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Coercive Military Strategy

Jan van Tol

Stephen J. Cimbala

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Nogales, Mexico, and Nogales, Arizona.

Kaplan supplements his own observations with interviews of local officials; business leaders; journalists; and professors; leaders of Hispanic, native American, and Black communities; environmentalists; survivalists; truck drivers; and even the rootless, disturbed passengers on a bus from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Amarillo, Texas. Perhaps of particular interest to readers of the *Naval War College Review*, Kaplan begins and ends his account with conversations with officers attending the U.S. Army Staff College at Fort Leavenworth; their traditional patriotic values serve as a benchmark for how far their fellow citizens have moved from such a perspective. Kaplan pays high tribute to the intellect and professionalism of the officers, who wonder about America's future and their role in it, even as the gap widens between themselves and their countrymen.

Critics have accused Kaplan of being superficial and subjective; one letter described his articles in *Atlantic Monthly*—on which much of this book was based—as “drive-by journalism.” Some of his key observations, such as the growing disparity in U.S. incomes and the proliferation of exclusive communities, are hardly original, and his sweeping generalizations require rigorous research and analysis before they can be validated. Nonetheless, this book is insightful, entertaining, and provocative. Anyone with a strong desire to understand contemporary trends in America should read it and contemplate its message.

LAWRENCE MODISETT
Naval War College

Cimbala, Stephen J. *Coercive Military Strategy*. College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1998. 229pp. \$39.95

In light of events in the Balkans, the subject of this book is singularly timely. Stephen Cimbala's thesis is that “an understanding of coercive military strategy is a necessary condition for policy makers, military leaders, and scholars who hope to understand and to manage favorably the forces at work in the post–Cold War world.” He defines such a strategy as one that “explicitly seeks to employ deliberately calibrated means in order to accomplish policy objectives, while adjusting its ends and means relationship to the evolving situation and context.” (Military readers will be forgiven if they feel the hair rising on the backs of their necks.)

Cimbala uses several case histories to discuss how the United States employed such strategy, with more or less success, in the past. These include limited-war strategy during the Cold War, coercive diplomacy in the Cuban missile crisis and in Vietnam, and coercive military strategy in *DESERT STORM*. In two other chapters, Cimbala discusses the subject in the contexts of collective security and operations other than war (OOTW).

The subject would seem to be of significant interest to military officers and policy makers—but the book is disappointing. It is essentially a political science text, and one that suffers

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from many of the deficiencies of that genre. There are pseudo-theoretical distinctions without practical differences made between them (such as coercive diplomacy and coercive military strategy), many fine-grained arguments about whether either is offensive or defensive or where such notions as deterrence, compellence, and denial fit in, and so forth. Such typical statements as “coercive military strategy borrows from any combination of deterrence and coercion as called for by political and military objectives and by the nature of the situation” are so fuzzy as to be both true and useless at the same time.

On the positive side, the chapters on collective security and OOTW discuss a number of relevant issues about the post-Cold War context for using military force. Among them are the potential of new technology to increase greatly the speed of warfare and perhaps heighten political willingness to use force, the potential reluctance of the U.S. military to become involved in peacekeeping and peace enforcement, the differing military cultural requirements for war and OOTW, and the unwillingness of the American public to accept casualties (Cimbala suggests it is overstated).

The volume's concluding chapter is an effort to offer a coherent theory of “coercive military strategy,” based on the data extracted from his case studies (though Cimbala appropriately cautions that his examples are not true case studies in the business-school sense). Such a strategy will have the attributes of “influencing the [adversary's] Will,” “openness to revision,” “perspective-taking,” “symbolic manipulation,” and “moral influence.” The

discussion is perhaps of interest to political scientists, but it is less useful for practicing military officers.

Still, there are a few salient thoughts for military professionals, ideas that may unfortunately become painfully apropos in the coming months. For instance, “a war that *remains subordinate to policy objectives* can be concluded more quickly and more successfully if *force application* to the assigned mission is not hobbled by *self-imposed and arbitrary limitations*.” Also, “the paradoxical lesson of recent conflicts is that the costs over the long-term can be minimized the more that they are accepted in the short-term.” And, “as the number of non-war missions grows, the propensity to ‘do something’ with available forces may increase.” It will be interesting and important to see whether the Kosovo intervention validates these arguments in the long term.

Stephen Cimbala is professor of political science at Penn State University, Delaware County campus. He has written twenty-two books on international strategic issues.

JAN VAN TOL

Commander, U.S. Navy

English, Allan O., ed. *The Changing Face of War: Learning from History*.

Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1998. 299pp. \$45

This excellent volume offers the best essays gleaned from the participants in Canada's Royal Military College war studies program. Collectively they seek to answer Liddell Hart's classic challenge, in his essay “Why Don't We