



Book Reviews

David Fouse , Michael Horowitz , Alexander B. Downes , Stephen B. Long & Thomas S. Wilkins

To cite this article: David Fouse , Michael Horowitz , Alexander B. Downes , Stephen B. Long & Thomas S. Wilkins (2010) Book Reviews, Journal of Strategic Studies, 33:1, 163-173, DOI: [10.1080/01402390903199054](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390903199054)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402390903199054>



Published online: 19 Feb 2010.



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BOOK REVIEWS

Richard Samuels, **Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of Asia**. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007. Pp.277. \$49.95, HB. ISBN 978-0-8014-4612-2.

The future direction of Japanese security policy has been a major topic of debate among Japan specialists and geopolitical strategists for several years now. The choices that Japan makes over the next five to ten years with regard to its security role will have a strong impact both in Northeast Asia (where the rise of China has raised the stakes significantly) and internationally (where Japan remains one of the United States' strongest international backers). In this regard, Richard Samuels has offered what is undoubtedly the most thorough and nuanced analysis to date of the piecemeal changes that have been taking place in Japanese security policy over the past 10 to 15 years.

Samuels' analysis places recent shifts in Japan's security policy within a rich historical account of the modern development of Japanese security thinking that challenges the commonly held view that Japan has been a reactive and sometimes 'irrational' state, lacking in strategic vision or 'grand strategy' (p.6). In Samuels' view Japan's policymaking has been neither dominated by external events (and in that sense reactive) nor has it been hostage to domestic political competition (and thus overly ideological or irrational). In contrast, Samuels argues that Japanese leadership has made several coordinated attempts to hedge Japan's military, diplomatic and economic power in ways that have been both rational and *realist* as defined in terms of contemporary international relations theory.

Samuels tracks the historical debates around Japanese foreign and security policies from the Meiji Restoration (1868) through the contemporary period, arguing that these debates have culminated in three 'moments of consensus' (p.15) that have formed the basis of Japanese policymaking over the past 150 years. In describing the third consensus Samuels sides with the dominant view that early postwar Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru's strategy of relying heavily on the United States for defense while maximizing economic growth characterized Japan's postwar security policy up through the 1980s.

In contrast to some, however, he sees the Nakasone administration as the first to begin slicing away at the Yoshida consensus.

It is this ongoing process of slicing away at the 50-year-old Yoshida consensus that leads Samuels to argue that a new fourth consensus is now under construction, one that has 'yet to reveal itself, though its contending political and intellectual constituents are clearly identifiable' (p.15). Samuels captures the dynamics of Japan's emerging domestic debate on security by sorting the policy preferences of domestic political actors according to their views on the US-Japan alliance and their willingness to see Japan use force in international affairs. He categorizes those who are both strong on the alliance and favor loosening constraints on the use of force imposed by the postwar constitution as 'normal nationalists'. Those who are strong on the alliance but favor maintaining restraints on the use of force are labeled 'middle power internationalists'. 'Neoautonomists' are interested in both dissolving the alliance and developing Japan's own unfettered defense capabilities. 'Pacifists', on the other hand, disdain the alliance and wish to uphold constitutional limitations on Japan's military (pp.110–13).

In speculating on the outcome of the fourth consensus, Samuels invokes the 'Goldilocks' metaphor, arguing that Japan will most likely choose a strategy that is neither so muscular that it will repel Japan's neighbors, nor so dependent upon the United States that its overarching goals of national autonomy and prestige are permanently sabotaged. Samuels envisions a 'strategic convergence' for Japan that emerges by building a globalized US-Japan alliance to check increases in Chinese power that result from the creation of a fully institutionalized East Asian Community, a process by which Japan also clearly intends to benefit.

