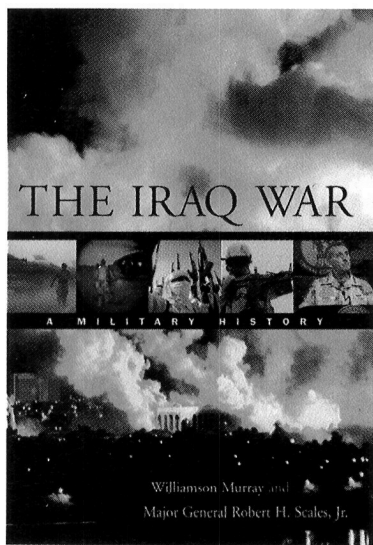


Instant History

reviewed by Col Jon T. Hoffman, USMCR

THE IRAQ WAR: A Military History. By Williamson Murray and MG Robert H. Scales, Jr., USA(Ret). Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2003, ISBN 0674012801, 368 pp., \$25.95. (Member \$23.36)



Instant history—an account written soon after an event has occurred—faces two tough challenges. First, primary sources, such as official documents, oral histories, diaries, letters, etc., are rarely available in sufficient quantity or quality. This is particularly true with war where many sources of information remain classified, some reports have not yet been written, and most participants are not yet willing to make candid public assessments. Second, any book rushed to the presses inevitably includes errors and shortcomings large and small that would be smoothed out in a more deliberate process. *The Iraq War* is one of the first comprehensive accounts to appear in print about the recent conflict and consequently suffers a little in both areas.

The authors came to their task with impressive credentials. MG Robert H. Scales, Jr. once served as the commandant of the Army War College and has written previous books on modern warfare. Dr. Williamson Murray has long been a highly respected professor of military history (including a stint as the Horner Chair at the Marine Corps University) and was one of the principal authors of the *Gulf War Air Power Survey*. Both men had ready access to the upper echelons of the U.S. Armed Forces as they assembled this account. Neither one of them, however, has had enough experience with the Marine Corps to prevent several mistakes that any Marine would quickly note. Some errors will merely clang harshly on Marine ears, such as a misdescription of the seminal Marine Corps doctrinal publication, *Warfighting*, as *Fleet Manual 1*. Others have somewhat more weight, such as a reference to the base at Twentynine Palms as an instrumented range with a live aggressor force just like the Army's desert training setup at Fort Irwin, CA. The attack across the Diyalah River is touted as only the second opposed river crossing in the Corps' history, the first supposedly being the Han River during the 1st Marine Division's advance on Seoul in September 1950. The ghosts of those Marines and soldiers of the 2d Division who fought their way over the Meuse River on the last night of World War I would not be pleased at this lapse of historical memory regarding their deed. The editors did not improve things. In their zeal to ensure that the term Marine is not capitalized, they refer throughout the book to the "U.S. marine corps" (an institutional title that should be capitalized under anyone's rules). On most substantial

issues, though, the authors praise the Marine Corps, highlighting items such as its emphasis on close air support and its air-ground task force concept. The organization of the book and the flow of the narrative are not as smooth as they should be. The authors assert that "in this war it is almost impossible to divide the air and ground campaigns into neat segments," yet they go on to recount those two elements of the war in separate chapters and even give the air chapter its own set of lessons learned. The air chapter also comes after the ground chapter, which means that the opening act of the war—the attempt to decapitate the Iraqi regime with an airstrike—appears on page 154, after the authors have taken the story of the ground campaign nearly to the doorstep of Baghdad. In general the accounts of events at the frontlines and elsewhere are well-written and perceptive. However, there are places where the authors would have done well to expand upon ideas that are tossed off almost as afterthoughts. They point out that the air tasking order was "simply not flexible enough" to fully adjust to the sudden change of plans at the outbreak of the war, but do not evaluate this shortcoming in their lessons from the air war. They note that "American artillery had truly joined the precision age, albeit reluctantly," without further describing or elsewhere mentioning the torturous process they seem to allude to in two words added to the end of the sentence. At several points in the narrative, they contend that the Iraqi leadership could not react fast enough to have any effect against the rapid operations of the coalition forces. But the authors also praise

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American feints that supposedly caused the enemy to move their units into the wrong positions. Although these two observations are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they seem too neatly to credit us with success on both sides of the coin. In the absence of more thorough analysis of Iraqi intelligence collection and decisions, as well as the willingness (or lack thereof) of most of the Iraqi Army to fight, it seems premature to ascribe too much credit to all facets of our game plan.

