



Senior Officer Professional Digest

Selected readings from the world's military journals

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Compiled by:





The CA's Introduction

Professional reading is a commitment to our Army's future.

The Senior Officer Professional Digest (SOPD) has been designed to assist you to learn more about the issues that will shape the future of warfare. I commend the SOPD to you and ask that you make the time to read the articles and to reflect on their content.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P.F. Leahy', with a long, sweeping underline.

P.F. LEAHY
Lieutenant General
Chief of Army



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| Article | 'Is strategic geography relevant to Australia's current defence policy?' |
| Author | Paul Dibb |
| Publication Details | <i>Australian Journal of International Affairs</i> , vol. 60, no. 2, June 2006, pp. 247–64 |

SYNOPSIS

Paul Dibb, one-time Deputy Secretary for Strategy and Intelligence, continues his argument in favour of expensive, high-technology platform-centric air and naval forces as the best method of ensuring Australia's security. Dibb sees a highly deployable Army—with sufficient combat weight to do warfighting, stability operations and peacekeeping—as less useful than ships and planes to defend the sea-air gap. He quips 'imagine Australian main battle tanks trundling down the streets of Surabaya or Port Moresby'—but this is exactly the lesson of humanitarian operations in Somalia in 1993, when the streets of Mogadishu became lethal.

Interestingly, given recent and current events in East Timor and Solomon Islands, he presents Australia's defence forces as structured for niche contributions 'in a subordinate role to allies in distant theatres'. He also argues that the key driver of defence planning should be to defeat 'credible hostile forces', but doesn't see non- or trans-state actors as worthy of serious consideration in the complex force structure equation.

Unfortunately, Dibb slips occasionally into emotive language, which weakens his argument. For example, he writes that the 2005 Defence Update 'harps on about coalition operations'. He also criticises the Howard Government's attempts to re-frame strategic defence policy to keep abreast of evolving international conditions:

There is no consistency between the geographic focus of the 'Defence Update 2005' and that of the 2000 Defence White Paper, although the Prime Minister John Howard asserts that the defence update [*sic*] is 'not a major departure from the 2000 White Paper'.



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| Article | 'Countering Aggressive Rising Powers: A Clash of Strategic Cultures' |
| Author | Thomas Donnelly |
| Publication Details | <i>Orbis</i> , vol. 50, no. 3, Summer 2006, pp. 413–28, |

SYNOPSIS

Thomas Donnelly's article assesses the 'strategic cultures' of the potential and immediate adversaries of the United States. His aim is to understand the 'habits of mind that shape their decision-making' to determine how the strategic habits of these adversaries might intersect with US strategy. Donnelly identifies three potential adversaries: China; an 'Islamist, Al Qaeda-inspired great power'; and 'weak-yet-rising' nuclear powers.

Donnelly contends that central to China's strategic path is the way that the new leadership generation chooses to exploit globalisation and manage the consequences of 'economic energy'. He highlights that 'China experts' and business people from the United States adhere to the theory of 'democratic inevitability', thus easing the 'need for any diplomatic unpleasantness with the regime in Beijing and its prickly leaders'. However, Donnelly explains, there is a lingering, deep-seated and widely held resentment toward the United States and the West. He claims that while Chinese strategic culture is rich, it also contains two distinct branches. The Confucian–Mencian tradition stresses non-violent political or diplomatic means of dealing with adversaries. Violence, when used, is controlled and defensive. However, Ming Dynasty strategy making shows a tendency for strategically and militarily offensive behaviour when China had an advantage in capabilities. Donnelly notes that the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) states that 'China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States' but also concludes that '[T]he outside world has little knowledge of Chinese motivations and decision-making'. Donnelly concludes that the 'happy talk about democratic inevitability is hedged by a harder-edged view that China is perfectly willing to use force'.

