

## BOOK REVIEW

**Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2001.**

**Reviewed by: Michael Frater<sup>1</sup>, Associate Professor, Australian Defence Force Academy.**

Much has been written on the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, arising from the breakup of Yugoslavia. This book provides a unique personal perspective on both these conflicts, and modern warfare in general, from the point of view of a senior commander. As well as having been Supreme Allied Commander, Europe during the conflict between NATO and Serbia, General Clark's previous appointments gave him personal involvement in the international negotiations surrounding the civil war in Bosnia.

Although structured primarily as a narrative of the events, the book covers the breadth of issues in current debates on modern warfare, and the structure of forces to fight and win these wars. It includes discussion of joint and coalition operations, command and control, the role of the media and other non-combatants, rules of engagement, political involvement (or interference) in the military command and control cycle, and the relationship between operational commander and defence and civilian bureaucracies. It sets out many examples of distortions of policy caused by forgetting its original intent. Perhaps the most notable of these is the US policy of being able to support military operations in two theatres simultaneously. Because two particular theatres were mentioned as examples in the policy, its implementation was often based on these two specific theatres, leading to difficulties in supporting forces in the Balkans.

Because of the central, personal role of the author in the major events described, this book will be an important resource for future studies of the Kosovo conflict. In some ways, this is likely to be more for its setting out of the sequence of events and Clark's personal view than for its analysis. In this respect, a number of critical issues for modern warfare, especially coalition warfare, are raised without detailed analysis.

An important property of the military chain of command has always been that it provides a means of summarising the behaviour of a large number of soldiers into a small number of subordinate organisations, each of which is commanded as a single entity. While more detailed visibility of a particular, critical, small part of a force is sometimes required (Clauswitz's directed telescope), the concept of mission command means discourages a commander from micro-managing subordinates. The influence of the international media on public opinion (and through this on politicians), especially relating to operations in Bosnia, had the effect of greatly increasing commanders' needs to have detailed knowledge of operations at the lowest levels. A key danger of this trend for senior commanders is that it significantly increases their workload, getting them much more involved in the minutiae of operations, and arguably distracting them from the big picture and their primary role.

A related, but equally important, problem experienced by Clark was difficulty in defining the freedom of action available to subordinate commanders. Several examples are given where he found it necessary to overrule a decision made by a subordinate. Once again, the influence of the media on political decision-making was a key cause of Clark's difficulties in this area.

Clark's unique personal view of events alone is enough to make this an important book on NATO's role in Bosnia and Kosovo. The challenges faced by commanders in modern warfare, raised throughout the book, may provide a starting point for a much-needed, detailed analysis of these issues. *Waging Modern War* is therefore of interest to those involved in the current discussions on modern warfare. It sheds considerable light on the US approach to military operations, particularly those directly in support of US foreign policy.

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<sup>1</sup> The University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, Northcott Drive, CANBERRA, ACT, 2600, AUSTRALIA