The authors do expound upon a number of major issues arising from the war. In one thesis that may help generate a long-term debate, they argue that the precision of aerial strikes and the political limitations on collateral damage mean that air-

power no longer has any utility (if it ever did) as a method to undermine the morale of a population or otherwise achieve a strategic effect. The average Baghdad resident, for instance, went about his business during the air campaign as if nothing were happening, while the regime already had moved its main assets out of vulnerable fixed locations. However, in the view of Scales and Murray, airpower is proving to be a major component in operational and tactical success when it is applied as close air support on behalf of ground forces. That will not come as news to Marines, but it could have a major impact on how the other Services operate.

Despite its flaws, *The Iraq War* is a good overview of the conflict and

will be a useful source for the time being for anyone who wants to know more than what they read in the newspapers and saw on television as the conventional phase of the campaign unfolded. But for those readers who want a definitive account of the conflict, there will be other books down the road that will better stand the test of time and cover the ongoing unconventional battles that will really determine who finally wins this war.

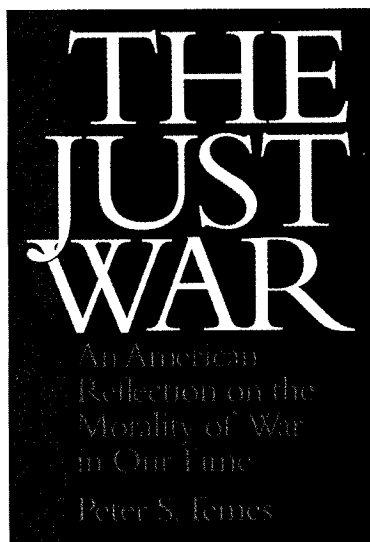
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War in the 21st Century

reviewed by CAPT Robert B. Brannon, USN

THE JUST WAR: An American Reflection on the Morality of War in Our Time. By Peter S. Temes. Ivan R. Dee, Inc., Chicago, IL, 2003, ISBN 1566635349, 224 pp., \$25.00. (Member \$22.50)



This is not just another book about “just war theory”—simply stated, a set of norms that speak of war

as always wrong but sometimes necessary. Peter Temes has written a very short yet powerful work that examines war in both historical and modern contexts from the standpoint of morality. This book is recommended for anyone who wants to think about the global war on terrorism—including Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM—in terms of the essential rightness of purpose and conduct.

Few have tried to bring the voices of centuries of classical philosophers into the debate about just war thinking. Temes recalls the arguments of Plato, Kant, Hegel, Rousseau, and Locke, as well as military theorists Clausewitz and Machiavelli, in addition to the usual suspects in just war philosophy such as Augustine and Grotius. If for no reason other than to consider the works of these great thinkers, especial-

ly as they relate to the subject of war, this book is excellent.

Several specific aspects of this book are especially insightful. First, in addition to his thoughtful recollections of classical theorists in the context of just war thinking, Temes also offers a very good synopsis of how the subject plays out across three religious cultures—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. He includes a short background piece on the historical inceptions of morality in war for each and speculates on the potential significance of morality in modern warfare as practiced by and between these three cultures. But the real heart of his work comes in his examination of what he calls the “center” and the “fringe.” The author suggests that fundamentalists at the fringes of any religion believe there is no real choice about following literal interpretations of doctrine. The question of whether wars can be fought humanely and for the right reasons can best be settled at the center of each religious culture where thinking is more moderate and adaptive. Temes concludes that followers at the center are more open and tolerant, perhaps less likely to resort to war as an extension of politics.

Despite his excellent treatment of historical context—in and of itself reason enough to buy the book—the real value of Temes’ work lies in its application to current events. It is in the tri-