

war. So there was no compelling reason for launching the bombers . . . before their crews or the planes were ready to go. The fact that men were ordered to risk their lives to carry out

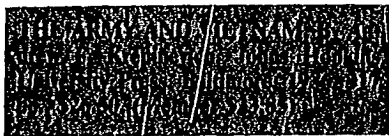
such a flawed plan said to me that the American military command structure is broken and must be fixed. If it is not fixed, the United States is in real danger of losing any next war.

Strong words. Convincing arguments? You decide. Regardless of your conclusions, you will enjoy *Supercarrier*.

USMC

Counterinsurgency Revisited

reviewed by Maj Thomas X. Hammes



Maj Andrew F. Krepinevich, USA, took off the gloves when he wrote this almost brutal analysis of the Army's role in Vietnam; I hope he has prospects for work elsewhere. The result of a deep but relatively narrow research effort into "How could the Army of the most powerful nation on Earth. . . fail to emerge victorious against a numerically inferior force of lightly armed irregulars?", this book poses some very interesting questions for professionals of all Services.

The author's basic premise is that the Army failed in Vietnam as a direct result of being wedded to the "Army Concept." This concept is the Army's dedication to organizing and fighting a midintensity European war. As a result of its dedication to this concept, the Army squeezed its strategy to match its doctrine and force structure. The only "strategy" that would match its conventional forces against an insurgent force was that of "attrition."

Maj Krepinevich develops this argument in a logical manner exploring the Army's progress (or lack of it) in developing a viable counterinsurgency doctrine and the forces necessary to execute that doctrine. The first four chapters of his book deal with the period from 1954 to 1964 and the Army's initial role as advisor and mentor to the South Vietnamese Army. The next four chapters deal with the "big unit war" from 1965 to 1968. He then closes with two chapters on events after 1968.

In his first section covering the advisory period from 1954-1964, the author repeatedly hammers home his argument that the Army was fixated on its concept of conventional war. Despite heavy pressure from the very top

(President Kennedy), the Army made full use of its bureaucratic inertia to avoid restructuring conventional forces to fight a counterinsurgency. He further reinforces his concept theory by documenting that the Army not only structured and trained the South Vietnamese Army to fight a conventional invasion but actively discouraged them from developing counterinsurgency forces. He is particularly harsh on the Army "brass" for failing to realize that throughout this period the insurgency was basically in Phases I and II and therefore only vulnerable to counterinsurgency efforts.

In dealing with the period from 1964 to 1968, Maj Krepinevich further develops his argument that the Army continued to adhere blindly to its concept and as a result insisted on the big unit war, completely failing to address the insurgency occurring all around it.

Krepinevich strikes at the heart of the matter in his statement "By adopting a strategy of attrition, the Army placed the VC in the position of merely having to survive in order to prevail." Thus the Army was trying to attrit an enemy until that enemy was willing to quit. Yet because the Viet Cong dictated the time and place of 90 percent of the engagements, they actually determined the level of attrition sustained. The author argues that the Army, despite repeated proclamations about taking the fight to the enemy, completely yielded the initiative.

In the final two chapters, the author deals very briefly with the events after 1968 and discusses alternative strategies. In place of the "strategy of attrition," he believes the Army should have adopted a program of pacification, taking the fight to the enemy by destroying his control over the people who are, of course, the actual objective of a counterinsurgency.

It is unfortunate that Krepinevich spends so little time on this phase of the war. It was at this point that the ci-

vilian leadership finally insisted on an emphasis on pacification as a way of extracting us from Vietnam as rapidly as possible. Detailed research on the effects of pacification even under these very unfavorable conditions might have done much to bolster his arguments for a pacification strategy.

The book closes by noting that we as a nation still do not have a coherent counterinsurgency doctrine.

As stated at the beginning of this review, the author's research was deep but narrow. He refers occasionally to what other agencies were doing but in no way places the Army's actions in context of the overall government effort. In fact, the thesis leaves one with the impression that this country's failure in Vietnam is completely the fault of the Army command. Although he goes overboard on this aspect, he makes telling points concerning the pivotal role the Army played in determining the actual structure and strategy employed in South Vietnam.


Although there is plenty of blame to go around and many will argue that the author should have discussed the failures of other institutions, Maj Krepinevich's emphasis on the failure of military leadership is precisely the reason I strongly recommend this book for the vast majority of Marine Corps officers. While there are very few of us who have any impact on what is done by national level agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency, each of us must contemplate the failure of most Army officers (and by implication, Marine officers) to try to think beyond the limits of their training, schools, and experience. Further, we must consider and discuss how to ensure that we don't repeat that failure.

One area that requires further discussion is the sharp contrast between this work and Col H. G. Summers, Jr.'s *On Strategy*. While both books agree that there was a massive failure on the part of our senior military leadership in defining the Armed Forces' role in Vietnam, their proposed solutions are 180 degrees apart. In fact, Maj Krepinevich's attack on "conventional" wis-

dom as reflected by Summers' book is yet another strong reason for reading his views. However, it is only fair to warn you, his analysis may force you to reread Summers' book as well. I

know it did me.