Next, the author raises the prospect of an Al Qaeda-inspired Islamist great power 'ruling a caliphate or even emirate perched on a giant oil patch'. Where it might be hoped that China would choose a peaceful path,



Donnelly believes that ‘there is little doubt that the rise of a radical Islamist state would be extremely violent’. The author spends some time highlighting the strategic culture that would support such a state. He traces a line of consistent argument, extending from (Egyptian Islamist) Sayyid Qutb’s rejection of modernity in the 1950s, through Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri’s political claims for Al Qaeda, to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s operations in Iraq. Donnelly concedes that ‘the prospects for a policy of containment, let alone peaceful coexistence, seem very bleak indeed’. He also concludes that the geopolitical goals of such a state extend beyond the United States and Israel to ‘recreating a caliphate that would, in power, repress the Shia and other Islamic sects and enforce a strict Sunni form of rule’. Donnelly concludes that ‘the failure of Al Qaeda to prevent legitimate and more representative governments from taking hold in Afghanistan and Iraq will be a big loss for Al Qaeda’.

Where containing Al Qaeda is ‘an impossible task’, Donnelly highlights the risk associated with adopting a containment strategy for ‘weak-yet-rising nuclear powers like Iran and North Korea’. However, he concludes that containment of these states is ‘regime change by tolerable means’. He argues that the solution for Iran is unlikely to appear until there is stability and democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan. Similarly, the ‘solution to the problem of North Korea’ is unlikely to appear until the larger problem of China is ‘on the way to resolution’. Donnelly then analyses the most confounding state in this category: Pakistan. He highlights that Pakistan is a state that has been shaped by ‘deep uncertainties’. The army has always played a central role in balancing competing demands within Pakistan; however, there is growing concern about the capacity of the army to continue to do this in the ‘face of an obviously rising Islamic populism’.

Donnelly concludes his discussion of strategic cultures with a brief analysis of the United States, noting that it is ‘not surprising, some people and states, particularly those we regard as aggressive rising powers, have the sense that we’re gunning for them’. This observation draws on John Lewis Gaddis’s observation that ‘American leaders [have] evolved a strategy of forestalling future challenges by enlarging American interests’.



The final section of the paper considers the QDR as the means to align US military plans with grand strategy. Donnelly argues that, while the QDR acknowledges the issues with China and weak nuclear states, ‘it leaves the reader with the impression than [*sic*] old-style containment remains a realistic long-term solution’. He observes that the QDR is weakest on the ‘long war’ in the Middle East. He believes this shows that the ‘Pentagon seems to have neither understood the strategic culture of the Al Qaeda-like enemy—and the connection between terrorism and the larger political culture of the greater Middle East—nor the strategic culture of the United States as articulated in the Bush Doctrine’.

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| Article | ‘Cyber-Mobilization: The New <i>Levée en Masse</i>’ |
| Author | Audrey Kurth Cronin |
| Publication Details | <i>Parameters</i> , vol. XXXVI, no. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 77–87, http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/06summer/cronin.pdf |

SYNOPSIS

Dr Cronin, of Oxford University, locates a similarity between the explosion of cheap and accessible publications and propaganda in France in the latter half of 17th century, which enabled the mass mobilisation exploited by Napoleon, and the enabling technologies associated with today’s information society. ‘The result is creative anarchy, full of heady opportunity but also pregnant with unpredictable change and real-world effects, especially for war’.

Information and communication technologies—such as personal computers, DVDs, and the Internet—are being used by insurgents and terrorists to create a sense of common purpose and to celebrate successes. It was the creation of a national identity and purpose that gave Napoleon his *levée en masse*, and Cronin contends that similar forces are empowering and enabling Western adversaries. ‘Zarqawi’s slick video, “All Religion Will Be for Allah”, is available for downloading from the Internet and can even be shown on a cell phone’. The outcome is ‘a potent mythology of an anti-Muslim campaign and a romanticized image of global resistance to the West’.

