

## BOOK REVIEWS

Offley has also authored *Scorpion Down: Sunk by the Soviets, Buried by the Pentagon: The Untold Story of the USS Scorpion*; *Pen and Sword: A Journalist's Guide to Covering the Military*; and *Lifting the Fog of War* (with Admiral William A. Owens, USN).

*Turning the Tide* traces the evolution of the battle of the Atlantic in World War II as Germany and the Allies vied for control of the North Atlantic. Germany sought to control the North Atlantic to starve Britain and prevent a buildup of Allied forces and supplies in England. The Allies sought control to secure sea lines of communication for movement of people and material for an amphibious assault and land campaign into the heart of Germany. Both antagonists had to battle the North Atlantic's tremendous weather conditions while waging war.

Offley sets a baseline for the reader to understand the conflict by discussing the organizations and capabilities of each force prior to 1943. He discusses a variety of topics for both opponents that blend together to provide a coherent picture of the circumstances that affected the battles at sea, such as adequacy and quantity of their equipment; service culture; laws and legalities; organization; command and control; intelligence; national resource allocation; technological advancements; and action, reaction, and counteraction to each change in the environment.

The author then shifts his focus to March 1943, when Axis U-boat efforts had reached their zenith in the North Atlantic. The author uses the Axis success in the attacks on convoys SC122 and HX229 as an example of where U-boats inflicted unsustainable losses on the Allied convoy efforts.

The March 1943 Axis actions forced the Allies to make rapid changes in their organization, command and control, and resource allocation for protection of convoys. The Allies did this in April and May 1943. Simultaneously, new detection and attack technologies came on line in quantities large enough to tip the balance in favor of the Allies. The primary example used to show the effects of the convergence of these substantial changes to Allied convoy protection was convoy ONS-5, a westbound convoy transiting to Halifax from the U.K.

The epilogue and appendices summarize the Axis and Allied convoying efforts in the Atlantic for the rest of the war and information on the capabilities

of the various models of German U-boat and Allied escort ships.

*Turning the Tide* is well researched, organized, and well written. It follows logical paths, is free of difficult military language, and does not require the reader to be an expert in naval warfare. This book is for naval and World War II enthusiasts, novice and scholar alike. Additionally it has applicability to those studying change in the midst of conflict.

**Lt. Col. Terrance M. Portman, USMC, Retired,  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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### ARMS OF LITTLE VALUE:

#### **The Challenge of Insurgency and Global Instability in the Twenty-First Century**

G.L. Lamborn, Casemate Publishers, UK  
2012, 295 pages, \$32.95

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**F**OR SOME TIME, counterinsurgency has been hailed as the graduate level of warfare. However, in *Arms of Little Value*, G.L. Lamborn argues that counterinsurgency is irrelevant and even harmful without a thorough understanding of insurgency. Through case studies and analysis, Lamborn, a former Army and Central Intelligence Agency officer, seeks to explicate the importance of political action to insurgencies and explain how military power is successful only to the extent it delegitimizes an insurgency.

For militaries, undermining the political activist nature of insurgencies remains a vexing challenge. In successful cases, this has occurred in situations where reform of political and economic policies was enacted by host governments, as was demonstrated by Magsaysay in the Philippines. Conversely, there is little to defend when local partners remain stubbornly corrupt and resistant to political reform, as was the case with Diem's Republic of South Vietnam.

*Arms of Little Value* is reminiscent of Robert Taber's classic *War of the Flea*. However, Lamborn is more concerned with how the U.S. military should better prepare its capabilities through greater understanding of the political nature of war and root causes of insurgencies in particular. As he states, "Pentagon pamphlets and PowerPoint presentations

proliferate on COIN. And yet, the causes and nature of insurgency per se are seldom mentioned.”

Delving into this problem, the book’s first three chapters examine the importance of grievances—whether social, economic, or political—that engender insurgencies. However, solving such grievances is beyond the realm of the military’s capability. The author details how the military decision making process is ill suited to resolve insurgent grievances because it remains locked in a philosophical framework advocated by Antoine Jomini. The problem of differing means and ends in combating insurgencies shapes Lamborn’s argument throughout the book.

For example, he argues, “the U.S. Army has yet to figure out that Jomini has no place in the graduate school of warfare.”

In no way is *Arms of Little Value* a sardonic critique of the U.S. military. The author makes an effort to point out historical cases in which the United States made wise decisions regarding its foreign policy and use of its military. A consistent theme in this regard is that success in countering insurgencies has occurred where the United States supported host governments that reformed the negative practices that served as rationale for revolution. Insurgencies have an emboldened cause where reform has not occurred, as in the case of South Vietnam where Ngo Dinh Diem exemplified failure as a leader. Conversely, Magsaysay in the Philippines eventually overcame the Hukbalahap insurgency because of his willingness to reform. In all cases, political legitimacy is key and cannot be accomplished solely through military power or inundating a country with development aid unless real and perceived reform occurs. This issue is still problematic for the United States.

Despite the astronomical investment by the American people in national security, the defense establishment has shown itself less than fully competent at dealing with low-intensity conflict—insurgency. The answer to this failure is straightforward: the political roots of warfare have been forgotten.

This contentious claim applies to the institutional organization and pathos of the military. Notably, Lamborn cites the expertise of several contemporary generals such as Stanley McChrystal as exceptions. A troubling argument, one central to the book, is the inability of the U.S. military to truly adapt into an organization that teaches and understands the political foundations of insurgency, despite its publicized

statements that it is an evolving and “adaptable” force.

Lamborn recognizes that the U.S. military has been handed politically oriented tasks for which it is not organized, and he drives home the point that other departments must shoulder a greater share. Emphasizing conventional exercises and training officers how to plan static defenses, for example, are understandable but obviously ill-suited to address an insurgency. The author argues that this is a myopic approach and that our military has yet to get its institutional arms around political warfare embodied through insurgency. This is important to fix, Lamborn argues, since political warfare in the form of insurgencies will constitute the type of warfare most likely to occur in the 21st century.

*Arms of Little Value* is not entirely condemnatory. It presents a number of solutions and alternative perspectives on the development of policy and use of military might. Many of the author’s suggestions are in line with a recent RAND study that brought together analysts and military officers on the 10-year anniversary of the Iraq invasion. In essence, the RAND study and *Arms of Little Value* both emphasize the critical importance of an invariably clear policy goal that withstands critical scrutiny. As the RAND study indicates, this did not occur with Iraq. Failure to understand second- and third-order effects of major decisions—such as the Coalition Provisional Authority Orders Nos. 1 and 2 that disbanded the Iraqi Army and initiated de-Baathification—provides ample evidence of such failure. On the other hand, the U.S. military’s efforts in Anbar Province through the Anbar Awakening indicate an adaptability that the author could have examined as a positive example of understanding insurgency.

Although the book does not address the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan directly, the examined historical case studies point to current and recent events. Altogether, significant and substantive arguments are presented, and the author’s focusing on better understanding of the political nature of warfare is merited. Similarly, listening to and evaluating the assessments of a credible author are marks of professionalism. If readers accept the premise of honest, critical evaluation of military power’s limits, there is much to be gained from *Arms of Little Value*.

**Capt. Nathaniel L. Moir, USAR,  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota**