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In My View

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Ian Oliver

IN MY VIEW . . .

Stealth as a Revolutionary Development

Sir,

Captain James Patton's article, "Some Operational Implications of Stealth Warfare" (Winter 1990), is seminal. It correctly describes stealth as a revolutionary new development. May I attempt to place it in historical and theoretical contexts?

The development of stealth seems to me to be the inevitable reaction to the rise to prominence in this century of intelligence. If the tools of information-gathering had not become as penetrating and as ubiquitous as they are, armed forces would not need stealth technology. Stealth negates intelligence. In this sense, stealth may be seen as an extension of nature's camouflages. Captain Patton is right when he says that "a credible case could be built that would identify the primitive ambusher as the original progenitor of the new nuclear attack submarine and the B2 bomber."

If this opposition of stealth and intelligence is correct, several corollaries emerge. Intelligence optimizes one's resources; stealth disperses the enemy's resources while concentrating one's own. Intelligence is fundamentally defensive; stealth is fundamentally offensive. Intelligence is knowledge; stealth is secrecy.

The theoretical aspects of stealth, which Captain Patton has here—to my knowledge—first touched upon, deserve to be investigated much more. They may well throw light not only on stealth, but on intelligence, which sadly lacks a theory. I hope that Captain Patton's valuable article will provoke such studies.

David Kahn
Great Neck, New York

Editor's note: David Kahn is the author of *The Codebreakers* and *Hitler's Spies*.

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Sir,

I write to comment on the outstanding qualities of Captain James Patton's article, "Some Operational Implications of Stealth Warfare," in the Winter 1990 issue. I hope you can elicit future articles from him as he not only writes well but manages to get across more ideas in a paragraph than many do in a page. I had never heard of Patton before but would be pleased to read more of his work.

I.B. Holley, Jr.
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

The Antarctic and Arms Control: A Loose Connection

Sir,

Dr. Christopher Joyner's article, "Nonmilitarization of the Antarctic: The Interplay of Law and Geopolitics" (Autumn 1989), provides an excellent description of what the author refers to as the "Antarctic Treaty System"—the series of customs and practices that have followed the signature of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. Unfortunately, the author misses the point of his title: it is primarily the geopolitics of the situation, and not the existence of law, that prevents military activity in what is still a desolate region. To claim that the Treaty "stands as an exemplar . . . for promoting the reduction of military activities on a regional basis" is a wishful exaggeration. There were simply no "military activities" (as defined by Joyner) in Antarctica to reduce. Thus, the article provides an excellent example of exactly what is wrong with most current academic studies of arms control: the twin assumptions that the absence of apparent violations demonstrates the effectiveness of a treaty, and that the "effectiveness" of a particular treaty demonstrates the universal applicability of "arms control."

Quite simply, the costs of military operations on the frozen continent far outweigh any possible gain. That is what has prevented and continues to prevent legally defined "military activity." It is the reality of geography and economics, two of the most prominent factors of geopolitics, that has preserved Antarctica for science, and not legal verbiage that "cooperating nations" may find it convenient to adhere to. While nations can easily lay verbal claim to chunks of polar real estate, it is another thing to devote precious resources to the construction of armed military bases in a land with no permanent population and whose natural resources are—thus far—uneconomical to exploit. The transport of military forces to the continent for combat training is likewise unrealistic; those nations likely to engage in cold weather combat generally have their own closer icy netherworlds in which to train. Even if the Treaty did not exist, the possibility of "superpower confrontation" or "extensive" military activity would remain low unless the payoff for such activity greatly increased. And if such an increase were to occur, the premises leading nations to ratify the Treaty would likewise change, putting continued adherence in doubt.

This is not to say that the Treaty is in itself “worthless.” It is worthy of study. It codifies practices and provides a written standard of behavior, a laudable purpose for any international agreement. But the “effectiveness” of the Antarctic Treaty simply illuminates one of the first principles of arms control: the easiest treaty to sign and adhere to is the one that is unnecessary. Prohibiting activities that nations do not intend or cannot afford does not prove the effectiveness of formal arms control.

Returning to the academic study of arms control, the problem may be that many arms control scholars have never taken the time to study the theory and sociology of war. Either they have not read their Clausewitz, or have and, completely discounting his work, assume that wars are fought for solely irrational purposes. If all conflict is considered irrational and lacking in objectives, then it is certainly logical to envision sustained military activity in the Antarctic wastes. A possible counter to the Clausewitzian argument that wars have “rational objectives” is that two major nations did conduct a war over an “equally worthless” lower-latitude piece of real estate, the Falkland/Malvinas Islands. However, the Falklands/Malvinas possess a permanent population, albeit small, whose rights of political association conflicted with an authoritarian regime’s need for aggrandizement by reconquest of territory previously “lost.” Neither situation corresponds with the politics of the Antarctic.

While I agree with Dr. Joyner’s optimism that arms control agreements can prove beneficial to international security, the continued existence of the Antarctic Treaty just does not demonstrate all that he claims. A final ironic comment to add is that most scientific studies in the region have been supported by logistics provided by the navies of the world—especially by U.S. Navy Construction Battalions and military airlift. Thus, it can be argued that almost all Antarctic operations have, in fact, been “military.”

