

BOOK REVIEWS

Dickson also makes it clear that Crerar was a man who knew his limitations, and who was often sensitive about them. He lacked the combat experience of his British peers, and even some of his Canadian subordinates, so he devolved much to those subordinates with respect to the planning and conduct of battle. He gave Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds the lead in planning the battles between Caen and Falaise, which Simonds spearheaded with his Second Canadian Corps during the summer of 1944, and, in the winter of 1944-1945, he left the 'nitty-gritty' details of Operation *Veritable* to Lieutenant-General [Sir] Brian Horrocks, then commanding 30th British Corps. On the battlefield, Crerar was more of a coordinator and resource-provider than anything else. For the most part, he managed to keep his insecurities under wraps, but occasionally, when he was questioned or challenged on operational matters, those insecurities popped out. When Guy Simonds dismissed one of Crerar's staff officers in Italy, Crerar took it as a brush-off by a snotty junior officer, who was puffed up by his recent battle successes and contemptuous of anyone not in that 'battle-experienced club.' Piqued by the episode, Crerar sent a note to the Eighth Army commander, General Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, expressing his concern that Simonds had become unstable.

When Lieutenant-General Sir John Crocker, GOC 1st British Corps, refused an order in July 1944, Crerar again went to Montgomery, this time seeking the removal of the difficult subordinate. And yet, in spite of a few touchy episodes that broke the monotony of Crerar's blandness, Dickson reminds us that the man did preside successfully over the operations of First Canadian Army in Northwest Europe – and that was no small accomplishment.

This is the biography that Harry Crerar deserves. A soldier who was at the centre of Canada's Great War victories, who gave up a lucrative civilian career to save some shred of military professionalism in Canada's dismal inter-war army, who engineered the largest Canadian field force ever assembled, who fought that army competently against one of the fiercest armies ever assembled, should not have been allowed to slip into obscurity, no matter what his faults. In effectively dragging Crerar from the shadows, Paul Dickson has performed a great service.

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IRAQ & THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN STRATEGY

by Steven Metz

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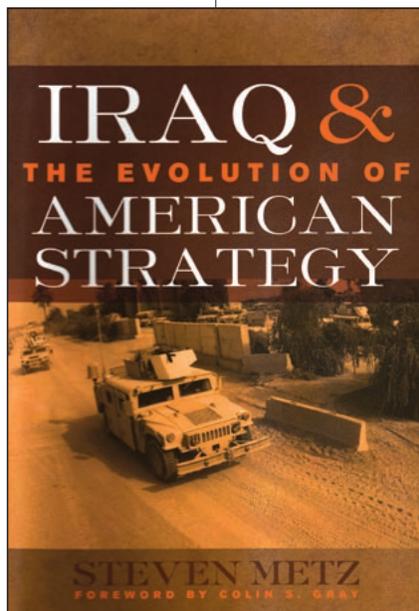
Reviewed by James McKay

Steven Metz is a Professor of National Security Studies at the US Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute. This long-awaited book offers an explanation of why the 2003 invasion of Iraq did not lead to the expected outcome, as well as the long-term ramifications for American strategy. Instead of merely offering an explanation for events in Iraq since the 2003 invasion, Metz has taken a longer view and tied it to broader trends in American strategy since the early 1980s.

The book starts with a short exploration of the concept of strategy and its purpose from the point of view of the state. Metz has been careful to make a distinction between grand strategy and military strategy. This is not surprising, considering the traditional division of responsibility between the centre of the American government for the production of the

National Security Strategy and the Department of Defense's production of the National Military Strategy. While he has been careful to make that distinction, he has also focused the reader's attention upon the role of force in pursuit of American national interests. The most important element of this exploration of strategy, however, is his observations upon American strategic culture.

Metz has argued that there are long-term trends in American strategic culture, and, while the list of such trends is lengthy, three of them merit mention as they speak directly to the book's central thesis. First, he notes that there is an American penchant for using 'mirror images' to think about the adversary's motives and intentions. Metz argues that a series of Administrations, lacking a deeper understanding of Iraqi culture, misread Saddam Hussein's government's intent and actions. Second, he suggests that the United States government fluctuates erratically between the realist and idealist traditions of international relations, and, on occasion, creates admixtures between the two. Third, the process of strategy formulation in the United States requires a degree of transparency, openness, and participation by multiple government agencies. The combination of the three, however,



BOOK REVIEWS

means that the process is also rather complex. Unfortunately, the book does not go into detail on the last point.

