

Bellamy, Christopher. *The Evolution of Modern Land Warfare: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Van Creveld, Martin. *The Transformation of War*. New York: Free Press, 1991.

Luttwak, Edward, and Stuart L. Koehl, eds. *The Dictionary of Modern War*. New York: Harper Collins, 1991.

These three works by prominent defense intellectuals of various nationalities are cast in different modes. Christopher Bellamy's (UK) is an impressionistic ramble across a wide range of topics, Martin van Creveld's (Israel), a honed and focused essay, and Edward Luttwak and Stuart Koehl's (US) an encyclopedic dictionary. The most salient commonality is a somewhat pontifical tone, hard to avoid in the latter case, given the function of a dictionary, but no less evident in the others. This is stylistically characteristic of much forthcoming from academics and journalists in regard to *res militariae* from the early 1950s until the Gulf War, during which many crystal balls were shattered, and some pundits besmeared with proverbial egg. Hopefully, the post-Cold War epoch will be marked by greater moderation in style and more careful arraying of supporting data in the spirit of John Erickson's dictum that defense analytics require no less rigor than French medieval history.

To proceed in sequence, then, *The Evolution of Modern Land Warfare* is introduced as a "handy" summary of "the way modern land warfare, military thinking, and concepts have evolved" — and "selective." More latter than former, it is a smorgasbord of assertions, musings, and analysis, laced with such colloquialisms as "booze up," "master-mind," and "colossally superior," beginning with a *defensa* of drum-and-trumpet military history, and an assertion that "the vigorous Russian tradition of scientific examination of the mechanisms of war . . . despite occasional abuses of history . . . is the best."

Much of *Evolution* lies beyond the easy grasp of undergraduate students and "all ranks," eg. arrayed on two facing pages are von Moltke the Elder, Sun Tzu, JFC Fuller, Richard Simpkin and Sir Douglas Haig — a very steep path for tyros, most useful for whom are the first fifty pages on "Ground Rules" and "Techniques and Warfare."

In a seventy-page sweep across Western military history from 1800 to the late 1970s, the author's prime interests are evident in the three and-a-half pages given Soviet deep battle doctrine *versus* two short paragraphs on the Spanish Civil War. The Polish, Danish-Norwegian and Yugoslav-Greek campaigns are not mentioned in the World War II section. Amphibious operations in Europe and the Pacific share one short paragraph, while US Civil War riverine operations and the Dardanelles campaign of 1915 are excluded.

After three *precis* of air-land battles — Lam Son, 1971, Sharon's 1973 drive on Cairo, and Jijiga, 1977 — are two case studies. The first, on *Corps volant* - Operational Maneuver Group doctrinal evolution, is the apex of the book in content and style. The second broadly surveys Asian military history

— the Mongols, Tamerlane, the pre-colonial military history of Annam, some Indian and central Asian leaders, the Tai'pings, the Long March, the Chinese Civil War and General Giap.

In keeping with the author's view that "major land conflicts and large scale military operations have been confined to Asia" since 1945, Angola, Congo/Zaire, Nigeria/Biafra and Algeria are out of view, and the Korean War deemed the "nearest precedent (sic) to a possible armed confrontation between East and West." (p. 106). Aside from excluding such cases as twentieth century Japanese commanders, the view of Asian warfare as uniquely subtle (eg. p. 237) overlooks the rich Western tradition encompassing Hereward, the Wake, Bertrand du Guesclin, the Spanish guerrillas, Mosby, Lawrence and Skorzeny, as well as extensive cross-cultural diffusion of ideas over centuries. Sensitivity to "interdependence of different levels of conflict," hardly geo-specific, was visible in mercantilist warfare, and in British strategy and war-time operations from Pitt to Churchill.

