



2011-049

Michael R. Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945*.

Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2011. Pp. xx, 334. ISBN: 978-0-8061-4156-5.

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Michael R. Matheny's *Carrying the War to the Enemy* offers a significant analysis of how the US military fought in the Second World War at the strategic and operational levels and how it learned to conduct joint and combined operations overseas. By locating the origins of operational art in nineteenth-century Europe, it provides an important corrective to the existing literature, which has concentrated on the Soviet Union and Germany.¹ Matheny (US Army War College), a retired Army officer, also points out that, if operational art is an orphan, maritime operational art has been entirely overlooked and the picture is similar with regard to airpower. But his book is also an intriguing study of how officers and instructors at war and staff colleges interpreted the American experience on the Western Front in 1918 in preparing future senior leaders to think deeply about joint and combined operations, and how those former students rose to the challenge of World War II.

Matheny proceeds from George Marshall's recognition of early 1942 that the United States needed to carry the war to the enemy. In World War II, this meant "projecting, conducting, and sustaining large-scale military operations on a global scale" (xiii). He posits that, while we have several working definitions of operational art as bridging tactics, logistics, and strategy, we lack a clear-cut sense of how it has been applied in the past. Historical studies remain sparse and only late in the twentieth century did the US Army officially recognize the operational level of war in its doctrine. Yet, Matheny "would argue that ... [the Army] did develop operational art during the interwar period, 1919-1940, and practiced it to great effect during World War II" (xiv). He concludes that "the story of modern American operational art is the story of joint operations—land, air, and sea.... The origins of modern American operational art can thus be found in the military educational institutions of the interwar years" (xvi, 16).

The book is organized in eight chapters that move from a concise discussion of the emergence of something akin to operational art in European wars of the nineteenth century to the scholarship of the subject and then to the lessons, legacy, and practice of American operations in World War II. Following the introductory chapter 1, Matheny analyzes attempts at the Leavenworth schools and at the Army War College in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to modernize the intellectual and doctrinal foundations of the army and concisely outlines the US experience in World War I (chapter 2).

Three thematic chapters discuss how officers in the army, navy, and the army air corps interpreted the lessons of the Great War and what they predicted with respect to land (chapter 3), air (chapter 4), and sea power (chapter 5). These chapters, the heart of the book, reflect the growing scholarly attention to professional military education in the interwar years.² In general, Matheny is strongest on the army, but he also offers significant insights into how the naval and innovative army air corps officers processed their experiences of the First World War. Most striking here is the extent to which both army and navy recognized their co-dependency in modern war.

In the book's remaining chapters, Matheny considers the better known story of how American forces entered the fight in North Africa, planned for and conducted the Normandy invasion (chapter 6), and

1. See, e.g., Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), Richard W. Harrison, *The Russian Way of War: Operational Art, 1904-1940* (Lawrence: U Pr of Kansas, 2001), and Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel: The Development of Armor Doctrine in Germany and the Soviet Union, 1919-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell U Pr, 2003).

2. See, e.g., Peter J. Schifferle, *America's School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence: U Pr of Kansas, 2010) and Jörg Muth, *Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Force, 1901-1940, and the Consequences for World War II* (Denton: U North Texas Pr, 2011).

fought their way back to the Philippines and conducted the lethal battle for Okinawa (chapter 7). Finally, chapter 8 presents general conclusions and reflects on the lessons and legacy of operational art in World War II. While the operational level of war making was neglected in the first decades of the nuclear age, Matheny finds that the primary lesson learned was the need for professional education stressing joint operations.

The impetus for refining operational theory was World War I, which “provided the stage for the introduction of airpower. It also presented the problems of modern mass warfare marked by an increased complexity and scale that demanded study by the professional destined to deal with it in coming conflicts” (xvi). In his discussion of the interwar army, Matheny contends that historians have overlooked broader innovations in operational thought, instead focusing too heavily on technology and tactical doctrine.³ He holds that

the experience of World War I greatly influenced the officer education system established in the United States in the postwar period. The army reestablished the school system in 1919 to address many of the specific problems that emerged during the war, foremost among them the handling of large armies in the field and preparing the nation for war. The School of the Line and the General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth prepared officers to staff and command large units; the Army War College in Washington, D.C., prepared them for duty with the Army General Staff (xvii).