Finally, Maj Krepinevich's statement that "Low-intensity warfare represents the most likely arena of future conflict for the Army . . ." combined

with the dearth of doctrinal changes that have occurred since Vietnam should serve as a prod for all Marines to start studying this most demanding form of warfare. 

Sorting Out Maneuver and Attrition

reviewed by Col Gordon D. Batcheller

MANEUVER IN WAR. By LtCol Charles A. Willoughby, USA. The Military Service Publishing Company, Harrisburg, PA, 1939, 286pp. NA. Reprinted 1986 as NAVMC 2796.

Those participating in the maneuver warfare dialog will be interested in NAVMC 2796, the reprint of the 1939 edition of LtCol Willoughby's *Maneuver in War*. The title alone is enough to make it an obligatory "read." While it is dangerous to draw conclusions on the superficial reading that most of us find ourselves limited to, the book contains some interesting observations for those trying to sort out maneuver, attrition, and Forrest warfare. (See LtCol E.J. Robeson IV's article in MCG, Aug86.) Strangely enough, it will bring little happiness to the maneuverist camp. On page 1 it warns the student to be wary of those who claim to have found THE ANSWER to war's challenges by quoting from Gen Douglas MacArthur's 1935 Annual Report as the Army Chief of Staff:

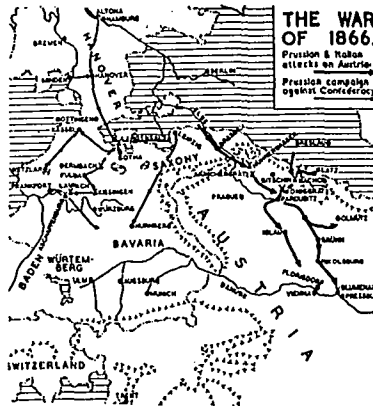
They apparently cling to the fatuous hope that in historical study there is to be found a complete digest of the science of war rather than simply the basic and inviolable laws of the art of war. . . .

Even more interesting, as a sign of the time, the quotation is part of a longer dissertation on military historical study and the military profession. Maybe during lean fiscal years, with a paucity of programs and systems to arvel at, thoughts turn to more enduring aspects of our profession. (Gramm-Rudman-Hollings to the rescue?)

The book goes on to develop the historically revealed "principles of war," demonstrating in the process the fundamental importance of terrain in warfare and the requirement for the successful practitioner of war to draw from a broad knowledge of these principles, of terrain, and of the behavior of men in dealing with the situation

confronting him. Napoleon, one of the greatest military "cooks" of all time, would have little sympathy with a rejection of these principles because they are conducive to "cookbook tactics." He would appear to endorse the requirement for a cookbook, based on the diversity of dishes on the menu of war, and on the variety of skills found in the kitchen.

On page 133 the student learns that superiority in numbers, while not essential to victory, is eminently desirable: Napoleon had a 2 and 5 won-lost record when outnumbered, and Moltke deliberately avoided such engagements. Similarly, the value of defensive warfare receives support and




Moltke avoided contact with superior forces in 1866 Seven Weeks' War.

endorsement, and Moltke is given credit for recognizing that "the tactical defensive has gained an unmistakable advantage over the offensive, as a result of increased firepower." Several lines later: ". . . the attack of a position has become increasingly more difficult than its defense." But rather than espousing one form of warfare or another, the book serves to underscore only that the study of war reveals a number of principles that commanders must be able to apply to the tactical situation at hand. Battles are fought, on at least one side, by moving men,

and the author finds it useful to repeatedly talk in terms of mass and direction, and of the advantages derived from the proper combination of these vectors. But he makes it clear that this proper combination will come most frequently to the commander with good intelligence and a sound plan.

There is nothing in *Maneuver in War* that suggests Marine Corps doctrine or style is as woefully deficient as the maneuverists claim; rather, it shows that maneuver is one of several means to an end, and the attainment of that end is more likely when the commander accommodates the "basic and immutable" principles and properly prepares the battle. It is normal for historians to search for order and meaning as they interpret the "what" and the "why" of the past, and it is normal for the participants in past events to reinforce (or create anew) order and reason as they recount the events. But even allowing for these tendencies, it is difficult to find support for the fluid, uncoordinated battle that maneuverists seem to champion. *Maneuver in War* advocates an approach to battle that stresses planning, and preparation, and coordination, and discipline. It may be only a matter of emphasis, but the tendency of the maneuverists to belittle the unimaginative mindset of those concerned with formations, and firepower, and terrain, and coordination detracts from the valid points they would make. Perhaps the best end for this discussion is to revisit its beginning and agree that dogma, from either end of the spectrum, is fatuous.

In any event, *Maneuver in War* is worth the time it takes to read it, and the Marine Corps has done us all good service by keeping this book available for a new generation of readers. 

> *Distribution of NAVMC 2796 was completed last year. Additional copies may be obtained from the Marine Corps publications stock point at MCLB Albany, GA, per instructions in the current edition of MCO P5600.31. See MCG, Aug 86, p.4 for a brief discussion of this new series of publications.*