Whether the 'dual hedge' strategy that Samuels describes truly represents a significant break with the past or merely a revised and updated version of the Yoshida doctrine is a question that is left hanging over Samuels' conclusions. His description of the strategic constraints which leave the Goldilocks strategy 'overdetermined' appear to have ruled out any significant change in the overall direction of Japanese security policy for quite some time (pp.194–8). His view appears to rely on a fairly static image of the balance of power internationally and the street sweeper of Japanese democratic process to clean up any 'policy excesses' that might emerge domestically. The strong case for a major reorientation of Japan's security policy made in Chapter 4, 'Whither the Yoshida Doctrine', appears damped down in the author's concluding arguments.

Despite these weaknesses, the book's detailed exposition of the recent incremental changes in Japan's security policy and the

multivalent political debate within which these policy changes are being hashed out will be of great benefit to anyone interested in this topic.

DAVID FOUSE © 2010
Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies
 Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Adam Dolnik, **Understanding Terrorist Innovation: Technology, Tactics and Global Trends**. London: Routledge, 2007. Pp.224. £80, HB. ISBN 978-8-415-42351-9. £22.50, PB, ISBN 978-0-415-54516-7.

Adam Dolnik's book is a timely addition to the literature for both scholars interested in terrorism and scholars interested in military innovation. It ambitiously lays out a series of theoretical propositions designed to predict the type of terrorist groups most likely to develop and adopt military innovations. The book includes an extensive chapter theorizing about terrorist group innovation and then a series of detailed case studies that range from the Aum Shinrikyo to the Riyadus-Salikhin Suicide Battalion, as well as other groups. The book then concludes with a series of lessons learned, drawn from the case studies, about how to predict the terrorist groups most likely to innovate.

This is an interesting book. While both terrorism and military innovation are important topics that have received extensive treatments, the topic of terrorist group innovation is underexplored both theoretically and empirically. The book has many strengths. Its case studies are well researched and cover a broad range of groups, while Dolnik presents an eclectic range of theoretical arguments in Chapter 2. Its discussion of the military innovation literature demonstrates serious engagement on the part of the author. As one of the first books to address explicitly linkages between the terrorism and military innovation literatures, Dolnik deserves much credit for exploring new territory.

Dolnik's analysis also may offer opportunities for future researchers interested in pursuing the intersections of military innovation and terrorism. First, Dolnik defines terrorist group innovation 'as the adoption of a tactic or technology that *the given organization* has not used or considered in the past' (p.6). He therefore includes as an innovation both when an organization creates something no group has done before and when an organization adopts something another group has already used. Therefore, Dolnik's definition runs the gamut from the invention of technologies to the adoption of new strategies for using force to what is often considered the emulation or diffusion of innovations. His attempt to create an integrated theory of both

innovation and diffusion is impressive. However, given what we know from the business and conventional military realms about the potential for late mover advantages, it is possible that the factors that make a group more likely to invent a new way of operating might differ from the factors that make a group more likely to adopt innovations others have already used. More discussion of how this distinction operates, and its potential significance, may provide an opportunity for future research.

Second, a lack of clarity concerning some variables and their role in the innovation process unnecessarily complicates Dolnik's analysis. He identifies 11 factors that may explain terrorist innovation. These factors range from the role of ideology and strategy to targeting logic to durability (age) to attachment to weaponry/innovation (p.13). Many of these factors also include sub-components. Dolnik's 11 factors and their sub-components operate at several different locations in the innovation process, but this is not always plainly identified. Essentially, it is not always clear whether the author is trying to test the broadest possible set of propositions about terrorist group innovation or advocating for a particular set of factors.

For example, in the section on 'relationship with other groups', Dolnik argues that 'the unacceptability of emulating other groups' (p.18) could drive innovation, especially when groups are competing. However, cooperation can often facilitate the diffusion of an innovation, which we know happened in cases like the spread of knowledge about suicide terrorism from Hizballah to Hamas in 1992. In Chapter 7, when the author discusses the results from the cases, he concludes both cooperation and conflict matter at times, though not at others, as does indirect mimicry (pp.161-3). Dolnik's discussion is admirable since he studiously avoids trying to 'curve fit' in his discussion of results. However, these uncertainties do make it harder to use his conclusions as a building block for future research.

