

into Iraq's populated zones despite the fact that was the one glaring military lesson of this century—to make the results permanent, occupy the ground.

History appears to have little influence on the thinking of the American military, and so we may be sowing the seeds for developing military and technological capabilities that seem to promise decisive victory against generic opponents. In the real world, the U.S. military is going to come up against opponents who have prepared for war in a serious fashion

and whose size and political complexities are going to present intractable problems. For example, how many aim points would it take to disable India's or China's will to resist, ignoring the fact that the Indians and Chinese possess nuclear weapons? In the end, the United States is going to have to fight real countries, with real military organizations, with real abilities to mobilize popular support. And in the end, no matter how successful the American military appears to have been on the field of battle, it will have to convince America's opponents

they are beaten and that resistance is futile. Russia's experience in Chechnya and our own in Somalia suggest that even against relatively primitive countries, "decisive" battles will not turn out to be all that decisive when the dust settles.



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## Thinking About Cities and War

by Williamson Murray

*Cities will be important in future warfare, but not necessarily for the reasons Marines believe . . .*

The importance of cities to the military operations in which the United States will commit its forces in the future has been the subject of considerable debate over the past decade. A number of senior Army leaders have stated explicitly that the U.S. Army does not "do" cities. The Air Force suggests that it only does cities from an altitude above 15,000 feet. The Navy, likewise, will only involve itself in cities from a distance—well offshore with cruise missiles or like the Air Force from above 15,000 feet with carrier aircraft. Only the Marines have indicated they will do cities, but largely because, they argue, the urbanized portions of the globe are expanding as the populations of even Third World countries flock to urban areas. There are, thus, considerable differences in how the Services view the problem of cities in their operational concepts. Not surprisingly this has considerable implications for how they will, or will not, cooperate in the joint arena, especially if the United States finds itself involved in a major conflict in which cities are an important factor.

History suggests a great deal about the importance of cities, re-

gardless of whether or not increasing percentages of the world's population move to urban areas. The reality is that, since the 17th century, armies have focused on the capture of cities in their military campaigns—not on the mere capture and occupation of terrain. This is because cities represent not only the state's economic and financial heart, but the psychological heart of national resistance as well. Thus, in the 19th century, Napoleon focused his military operations on the destruction of enemy armies as a means to move against enemy capitals. The destruction of the enemy's army served as a means to open the way for the French armies to seize the enemy's main cities. In 1805, the goal of the Ulm campaign was Vienna; in 1806 the aim was Berlin. Thus, the brilliant victories of Ulm and Jena/Auerstadt enabled French forces to seize the Austrian and Prussian capitals. Similarly, Napoleon's campaign of 1812 targeted Moscow in the hope that the seizure of the Russian capital would break Russian resistance. It did not, as Tolstoy's brilliant novel *War and Peace* underlines, but, as with the capture of Madrid, the con-

tinued resistance of the Russians and Spanish reflected the primitiveness of their societies as well as xenophobic nationalism.

In the case of 1812, the failure of Moscow's fall to end Russian resistance did not end the centrality of cities to military operations. The vast battles of 1813 centered on cities like Berlin, Dresden, and Leipzig because the occupation of those cities possessed psychological as well as logistical importance. (Dresden was the capital of Saxony, while Berlin was the capital of Prussia.) Allied offensives aimed at the major cities of central Germany forced the French to fight a series of battles that eventually wore them to the breaking point. Similarly, the campaigns of 1814 revolved around allied efforts to isolate and then to capture Paris. In the end, the fall of the French capital spelled the end of Napoleon's hold on power and forced his abdication and eventual exile to Elba.

The other major wars of the 19th century also revolved around major cities. During the American Civil War, Union operations in the east targeted Richmond from the beginning of the conflict in 1861 through

to its end in 1865. The western cities were equally important. Not until Grant's forces had captured Vicksburg could Union naval forces control the Mississippi River; similarly, Sherman's campaign of 1864 aimed at the capture of first Atlanta and then Savannah as a means to destroy the Confederacy's willingness to continue the struggle. After the initial French defeats on the frontier, the Franco-German War of 1870-71 settled down to the lengthy and fierce siege of Paris—the capture of which Bismarck demanded to create the psychological basis for an eventual peace with the recalcitrant French Republic and its leaders.

