Foreword

Welcome to the 2011 CAS’ Reading List. The Strategic Defence and Security Review was conducted against the need to do all we can to succeed on current operations and, looking forward to 2020 and beyond, to ensure the long term security of the United Kingdom and its interests. The Royal Air Force continues to be capable of meeting these requirements and is prepared to deliver across the 4 core air and space power roles and is engaged in the growing realm of cyber protection and effects.

When considering the delivery of capability, in the past, we have too often focused on platforms. We need to take a more adaptive approach to creating desired effects through integrating and synchronising a range of capabilities and activities. The successful employment of British air and space power in the twenty-first century depends, above all else on agility - of course this involves the platforms we employ, but the primary means of ensuring agility is you, the RAF’s people. This demands continuing education as well as training, to ensure that we are agile of mind and have the strategic vision to make the telling contribution to an ever more complex operating environment.

To that end, I wholeheartedly endorse the 2011 reading list. This builds on the previous 4 iterations of the list to ensure that personnel on all units have access to comprehensive and relevant reference material which reflects the most up to date thinking on defence and security matters. The titles for this year encompass a broad spread of subjects: those that give an historical perspective - Holland’s ‘Battle of Britain’ and Hennessy’s authoritative history of ‘The Secret State’ in Britain since 1945; a view of strategy – the current campaign and its roots are examined in Rashid’s ‘Descent into Chaos’, whilst Krepinevich’s ‘7 Deadly Scenarios’ attempts to predict where conflict may occur in future and what the causes may be; carrying on with the future theme, there are 2 books ‘Cyber Warfare’ and ‘Wired for War’, that examine the likely impact of technology and help us to understand what capabilities we may require in future.

Of course, these books should not be read in isolation, I implore all of you to get involved with on-station Force Development education and training activity so that you continue to develop your agility and capability and become ‘educated warriors’ ready to play your part in the Royal Air Force’s delivery of British air and space power.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton KCB ADC BSc FRAeS CCMI RAF
Chief of the Air Staff
CAS’ Reading List 2011

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STRATEGY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD: 
AN INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGIC STUDIES

By John Baylis, James Wirtz & Colin S. Gray (Eds)

Publisher: Oxford University Press, 2009
ISBN 978-0199548873, 480 pages

Reviewed by Gp Capt Clive Blount

Now in its 3rd Edition, this book is recognised as the definitive textbook of modern strategic studies and is a must for anyone who wishes to study the role of strategy and international relations in the modern world. A wide range of contributors, all recognised experts in the field, contribute articles discussing both the enduring nature of strategy and war, and the range of contemporary challenges facing the modern strategist or policy-maker.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, entitled ‘Enduring Issues of Strategy’, consists of a series of essays tackling the key strategic theories and the nature of warfare. Chapters on the causes of war, how modern warfare evolved, and key strategic theories, are followed by discussions of the laws of war, the effects of geography and technology and a treatise on the importance of intelligence in strategy-making. The second section, ‘Contemporary Problems’, looks at modern warfare with sections on irregular warfare, weapons of mass destruction, humanitarian ops and military transformation. This section is right up to date and includes much thought on how operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will influence strategic thought. The final section looks to the future of strategy and strategic studies and questions the role of strategic theory in the future world.

The book is well laid out, with side bars summarising key points, boxes giving further detail in important areas, and a comprehensive bibliography (including internet references) for each chapter. Self assessment questions are available for each section to check understanding. There is an extensive online resource available to complement the book which provides several well-written case studies, extensive web links and, for teachers of strategy, access to powerpoint slides and test questions.

The collective efforts of the brightest lights in the field of strategy, this book is considered by many to be the gold standard by which others should be measured. That said, it is easy to read and accessible to those who wish to just dip into individual subject areas. An invaluable text for anyone with a keen interest in the modern world - and the role of the military within it.
Both the credited authors of this book are exceptionally well informed and connected. Richard Clarke has worked in a senior capacity for both Republican and Democrat US Presidents, beginning in 1985 with Ronald Reagan, continuing through the George H Bush and Clinton administrations. Following Clinton’s inauguration, he held the role of Counter Terrorism Coordinator on the National Security Council and continued in this role during the early stages of the George W Bush administration; it was in this role that he was one of the few voices raising concerns about Al Qaeda mounting attacks on the United States. In 2001, he was made the Presidents special advisor for Cyber Security, but resigned from the Government in 2003. Robert Knake served on the Counter-Terrorism and Homeland Security Task Force during the Obama campaign and following the election was part of the presidential transition team at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security authoring the agency review team’s final report.