Sam J. Tangredi
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy
Coronado, California

The Fringes of Power

Sir,

I am often intrigued by the varied pictures your book reviewers present of the Brits. In particular, Michael A. Freney’s review of John Colville’s *The Fringes of Power: Ten Downing Street Diaries, 1939-1945* (Spring 1989), deserves a comment. It may not be profitable to discuss a remark such as “. . . the British society was class-based then, even more than it is now”: so much depends on definitions. But perhaps something may be said that will assuage Dr. Freney’s shocked reaction to “the privilege enjoyed by the British leaders.”

What Colville presented was a portrait of Churchill working with his inner circle of intimates: young secretaries at his beck and call, egregious adventurers like Lord Beaverbrook and Brendan Bracken, the contentious Professor Lindemann, and Churchill’s personal physician Moran. Churchill revelled in the luxury he was able to command as Prime Minister, and told Colville “he was ashamed of the easy life

he led and had never before lived in such luxury." At Ditchley Park, where he spent working weekends when the full moon made his official residence at Chequers too vulnerable to enemy bombers, he enjoyed an ostentatious luxury sustained by the American fortune of his friend Ronald Tree. His young men's bursts of intensive work were regularly punctuated by free weekends, for Churchill pampered his inner circle as if they were extensions of himself. Far different was it for the rest of the "British leaders." Rested by his afternoon sleep, Churchill would keep the Chiefs of Staff up till 3 a.m., enduring his loquaciousness and his Gilbert and Sullivan records: no time off for *them* to recover. As for luxury in other circles, "the breakfast supplied by Mrs. Chamberlain is really hardly edible"; the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (a fact not recorded by Colville) rode to his wedding on a public bus.

Dr. Freney suggests that Americans who served in "the blood and gore of the foxholes" will wonder at the British leaders' privilege, and speculates that the British who fought in the war will feel immense resentment. In reality, the Churchill luxuries which were visible at the time were not resented. His Cuban cigars and taste for brandy amused the public: he was a character and a bit of a rogue, just the man to put against Hitler, and the troops enduring the hardships and shortages of North Africa loved it. Mrs. Churchill, visiting a heavily bombed poor area of London, was "ridiculously overdressed in a leopard-skin coat," but was loudly acclaimed by the people.

My own view from the turret of a tank did not suggest that Churchill's way of life would have been much resented. The debauched evenings of some of the Army Group staff in Brussels, or the war correspondents' boozy manufacturing of news in the bars of Paris, would have aroused stronger criticism. But really there were other things to worry about, and what counted were the small pleasures one enjoyed oneself: meals cooked beside the vehicle, a full night's rest and the companionship of the squadron mess. The chaplain of my regiment once remarked that the nearer one came to the sharp end of the war, the more cheerful and uncomplaining men became.

But not many people will now remember or understand the atmosphere of a great war which was universally regarded as just and necessary.

Piers Mackesy
Aberdeenshire, Scotland

The reviewer responds:

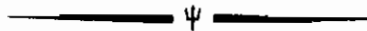
Sir,

Professor Mackesy intuits a "shocked reaction" on my part to some details in Sir John Colville's work. No such reaction occurred. Further, he credits me with speculation on British attitudes toward privilege. All I did (and do) is wonder at some of them. On the latter, I think I am not alone among those of us who live in former colonies. Professor Mackesy's colorful recollections help me wonder less.

These minor points aside, let me ask the Professor to focus on the principal substantive point in my almost embarrassingly complimentary review of Sir John's

diaries. It is in the last sentence: "This volume . . . is one of the best sources in recent times on the subject of power in crisis."

Michael Freney
Naval War College



Call for Papers

The Pacific War

The Eisenhower Center of the University of New Orleans invites submissions for entire sessions or individual papers for its annual spring conference on World War II history. The theme of the 1991 conference will be "The Pacific War." Featured speakers will be John Keegan and Ronald Spector. The meeting will take place on 19-20 April 1991. Submit one-page abstracts and curriculum vitae before 31 November 1990 to Dr. Guenter Bischof, Eisenhower Center, University of New Orleans, Lakefront, New Orleans, Louisiana 70148.

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Call for Papers

World War II—A 50-Year Perspective

Siena College is sponsoring its sixth *multidisciplinary* conference on the 50th anniversary of World War II, to be held on 30-31 May 1991. Although the focus of the conference will be on the year 1941, welcome topics that deal with broad issues of earlier years are: Fascism and Naziism; the War in Asia; Literature; Art; Film; Diplomatic; Political and Military History; Popular Culture and Women's and Jewish Studies dealing with the era. Asian, African, Latin American and Near Eastern topics of relevance are solicited. Obviously, collaboration and collaborationist regimes, the events in Greece, Yugoslavia and the Balkans in general, as well as North Africa, the invasion of Russia, Pearl Harbor, etc., will be of particular relevance. Please direct replies and inquiries, no later than 15 December 1990, to Professor Thomas O. Kelly II, Department of History, Siena College, Loudonville, N.Y. 12211.