Cronin warns against ignoring this ‘dimension of warfare’, stating that mobilisation does more than recruiting soldiers, it is also ‘a crucial



element’ in ‘inspiring violence and crafting the account of the struggle’. For example, Iraqi insurgents use websites to post tips for tactical success based on operational experience. The narrative binds people into an identity, shaping their outlook, and ‘cyber-mobilization already has changed the character of war, making it much harder for the United States to win in Iraq, and it has the potential to culminate in further interstate war in the 21st century’.

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| Article | ‘Stability Operations in Strategic Perspective: A Skeptical View’ |
| Author | Professor Colin S. Gray, Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies, University of Reading |
| Publication Details | <i>Parameters</i> , vol. XXXVI, no. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 4–14, http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/06summer/grav.pdf |

SYNOPSIS

Professor Gray opens his article by questioning the Quadrennial Defense Review’s (QDR) focus on irregular warfare and stability operations. ‘[A] QDR composed at the current juncture of events in Iraq and Afghanistan is not to be trusted as a source of balanced guidance for the future.’ Seeing a large dose of ‘presentism’, he declares ‘I am concerned about the number and significance of truly major political and strategic assumptions that are simply passed over in silence.’

Based around eight specific points, the article builds a cogent case for caution when assessing the QDR:

1. The United States is currently ‘the only possible principal guardian of global order’ — hegemons are necessary, and sometimes their role and mission is to enact change that others are unable or unwilling to.
2. The US reputation is crucial to maintaining international order and this credibility must not be squandered.
3. The espoused ideology of ‘freedom’ based on simplistic definitions of ‘good or evil’ is apt to mislead US policies and public opinion, especially in identifying threats or courses of action.
4. The American way of war is linear, ahistorical and regular—based in aggressive action and high technology—and thus not well suited to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency.



5. The central thesis of the QDR, the ‘long war of global domain against violent extremists who resort to terrorism’, is wrong and shortsighted.
6. Nationalism against US hegemony is a greater risk than religious fanaticism. ‘The Arab, even the Islamic, realm may well be ready to benefit from less corrupt government and more democracy, but beneficial reforms can be effected only from within those societies by local effort’.
7. Stability operations are integral to warfighting and counterterrorism/counterinsurgency, not a separate matter. ‘The primary object in counterinsurgency is protection of the public, not the military defeat of terrorist-insurgents.’
8. Technology is not the panacea the QDR represents—people and their attitude are far more important.

When Gray imagines the backlash from drawn-out and inconclusive operations in Iraq, he hears the cry ‘no more Iraqs’ in the same way ‘no more Vietnams’ rings loud—and this may not be a good thing. When the ideology of freedom infects strategy, however, Gray says ‘We need to beware of confusing the desirable with the possible’.

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| Article | ‘Humanitarian Intervention After Iraq: Legal Ideals vs. Military Realities’ |
| Author | James Kurth, Editor of Orbis |
| Publication Details | <i>Orbis</i> , vol. 50, no. 1, Winter 2006, pp. 87–101, http://www.fpri.org/orbis/5001/kurth.humanitarianinterventionafteriraq.pdf |

SYNOPSIS

This article, relevant as Australia deploys troops on stability operations within our region and further afield, examines the rise of humanitarian interventions through the 1990s and assesses the future for such operations. Australia’s INTERFET operation to East Timor is listed as one of only five successful interventions (the others are Haiti–1994, Bosnia–1995, Kosovo–1999, and Sierra Leone–2000).

The author makes the point that, beyond unsuccessful interventions such as Somalia (1992–1995), there are many examples where the failure to intervene is worse than a failed attempt. The highest profile of these is



Rwanda in 1994, where 800 000 Tutsi were massacred in ethnic genocide. It is often the element of ethnic difference that is most noticeable. Yet, according to Kurth, 'If ethnic hatreds are really long-standing and widespread, no outside intervention can get at the roots of the conflict'.

