

2023

Military Agility: Ensuring Rapid and Effective Transition from Peace to War

Richard Norton

Meir Finkel

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Recommended Citation

Norton, Richard and Finkel, Meir (2023) "Military Agility: Ensuring Rapid and Effective Transition from Peace to War," *Naval War College Review*. Vol. 76: No. 3, Article 16.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol76/iss3/16>

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Military Agility: Ensuring Rapid and Effective Transition from Peace to War, by Meir Finkel, trans. Moshe Tlamim. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2020. 192 pages. \$35.

As the United States moves from nearly two decades of artisanal war to face potential opponents who can deliver combat on an industrial scale, Meir Finkel's book is unusually timely. Using research and personal experience derived primarily from the October 1973 Yom Kippur War and the 2006 (second) Lebanon war, Finkel examines the challenges facing a military that must be ready to undergo a very rapid transition from current operations to all-out war.

As Finkel points out, the Israeli armed forces have not had the luxury of enjoying what most leaders would consider peace. Rather, the Israeli military—in particular, the army—and the nation are engaged perpetually in routine security operations (RSO). The constant threat of terrorism, border incidents, and limited skirmishes with neighbors provides very real missions. At the same time, there is always a chance that all-out war might break out. Israeli intelligence historically has been good at providing a strategic warning of war, but no intelligence is infallible. As Finkel points out, unless a state is initiating conflict, there always will be some confusion and delay in recognizing that war has broken out and in adapting to this new reality.

During RSO, chains of command tend to become more inflexible. Areas of responsibility and operations often are defined rigidly. The locus of decision-making moves upward along the chain of command, to the point where rather senior leaders make decisions for more-junior commanders. Strict routines and

procedures, designed to limit collateral damage and reduce risk of accidentally widening a conflict, multiply. Casualty avoidance—for both one's own forces and enemy personnel—becomes widespread. Over time, military forces, such as artillery units, may be tasked to perform missions that are vital in an RSO environment but that are other than their official missions. This structure may make sense in meeting present needs, but it incurs an element of risk if and when future operations require skills that have withered.

Members of the U.S. national-security enterprise immediately will recognize these and similar issues, as they easily translate to challenges facing some of the U.S. armed forces. A decades-long focus on counterinsurgency operations and irregular warfare has left a deep mark on the Army and Marine Corps and, to a lesser extent, the Navy and Air Force. Certain skills have atrophied and our national force structure has shifted. As Finkel reminds the reader, even something as basic as ammunition stocks can be reduced to a level that is still sufficient for RSO, but not for prolonged war. An excellent recent example of this involves the expenditure of Javelin missiles in Ukraine; their use has far exceeded production, and the associated shortages would be far worse in the event of a wider Russia-NATO confrontation.

There are also challenges with the introduction of new systems and doctrine. No new system can be made fully operational and integrated without some trial and error. Undiscovered deficiencies and capabilities will emerge and will have to be corrected and used, respectively. This, in turn, requires significant changes in training, doctrine, and tactics and may affect maintenance and logistical functions. The Israelis have

to be especially careful in these efforts, because going to war in the middle of significant transitions can have extremely negative consequences. While the United States has a much larger ability to buffer its frontline forces from such turmoil, similar concerns do exist. Given the scope of potential changes, U.S. leaders need to think through ongoing and future transitions most carefully.

Perhaps even more important will be new requirements leveled on U.S. troops and their officers during an all-out conflict. Despite advances in protective equipment and sensors, casualties resulting from war with a peer or near-peer competitor will be continuous and far larger in number than those seen since the Vietnam War or even before. The physical and mental stress placed on U.S. service personnel will be worse, if only in scale, than any experienced by almost any unit in decades. Leadership and decision-making will be exercised in very different conditions. Commanders will be forced to push decision-making authority further and further down the chain of command. The kaleidoscopic nature of the fight will require even more resiliency and mental toughness, including the ability to accept and deal with potentially ugly mistakes. To survive and attain victory requires extensive and realistic training, not just for the active component, but for the reserves and National Guard as well.

Finkel's book does not have all, or even most of, the answers to these issues. But he does present a strong set of initial questions that open the door to the discussions and decisions that are necessary if we are to be as ready as possible for an all-too-likely future conflict. This is a book well worth reading.

RICHARD NORTON



Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games: International Sport's Cold War Battle with NATO, by Heather L. Dichter. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2021. 275 pages. \$29.95.

In 2022, the White House announced a “diplomatic boycott” of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Like all the boycotts of Olympic gatherings that came before, it failed to alter the political landscape. One could be forgiven for thinking that sport and politics are so alien to one another that they do not mix. Heather L. Dichter has written a stunningly good book that shows that this simply is not true.

Using a plethora of research, Dichter begins her accounting in the late 1950s as international sports federations and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) found themselves having to address a serious political issue: the status of Germany. After the creation of the German Democratic Republic, there was a real question whether German sports federations, all based in the West, represented all German citizens. The IOC solved this situation by saying that they did, and by requiring the two Germanys (East and West) to compete as a unified team. That solution worked for about a decade.

Wishing to bolster its legitimacy, East Germany established a series of national sports federations and obtained membership in the international governing bodies of these various sports. As more and more East German federations obtained certification from the different international federations, questions about national symbols (flags, national anthems, and team uniforms) moved to the forefront. Could the East Germans use their flag, anthem, and team uniforms even in