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The American Way: a History of United States Military Strategy and Policy

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these people from challenging the program's goals and methods.

In many ways this book is replete with irony. Although it is the definitive work on the successful production and development of a \$10 billion weapon system, it has been written not by a management expert or a systems analyst, but by a political scientist. Although the directions of this program became renowned for their managerial techniques, their success was due to their political acumen. If Sapolsky's work has any lesson for the Trident program, it would seem to be that just as war is too important to be left to the generals, weapon system development is too important to be left to the managers or technicians.

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Weigley, Russell F. *The American Way of War: a History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*. New York: Macmillan, 1973. 584p.

The subtitle of Russell Weigley's book may surprise many students of American military history for it has been generally believed that, at least prior to the onset of the cold war, no such thing as *American strategy* could be said to exist. Only three Americans are mentioned in Edward Mead Earle's classic *Makers of Modern Strategy*, and only one of them, Alfred T. Mahan, produced a systematic treatise on the subject. As Professor Weigley himself observes "throughout American history . . . the United States usually possessed no national strategy for the employment of the use of force or the threat of force to attain political ends. . . . The United States was not involved in international politics continuously enough or with enough consistency of purpose to permit the development of a coherent national strategy . . ."

he has found a consistent pattern running through most of American history which suggests a distinctive American approach to warfare: an "American Way of War." Professor Weigley has found this pattern not in the writings of theorists, of which there are few, but in the actions of American military leaders from George Washington and Winfield Scott to MacArthur and Marshall.

According to Professor Weigley the American Way of War has been to seek the complete destruction of the enemy's armed forces and his means of waging war. "Most American strategists," the author observes have been "strategists of annihilation." From Napoleon and his interpreters who, the author claims dominated the imagination of American military men in the 19th century, they derived the concept of the climactic battle resulting in the complete physical destruction of the enemy's army.

During the Civil War, Grant abandoned the practice of trying to win the war in a single decisive battle which commanders on both sides had repeatedly attempted, for a massive campaign of attrition designed to destroy the Confederate Armies. Nevertheless, the aim remained the same: the annihilation of the enemy. Having learned their lesson in annihilation well, American soldiers, Professor Weigley suggests, then proceeded to practice it with frightening literalness in their campaigns against the Indians.

Alfred Thayer Mahan, with his theories of seapower, and Gen. William Mitchell, with his ideas of airpower, both contributed in their way to the American concept of war: through annihilation. According to Mahan this would be accomplished through the destruction of the enemy's battle fleet in a great battle for "control of the seas"; according to Mitchell, through devastating bombing campaigns which would cripple the enemy's centers of production and destroy his will to resist.

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apogee in World War II with the complete destruction of Germany and Japan. Since that time, Professor Weigley suggests, it has been increasingly irrelevant. Yet many military men have been unable or unwilling to abandon the old American belief that the object of war is the total destruction of the enemy.

The American Way of War is an impressive achievement. Professor Weigley has given coherence and meaning to a subject which until now had been treated only in a fragmentary and confused manner. Although few specialists will agree with all of the author's judgments of such men as Lee, Grant, Mahan, Marshall, and MacArthur, his

portraits of these and other key figures of American military history are always clear and illuminating. The author has devoted most of his study to the methods and strategy of the great American war leaders and with good reason. Yet one could wish that more attention had been given to the role which such institutions as the Army General Staff, the Navy General Board, and the War Colleges played in the formation of American strategy. But perhaps this would have required another book.

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It is with books as with men: a very small number play a great part.

Voltaire: 1764