The conceptual exploration of strategy is the prelude for a cursory discussion of American relations with Iraq dating as far back as the Carter Administration. Metz, however, focuses upon the Administrations from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush. This discussion explains how the United States became increasingly interested in the stability of the Persian Gulf region, and how this led them into a longer conflict with Iraq. Many would be tempted to accuse the United States government of being interested in the region due to the presence of oil, and therefore the rationale for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. While such comments are not inaccurate in terms of the reason for an increased interest in the region, they do not represent the situation accurately. The United States has sought to maintain political stability in the region as it has an effect upon the supply and price of oil worldwide, and, therefore, it could have had global economic ramifications. It was not so much an attempt to ensure control of the supply of Persian Gulf oil as it was an attempt to deny any one power the same control.

There is an underlying message throughout this section – that the Administrations with a realist approach to Iraq tended to fare better than those that did not take such an approach. In short, Metz's description of the Reagan Administration, despite its idealist rhetoric, is far more positive than it is for subsequent Administrations, as the Reagan Administration understood that Iraq was peripheral to American interests at the time. The George H.W. Bush Administration approached the issue of Iraq in the manner befitting a realist approach, but it also came to be known by its friends in the Islamic world, namely the conservative monarchies. The Clinton Administration was criticized for its relative inaction on the issue of Iraq, as it chose to engage in the policy of 'Dual Containment.' The idealist nature of that Administration led it to focus efforts elsewhere, and to adopt an ultimately politically costly policy in the Persian Gulf. Metz's comments about the George W. Bush Administration may come across as kind to some readers, as he observes that many of its leaders were 'conservative idealists.' While this variant of idealism originated with the Reagan Administration, it was applied differently under the George W. Bush Administration. The former believed that the use of military power would permit the inherent appeal of political and economic liberty to occur, whereas the latter believed that military power could be used to directly transform a totalitarian state.

Metz's explanation for events from 2002 to the present is subtle, and it combines three trends. He notes that the American defence establishment was reshaped

to work on the Global War on Terror, but it focused against the perceived state sponsors of terror. With the emergence of a global network of terrorists, and the belief that a state sponsor with the capacity to provide parts of that network with weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), the perception of threat grew immensely. He also observes that the conservative idealists within the George W. Bush Administration believed they could transform countries through the direct use of force. To summarize, the invasion was undertaken to eliminate a government that was seen to be a state sponsor of terror, and to replace it with an example of democracy to encourage the spread of democracy throughout the Middle East.

Metz points out that there are three competing explanations for the failure to transform Iraq from a totalitarian dictatorship into a healthy secular democracy in five years. These explanations include the failure to plan for the transition to peace, that the transformation of Iraq was impossible, and the advancement of the 'stab-in-the-back' theory. He noted that these explanations are crucial, as they contain the potential solution for future cases. If it is the first explanation, the failure to plan, then the solution would be to ensure that the successors to the George W. Bush Administration are wiser. If it is the second explanation, that the transformation was unachievable, then the solution would be to avoid fostering the growth of democracy overseas through the use of force and/or to blame the decision-makers that led the United States to the invasion. The last explanation would suggest that the marginalization of the 'stabbers' was warranted, but this solution is hardly credible, given that this would mean marginalizing the American intelligence community, the Democratic Party, or the media.

The book is not a difficult read, and the tone of the work comes across as if it was intended for a mass audience, as opposed to a purely academic audience. It is relatively short, weighing in at just over 200 pages of text.

Ultimately, this is a succinct work that illustrates the challenges of strategy formulation and implementation in an American context while focusing upon the specific case of Iraq. Those interested in a deeper understanding of strategy will find this evokes clearer and less partisan thought on the issue of Iraq. Those interested in a partisan criticism of the George W. Bush administration may be disappointed.

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