

which would be quickly swallowed by its larger neighbor. Finland's defensive war against the Soviet invaders thus took on a significant role in popular memory and in the following months as both Axis and Allies reacted to the conflict. Gordon Sander's comprehensive history of the war expands beyond traditional narratives of hopeless and inept Russians being cut to ribbons by a handful of Finnish troops in arctic forests. Against this mythical backdrop, Sander weaves social, military, diplomatic, and cultural history into *The Hundred Day Winter War*, giving life to the complex interplay of national and international politics that drove the war.

For the military reader, Sander's analysis of Finnish defensive operational maneuver against a numerically superior foe is insightful. The treatments of the battles around Suomussalmi are Sander's best combat writing. These battles, which saw an undermanned and underequipped Finnish force trap and nearly annihilate two Soviet divisions, are presented as "a classic military double victory with few if any precedents in the history of modern warfare." While the sections on Finnish attacks against Russian troops do read like the traditional narrative of "ghosts on skis," Sander does cover small unit tactics, logistics, and the impact of combat on the Finnish soldiers in the protracted battles. Sander's inclusion of the human element strengthens the narrative and helps demystify both the Finns and the Soviets. Readers looking for a more analytical approach to the battle should see Allen F. Chew's *Fighting the Russians in Winter: Three Case Studies*, issued by the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College's Combat Studies Institute in 1981.

Sander briefly covers the Red Army's evolution during the course of the war. Initial Soviet failures were rectified and incompetent commanders, mostly junior officers before the purges of the late 1930s who suddenly found themselves regimental and division commanders, were relieved and some executed. The battles around Suomussalmi led Stalin to continue the war "after the requisite period of retraining and reorganization," including the appointment of Semyon Timoshenko as the commander. Under Timoshenko's command, the Red Army adapted and changed its tactics to become an army that was indeed capable of learning from past mistakes. As a result, the Soviets were able to break the Finnish defensive positions and destroyed the nation's ability to fight.

Sander is unabashedly pro-Finnish in his writing and use of sources. This said, he does attempt to explain Soviet intentions and political vision for the conflict in balanced terms. He was able to locate several Soviet veterans whose stories are included. Overall, the lack of Soviet equivalence or parity in writing does detract from the balance of the book though, as the subtitle implies, Finland is the hero of Sander's narrative.

Overall, Sander presents a history of the war using a plethora of primary and secondary sources in a clear manner. The book is largely a social history of the war heavily influenced by his journalist sources, but military readers will benefit from its expansive scope and well-written sections on military operations.

**Ardennes 1944:
The Battle of the Bulge
By Antony Beevor
NY: Penguin Books, 2006,
451 pages**

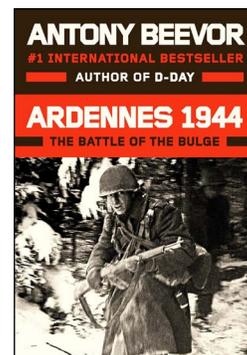
Reviewed by 1stLt Walker D. Mills,
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The Battle of the Bulge, known to the Wehrmacht as Operation Autumn Mist, was the Germans' final major offensive of the Second World War. Hitler himself planned an operation intended to seize the port of Antwerp and cleave the Allied Western Front in two. The German divisions were able to achieve complete surprise and penetrate more than 40 miles into the Allied front before they were halted just short of the River Meuse in what became their "last gasp." In his new book *Ardennes 1944: The Battle of the Bulge*, Antony Beevor narrates the story of the battle from all perspectives — general, private, German, and American. The book is a masterwork and a must read for anyone who has interest in the battle itself or World War II. Beevor again proves himself a master of the operational-level saga, a treat for the reader from start to finish.

Ardennes 1944 is Beevor's ninth book and a worthy inheritor of his legacy of prize-winning World War II writing. Beevor has won major awards for almost all of his previous works. He shows us again that he can take a well-known story, Hitler's desperate gamble over the Christmas of 1944, and make well-researched history page turning. The book lacks a little of the cataclysmic nature inherent to some of his previous work like *Stalingrad: The Fateful Siege: 1942-1943* and *The Fall of Berlin 1945*, but Beevor keeps the reader from noticing.

Emboldened by success on the Western Front, the Allies moved quickly across northern France to the German border after breaking out of Normandy. Allied intelligence predicted little to no possibility of a German offensive; in late August of 1944, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force G-2 published an analysis that said, "The August battles have done it, and the enemy in the West has had it." Hitler had other plans, however. In September, he summoned his top generals to brief them on an upcoming offensive. The plan was to smash the Allied lines in the Ardennes sector in order to break through to Antwerp. He predicted the ensuing disaster would create "another Dunkirk" and strain the Anglo-American alliance to the breaking point. Preparations were made in almost total secret and went undetected by the Allies. Most German officers were not briefed on the plan or even the objectives until hours before the offensive was to begin.