Clarke begins his book by stating that he was ‘taught by senior national security officials for decades never to bring them a problem without also suggesting a solution’. In this book Clarke and Knake attempt to do this. Starting off by using real world examples, which draws the reader into the book, the authors explain how, using as an example the Israeli raid on suspected Syrian WMD sites in 2007, cyber techniques can be used to prepare an area of operations for conventional military forces, in this case taking down the Syrian air defence network to enable air strikes. Examples are also given of how cyber operations can be employed independently for military ends; from intelligence gathering, noting that the F-35 plans appear to have been popular with internet addresses in China and Russia, through to the destruction of hard targets such as electrical power grids and oil supply facilities.

Clarke and Knake do a good job of explaining, in layman’s terms, the principles behind the internet and how that technology is exploited to deliver cyber-attacks. The authors examine and critique the US response to developments in this area. They identify the inherent weaknesses of the internet (in the west) as its unregulated nature, a reliance on monopolistic software and hardware suppliers and a lack of resilience in the network. They draw a contrast with China and, to a lesser extent, Russia where there is far greater state control of the network. As stated at the beginning of the book a solution is suggested which includes a form of arms length regulation to help ensure the protection of civil-liberties. The book goes on to examine other issues, such as whether theories of deterrence hold true in cyberspace, the issue of collateral damage, and problems surrounding identifying exactly where a cyber-attack has been generated from.

All told, this book provides a very readable introduction to the Cyber domain, and provides an excellent study of its implications for the political, military and economic arenas. Readers may not agree with all of the measures that Clarke and Knake suggest, but there is no doubt that this book informs the critical debate in this area, and the issues they raise are ignored at our peril.
Books on ethics by political scientists and philosophers are very different to books on ethics by practitioners. This phenomenon applies to the ethics of war which we in the West call “Just War”. The philosophers who write on Just War and the military and political leaders who have to implement Just War tend to express themselves very differently. The former tend to argue that war must be constrained by strict adherence to a complete set of criteria from which practitioners cannot cherry-pick. For war to be just, all the criteria need to be satisfied. Military writers and politicians involved in the administration or direction of war tend to take a more relaxed approach to Just War. They see it as aspirational and they treat the criteria far less reverentially and far more loosely (they would say “flexibly”).

This book falls into the latter camp. Its two authors were senior military decision-makers, one (General Lord Guthrie) being a former Chief of the Defence Staff and the other (Sir Michael Quinlan) being a former senior civil servant within the Ministry of Defence. Their small book, with less than fifty pages of analysis, contains an explanation of Just War that most theorists would consider far too relaxed and liberal. It would certainly be easier for a state and its armed forces to satisfy the Just War criteria as Guthrie and Quinlan understand and explain them than it would be to comply with the same framework as codified and explained by a theorist or philosopher.

Despite a slightly liberal approach to criteria for going to war and fighting it justly, this small book has one fantastic strength: it is short, simple and clearly written. It can thus be read and digested in a single sitting by officer cadets, junior officers and junior civil servants. The authors never identify their intended readership, but the groups just mentioned would certainly benefit from this easy-to-follow guide to the broad principles that govern (or should govern) the moral decisions inevitably found within the causes, course and consequences of war. The authors draw upon relevant examples to make their points and, aside from a few distracting paragraphs here and there about the West’s motives during recent decades, they seldom reveal bias and parochialism. The authors’ status as senior practitioners will add significant credibility to their words in a way that those written by even the most illustrious philosopher would find hard to equal. Having said that, the book is not as full of profundity and wisdom as one might have expected given the gravitas, experiences and distinguished records of the authors.