Dolnik also introduces some very interesting concepts, such as group dynamics and how they may influence terrorist groups. Group dynamics includes several sub-areas: 'the background, the value system, and the authority of the leader' as well as 'the group structure' (p.8). He also adds insights about the difference between centralized and decentralized groups in 'group dynamics', like Evangelista's argument that centralized organizations have a harder time innovating but an easier time implementing innovations once a decision is made. However, what really matters in the case of his group dynamics variable is not always clear.

In Chapter 8, the conclusion, Dolnik provides some structure and cohesion, narrowing his argument down to four key factors/predictors of terrorist group innovation: an ideological predetermination to use

advanced technologies, competition with another group, government countermeasures, and the accidental acquisition of knowledge in the form of a member with specialized knowledge or some other unpredictable event. These are sensible conclusions and reflect considerable research and thinking, though it would have been helpful to more directly link these factors to his assessments in Chapter 7.

Finally, Dolnik is admirably honest about the limitations of his study, encouraging future researchers to pick up on the ideas he discusses and further explore the issue of terrorist innovation. Given the importance of terrorist group innovation as an issue for both academia and policymakers, we can only hope his book is read and further research continues exploring this area.

MICHAEL HOROWITZ © 2010
University of Pennsylvania

Hugo Slim, **Killing Civilians: Method, Madness, and Morality in War**. *New York: Columbia University Press*, 2008. Pp.319. \$29.95, HB. ISBN 978-0-231-70036-8.

Over the course of the last decade, scholarly and popular interest in the subject of violence against civilians in wartime has increased rapidly, resulting in a wave of new work on civilian victimization by historians, social scientists, journalists, and activists. Hugo Slim's new book contributes to this burgeoning literature by surveying a large number of cases and different types of civilian victimization from ancient Rome to Darfur. Although the book purports to offer explanations for the killing of civilians, it is instead primarily a work of description that provides few new insights into why noncombatants are killed in wartime.

Killing Civilians does not advance a single unified argument, but rather offers an overview of the subject of civilian victimization in its four parts.

Part I, for example, called 'Different Attitudes to War', gives a short history of the doctrine of limited war, which maintains that 'people should be protected from war, that there are such things as civilians and that indeed most of us are civilians . . . deserving of protection' (p.11).

Part II, 'Seven Spheres of Civilian Suffering', provides an encyclopedic demonstration of the frailty of the limited war doctrine in practice, recounting the various types of harm (both lethal and non-lethal) that befall noncombatants in armed conflict.

Part III, entitled 'Reasons for Killing Civilians', argues that noncombatants fall victim to three types of 'anti-civilian ideologies': genocidal thinking, which denies the existence of civilians; means-ends

thinking, which recognizes that civilians exist but maintains they can be targeted when it is necessary to do so to win wars or achieve other important objectives; and regretful thinking, which ‘seeks to minimize civilian suffering in war and claims only ever to kill civilians with regret’ (p.169). In this part, Slim also acknowledges that the economic, military, social, and political roles that civilians play in society can make their protected status ambiguous and echoes the well-known finding that getting ordinary people to participate in mass killing is relatively easy.

The book’s final part, ‘Arguing for Limited War’, presents a strategy for countering anti-civilian thinking and convincing belligerents that the various connections of civilians to war ‘should not necessarily be fatal’ (p.268).

There is much to admire in this book. It is a fine resource for information on cases of civilian victimization spanning almost 2,000 years and is especially good on recent African civil wars, with which the author has had personal experience. It also contains a sophisticated discussion in Chapter 5 of how the various roles that civilians play in society raise doubts in the minds of belligerents regarding their noncombatant status. Such nuanced and realistic discussions of civilian identity are rare in the literature and nearly nonexistent among humanitarian advocates, who fear that admitting any ambiguity might erode the notion of noncombatancy altogether.

