

the escalation. As Cable puts it succinctly, the air war against North Vietnam “had changed the character of the conflict from an insurgency to a partisan war.”

Unholy Grail suggests that the North Vietnamese effort to reunify Vietnam by force was thus a byproduct of American military tactics. Moreover, in this new situation Hanoi’s relationship to the National Liberation Front fundamentally changed. Now they were “potential rivals for power and . . . expendable tools;” in the Tet attacks of 1968 they were indeed expended. Cable argues that although the Viet Cong were “polluted” by North Vietnamese-trained cadre, they were mainly “Southerners in pursuit of a Southern agenda.”

Then, why was the US in Vietnam? Why did it not find the Southern agenda acceptable? On the whole Cable answers in a familiar fashion: the clichés of the Cold War led the US to Vietnam and obscured the fact that there was a Southern agenda. He is more interested in demonstrating the ways in which a refusal to reconsider received military doctrine kept the US in Vietnam and blinded its leaders to the reality of a Southern insurgency. But *should* the US have accepted the Southern agenda (a neutralist government in South Vietnam)? Cable notes that Robert Komer’s “theory of victory” which stressed “pacification, revolutionary development, Viet Cong infrastructure neutralization and a diminishment of large-scale combat operations” might have worked if it had been tried in 1965. *Should* it have been tried in 1965? On this the book is largely silent. I worry that Larry Cable imagines there to have been a holy grail as well as the unholy one he so penetratingly exorciates.

Marilyn B. Young
New York University

Wolpin, Miles D. *America Insecure. Arms Transfers, Global Interventionism and the Erosion of National Security*. Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 1991.

US military policy is currently under intense scrutiny and the US armed forces are in a period of reorganization. That should be so given the fundamental changes in international relations. Wolpin contributes a sharp and distinct view to this debate. He argues that the military apparatus should shrink considerably and that it should be used solely for the defense of the territory of the United States. He specifically emphasizes that the US government should not intervene militarily in what is conventionally called the Third World.

While suggestions for future policy are the most relevant part of the book, the bulk of it is a review of US military policy in the last few decades, with a focus on the 1980s. Wolpin delves into arms transfer policy, military interventions in Third World countries, the provision of hardware to the US military, the economic cost of US military spending and the ideological foundations of US military policy.

For Wolpin, arms transfers and interventions during the last few decades add up to a US policy of attempted military domination of the Third World. He finds both conservative and liberal explanations for US military policy towards the Third World wanting. His analysis of both individual cases and the general trends reveals that it was predominantly authoritarian governments that were supported and that economies in Third World countries suffered. He argues that there were few cases where there was a real threat the US would “lose” countries to the Soviet Union; governments that US judged to be communist were predominantly nationalist. They would have been cooperative with the United States, had the United States been less aggressive in its behavior. Why then did US governments follow counterproductive military interventionist policies? Wolpin’s search for actors leads him to transnational corporate interests in what he calls “colonial” and “imperial” domination of the Third World. Resource and labor exploiting companies are averse to nationalisms in the Third World that threaten to tax their profits or even nationalize industries. These transnational corporate interests act, Wolpin argues, in conjunction with the domestic military-industrial complex interested in selling as much hardware as possible.

Wolpin documents negative economic effects in both the Third World and the US. Third World countries have to pay for arms imports, they are exploited by transnational corporations and are plagued with corrupt rulers. In the United States, especially during the Reagan military buildup, costs for military preparation were large and jobs exported to Third World states with repressive governments. Wolpin discusses in a separate chapter whether the Garrison State hypothesis, developed in the early 1940s by Harold Lasswell, is applicable to the United States. He detects a large military-industrial complex and strong influence from the top military brass over foreign policy decision-making and thus a “nascent garrison state.”

Wolpin not only sees tendencies towards a more militaristic American foreign policy, but, also strong counterforces. Nations in the Third World, but also in Europe, are more assertively nationalist, and are not easily dominated by the US. The loss of jobs in the United States and the costs of the Reagan military buildup have increased awareness of the economic effects of military interventionism. The end of the Cold War has rendered the excessive use of the Soviet threat useless. A reorganization of US military policy would have been overdue, even without the end of the Cold War, and Wolpin sees chances that some of the ideas he champions could be adopted as policy guidelines. These include beliefs that radical, even Marxist, regimes in the Third World do not necessarily threaten the safety or the material welfare of the American people; instead, that radicalism may often be the best way to achieve development. Therefore there is no need for the large-scale US military forces. Moreover, large-scale force reductions would help to strengthen the US economically. Finally, the parallel diminution of the powers of actor groups interested in military interventionism would democratize the USA.

Wolpin provides a comprehensive alternative approach to US military policy. In the view to this reviewer, it is too encompassing, promising too much in

an effort to bind together many partial interests. Reductions of military expenditures do not easily yield “peace dividends,” US job losses will be very difficult to reverse and it is doubtful that radical regimes in the Third World have good development records.

The criticism of Wolpin’s recommendations also applies to his historical analysis. There is too much post-hoc rationalizing, too many facts and trends linked with each other. Sometimes, the link is reduced to a hint at a great conspiracy, for instance in the case of the Kennedy murder which was followed by changes in military policy towards the Third World. Such obscurancy — or is it even paranoia? — detracts from the basically sound analysis.

Wolpin has collected a large bag of facts and views which he presents in his twelve chapters. While the data is neither new nor unusual Wolpin’s analysis often deviates from the conventional. Readers can expect Wolpin to be controversial both in detail and in general conclusions. He is quick to jump to strong views.

Wolpin wants to offer an “alternative populist strategy.” (p. xii) He seeks “National Security,” in the sense that the security of the inhabitants of the United States is optimized. He wants to see US manufacturing strengthened and jobs for the workers in the US. Mostly, though by far not always, he arrives at positions that are congruent with what one would label as “left wing.” His position is best characterized as that of a left-wing populist.

Michael Brzoska
Universität Hamburg

O’Sullivan, Patrick. *Terrain and Tactics*. New York: Greenwood, 1991.

As the title suggests, this volume examines the important but often overlooked nexus of military action and geography. The author draws from his many previous works to present in one book a range of topics from geopolitics to guerrilla warfare.

The book begins with a series of descriptive examples from recent wars in the Third World which demonstrate the underlying, powerful effects of terrain on the outcome of military conflict. It then proceeds from the macro-level topics of geopolitics, revolution and “classical spatial ploys” to the micro-effects of terrain on military tactics, insurgency and urban warfare. Each chapter is supported by a range of well-informed examples and interesting detail.

O’Sullivan carefully acknowledges that the causes of war are found in cultural, sociological, economic and political factors but reminds us that “we need to turn to physical and human geography to trace the course of war.” He contends that “all political conflicts are territorial. They are contests for power over certain parts of the earth” — a lesson that is liable to be lost among the proliferating