On balance, this is not the book for readers who want to dig deeply into the history, philosophy, concepts and practice of Just War. Yet it is precisely the right book for those who know little about the subject but want to learn the basics. Thin enough to fit inside a jacket pocket or a pack, this book could, and should, be read by every recruit, cadet, junior NCO and junior officer within the three armed services.
THE SECRET STATE: PREPARING FOR THE WORST 1945-2010

By Peter Hennessy

ISBN 978-0141044699, 528 pages

Reviewed by Air Cdre (Ret’d) Dr Peter Gray

This is the third edition of *The Secret State*, the first having appeared in 2002. It is worth reading at several levels and for a range of purposes. The first of these is that it is a very good read; it is well written and tackles a range of complex issues in a remarkably clear manner. It is also an authoritative guide to the workings of the secret and complex workings of Whitehall. Hennessy has written extensively on the subject with other works including *States of Emergency, The Hidden Wiring: Unearthing the British Constitution and The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders Since 1945*. He is the Attlee Professor of Contemporary British History at Queen Mary, University of London; but it should not be imagined that this book is a dry academic text. It is well referenced, but the number of his endnotes that are ‘private information’ gives an insight into the difficulties of researching material that is kept secret usually for very good reasons, and often for many years. It is clear that Hennessy has built up a wide range of informal sources who have been willing to discuss issues frankly on condition of anonymity. His selection of material that has been published confirms his ability to navigate what is often termed ‘the wilderness of mirrors’ that is the intelligence world.

The book itself starts in the aftermath of the Second World War and charts the development of the Cold War and the interrelated nuclear expansion. Current operations, which have been ongoing since the end of Warsaw Pact, have not surprisingly overshadowed our recollections of those tense years when either a sudden conflict (the Counter Surprise scenarios) or a slow build-up of tension and escalation through the formal NATO alert states could have developed into World War III. This book outlines the secret plans that were formulated to ensure the continuation of government. It is interesting to read of the bureaucratic measures designed to cope with impending Armageddon in such matter-of-fact, dry language. The final chapters deal with the security challenges post 9/11 and the slow, but inevitable progress towards the National Security Policy recently announced.

From an air power perspective, this book sets the context in which the ultimate use of air power for strategic effect would have been used – the RAF Nuclear Deterrent. In his chapter entitled ‘The Human Button’, Hennessy describes the process of going to war ‘when our Vulcans were white’ illustrating the pragmatism with which the young (and not so young) aircrew contemplated their unenviable – and today almost unthinkable – task of delivering nuclear weapons.
James Holland’s contribution to the historiography of the Battle of Britain differs from many previous works in that it is not simply an account of the air fighting over Britain during the summer months of 1940, bounded by the somewhat arbitrary official dates laid down for the battle, largely in order to set a defined period of time to allow the award of the Battle of Britain clasp for campaign medals.

Holland instead presents an account which, perhaps more than any other to date, seeks to place the battle in the wider context of events in 1940, and without the near-exclusive concentration upon the enormous efforts of Fighter Command in countering the German attack on the United Kingdom. The work of RAF Bomber and Coastal Commands, all too-often ignored by historians, are considered as is the part played by the Royal Navy. Holland gives short shrift to some of the more egregious attempts at revisionism of recent years (usually carried out through the vehicle of the internet, but with the occasional unfortunate escape into print) which seek to claim that the Battle was won by the existence of the Royal Navy. Although some of Britain’s most capable maritime historians – most obviously Andrew Gordon – dismiss such a black and white approach and have brought more nuanced consideration to the part played by the naval and air forces, it may well be that the publicity for Holland’s book, aided by a BBC television programme, will be the source of a more reasoned consideration of the role of maritime power without the crass attempts by some historians to denigrate the importance of the air force contribution to the Battle.

James Holland places the role of the other components into a reasoned context, pointing out the significance of the naval contribution to the defence of the United Kingdom in a joint context – one which was, in fact, recognised by the Chiefs of Staff in May 1940, in a document ‘British Strategy in the Case of a Certain Eventuality’, in which the importance of the RAF and RN standing firm against German efforts was held to be essential to Britain’s ability to continue the war. Holland also gives due consideration of the British Army, which would, of course, have had to have faced any German landing which managed to get ashore, and manages to highlight the important point that despite the disaster of the French campaign, Britain was not quite in the state where the Walmington-on-Sea Home Guard platoon of ‘Dad’s Army’ fame would have been the first line of defence against an attempt at establishing a lodgement.