But *Killing Civilians* also has limitations, the most important of which is its emphasis on often unoriginal description at the expense of explanation. The least satisfying part of the book in this regard is Chapter 4, which professes to explain the reasons why civilians are killed in war. Readers looking for causal explanations of civilian victimization are bound to be disappointed. There are no theories here, only a list of various reasons civilians have been killed historically. According to Slim, killing civilians can be an end in itself, a means to an end, or neither a means nor an end but rather an accident. This is no doubt true – although in my view Slim overstates the extent to which killing noncombatants is an end in itself – but on its own is not very informative. Why, for example, do belligerents sometimes seek to destroy entire groups of people or remove them from certain areas rather than using non-violent or less violent methods?

Slim also lists a variety of goals that targeting civilians has been used to achieve but says little about the circumstances under which combatants are likely to use this brutal method to obtain their objectives. In short, the discussion in this chapter is not actually about reasons *why* belligerents commit genocide or target civilians in pursuit of some other war objective. Instead, it simply describes various types of civilian victimization without explaining what causes them.

Moreover, some of Slim's language raises doubts about whether he thinks there are deep causes of civilian victimization at all. In certain passages, for example, Slim seems to argue that the reasons voiced by leaders to explain their decisions to target noncombatants are mere justifications given after-the-fact for choices made for entirely different reasons. As Slim puts it, 'Reasons for killing and hurting civilians are mostly thought up by political leaders who decide that policies of mass killing, destitution or terror are appropriate strategic and tactical responses to the problems they face' (p.121). This statement implies that leaders choose policies of civilian victimization for one set of reasons but then concoct a different set when describing what they are doing. What the real reasons are, however, remain unexplored.

Another source of confusion is Slim's use of the term 'anti-civilian ideologies' to describe the three families of reasons for civilian killing. Slim never explains what he means by the term ideology, but the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as a 'systematic scheme of ideas, usually relating to politics or society, or to the conduct of a class or group, and regarded as justifying actions'. Common examples of ideologies include communism, fascism, and liberalism. An anti-civilian ideology, I suppose, would be a set of ideas that justifies killing noncombatants, but this implies that reasons for killing civilians are only ideas or are 'all in your head' rather than a response to real military difficulties or political goals. This goes against most research, which suggests that although leaders' beliefs can matter in some circumstances (especially genocide), much civilian victimization is driven by the military situations in which belligerents find themselves and the political objectives they seek.

Killing Civilians is a welcome addition to the literature on violence, providing a wealth of information on cases and an enlightening discussion of how the roles played by civilians can create real ambiguity regarding the extent of their 'innocence'. The book disappoints, however, because it adds little to our understanding of the causes of civilian victimization in war.

ALEXANDER B. DOWNES © 2010
Duke University, NC, USA

Michael C. Desch, *Power and Military Effectiveness: The Fallacy of Democratic Triumphalism*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. Pp.248. \$45, HB. ISBN 978-0-8018-8801-4.

In *Power and Military Effectiveness*, Michael C. Desch argues that both the logic and the empirical findings supporting the democratic

triumphalist argument, that democracies have greater military effectiveness than other regimes because of democracy per se, are flawed and in need of re-evaluation. His study begins with two chapters devoted to critiquing the logic of the selection effect and war-fighting theories that predict democratic success, followed by three case studies (although one covers several Arab-Israeli wars) in which he proposes to use process tracing to demonstrate that these causal mechanisms were not at work.

Desch makes a persuasive argument in several sections of the first two chapters, such as his critique of Lake's argument that democracy is conducive to wealth creation and his argument in favor of focusing on marginal effects rather than statistical significance alone. However, the book suffers from several flaws that are likely to leave most readers unconvinced, especially those who are comfortable with the practical issues of using quantitative research methods.