Matheny uses curricular records to show convincingly how much military postgraduate schools stressed power projection over great distances.

The curricula of these institutions during the interwar period evidence an appreciation for such key operational concepts as phased operations, center of gravity, and lines of operation, all of which became embedded in American military institutions and doctrine. The sophistication of interwar thought in the United States can be judged by the emphasis placed on theater structure, logistics, intelligence, joint operations, and combined warfare. Indeed, operational art as taught and understood during the interwar years proved helpful to the American armed forces’ preparations for the great challenge that loomed just over the horizon, World War II (xvii).

However, the book’s failure to distinguish consistently between operations and strategy introduces a certain ambiguity. Matheny defines operational art according to current US military doctrine as “the arrangement of battles and major operations to achieve military operational and strategic objectives.’ At this level, commanders practice operational art by integrating ends, ways, and means across the levels of war. At the heart of operational art is campaign planning. The campaign plan actually links tactics to strategy by determining where, when, how, and, most importantly, to what purpose military forces will engage the enemy” (xviii).

Although the main argument here is well developed, clearly expressed, and quite convincing, the more theoretical issue of the proper purview of operational art remains a moving target. Thus, in discussing Operation Torch, Matheny equates it with the preoccupation of Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mark Clark, and their respective staffs with logistics and the concentration of force. Most of this, however, qualifies as strategy. Moreover, the book argues that the main operational emphasis of American generals in the European theater was on a direct attack on Germany—the center of gravity where a decision could be forced. This, too, is as much a strategic as an operational matter.⁴ Matheny maintains that American operational art worked best in the Pacific theater, where “the ability to focus, leverage, and sustain air, sea, and land power won the war” (252). All this again places operations at the intersection of strategy and logistics. Matheny makes a strong, sensible case for operational art as the realm where military means and ends are

3. Matheny specifically mentions David E. Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers: Innovation in the U.S. Army, 1917–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell U Pr, 1998) and William O. Odom, *After the Trenches: The Transformation of U.S. Army Doctrine, 1918–1939* (College Station: Texas A&M U Pr, 1999).

4. See Mark A. Stoler, *Allies in War: Britain and America against the Axis Powers, 1940–1945* (NY: Oxford U Pr, 2006) for a similar discussion of the North African and European campaigns from the perspective of strategy.

properly aligned to advance larger strategic and political purposes. But a core tension of the book, one recognized by the author himself, is that army, army air corps, and navy planners and commanders did not themselves clearly distinguish between operations and strategy within a given theater and so held no unified conception of operational art.

These problems of definition apart, *Carrying the War to the Enemy* achieves its main objectives and even exceeds its author's stated goals. It cogently insists that we must include the US military in thinking about the operational strengths of armies, navies, and air forces in the world wars. Further, we must also approach the study of modern warfare from the perspective of all military services rather than focusing singularly on land, air, or sea power. Matheny shows, too, that the reforms in doctrine and education in the 1970s and 1980s, so critical to the army's recovery from the Vietnam War, reflected historical experience as much as the study of foreign military institutions. And, most importantly, his astute treatment of the complex relationship of operational art and strategy demonstrates that even great strength in one area is insufficient in war without expertise in the other.

To strengthen his argument, Matheny should have addressed directly both Russell Weigley's paradigmatic concept of an "American Way of War" and more recent treatments of the topic by Brian Linn.⁵ *Carrying the War to the Enemy* is nonetheless an effective brief for a particular, pragmatic, American sort of warfare based on professionalism and education that evolved in the first half of the twentieth century from antecedents in the nineteenth. It deserves a wide audience among military officers, policymakers, and historians concerned with questions of strategy and operations, education, and interservice cooperation. It will also appeal to those interested in the campaign planning and preparations that ensured American victory in World War II.

5. See Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (NY: Macmillan, 1973), and Linn (with response by Weigley), "The American War of War Revisited," *Journal of Military History* 66 (2002) 501-33, and *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War* (Cambridge: Harvard U Pr, 2007).