As such, Holland offers one of the few attempts to take a more holistic view of the Battle of Britain. Readers expecting an overview of the Battle which concentrates upon air fighting and accounts of derring-do on both sides are likely to be a little disappointed, not least since the first 250 or so pages deal with events prior to what is commonly accepted as being the period of the Battle of Britain, and, indeed, preceding the speech by Winston Churchill on 18 June 1940 in which he gave popular currency to the term ‘the Battle of Britain’ by stating that ‘…the Battle of France is Over. The Battle of Britain is about to begin’. This contextualisation is important to both the narrative and the analysis, however, and is thus far from misplaced.
Following the successful approach of his previous works on military history, Holland draws upon the personal recollections of a number of participants in the Battle to add colour to his tale, and does so to good effect, never allowing individual recollection of events to dominate. The overall effect, therefore is to prevent a fully rounded account of the events which led to the Battle of Britain and the successful efforts of the nation as a whole, with the Royal Air Force in the vanguard, to thwart the German effort to force Britain to seek peace. Holland provides a welcome addition to the historiography, perhaps opening a new ‘front’ in the consideration of the Battle in which the role of Fighter Command is given the credit which is rightly its due, but as part of a broader joint national effort to ensure that Britain was not defeated in 1940, thus leaving the consequences of such a defeat for the future direction of British, European and World history to entertaining counter-factual historical works.
Rather than think the ‘unthinkable’, as the dust-cover has it, Andrew Krepinevich’s book is a serious work which advocates the use of scenarios to drive Defence planning and then develops seven scenarios which could plausibly occur in this decade. The relevance of Krepinevich’s book is the challenge on both sides of the Atlantic to balance the competing resource requirements of ‘today’s wars, while building the capabilities needed to deal with future threats’, as the US 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review put it. Of course, the UK’s 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) and Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) addressed similar issues, in an even more austere financial context. Krepinevich is a seasoned expert on the subject, as the president of a strategic think-tank in Washington DC and a consultant to various US Government agencies, including the Department of Defense and Joint Forces Command. Krepinevich’s thesis is that, given future conflict will not be a linear extrapolation of the recent past, the use of plausible scenarios enables defence planners to build the right military for the future.

To make this point, Krepinevich starts with three historic examples of prescient scenarios: a US joint war-game in 1932 predicting a surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Anglo-French observation of German Blitzkrieg exercises in 1937, and a US war-game in 2002 which showed how Iran could confound US military strength in the Persian Gulf. Krepinevich explains that the implications of scenarios are often ignored because they threaten the status quo or vested interest. Hence, militaries often prepare for the previous war, or one that is a linear progression of it, ignoring innovations (like space and cyberspace), and forgetting that enemies set out to surprise.

The seven scenarios are written as future history narratives and read like the opening chapter of a Tom Clancy novel. In the first, the ‘collapse of Pakistan’, an Islamist coup allows extremists to take possession of its nuclear weapons. The US Government is forced to consider the use of special forces or air strikes to secure the weapons. In ‘war comes to America’, Al Qaeda sets off, in two US cities, Soviet atomic demolition munitions, purchased on the black market, killing tens of thousands. Al Qaeda demands the US withdraws its forces from Islamic countries and to withdraw support for Israel, or the terrorists will detonate more devices. In the next, an influenza pandemic, while mitigated by anti-viral drugs in the US, causes state collapse in Mexico and a mass exodus across the border. In ‘Armageddon’, Iran is able to isolate Israel using the threat of nuclear weapons and a short-range rocket barrage by its proxy Hezbollah. In ‘Assassin’s Mace’, the Chinese government, under pressure from its demographically skewed population and slackening economic rates of growth, uses its anti-access/area-denial capabilities to threaten Taiwan and challenge US access to the Western Pacific, space and cyberspace. In ‘Just Not-on-Time’, Islamists obstruct oil supplies from Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, and block the Malaccan Strait and cyberspace, threatening the workings of the global economy. In ‘who lost Iraq’, Iranian backed Shia, with Chinese and Russian support, take over Iraq as US forces leave, leaving the US and its allies on the outside looking in.