"Some Conclusions and Prognoses" parallels van Creveld's views of large-scale warfare's obsolescence, examining future forms of warfare, and the didactic value of military history. Throughout the work, strong assertions abound. The claim (p. 33) of a tendency to parity of technology between opposing forces in modern conflicts, made before the Gulf War, also stands contrary to many cases, such as Vietnam, Afghanistan, New Orleans, 1815, Omdurman, the Rif Wars, Ethiopia, and the Sino-Japanese War. In the section on World War I, it is noted that the "most spectacular breakthroughs" were made by "infantry . . . with carefully orchestrated artillery fire." (p. 45) So much for Messines, Cambrai, the offensive of 8 August 1918 and Megiddo. Defending Haig and World War I British generalship (not necessarily identical), Bellamy suggests that "at this time (1917) cavalry was probably the only arm that could have carried out rapid exploitation." After lamenting a failure to properly use cavalry for pursuit at Cambrai, and arguing its utility elsewhere (p. 44), he then observes that "conditions preclude this (use in the pursuit) absolutely." (p. 78) Air power historians may differ with the view that aviation played "a very limited ground-attack role" in World War I. Not surprisingly, the Somme and Passchendaele/3rd Ypres are barely visible.

Moving beyond the Great War, Bellamy, a former Gunner, judges the artillery's effect on troop morale as "incomparably greater" than that of air attack. Certainly such accounts as German survivors of COBRA, the Falaise Gap and QUEEN, and those of Vietnamese hit by ARC LIGHT strikes *inter alia* suggest otherwise. Nor, with nuclear weapons, assault breakers, fuel-air explosives and napalm in view, does the dictum that (p. 50) "area weapons . . . tend to wound more than they kill; more precise weapons tend to be deadlier." Nor does it mesh with cause-of-wound statistics from World War II. Are there indeed firm data on rounds-fired/trauma-inflicted of weapons types to bear that out? Did Grant display a Jominian flare for "speed, manoeuvre, surprise" in the East on a par with Lee, Jackson or Sherman? Was a "tradition of American expertise in the attack" (p. 65) visible at the Meuse-Argonne?

Bellamy, like van Creveld, gives nuclear theoretics short shrift, and suggests weak links between the former and pre-nuclear military affairs. So much for the work of Bernard Brodie, J.M. Sallagar, Roberta Wohlstetter, Fred Ikle and Henry Kissinger. The suggestion that the Americans and British "did not develop a formal doctrine and training for air-ground cooperation until late in the (Second World) war," (p. 96) stands in tension with the recent studies of Richard Hallion and Frank Cooling, the RAF, USAAF and US Navy official histories, and Robert Sherrod's history of Marine Corps Aviation. Patton, not "a member of an Indian-fighting Army" (p. 245), was commissioned in 1909, about thirty years after the last pitched battles.

The conclusion that "modern nations no longer accept war as a relatively natural aspect of international relations," (p. 240) is hard to mesh with the Falklands, the Gulf, Yugoslavia, many other wars raging, and the proliferation of arms over the last generation. Did the Allies in World War II use the "newest destructive technology in the crudest way to obliterate Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan." (p. 240) Aside from the fact that some methods were quite elegant, how can it be that Nazism, Fascism and Japanese militarism are re-emerging and Germany and Japan are economic superpowers? Bellamy's suggestion of increasing religious tolerance (p. 241) stands in some tension not only with van Creveld's views, but with "liberation theology" in Central America, the *intifada*, pandemic Islamic fundamentalist upheavals, Hindu-Muslim-Sikh struggles, Ulster — and the United States, for that matter. Many will share the hope that his views regarding the increasing rarity of warfare among major nations proves valid. Looking beyond its many such points of issue, *Evolution* is a good "read," and at the very least a worthy source of CS Pierce's "irritation of doubt."

The gloominess of van Creveld's *Transformation of War* approaches Spengler's *Decline of the West* and Bernard James' *Death of Progress* as he envisions a micro-warfare pandemic raging in the wake of the Cold War. Like late nineteenth century observers who saw assaults on public order by terrorists from Fenians to Bakuninites as a prelude to *bella omnia contra omnia*, van Creveld deserves careful consideration. After all, their fears that if radicals gained power their urge to dominate would override idealism proved all too valid.

