

Book Reviews

Former Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, the father of the Total Force concept, recently commented on the role that the Reserve Components play in current operations:

Nearly 80 percent of the airlift capacity for this war and about 48 percent of the troops have come from Reserve and National Guard units. The high percentages are due, in part, to the specialized missions of those troops: transporting cargo, policing, rebuilding infrastructure, translating, conducting government affairs—in short, the stuff of building a new nation.¹

Secretary Laird's observations suggest the evolution of the concept he proposed over 30 years ago: the Reserve Components, conceptualized as a strategic reserve, have truly become an operational force. As of June 14, 2006, over 100,000 National Guard and Reserve personnel had been mobilized to Active duty. With this new reality comes the need to transform the Reserve Components to fit their new roles, and numerous scholars and strategists have met to address the task. The products of two of the most recent of these endeavors are brought to your attention here.

"The Reserve Component at War" was one of five panel discussions that took place during *A Nation at War*, the 17th annual strategy conference held April 11–13, 2006, at the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Panelists included:

- BG Dave Burford, USARNG (Assistant to the Director of the Army National Guard), who discussed imperatives for National Guard transformation as it moves from a strategic reserve to a post-9/11 operational force
- MG William T. Nesbitt, USARNG (Assistant Adjutant General—Army and Commander of the Georgia Army National Guard), who pointed to the unpredictability of mobilizations, standard equipment, and uncertain budget as the main stressors on the Reserve Components
- MG Donna L. Dacier, USAR (Commander, 311th Theater Signal Command), who applauded the flexibility and resourcefulness the Reserve Components have shown so they can participate fully in Active duty missions but warned of shortfalls in training for combat support and combat service support troops
- BG Michael Squier, USARNG (Ret.), who questioned whether, in the face of many variables, the Reserve and the National Guard are prepared to fight the Long War
- MG Robert Ostenberg, USAR (Deputy to Commander for Reserve Forces, North American Aerospace Defense Command/U.S. Northern Command), who linked the usefulness of lessons learned by the National Guard during Hurricane Katrina recovery to a potential domestic terrorist attack.

No written transcript of the proceedings is available, but videotape of this panel discussion is viewable at <<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/conf/panels-media.cfm>>.

The International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has produced a comprehensive study of the National Guard and the Reserve in the 21st century as part of the larger CSIS "Beyond Goldwater-Nichols" project. The study analyzes military command structures and the defense acquisition process while primarily focusing on the future of the Guard and Reserve Components of the Total Force. The study is available on the CSIS Web site at <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/bgn_ph3_report.pdf>.

L. Yambrick

NOTE

¹ Melvin R. Laird, "Iraq: Learning the Lessons of Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 6 (November/December 2005).

NEW from NDU Press for the Center for Technology and National Security Policy



Defense Horizons 54 Lee's Mistake: Learning from the Decision to Order Pickett's Charge

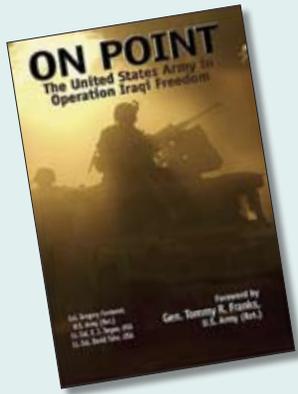
At the Battle of Gettysburg, Robert E. Lee made a mistake that doomed the hopes of the Confederate States of America to compel the United States to sue for peace. Why one of the great generals of his time made such a blunder continues to be a topic of research and intense debate. Authors David Gompert and Richard Kugler explain Lee's fateful decision not with new facts but with new analytical methods to illuminate decisionmaking in combat.

Defense Horizons 53 Countering Terrorism Across the Atlantic?

Kimberley L. Thachuk discusses ways to bolster the U.S.–European Union counterterrorism relationship, such as capacity-building, anticorruption measures, and strengthening multilateral agreements.