Krepinevich concludes by advocating organisations like Joint Forces Command stop developing concepts comprising
meaningless notions, such as ‘information superiority’ or ‘dominant maneuver’, found in publications like *Joint Vision 2010*. Instead the US should develop both strategy and concepts of operations to address plausible scenarios.

Of course, US and UK defence planners do use scenarios to provide an evidence base for force structure and capability development decisions. Decisions are based on risk and in particular the choice between worst case and most likely case. Hence, the UK’s NSS lists threats in tiers of risk. Furthermore, though Krepinevich’s scenarios describe the context for future war, he stops short of describing the resulting character of conflict, and its implications. He therefore, arguably, does not fully meet his title’s remit of exploring war in the 21st Century.

Nevertheless, Krepinevich’s arguments are well made. Though Krepinevich’s book broadly mirrors the trends and drivers of the UK MOD’s *Global Strategic Trends* and *Future Character of Conflict studies*, its US perspective is insightful. The challenge for Britain is how to maintain its special relationship with US and how to help the US maintain the rules-based international system on which we depend, as America’s attention moves East.
Patrick Porter’s book is a study of the relationship between culture, strategy and war. It is an accessible and scholarly critique of the fashionable notion that culture has supplanted strategy as the key to understanding war. America’s strategic difficulties in Iraq and Afghanistan, so the argument goes, originate in a cognitive failure to understand Eastern culture. As a result, US-led coalitions have struggled to translate the Western way of war - based on technological dominance and epitomised by air power - into strategic success because enemies like the Taliban have countered it, using an indirect and primordial, ‘Eastern’ approach. In response, the US and UK have rediscovered population-centric counter-insurgency doctrine. This doctrine promotes understanding through the use of social sciences such as anthropology and human geography to, as Porter puts it, ‘weaponize cultural knowledge’. Consequently, the UK’s Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40 Security and Stabilisation uses the word culture forty-four times and cultural sixty-nine but air power only seven. Porter’s thesis is that culture, while important, does not replace strategy. Using telling examples, Porter demonstrates that the nature of conflict means culture is dynamic and adaptive, as both sides strive to win. Culture shapes war and war shapes culture.

The Military Orientalism of the title refers to the hypothesis of Edward Said’s Orientalism, in which the West stereotypes the East as different - exotic, corrupt and weak - and prone to Western domination. Porter reminds us of a long history of Military Orientalism, dating from Herodotus’s contrast of Greek hoplite and Persian horde, and linking Sun Tzu’s China and medieval Arabia to the Islamic insurgencies of today. Military Orientalism also recurs in popular culture, in films such as 300, Black Hawk Down, and numerous Rambos. Porter uses four modern military case studies to show strategy is global and universal and not ethnocentric and dependent on cultural context. He therefore questions the existence of differing Western and Eastern strategic cultures.

The first case study concerns the positive observations of Japanese culture by British military observers during and after the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war. The Japanese combined a warrior ethos with modernity, when British society seemed increasingly weakened by urbanisation and liberalism. Next he examines how, between the two world wars, Liddell Hart made a virtue of the Mongols and linked them to theories of modern Western, indirect, and boundlessly mobile warfare. He then argues that the Taliban and Hezbollah are cultural realists. Though the Taliban are often depicted as extreme traditionalists, Porter cites their changing attitudes to education, propaganda and suicide bombing. Likewise, in the Lebanon in 2006, the Israelis underestimated Hezbollah. Expecting primitive theocrats, they found an adaptive force with advanced operational methods and technology, who won the battle of the strategic narrative and who were a match for an IDF, rusty at combined arms operations.

The book’s strengths are manifold. Porter, an Australian Oxford-trained historian who teaches at the Staff College, puts the history of strategy and war in the modern context of wars against non-Western foes. He uses absorbing evidence
drawn from the history of warfare – such as the American use of guerrilla tactics in the Revolution and the British determination to ‘know the natives better’ after the Indian Mutiny – to demonstrate the hybridity of war. The book is beautifully written, and at less than two hundred pagers, will appeal to student and expert.