Further, the author contends, there is often a powerful extra component to tensions that require interventions—the involvement of state-sponsored forces. This can be seen in southern Sudan in the 1980s and 1990s, and now in Darfur. It is this connection between ethnicity and state-sanctioned violence that is overlooked by the intervening powers, often to their detriment. That nexus needs to be broken before any intervention can succeed; it is a necessary pre-condition. Otherwise, the misery and anarchy return once the pacifying powers depart.

Worse, Kurth highlights, the future will likely need far more interventions just at a time when the leading candidate to intervene, the United States, recoils from long-term overseas deployments in the wake of the Iraq War and subsequent insurgency. 'With the U.S. ground forces stretched to their limit in Iraq, there is no reserve of ground forces left to engage in sizable and extended operations anywhere else'. Further, US credibility in the General Assembly and the court of international opinion has been damaged by the *casus belli* presented for invading Iraq in 2003. This 'Iraq Syndrome' will have domestic as well as international implications. Thus, 'the United States is unlikely to undertake military interventions in the very regions where, from a humanitarian view, they are most likely to be needed'.

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| Article | 'Saddam's Delusions: The View From the Inside' |
| Author | Kevin Woods, James Lacey and Williamson Murray |
| Publication Details | <i>Foreign Affairs</i> , vol. 85, Issue 3, May/June 2006, http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20060501faessay85301/kevin-woods-james-lacey-williamson-murray/saddam-s-delusions-the-view-from-the-inside.html |

SYNOPSIS

This article presents excerpts from the book length report of the Pentagon's Joint Force Command Iraq Perspectives Report. Based on post-invasion interviews, documents and analysis, it presents the unique Iraqi perspective of events and strategic expectations from the Gulf War in 1991 to the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.



Importantly, Saddam Hussein significantly mis-read the intentions of his adversary's and their capabilities. Not helped by a fearful and dishonest state apparatus, the Iraqi military was completely unprepared to take on the US war machine in March 2003. The major areas of Iraq's weakness stem from:

- terrible strategic calculus
- limited military effectiveness
- irrelevant political guidance
- rampant political interference
- a force structured for paramilitary suppression of dissent
- corruption
- positioning of sycophants and relatives
- and a lack of command and control

The article describes an Iraqi state apparatus reminiscent of the Stalinist-era Soviet Union, and gives important insights into other authoritarian regimes. Download the complete declassified Pentagon report [here](#).

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| Article | 'Hunkering Down: A guide to the U.S. military's future in Iraq' |
| Author | Fred Kaplan |
| Publication Details | <i>The Atlantic</i> , vol. 297, no. 5, June 2006, pp. 34–51 |

SYNOPSIS

The author, who is the national security editor of *Slate*, proposes how the US military occupation of Iraq could look like in years to come. He opens by noting that US Army generals have been asking historians and archivists to trawl through the 'official records from the 1970s involving the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam'. From there, he suggests that the United States will retain some significant presence in Iraq, on the heavily fortified 'Forward Operating Bases' (FOBs). Sometimes referred to as 'enduring bases', places like Camp Anaconda and Camp Cooke, are 'fortified chunks of Middle America, surreally plunked down in the



desert, replete with Burger Kings, Pizza Huts, Internet cafés, first-run movie theaters, gyms, and swimming pools’.

Kaplan then examines the state of Iraqi forces: ‘nearly half of the Iraqi units are able to *lead* a combat operation, not one can fight by itself’. Citing a lack of air forces, intelligence, logistics and armour, the author builds a case for the unpreparedness of the Iraqi Army to defend its borders or protect supply lines. Then there is the case of sectarian violence leading to civil war and the fragmentation of the nation. Kaplan sees only four options for the United States:

1. Try to stop the civil war;
2. Pick one side and fight with it;
3. Get out quickly; or,
4. Hunker down.

For Kaplan, who considers each option in detail, the easiest course of action is to withdraw into the FOBs, which are distant from cities and relatively invisible to ordinary Iraqis, and thus also safe from mortar and rocket attack. It would alleviate the requirement for massive troop numbers, but still allow the United States to project military force (mostly through airpower) and exert diplomatic and deterrent influence.