At the same time, a number of assertions invite challenge. Did, for example, the western Allies really direct 35% of their World War II defense production to strategic air forces in World War II? Was the 1973 October War larger than the Chinese Civil War, Korea or Vietnam? Some readers will have difficulty accepting North Vietnam's victory as a triumph of low-intensity conflict against conventional warfare, that Skorzeny's forces were after the Allied high command, or that Eisenhower and Rommel were the only luminaries targeted in World War II. What of Yamamoto, Vatutin and Heydrich?

Many cases in the military history of imperialism stand contrary to the dictum that "once a force has been vanquished by the weak it will grow timid

and wary of repeating its experience," (p. 178) — the Italian return to Abyssinia in 1935 to avenge the humiliation at Adua in 1896; Spanish campaigns after the Annual massacre in 1920; the Nile campaign of 1896 that avenged Gordon's death; the Zulu wars; Indian Army campaigns along the Northwest Frontier for generations, and US frontier wars.

Van Creveld's statements about nuclear weapons are especially strident. He discounts current anxieties about horizontal proliferation, and the concerns of American presidents since Eisenhower over the plight of civilians in nuclear targeting. Beyond that, he asserts that "by and large . . . politicians, the military and their academic advisers" made no attempt to take a "profound look at the nature of war in our time." (p. 222) Exceptions in western Europe aside, that was not true of Presidents Kennedy, Nixon, Carter, Reagan or Bush, nor of many members of Congress and their staffs who took a close interest in such matters, eg., Senators Nunn and Cohen, nor a literal host of others, from Thomas Schelling to Morton Halperin and William Kaufmann to Paul Nitze. Civilian "advisors" and scholars who focused closely on LIC in the US include Noel Koch, John Collins, Richard Shultz, John Shy and Peter Paret, and US military professionals, Generals Edward Lansdale, Richard Stilwell, and Russell Volkmann, and Colonels Aaron Bank, Rod Paschall, Peter Bahnsen, Al Paddock, and Sam Sarkesian. None are noted in *Transformation*, nor is Frank Kitson, (who popularized the term "low-intensity warfare" in 1971), nor Roger Trinquier, or Tony Geraghty, nor de Bray, Asprey, Lawrence or Grivas. The apparent lack of awareness of the lengthy genealogy of LIC may account for some of the exuberance and the sense of unique vision.

Yet van Creveld has not got it all wrong by drawing upon his own impressions of LIC rather than drawing upon history. Questionable assertions aside, *Transformation* is challenging and stimulating. Its strident and self-confident tone may be what it takes to get the attention of military professionals, for it is already required reading at at least one senior US service school.

Some may be infuriated by the dissection of Clausewitz, and others find it a great romp, and the "strategic straight-jacket" a useful metaphor. Van Creveld's sub-essay on women and war is a useful contribution to a debate which often generates more calories than photons. It meshes with his deft treatment of the guises of war as a form of sports and "grand theatre," and of its sexual dimensions. Although paradoxical fascination for war has been expressed by many, from Robert E. Lee, through Ernst Junger, Frederic Manning, Glenn Gray and Robert Crisp to William Broyles, it is a point well made here.

Van Creveld strikes the brightest sparks in attacking the "Clausewitzian Universe," ie, the Newtonian clockwork model of a trinitarian state with a separate government, army and people. Shaping a paradigm à la Einstein — perhaps more appropriately Heisenbergian or Planckian — of conflict matrices less certain and more fluid, he sees war metamorphosizing into a diffuse and pervasive phenomenon. Linear, continuous fronts and echelons in "conventional" battle, winning wars through battles, complex mechanical and

nuclear weapons, and linked concepts and strategies are all deemed “dinosaurs.”