One weakness, perhaps, is in his relentless argument against the cultural turn, Porter tries to hammer the nail in too far. Many cultural experts have failed; for example, Anthony Eden, the prime minister responsible for Suez had a first in Persian and Arabic from Christ Church, Oxford. Others, like T E Lawrence, have succeeded. As Porter notes, Lawrence himself wrote of his disdain for the Arab character. A complex character, he is held up by Edward Said as an the ultimate Orientalist scholar-agent. Yet Lawrence (and others) combined cultural understanding, guerrilla tactics, and modern weapons, such as aircraft and armoured cars, to make the Arab Revolt effective. Disappointingly, he tamely accepts one secondary source citing air power’s limitations in the Lebanon in 2006, rather than recognising, in line with his own hypothesis, that it was the IDF’s Orientalism which caused poor operational design and ineffective air-land integration.

This is not a book about air power, but it is extremely valuable in contextualising the utility of air power in contemporary conflict. Porter’s book is a timely-reminder that though the West has portrayed the oriental warrior as irrational fanatic, noble savage, mystical genius or timeless primitive, conflict is full of cultural surprises. Conflict is not culturally determinant; Mao read Clausewitz and the Crusaders admired Saladin’s chivalry. Porter warns that cultural understanding is important but, like the previous panacea of network enabled capability, it is not a clear script for action.
Sir Michael Howard’s warning that ‘The nuclear dragon is not dead, but sleeping’ is an appropriate introduction to this detailed, reflective and in many ways personal treatise on nuclear warfare. Michael Quinlan was intimately involved with the formulation of British and NATO nuclear strategy from the early 1960’s, fulfilling a variety of senior civil service roles, firstly within the Air Ministry and then in the Ministry of Defence, eventually retiring as the PUS. His first-hand knowledge of policy decisions that came from the Nassau agreement in 1962, through the complex and politically charged decisions on updating Polaris with the Chevaline project, to the eventual decision to procure Trident, all permeate his writings. His reflections and study of the issues surrounding deterrence in the post Cold War era, building on his time as the Director of the Ditchley Foundation and as a senior fellow at the IISS have also added to the pertinence of his observations.

‘Thinking about Nuclear Weapons’ is not a history, nor is it a document on theory; it is an amalgam of thoughts that explain, to practitioners of nuclear policy and to students of nuclear strategy, some of the key ideas that they should be considering. He places nuclear weapons within the framework of how they have revolutionised both warfare and international relations thinking. In his section on deterrence, his analysis raises the importance of nuclear weapons as a form of war-prevention; however, he also articulates the importance of maintaining credible conventional forces, stating appositely that ‘while attack by nuclear weapons would certainly be one way of rendering a nuclear state desperate, it is absurdly narrow to suppose that nothing else could’.

Quinlan was also a deeply religious man. His section on the ethics of nuclear war, demonstrates that, within the Just War western tradition, nuclear armouries could be tolerated within certain circumstances. He makes a nuanced and well argued ethical case for nuclear weapons and the ideas raised within this section deserve to be more widely considered, particularly in the forthcoming debates about the moral efficacy of updating Britain’s nuclear deterrent. He also makes observations about deterring non-state actors, on how to avoid escalating nuclear conflict and issues surrounding proliferation. While he acknowledges that no system will be safe from terrorist action, or that rogue states may develop nuclear weapons, he believes that safeguards of existing weapons stocks, difficulties in manufacture and the leverage possessed by the nuclear powers can help mitigate these challenges.

It is perhaps unfortunate that he did not reflect fully, despite his section on the South Asian acquisition of nuclear weapons, on how many regimes may be willing to accept the risk and consequences of attempting to become a Nuclear Weapon States, regardless of international opprobrium. In his ‘practical agenda’ he discusses in-depth issues of Non-Proliferation, Arms Control, Ballistic Missile Defence and nuclear doctrine; however, his assertion that ‘the near-term prospect is not, in the round, gravely worrying, and headline seeking rhetoric to the fact that we stand on the edge of an abyss risks discrediting and damaging the pursuit of what is reasonable’ stand in marked contrast to how many observers view
the present situation in East Asia and the Middle East.