Likewise, the 20th century has seen cities as the focus for virtually all military operations. The German Schlieffen Plan of 1914 aimed not only at destruction of the French army, but the capture of Paris, France's administrative and political center. Similarly, the 1940 campaign aimed at the capture of Paris after the first successful battles had destroyed Allied armies in the Low Countries. At least in the minds of German military leaders, if not Hitler's, Operation BARBAROSSA had Moscow as its most important strategic goal. Well into the 1990s, military analysts have supported the postwar contentions of German generals that, had the Wehrmacht been allowed to capture Moscow in fall 1941, instead of being diverted to the Ukraine by Hitler's strategic and economic interests, the Soviet Union would have collapsed, and the Germans would have won the war. The next year, the German drive into the southern portions of the Soviet Union became entangled in the capture of Stalingrad, Stalin's city, with fateful consequences for the war's outcome. As the German drive came to a halt in front of Moscow in December 1941, the Japanese began their drive in the Pacific. Here again the focus of military operations, where possible, was on the capture of cities: in the Philippines on Manila, in Malaya on Singapore, and in Burma on Rangoon.

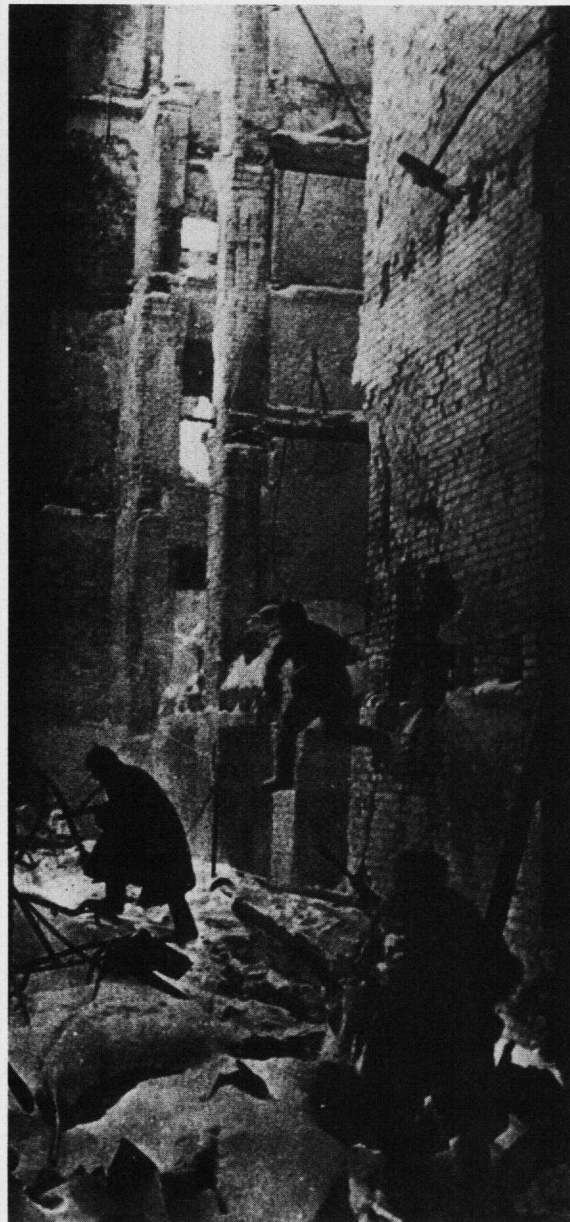
From 1943, Allied military operations also centered on the capture of cities as intrinsic to strategic and political goals. From 1943 to 1944, Rome was the glimmering prize for British and American forces in Italy. In August 1944, Eisenhower attempted to bypass Paris, but French politi-

forces focused their military operations on the capture of the great central European capitals: Budapest, Vienna, Berlin, and Prague. No less a strategist than Winston Churchill felt that the Western Powers made a serious political mistake in not pushing their forces at least to the capture of one of those capitals.

Post-World War II history has seen a continued emphasis in military operations against enemy forces in cities. Seoul became a battleground not once, but four times in the opening year of the Korean War. The 1968 Tet Offensive by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong aimed at capturing or upsetting the equilibrium of the South Vietnamese and their American allies by military operations against major cities. In the case of Hue, they succeeded in capturing the city and forcing a lengthy and politically debilitating siege on the Americans. In the case of Saigon, the North Vietnamese failed militarily, but pictures of the American Embassy under siege had a devastating impact on American public opinion.