In Weberian terms, van Creveld expects that military — or rather, paramilitary — organizations henceforth will likely be more charismatic versus formally bureaucratic, in conflicts where adversaries are often indistinguishably intermingled — as in Ulster, Lebanon, the West Bank, in drug and gang wars and international terrorism. The flaring-up of such conflicts in the wake of the Cold War makes van Creveld’s visions of proliferation, diffusion, and privatization of war and neo-condottieri clashing fitfully in “Mad Max” settings especially chilling, as are his predictions of the ultimate arrival in the US of such micro-wars, fire ants and killer bees born of terrorism or dissidence — or spin-offs from street crime, ethno-political tension or the drug wars. The state of many major American cities after nightfall certainly mirrors his gloomy view. Many would agree that the “degree of violent activity that even as late as the 1960s would have been considered outrageous is now accepted as an inevitable hazard of modern life.” (p. 194)

Overall, van Creveld sets out to provoke the orthodox-minded with his view of the gauzy, fluid nature of low-intensity conflict, and the tactics and attitudes required to wage it, challenging basic assumptions, capacities, strategies and doctrines. As in his *Command in War*, van Creveld takes a neo-Luddite bent in discounting the likely effectiveness of technical surveillance and sensor systems in LIC settings, (p. 210) and gives little analysis to such matters as the implications of satellite intelligence, including “fallout” from SDI, subtle psychological methods, drugs, enzyme specific weapons, propaganda, amassing of computerized personal data, expanding research and development and marketing of security technology, or proliferation of elite military and police forces or torture.

Whether *Transformation* is the stake in the heart of the Dracula of Clausewitz any more than, say, Liddell Hart’s *The Ghost of Napoleon*, let alone the defeat of Germany in two World Wars, remains to be seen. Overall, its passion and impulsive digressions lie far from the carefully crafted and elegant structure which that demands, if it can, indeed, be done. The dilemma with Clausewitz remains. His work may not approach that of preeminent philosophers’, but it has stood up very well against other attempts at military philosophy.

The *Dictionary of Modern War* would have been more accurately titled *The Dictionary of Current Military Technology and Concepts*. Although its senior editor is a productive and outspoken defense analyst highly visible in the American media in recent years, this work has a less assertive tone than Bellamy’s and van Creveld’s. In a uniform and lucid style it presents definitions of a wide range of acronyms and terms, including the detailed functioning of weapons systems as well as tactics and strategy. Its major defects are in its editorial mechanics. Most users will lament the lack of illustrations, maps, sketches and an index, and weak and uneven cross-referencing.

The *DMW* will, nevertheless, be useful to military professionals, analysts, academics, buffs and wargamers, as well as offering interesting browsing for general readers. It would certainly have been very useful to the many journalists grappling with military affairs as *terra incognita* in the hectic days of the Gulf War. The issue of what is included, versus what might or should have been, that naturally arises with any encyclopedia or encyclopedic dictionary could be raised here. There are, for example, no entries on the Reform movement nor O.O.D.A. Like Bellamy and van Creveld, the editors give relatively light treatment to thermonuclearitics. Terms like floorspace and footprint are not to be found, nor are many sub-elements of military tactics dealt with as topics per se nor readily found in related blocs, eg, advance and rear guard, ANGLICO, battle drill, beaten zone, BMNT and EENT, defilade, enfilade, envelopment, principles of war, reconnaissance by fire, and skirmish line. Vietnam terms are those linked to current military affairs, eg, "Wild Weasel." Some Soviet specialists may have difficulty with the definition of "meeting engagement," the placing of a discussion of operational science and art under "operational method," or the absence of "troop control" and "reflex control." Others may not concur with the definition of *auftragstaktik*, or with the judgment of close air support as "simply too costly for the results obtainable."

Focusing on such details, however, detracts from the overall quality and utility of the work. A commendable effort to wrestle complex categories and typologies into meaningful patterns, *DMW* will offer future users and historians a special perspective on military affairs at the end of the Cold War.

Taken as a group, these three works are perhaps final manifestations of an era that began in the 1930s, in which many civilian journalists and academic analysts struck bold poses as experts on warfare. The tone of confidence that one can find in George Fielding Eliot, SLA Marshall (and even Ernest Hemingway in the preface to *Men at War*) which began to quaver somewhat during the Gulf War may fall off in the post-Cold War era as a function of changing public interests and of a widespread effort by military professionals to enter the arena of military analytics in earnest, and balance the influence and perspective of military commentators and philosophers who, in many instances, had no immediate experience of military life or war. To what effect can only be judged with the passing of time.

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