Despite these mild criticisms, this book makes a valued addition to the bibliography on nuclear doctrine, policy and theory. It also provides a fascinating insight into the thoughts of one of the key protagonists of British deterrence strategy and as such should be essential reading for defence policy makers and academics alike.
DESCENT INTO CHAOS

By Ahmed Rashid

Publisher: Penguin, 2009
ISBN 978-0141020860, 560 pages

Reviewed by Gp Capt Mike Hart

Originally published in 2008, Descent into Chaos was republished in 2009, to take into account developments such as the revitalised Taleban offensive in Southern Afghanistan, and the consequences for Pakistan of the death of Benazir Bhutto.

For some Westerners, Rashid’s critical perspective can grate, and there are areas where his willingness to blame the West (and particularly the US) for the behaviour of, for example, the Uzbek government, strains credibility. This should not detract however, from the central achievement of the book, which is to set the Western response to 9/11 in Afghanistan and Pakistan into a regional perspective, or from its importance as a cogent articulation of an educated Pakistani perspective.

Two aspects of Rashid’s work particularly stand out - the clearest description yet of the way in which General Musharraf was able to establish himself as the guarantor of American interests in the region, whilst simultaneously failing to prevent a Taleban resurgence in the FATA, and a masterly investigation and exposition of the way in which the Pakistani Inter Service Intelligence organisation (ISI), morphed after 2001, effectively adopting the structures of an NGO, to provide highly effective covert support to the Afghan Taleban. Rashid’s withering comment on the ineffectiveness of the NATO response to the renewed insurgency in southern Afghanistan, and the plethora of competing international interests in Kabul is also a salutary and timely corrective to the more bland perspectives of many Western media organisations.

As a journalist with long experience of the region, and the author of a previous study of the Taleban, Rashid’s writing is both lucid and engaging. There is no better single-volume study of the complexities, difficulties and risks inherent in a region to which British armed forces will remain committed for at least the near future.
WIRED FOR WAR: THE ROBOTICS REVOLUTION AND CONFLICT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By P W Singer

Publisher: Penguin, 2009
ISBN 978-1594201981, 512 pages

Reviewed by Gp Capt Clive Blount

A recent New York Times best seller, this book is an exciting and readable exploration of a major emerging area of modern conflict – that of the role of robots in warfare. With over twelve thousand robotic systems currently deployed on operations and with sensational ‘Killer Drone…’ headlines occurring with increasing regularity in media reports, this well researched and provocative text provides the reader with a comprehensive introduction to the myriad of issues associated with unmanned systems.

Singer has drawn from sources in academia, industry, and the military to tackle an ambitiously wide subject area. He starts with a review of current and emerging unmanned technology before making a serious attempt at tackling some of the more challenging aspects of robotic systems on the battlefield – aspects that are not often discussed in any depth mainly due to their controversial and ill-defined nature. The first of these is autonomy; how much autonomy is acceptable? Science fiction has dabbled with the answer to this question with such ‘Laws’ as those in Asimov’s ‘I, Robot’ designed to regulate robotic behaviour. Sadly, such immutable laws remain only fiction, and the moral, legal and ethical debates surrounding - particularly armed - robotic systems are the subject of much heated discussion; it is likely that technology will enable robots to perform actions long before we can agree on how advisable those actions may be. Singer also touches on the role of unmanned systems as part of a network-centric battlefield, suggesting that information may enable a ‘flattening’ of the command chain with tactical feeds being made available to strategic commanders many miles from the battlefield. This takes the concept of a ‘long screwdriver’ to new lengths enabling the ‘tactical general’ rather than Krulak’s ‘strategic corporal’! Singer does not stray from controversy and raises the concept of ‘war without casualties’. Is risk of injury or death to one’s own side an inherent part of ‘just war’? Does a low risk of friendly losses make resort to war as a policy option more likely?