First, the book lacks a coherent theoretical framework of its own. Desch instead attempts to tackle every variety of theoretical argument and empirical finding in a large literature, resulting in what often reads as a list of theoretical or methodological disagreements. More frustrating is Desch's tendency to treat all of these complaints as equally damaging to the democratic triumphalist argument, even though many of his concerns have to do with minor coding decisions or research design choices. For instance, Desch treats his disagreement with other researchers' choices about the aggregation of campaigns into wars as a major critique, even though varying coding decisions have yielded a remarkably consistent set of empirical results. Desch also complains that the existing literature does not code many states correctly as democracies or non-democracies; this stands out because Desch himself never offers his own definition of either democracy or military effectiveness in the entire book.

Elsewhere, the author revisits somewhat idiosyncratic claims that have already received responses from his democratic triumphalist targets. Specifically, he argues that large-N studies of democracy and military effectiveness do not constitute fair tests of existing theories because they include cases in which alternative explanations, such as power distribution, may play a major role. Desch prefers instead to adopt a case study method in which he controls for such cases by eliminating them completely from consideration. However, the logic of statistical control in quantitative analysis is actually subtler than simply eliminating such cases. Including military power as a control in a large-N analysis allows its effects to be accounted for, while identifying the independent effects of democracy, even in cases in which neither is at its extremes.

The latter critique is part of a larger issue throughout the book, in that Desch seems to expect democracy to be *the* cause of military effectiveness evident in the empirical record. This approach is simply a mismatch for the probabilistic understanding of causality that is implicit in multivariate quantitative analysis. If the independent effects of democracy are statistically significant, given the presence of appropriate control variables, then democracy can correctly be seen as *a* cause of effectiveness, and this is still useful knowledge. For Desch, however, the fact that it does not fully explain important democratic victories, the connection is simply coincidental. Because of this difference in approach, it is hard to imagine any causal factor commonly accepted in quantitative international relations research that would satisfy Desch's requirements.

While Desch offers no clear theoretical framework of his own, that does not stop him from suggesting alternative factors that could explain military effectiveness. However, he does not provide much compelling evidence or even pseudo-theory to support the alternative explanations he provides. Nationalism, for instance, is a key alternative posed in his study of the Russo-Polish War (1919–21), but Desch makes no attempt to provide a theoretical link between nationalism and effectiveness, arguing simply that Polish and Russian forces were each more effective when defending their own territory. In the same chapter, he argues that public support for the war on the Polish side was very low, but bases this conclusion on just one quotation from the Polish leader Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, out of context and without corroborating evidence.

Throughout the studies, in fact, a double standard seems to apply to sources. Sources that support the democratic triumphalist case are dismissed and questioned, while single quotations or sources are deemed sufficient to disprove the triumphalist argument, regardless of context and without obvious concern for credibility. Despite disagreement among primary actors involved in the events in question, Desch often simply chooses a side and asserts that it proves his point. Some sections of these case studies are interesting, certainly, but they deserve more space and could benefit from more cautious and balanced interpretation.

Overall, this book could serve as a useful critique to balance the main literature on the topic in advanced undergraduate or graduate courses, but it is unlikely to have a major impact on the scholarly debate itself.

STEPHEN B. LONG © 2010
University of Richmond, USA

Thomas G. Mahnken and Joseph A. Maiolo (eds.), **Strategic Studies: A Reader**. London: Routledge, 2008. Pp.436. £25.99, PB. ISBN 978-0-415-77222-8.

Strategic Studies: A Reader is a compilation of some of the most influential and thought-provoking writing on the subject of military strategy. It combines works from a series of classic and contemporary authors to dissect the theory and practice of strategy across a broad spectrum of issues.

The volume is divided into six thematic parts each comprising of an assemblage of articles (many drawn from the *Journal of Strategic Studies*), book chapters or excerpts, preceded by a brief introduction from the editors.