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**On Point: The United States Army
in Operation Iraqi Freedom**

by COL Gregory Fontenot, USA (Ret.),
LTC E.J. Degen, USA, and
LTC David Tohn, USA

Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press,
December 2005
519 pp. \$34.95
ISBN 1-59114-279-2

Reviewed by
JAMES HERSON

This team-written book should rank among the classics when future historians debate the strategy, mistakes, and exercise of operational acumen demonstrated by U.S. Army forces throughout Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker has continued the *On Point* project commissioned by his predecessor, General Eric Shinseki, to capture and document the challenges and lessons learned in executing OIF. Schoomaker recognized the project's importance for future Army transformation initiatives and for documenting the role of land forces in campaigns such as OIF and the Army's continuing relevance in achieving joint victory. The Chiefs' support ensured the authors' access to and the cooperation of numerous units, agencies, and dozens of contributors to enable *On Point* to document the Army's story in this campaign. This broad brush gives the work balance and not only tells the story of commanders and their plans, but also showcases the exploits and valor of American Soldiers who continue to serve with distinction in Iraq.

Although Army operations and challenges are the centerpiece of this quickly written work, the larger, broader aspects of OIF and the strategic and diplomatic considerations surrounding it are captured, allowing the reader to understand the land campaign in contextual detail. Recognizing the long-term shaping that U.S. Central Command components underwent to prepare to introduce forces prior to offensive operations in 2003, the authors describe the changes in the theater's design from the end of *Desert Storm* until the eve of the second invasion of Iraq. This stage-setting (overlooked in many military histories) enables the reader to see the value of this in-depth preparation, mostly accomplished by Army Central Command, which provided reception, staging, onward movement, and integration and sustainment to Coalition ground forces. The largest challenge the Army faced in Iraq was not the enemy, but rather its own logistics. The authors properly note that it was only through hard work and improvisation that Army logisticians were able to sustain their combat arms brothers at barely a subsistence rate.

The work then segues to the shaping of the battlespace during the second phase and covers the importance of Coalition contributions in sustaining combat operations, examines how the degradation of Iraqi command and control was achieved, illustrates how the Coalition Forces Land Component Commander helped to maintain Coalition political will and resulting military synergy, and explores other factors that directly or indirectly influenced the fight.

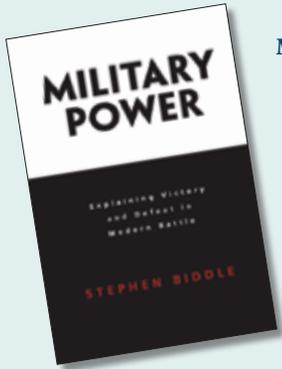
Most of the book details the broad operational fight and the challenges Army forces faced in breaching defenses from Kuwait and the ensuing 360-degree asymmetrical fight, the frustrations of the 4th Infantry Division in trying to join the fight after being denied transit through Turkey, the use of the 173^d Airborne Brigade to provide a reinforcing conventional capability to special operations forces elements in the north, and numerous other complementary actions in this distributed battle that were linked by commander's intent and a rapid operational tempo. The V Corps' fight up the Euphrates River Valley, and in particular the 3^d Infantry Division's "thunder runs" and 1-15th Infantry's running gun battles, chronicle the drama of the combat and the rapidly changing face of battle. The remainder of the book covers consolidation, regime change, the collapse of vestigial Iraqi security forces, and the outbreak of looting and public disorder, and expands on the future implications for the Army in Iraq without pointing fingers.

On Point clearly documents that despite advances in digitalization, increased situational

awareness, and other technological enhancements, fog and friction remain a timeless aspect of war and reward only well-trained and -led combined arms teams with victory. The Army's performance across the spectrum of combat in Iraq demonstrated this historical strength and highlights how joint the ground fight has become. The maturation of the American way of war seen in this campaign will testify to how essential our joint partners are in conducting successful ground operations. The authors' clear prose tells the Army OIF story in a compelling way that articulates theater strategy and then weaves in illustrative tactical vignettes, all spotlighting the Soldier, not technology, as the victor. As the authors note, "Humans, not high-tech sensors, remain indispensable, even in the 21st century."

Although the story is fascinating and infused with rich detail, the book's graphics, photographs, and other inserts are of poor quality and detract from the overall excellence. With luck, this minor flaw will not be repeated in the sequel, *On Point II*, in which the authors intend to focus on the shift from decisive combat operations to encountering and combating the current insurgency. If the sequel is half as good, it too should be added to every Soldier's library. **JFQ**

Colonel James Herson, USA, is a Professor of Strategy and Joint Warfighting at the Air War College and has authored numerous articles on military history.



Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle

by Stephen Biddle

Princeton University Press, 2004

337 pp. \$37.50

ISBN: 0-6911-1645-8

Reviewed by
CRAIG STONE

Stephen Biddle argues that, contrary to the belief of some observers, warfare has not actually changed much since the early 1900s. Using case studies and a quantitative statistical analysis model, he presents a new way of viewing warfare and determining outcomes.

Particularly compelling is the connection among the actual practice of war, international relations theory, and the current defense debate regarding the importance of technology. Within the context of military power, some modern international relations theorists have focused on numerical strength, while others have concentrated on technology changing the advantage from defense to offense. Biddle argues that both views are unsound and that the military underpinnings of international politics require a more detailed explanation of how numerical strength and technology interact and work. He counterbalances the contemporary debate about superior technology dominating future warfare. Revolution in military affairs (RMA) advocates who argue that technology is revolutionizing the battlefield need to read this book if only to better understand the weaknesses in their position.

Biddle argues that the real causes of battlefield success have been remarkably stable since 1917–1918, due largely to what he refers to as the modern system of force employment, or the doctrine and tactics by which forces are used in combat. He defines this system as “a tightly interrelated complex of cover, concealment, dispersion, suppression, small-unit independent maneuver, and combined arms at the tactical level” (p. 3). Although military members might find this concept obvious, the value of Biddle’s work is the rigorous and broad use of case studies and multimethod statistical analysis to support his assertion.

The author begins by defining the modern system and explains how it is connected to technology and the use of force by examining how changes in military technology since 1918 have altered the battlefield. Next, he deals with the issue of superior numbers (which, he argues, help but are neither necessary nor sufficient for success) and the consequences within the modern system. He then summarizes the modern system theory that he presents in more detail in subsequent chapters. This section is particularly useful because it

alerts readers to the critical issues to watch for when reading the case studies Biddle uses to demonstrate his theory.

The next three chapters present three case studies to demonstrate the modern system theory and its validity. Operations *Michael* (the second battle of the Somme, March 21–April 9, 1918), *Goodwood* (the penultimate Allied attempt to break out of Normandy, July 18–20, 1944), and *Desert Storm* (January 17–February 28, 1991) are examples of an event’s outcome supporting the modern system rather than the orthodox view despite the attacker/defender force ratios. In each example, Biddle explains why the case was selected and what outcome the orthodox theory and the modern system would imply. The second battle of the Somme provides a most likely case to support the orthodox theories of capabilities and a least likely case for the modern system theory. Operation *Michael* was an example of what should have been a British defensive success based on orthodox theories but was in fact a German offensive success, which is what the modern system predicts. It was a case of what should have been the success of defense-dominant technology and numerical imbalance for the Allies. But the Germans broke through, which supports the modern systems theory’s predictions that shallow forward defenders would not succeed against German modern system use of cover, concealment, and combined arms.

Like Operation *Michael*, Operation *Goodwood* was a case in which orthodox theory implied an outcome other than the actual result. Unlike *Michael*, in that the

Allies should have had a clear offensive victory, the end result was a win for German defense. The Germans had defense in depth, and the Allies attacked on a narrow front that prevented them from using modern system tactics such as cover, concealment, and small unit independent maneuver.

Operation *Desert Storm* was picked as a case study because while the breakthrough was predictable, the low loss rate was not. The modern systems theory attributes this outcome to the interaction between force employment and new technology used against traditional system defensive methods.

The final chapters move from the small-n case method to large-N statistical analysis and computer simulations. Biddle uses the University of Michigan’s Correlates of War dataset, the Army’s CDB90 dataset, and a self-developed dataset to test and prove his modern system theory. Though he admits the results are imperfect, they do display a preponderance of evidence to support the modern systems theory. The same holds true for the computer simulation.

The author summarizes his study with a number of important conclusions ranging from the role of military power in international relations to the lesson for historians in interpreting the outcomes of battles. One of the most important findings is that the U.S. focus on RMA and technology as a revolutionary change on the battlefield is misplaced. According to Biddle, most of the important variances in combat outcomes are not from technology change, but rather from the failure of states to implement modern systems methods such as cover, concealment, and maneuver. **JFQ**

Craig Stone recently retired after 29 years as an Artillery Officer in the Canadian Forces. He is an Assistant Professor and Deputy Director of Academics at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto, Ontario.



