

1993

The Lessons of Modern War, Volume I, The Arab-Israeli Conflicts 1973-1989; Volume II, The Iran-Iraq War; Volume III, The Afghan and Falklands Conflicts

Theodore L. Gatchel

Anthony H. Cordesman

Abraham R. Wagner

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Gatchel, Theodore L.; Cordesman, Anthony H.; and Wagner, Abraham R. (1993) "The Lessons of Modern War, Volume I, The Arab-Israeli Conflicts 1973-1989; Volume II, The Iran-Iraq War; Volume III, The Afghan and Falklands Conflicts," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 46 : No. 2 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol46/iss2/14>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

Like most of his contemporaries, Lejeune chose to keep controversial and damaging correspondence out of his collection of personal papers. But the papers of Army Major General James G. Harbord, a long-time and close friend of both Lejeune and Marine Major General Logan Feland, includes two letters in which Feland, angry because Lejeune would not support his efforts to become Lejeune's successor as Commandant, characterized Lejeune as a double-crosser "who works in an under-handed way always. . . . I know him like a book and there is nothing too low for him to do."

Then is it fair to say that Bartlett's book about Lejeune is not a book about a man but a book about a book? Hardly. In his concluding "Notes on Sources," *Reminiscences of a Marine* is cited by Bartlett as "useful in identifying the key junctures in his career"; but perhaps it may have been more useful to Bartlett and the readers if certain questions had been raised that clearly Lejeune never had any intention of answering. For example, why is the autobiography some 250 pages shorter than the original manuscript? Why did Lejeune devote a large number of pages to the three wartime months he spent in Europe and only twenty-five pages to the nearly nine years of his commandancy? And why is there not one word about the most controversial moment of his career, the relief of General Barnett?

Who cares? Merrill Bartlett does, and if you don't watch him, he will have you caring too. In Bartlett's mind

the swarthy little man who came unbidden out of the Louisiana wetlands a century ago is a metaphor for the Marine Corps of both the past and present.

Bartlett views his Corps the same way Kipling viewed his: "We're most of us liars, we're 'arf of us thieves, and the rest are as rank as can be. But once in a while we can finish in style (which I 'ope it won't 'appen to me)."

Is that all that John Lejeune was ever really up to, living his life so that he could finish in style?

CLAY BARROW
Annapolis, Maryland

Cordesman, Anthony H. and Wagner, Abraham R. *The Lessons of Modern War*. Vol. I, *The Arab-Israeli Conflicts, 1973-1989*. 394pp. \$55. Vol. II, *The Iran-Iraq War*. 647pp. \$55. Vol. III, *The Afghan and Falklands Conflicts*. 471pp. \$55. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990.

What military professional could resist the opportunity to learn the lessons of modern war? Not I. The title of this three-volume work proved irresistible. Unfortunately, my admiration for the authors' efforts to tackle such an ambitious undertaking has been tempered by an irritating weakness in their final product.

The introduction to the entire work can be found in the first volume, and the authors' conclusions are found in the third—which incidently, appears to be nothing more than a compilation

150 Naval War College Review

of newspaper accounts and journal articles, with nothing new added. Each volume is designed to stand alone but also contribute to the aim of the entire work: an understanding of the lessons of modern war. Each case study is divided into sections covering the background and history of the conflict discussed, detailed descriptions of the forces and weapons employed, comments on the strategy, operational art, and tactics used, and the lessons that can be drawn from each conflict.

Apparently to make the work as comprehensive as possible, the authors have included such a wealth of detail as to distract the reader from the intended focus of the work. Entire pages are devoted to the nomenclature, technical description, and performance data of weapons, data that is often repeated in tables, footnotes, or in other sections. Not only is this repetition unnecessary, it is annoying.

For example, Volume II (written before the Gulf War) has in its index five entries for the Iranian-manufactured *Oghab* missile. A check of each entry produces some combination of data regarding length, diameter, total weight, range, warhead size, circular error probable, and number fired during a given year. This information is not only redundant but in some cases inconsistent. The authors' explanation is that their five sources had given five different figures; rather than offer their evaluation of the inconsistencies, Cordesman and Wagner state that

information. This calls into question the real value of their work.

If the authors' intention was to focus on the lessons of modern war, then such data is unnecessarily detailed and repetitive. It would have been better placed in tabular form in an appendix where the reader could consult the tables as needed. If, on the other hand, their focus was to present a comprehensive reference work of the individual conflicts, the information is particularly not helpful. For example, did the Iranians fire 104 missiles in 1988 as stated on pages 230 and 367, or was the total nearly 250 as shown on page 498? The answer should not depend on which page the reader happens to pick from the index, and the authors offer no help to the reader in determining which figure is more likely correct. Neither do the authors limit such redundancy to weapons and other technical data: whole sections of text are duplicated.

For example, in Volume II, chapter ten discusses the Iran-Iraq War of September 1987-March 1989, devoting nineteen paragraphs to the USS *Vincennes* and Iran Air flight 655. Though this chapter provides a thorough account of the incident, you will find, verbatim, fifteen of its nineteen relevant paragraphs also in chapter fourteen, including the typographical error which has Iraqi (rather than Iranian) F-14s flying out of Bandar Abbas. In spite of all this, the authors do come across as especially astute, presumably because of Cordesman's first-hand knowledge of the Gulf region. However, such

ambiguities characterize the entire series.

If the reader is willing to wade through the redundancy and mass of details, this trilogy may prove a useful contribution.

THEODORE L. GATCHEL
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps, Ret.
Newport, Rhode Island

Fialka, John J. *Hotel Warriors: Covering the Gulf War*. Washington, D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1991. 75pp. \$9.75

This compilation of Fialka's experiences and those of his fellow journalists during the Gulf War offers a revealing look through experienced eyes at the relationship between the military and the media. In addition to two chapters dedicated to media interaction with the Army and Marines, the author has provided an interesting overview of the processes associated with coverage in Southwest Asia, media pools, and independent media representatives (unilaterals). He also offers several suggestions regarding media coverage of future conflicts. However, because no discussions regarding the U.S. Navy and Air Force and the media are included, *Hotel Warriors* is not the comprehensive and authoritative collection it might have been. One cannot help but wonder why the Navy and Air Force were not included, since so much of Fialka's work is not contingent upon his own experiences.

That aside, the compelling evidence in these pages provides

several inspirational, but more often than not disturbing, insights into the complex and deficient relationship between the military and the media. Overall, Fialka's presentation is even-handed and could (or should) compel military public affairs and operational personnel, as well as media representatives and their supervisors, to agree that there is definite room for improvement in their relationship.

The most important message to come across in this work is that the mind-set toward the press differs within and between the branches of the military as well as in the numerous media organizations. Fialka explains how that chemistry influences the integrity of public perception during a military conflict. This is the most laudatory attribute of this work.

Anyone familiar with the history of the working relationship between these two institutions, and especially with the tempestuous character of that relationship since the Grenada invasion in 1983, will be forced to appreciate the inherent truth about leading a horse to water but being unable to make it drink. How many times must someone of Fialka's outstanding repute examine significant instances of this interaction and conclude that there is an "attitude problem" before the message is received that neither they, nor the American people, are well served by squabbling about mutual support? Old, ingrained attitudes supported by institutions die a slow death. Fialka has provided the nails for the coffin.