Outside of the American experience, cities have played an equally central role. The battle of Algiers resulted in a major French victory over the Algerian rebels. But the resulting publicity in France over how French forces had gained that victory played a major role in undermining political support for a continuation of the conflict. It is not surprising then that the Russian efforts to destroy the Chechen Republic, first in 1994 and then beginning this past year, have focused on the capture of Grozny, even after it had become a seemingly worthless pile of rubble.

This brings us to the crucial question of what is it about cities that makes their capture so important to the conduct of military operations. From a military perspective, the most obvious is the fact that cities, even in some cases relatively small regional centers of urbanization, offer the key to the logistical and operational land-



*Once a relatively insignificant city in the southern U.S.S.R., Stalingrad became a symbol for both Hitler and Stalin. Millions of Germans and Russians perished in one of the greatest urban battles in history.*

cal sensibilities forced him to divert significant military forces to liberate the city when the Parisians rose in revolt. Early the following year, MacArthur enthusiastically threw his forces into recapturing Manila from the Japanese. And in the final collapse of the Third Reich, Soviet

scape. Montgomery concentrated British and Canadian military operations in the first month of Operation OVERLORD on the capture of Caen, because the possession of the road network of eastern Normandy that ran through the city would allow British armored forces to fight and be supported on the more open countryside east of Normandy. The great operational and strategic failure of 1944 came as a result of Montgomery's 21st Army Group's failure to take advantage of the seizure of the port of Antwerp in undamaged condition in early September 1944. The failure to open the Scheldt up until 85 days had passed put a severe logistical crimp in the ability of Allied armies to project military power across the Franco-German borderlands. In the end it probably prolonged the war needlessly into 1945.

Thus, the most obvious importance of cities lies in their placement on the geographic and logistical landscape. They are the essential components in the movement of people and goods over the surrounding terrain. That reality will not change in the next century. But cities also possess a political and psychological importance that more often than not transcends the specific economic and industrial importance they may possess. The British held Tobruk for the last half of 1941 partially because of the difficulties its possession caused Rommel's logistics and his ability to conduct military operations into Egypt. But the dogged resistance of the Tobruk garrison eventually took on an importance all its own in terms of Allied perceptions and propaganda. In turn, those perceptions led Churchill in June 1942 to make the serious mistake of asking his commanders in the Middle East to hold the port after the disastrous defeats of the Gazalla battles allowed Rommel to move against Egypt. The result was another British defeat, as Rommel launched a surprise attack against the ill-prepared garrison of Tobruk. Several months later, Stalingrad became the focus of massive German efforts to drive Soviet forces out of the city. Stalingrad's strategic and geographic importance on the Volga had been a major goal of German efforts to break the Soviet



*Cities vary greatly. Compare this to the one discussed on p. 94.*

Union off from its oil supplies in summer 1942. But the battle in the city took on a life of its own, drawing in German forces beyond any reasonable expectation of gain.

In the largest sense, cities have become identified with the basis for national existence. As was the case in 1995, the Chechens will undoubtedly make another effort to retake Grozny, no matter how badly destroyed the city may have been from invading Russian armies. Paris, especially in the eyes of Parisians, is France, and on its fate rests the fate of the French nation. In 1940, the fall of the capital signaled to French military leaders and most Frenchmen that the war against the Germans was over. Thus, British efforts to persuade the French government to abandon Metropolitan France and continue to wage the war from stony ground. Only an obscure French brigadier general by the name of Charles de Gaulle was willing to assume the mantle of continued resistance to the Germans outside of occupied France.

The failure to take cities may also have powerful unintended consequences. In 1982, the Israelis failed to seize Beirut after their stunning successes in the Bekka Valley. Instead, they were content to bombard the city by air and by artillery fire from afar. The resulting television coverage by CNN and other networks resulted in a political disaster that seriously af-

fected Israel's relations even with its closest friend, the United States.

What does the historical record suggest for coming decades? If history suggests anything, it is that cities will continue to lie at the center of U.S. military operations, if for no other reason that they are important politically for our opponents. It is not that cities will be any bigger or that there will be more of them. Rather, it will be that cities will continue to represent the physical geography and battlespace that matters and are where U.S. military forces will engage America's opponents. Even more important will be the fact that cities will dominate the geography of the human mind. If Clausewitz is right that war is the continuation of politics by other means, then cities will represent the political goals for which countries will fight throughout the 21st century. The American success of 1991 in DESERT STORM did not lie in the liberation of Kuwaiti deserts and oil fields; rather, it lay in the liberation of Kuwait City. And that reality will not change in the century on which we are newly embarked.

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>For Dr. Murray's biography, see page 38.