**German Strategy and the Path to Verdun:
Erich von Falkenhayn and the
Development of Attrition, 1870–1916**

by Robert T. Foley

Cambridge, MA:

Cambridge University Press, 2005

301 pp. \$75.00

ISBN: 0-5218-4193-3

Reviewed by

JOHN F. O'KANE

Foley dissects the changes in German military thought that began in 1871 and culminated tragically at Verdun in 1916. During this period, the General Staff debated two opposite schools of thought: annihilation and attrition. Both strategies would be tested early in World War I, but only the latter would lead to what some would call “the most senseless episode in a war not distinguished for sense anywhere” (p. 259).

Most senior German army officers backed the strategies of Helmuth von Moltke and Alfred von Schlieffen, who advocated quick, mobile wars aimed at annihilating the enemy in a few decisive battles. However, some officers, Erich von Falkenhayn among them, were convinced of the opposite: that the lessons of the Franco-German victory, the Anglo-Boer War, and the Russo-Japanese War were not of the success of annihilation-based strategies. Falkenhayn and his few supporters believed these wars were the beginnings of modern industrialized warfare that mobilized all of a nation's resources. As such, warfare would now require a strategy based on prolonged campaigns of attrition to bleed the enemy white and force them to negotiate peace.

Foley begins with an examination of alternative perceptions of warfare that arose following the German victories in 1871. These

views focused not on the decisive nature of the initial German victory, but on the second phase of the conflict and the challenges offered by the French *volkskrieg*. Some German military intellectuals saw victory in wars of attrition rather than in short wars with decisive battles. Still, most leaders in a position to make policy clung to the belief that the short war strategy was in the best interest of the German military. Enter Erich von Falkenhayn—a commander who, according to Foley, “appreciated and accepted the changed nature of modern mass warfare” (p. 7).

The book next focuses on Falkenhayn's strategies after his appointment as the chief of the General Staff after the German failure at the Marne in 1914. Plagued by the stalemate on the Western Front, pressure from the East to help the fledgling Austro-Hungarians, and unsupportive general officers, Falkenhayn felt compelled to achieve victory quickly. The attrition-based strategy in which he so strongly believed focused on rapidly defeating the French on the Western Front. It was in Verdun that he hoped the French army would expend the last of its reserves, resources, and will to fight, leading to its quick surrender. In turn, England would be isolated and soon forced into a similar predicament.

Any strategy based on attrition was bound to be at odds with

other commanders' views of warfare, as well as the German government's. Falkenhayn underestimated the will of his enemies and failed to realize that the Entente would not accept a peace on German terms in 1916; too much had been wagered at that point to agree to the status quo. As a result of the failure of Falkenhayn's strategy at Verdun, historians, especially German military historians, have generally ignored the concepts from which the strategy was derived. Adding insult to injury, Entente leaders with far greater resources and manpower at their disposal embraced the strategies of Falkenhayn. And through attrition warfare, the Entente leaders were able to accomplish what the Germans could not: peace issued to an army that had been exhausted.

Using records believed destroyed during World War II (which were returned to Germany after the collapse of the Soviet Union) and extensive archival research, Foley has painted an alternative picture of the development of the Verdun strategy. He rebuts Falkenhayn's critics by shedding new light on the German ideas about attrition warfare developed before and during World War I, citing in particular the writings of German historian and military commentator Hans Delbrück. Contrary to the thinking of many in the German army, Delbrück believed future warfare would not be decided by strategic battles and great victories, but rather would result in a settled peace after tremendous losses on both sides. Falkenhayn believed that to bring one side to the peace table, a unique strategy would be needed to force at least one of Germany's enemies to negotiations.

Foley has breathed new life into an issue that has been forgotten or overlooked in the

last century of warfare. Although some historians refer to the Schlieffen Plan as a good example for mobile warfare strategy in the 20th century, they often preface their discussions about the plan with “If only the German army had. . . .” The strategy was a failure from any perspective. Furthermore, many critics of attrition warfare point to the tactical innovations in mobile warfare that came out of World War I, which arguably were the foundation of the blitzkrieg tactics that were so successful in World War II. However true in principle this may be, mobile warfare as prescribed by Schlieffen and his supporters was not proving any more successful in combat than the attrition-based strategy of Falkenhayn. If the Germans had the resources, manpower, and economy of the Entente, *the Falkenhayn Plan* and *volkskrieg* might carry the same connotations today as *the Schlieffen Plan* and *blitzkrieg*. **JFQ**

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