Part I looks at the ‘uses of strategic theory’ and includes contributions by Bernard Brodie, Sir Lawrence Freedman and William C. Fuller Jr. It examines the question of how strategy should be studied and discusses the methodology that such study should employ. It considers how we should ‘think’ about strategy and the presumed value of ‘military lessons’.

Part II seeks to ‘interpret the classics’ offering excerpts from Sun Zi’s *Art of War*, Basil Liddell Hart’s *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* and Thomas Schelling’s *Arms and Influence*.

Part III is concerned with the ‘instruments of war’ and provides a selection of analyses on land, naval, and air warfare from three contemporary commentators, plus a passage from Sir Julian Corbett’s *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*.

‘Nuclear strategy’ is the focus of Part IV, which consists of an extract from Bernard Brodie’s *The Absolute Weapon* and an article by Albert Wohlstetter on the ‘balance of terror’.

In keeping with its current salience, the largest section, Part V, is dedicated to ‘Irregular warfare and small wars’, formed around the issues of asymmetric conflict, insurgency, and terrorism. It includes excerpts from the writings of T.E. Lawrence and Mao Zedong, as well as more contemporary scholarship.

The final part examines the future of warfare and strategy in the twenty-first century, with analysts investigating the Revolution in Military Affairs and the ‘war on terror’, as well as the conceptual and practical difficulties of acting strategically. The editors also include a useful set of study questions based upon the selected texts and a brief guide to further reading at the beginning of each part.

Each of the six parts is thematically distinct and self-contained in its own right, but taken together they serve to enhance the reader’s overall understanding of strategy. There is no space here to review or critique all of the works in this edited volume. Suffice to say that all the pieces have

been carefully chosen for their historical impact upon strategic thinking, or their particularly insightful or reflective contribution to interpreting strategic affairs. Some (personal) highlights include William C. Fuller Jr's 'What is a Military Lesson?' in which he cautions us on the utility and employment of historical analogy, and David J. Kilcullen's piece on 'Countering Global Insurgency', one of the most cogent and incisive examinations of the nature and operation of terror networks I have read to date. Lastly, Hew Strachan's 'The Lost Meaning of Strategy' is a welcome tonic to a political milieu in which the confusion or conflation of 'policy' and 'strategy' is regrettably all too prevalent.

The balance between the contributions of academics and practitioners (political or military) is just right. Obviously the editors are cognizant of the difficult choices to be made in compiling the volume as to what could be realistically included, and every scholar will have their opinions on who 'made the cut'. My only real disappointment is that Richard K. Betts's 'Is Strategy an Illusion?' article did not find a home here (though it is referenced as further reading in Part VI, and Colin Gray's superb piece 'Why Strategy is Difficult', in a similar vein, somewhat compensates).

Furthermore, though his influence naturally weighs heavy upon many of the works included (and the general introduction), it is odd that no dedicated section on Carl von Clausewitz appears in Part II. The editors argue that Clausewitz is the 'most important work of strategy and the starting point for any exploration of strategic theory' (p.51). Though the exceptional length of *On War* precludes even the inclusion of Book I, perhaps a shorter commentary on this seminal text could have been drawn from, for example, Peter Paret's *Understanding War: Essays on Clausewitz and The History of Military Power* just to balance the ticket.

Lastly, a dedicated capsule biography of all of the contributors (perhaps a short boxed text) would have been a useful addition to those unfamiliar with some of the writers, as details provided on some of them are rather scant.

Thomas Mahnken and Joseph Maiolo have done a great service to the graduate student (and grateful instructor!) of strategy and military history by gathering so many key works together in one volume. Used in tandem with a conventional strategic studies textbook, the *Reader* will greatly augment the student's understanding of the multifaceted, contested, and sometimes paradoxical, logic of strategy. I recommend the volume as an indispensable resource to advanced students of strategy and military affairs in general.

THOMAS S. WILKINS © 2010
 Centre for International Security Studies
 University of Sydney, Australia