Whilst not a standard academic text and proceeding at a breathless pace, Singer’s infectious enthusiasm, informal style and use of popular cultural references make this an accessible book that is not only informative but is fun to read.
Contents of CAS’ Reading List 2007

**The Narrow Margin**  
By Derek Wood and Derek Dempster  
Publisher: Pen & Sword, 2003

**Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare**  
By Colin S Gray  
Publisher: London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005

**Firestorm, the Bombing of Dresden, 1945**  
Edited by Paul Addison and Jeremy A. Crang  
Publisher: Pimlico, London 2006

**Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity**  
By Faisal Devji  
Publisher: London: C Hurst, 2005

**Leadership and Command**  
Edited by G D Sheffield  
Publisher: Brassey’s (UK) Ltd, 2002

**Terrorism Versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response**  
By Paul Wilkinson  
Publisher: Routledge, 2000

**Vulcan 607**  
By Rowland White  
Publisher: Bantam Press, London, 2006

**Tedder: Quietly in Command**  
By Vincent Orange. London  
Publisher: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004

**The Limits of Air Power The American Bombing of North Vietnam**  
By Mark Clodfelter  
Publisher: University of Nebraska Press, 2006

**Revolt on the Tigris**  
By Mark Etherington  
Publisher: Cornell University Press, 2005
Contents of CAS’ Reading List 2008

By Dag Henriksen
Publisher: Naval Institute Press, Annapolis

John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power
By John Andreas Olsen
Publisher: Potomac Books, Inc., Washington

Strategy for Victory: The Development of British Tactical Air Power, 1919 – 1943
By David Ian Hall
Publisher: Praeger Security International, London

Divining Victory : Air Power in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War
By William M Arkin
Publisher: Air University Press, Maxwell

Arms, Economics and British Strategy : From Dreadnoughts to Hydrogen Bombs
By G.C. Peden
Publisher: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History
By Colin S. Gray,
Publisher: Routledge, London and New York

Just And Unjust Wars
By Michael Walzer
Publisher: Basic Books, New York

Politics and Propaganda : Weapons of Mass Seduction
By Nicholas Jackson O’Shaughnessy
Publisher: Manchester University Press, Manchester

“Bomber” Harris: His Life and Times
By Air Commodore Henry Probert
Publisher: Greenhill Books

The Royal Air Force Day by Day
By Air Commodore Graham Pitchfork
Publisher: Sutton Publishing
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Constant Vigilance
By Nigel Warwick
Publisher: Pen and Sword Aviation

Understanding Modern Warfare
By David Jordan, James D Kiras, David J Lonsdale, Ian Speller, Christopher Tuck, C Dale Walton
Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Learning to eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam
By John A Nagl
Publisher: Chicago University Press

Air Power in Small Wars
By James S Corum & Wray R Johnson
Publisher: University Press of Kansas

Learning Large Lessons: The Evolving Roles of Ground Power and Air Power in the Post–Cold War Era
By David E. Johnson
Publisher: RAND

Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance
By Barack Obama
Publisher: Cannongate Books

Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq
By Linda Robinson
Publisher: Public Affairs

Swords and Ploughshares
By Paddy Ashdown
Publisher: Weidenfeld & Nicolson

Nemesis: The battle for Japan, 1944-45
By Max Hastings
Publisher: Harper Perennia

The Past as Prologue : The Importance of History to the Military Profession
Edited by Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich
Publisher: Cambridge University Press
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A History of Air Warfare
By Olsen (ed)
Publisher: Potomac Books Inc

Sky Wars: A History of Military Aerospace Power
By David Gates
Publisher: Cambridge: Reaktion

The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War
By James S Corum & Wray R Johnson
Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Immediate Response
By Mark Hammond
Publisher: Michael Joseph, London

The Battle of Britain
By Richard Overy
Publisher: Penguin

War Since 1990
By Jeremy Black
Publisher: Social Affairs Unit

The Return of History and the End of Dreams
By Robert Kagan
Publisher: April 29, 2008

The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One
By David Kilcullen
Publisher: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, London

The International Politics of Space
By Michael Sheenan
Publisher: Routledge

Inside Cyber Warfare: Mapping the Cyber Underworld
By Jeffrey Carr
Publisher: O’Reilly
The views expressed by the reviewers in this list are theirs and theirs alone. Inclusion of a particular book within the reading list should not be taken to mean that the Royal Air Force or the Ministry of Defence endorses the contents. Manuscripts with challenging and even contrarian views will be included in order to stimulate thinking, discussion and debate.
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