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| Article | ‘Challenges in Fighting a Global Insurgency’ |
| Author | LtGen David W. Barno (Retd), Director of the Near East Asia Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University |
| Publication Details | <i>Parameters</i> , vol. XXXVI, no. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 15–29, http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/06summer/barno.pdf |

SYNOPSIS

David Barno, previously commander of the Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan (2003–2005), brings unique real-world experience to his critique of current US policies and Fourth Generation Warfare. Based strongly in the Thomas X. Hammes (*The Sling and the Stone*) school of contemporary warfare, the author states that today’s enemies focus on decision-making elites and public opinion, ‘independent of military success or failure on the battlefield’. The author contrasts the Western



hierarchy of warfare (strategic, operational and tactical—with the primary unit of action and focus at the tactical), with the insurgent, who inverts this paradigm and reverses the emphasis.

His first conclusion is that too much stress is placed on ‘warfighting’ and far too little on ‘war winning’. Military services have a focus to ‘organize, train, and equip’ rather than ‘fight and win’. The means have become more important than the ends. Insurgents, conversely, ‘string together minor tactical engagements (often carefully chosen) via global media coverage to create international and strategic effects. Their lowest dollar investment...is at the tactical level, where improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers carry their strategic freight with great effect.’

Using several examples from his time in Afghanistan, Barno’s criticism of intelligence analyses is harsh and direct. ‘Our limited Western time horizons often precluded any serious look at a ten-year (much less a 25-year) timeline to discern the long-term effects of our policies, or a long-term comprehension of what the enemy might be attempting, ever so slowly’.

Barno then examines the intent and application of Information Operations undertaken in Afghanistan, especially against closed, suspicious and subtle tribal networks. This discussion then branches out to critique Western media methods, looking at the supposedly ‘values-neutral’ approach that actually aids insurgents. He concludes that the West’s desire for tactical victories is blinding it to proper strategic appreciation.

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| Article | ‘Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in Afghanistan and Iraq’ |
| Author | Stephen D. Biddle, |
| Publication Details | <i>International Security</i> , vol. 30, no. 3, Winter 2005-06, pp. 161–76 |

SYNOPSIS

The author, a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, replies in detail to the article ‘Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model’ (in the same edition, pp. 124–60). Written by air power specialists, ‘Winning with Allies’ views the events of Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002, ‘the Afghan model’, as representing a new way of



warfighting—cheaper, safer, and more effective. According to Biddle, however, the Afghan model of airpower, special forces and indigenous troops has limited utility and even less exportability. It relies fundamentally on the skills of the local forces. In Afghanistan, the allies were non-state actors, and the forces of the nation-state, the Taliban and Al Qaeda, often proved more skilled and thus more difficult to defeat. Biddle highlights several such engagements, the most famous of which is Operation *Anaconda*.

Biddle's concern is that calls for the widespread adoption of the Afghan model would weaken close combat forces, especially if force structures change to emphasise standoff precision and counterinsurgency. By closely examining ground combat encounters, especially taking defended ground, 'a technically demanding task', Biddle notes that attackers must either 'exploit cover, concealment, and suppression' or destroy the defenders 'preemptively'. Both of these require significant military skill and coordination, something Afghan forces repeatedly failed to display.

Given that the Afghan model would usually entail US forces supporting and enabling insurgents to take on state-based armies, then the insurgents would need significantly higher skills and weapons to overcome their lack of numbers. Biddle notes that most of bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan produced conventionally trained forces, with only the 'honors students' going on to learn terrorist techniques. He also highlights that the least skilled Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters were employed early in the campaign; battles became progressively harder and bloodier as the better-trained troops were employed at Bai Beche, Konduz and Anaconda. In conclusion, Biddle argues that 'Ground and air forces are thus powerful together, but are poor substitutes for one another: even twenty-first-century precision airpower cannot replace suitable skills on the ground'.