The offensive achieved nearly complete surprise at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. The initial thrust threw some Army units into headlong retreat south toward the River Meuse. But slowed by weather, poor roads, and lack of fuel, the German divisions were unable to exploit their initial success. The Americans were able to use their immense logistics capacity and herculean motor-lift capacity



to shift forces on the battlefield and blunt the offensive.

Beavor is the guide as he takes the reader on a journey through the battle, expertly wielding the experiences of combatants on both sides and noncombatants to sculpt his narrative, and even here he is able to keep the text wonderfully free of footnotes. When the occasional voice of hindsight speaks, it is during moments of consequence where it is most valuable. He shows the reader the humor of war when General Bradley is nearly arrested by nervous MPs on the suspicion that he is a German spy and in narrating the romantic and adventurous exploits of a young Ernst Hemingway. But he also shows the darkness of the massacres of civilians and soldiers alike behind the lines. Like the Piper Cub reconnaissance planes that the Allies employ as artillery spotters, the narrative dives in and out, crisscrossing the battlefield. Still, he never loses sight of the overall picture, giving the reader daily and incessant casualty tallies in men and equipment and placing the battle in the context of the war as a whole. The Battle of the Bulge critically depleted the Wehrmacht, particularly the Panzer divisions that were needed to stop the Soviet advance on the Eastern Front, which probably shortened the overall length of the war by many months if not a year.

On Tactics: A Theory of Victory in Battle

By B.A. Friedman

Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017, 42 pages

Reviewed by LTC (Retired)
Rick Baillergeon

In my experience, the books that have engaged and challenged me the most are the ones with which I did not completely agree. These books have made me think and look at things in a different perspective. One recent volume which clearly falls into this elite category for me is B.A. Friedman's *On Tactics*. It is a book which I believe will clearly engage, challenge, and make readers think.

Within the pages of *On Tactics*, Friedman focuses on a subject clearly challenging in itself — tactical theory. In his preface, he defines the book's specific objective and why the topic is such a test to address. He states, "The student of strategy, once he realizes the importance of the concept, has a well-organized field in which to plant the seeds of his intellectual development. The furrows are straight and parallel, the plow is sharp and ready, and even the fallow fields are clearly defined. The study of tactics offers no such easy introduction." He continues, "Unlike strategy itself, there is no organizing structure such as that provided by Carl von Clausewitz's *On War* (1976/1832). This work is an attempt to provide that structure or at least the beginning of one."

In providing a structure or the initial groundwork for one, Friedman organizes his volume into two major parts which

build upon each other. In his first section, the author has crafted a group of tactical tenets which he believes provides the foundation for the structure of tactical theory. To set the conditions for his discussion, he emphasizes that the principles of war lack the standardization and discipline to be utilized in tactical theory. In particular, he opines that the principles do not adhere to the three planes which he feels tactics live in — physical, mental, and moral. It is these planes which provide the organization for his tenets.

Within the physical plane, he has placed four tenets which he believes enable a tactician to arrange forces on the battlefield — maneuver, mass, firepower, and tempo. These physical tenets in turn will impose mental effects on an enemy. These mental tenets are deception, surprise, confusion, and shock. Finally, these mental effects (tenets), if achieved, will force the enemy to lose his moral cohesion which is the one tenet under the moral tenet category.

For the reader, there is much to think about here. Do the principles of war only have relevance to the strategic level of war? Do tactics "live" in the physical, mental, and moral planes? Has Friedman selected the right tenets? Does Friedman's path of tenets from physical to mental to moral have validity? Certainly, excellent questions which make for great debate.

In Friedman's second section, he builds on the above tenets and addresses a group of tactical concepts that he considers the most important in dealing with the realities of the tactical context. These concepts include the culminating point of victory; the offense, the defense, and the initiative; command and control; environment and geography; and linking tactics with strategy. Once again, there is significant food for thought in Friedman's discussion on each of these. However, for me personally, I would have liked a bit more discussion early on as to why he considered these the most important concepts and more detail on the relationship between the tenets and concepts. This was addressed in more substance in his excellent conclusion but would have been far more beneficial if discussed in earlier chapters.

Friedman concludes his volume with an interesting collection of essays, which in a common theme with the book, make you think. The subjects he touches on include the center of gravity, principles of planning, the organization of tactically successful militaries, and training and education. Each of these is a stand-alone essay in itself. However, the author strives to tie them in with his past discussion on tactical theory (tenets and concepts).

In summary, does B.A. Friedman achieve his primary objective of providing a structure or at least the beginning of one in the area of tactical theory within *On Tactics*? In my opinion, he has not delivered on providing this structure, but I also contend that may have been too ambitious a goal. However, I feel he has certainly made some valuable contributions in this area. He has accomplished this by crafting a volume that is sure to spark dialogue and debate and challenge and engage all readers.

