Book Reviews

***Men of Fire: Grant, Forrest, and the Campaign That Decided the Civil War.* By Jack Hurst. New York City: Basic Books, 2007, 442 pages, $27.95.** Reviewed by Command Sergeant Major (Retired) James Clifford.

There has been a book published about the Civil War for every day of the nearly 150 years since this country was torn asunder by that conflict. That means that by 2015 there will have been nearly 55,000 Civil War books published. One would think that the final word on the Civil War has been written, but publishing houses continue to crank them out. For any book to make an impact it must offer either new information or a unique perspective. With a title like *Men of Fire: Grant, Forrest, And The Campaign That Decided The Civil War*, this book promises to be one of those. It is a promise unfulfilled.

This book is a mundane recitation of well-known facts packaged in a less than convincing premise. The author claims that the battles of Forts Henry and Donelson were a "'Battle of the Bulge' without overcoats." That's a cute allusion without basis. His idea that the battles "decided" the war seems to be rooted in Ulysses S. Grant's resulting rise of military fortunes. Although a significant factor in the war, Grant's brilliance was a facet of his character completely apart from those particular battles. He makes no convincing claim that the battles themselves were militarily significant. If anything, these battles set the conditions for the increasingly brutal battles to come. They reinforced Grant's belief that the war would be short, a faulty but widely shared idea he held only until the bloodbath of Shiloh.

The author's focused appraisals of Grant and Nathan Bedford Forrest is at best apples and oranges attempts to create some linkage between these two leaders where none exists. The idea that Forrest, an insanely brave tactical commander who may not have attained his true potential as a military leader, compares with Grant, a determined strategic master who rose to the supreme leadership of the largest army in U. S. history up to that time, is dubious at best.

Hurst's analysis of Grant shallowly tills this already well-plowed field. The author heavily relies on Grant's often reported but highly suspect reputation for drunkenness and his financial troubles as the explanation for his stubborn nature and motivation to succeed. It is a pseudo-psychological analysis that attributes Grant's genius to his need to overcome past failures. While this may have been a factor in Grant's success deserving mention, the author's nearly 25 references to Grant's drinking leave the reader with the impression that he is relying on it solely.

The author previously wrote a biography of Forrest so his analysis of the man is uniformly positive. The vision of Forrest in this book is one of leader with a high level military acumen that generally conforms to the popular image of the man rather than the more accurate depiction of Forrest as a small-time raider with often spectacular but transitory impact on the enemy. He also soft peddles Forrest's post war membership in the fledgling Ku Klux Klan as a "believable legend."

Overall, this book is a good read with questionable notions. One may turn to it for the sake of discussion, but it is hardly a definitive treatment of either the campaigns or the leaders. *Men of Fire* is not likely to attain a notable position within the body of Civil War historiography.

***Victory in War, Foundations of Modern Military Policy.* By William C. Martel. New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 436 pages, $35.** Reviewed by Brigadier General (Retired) Curtis H. O'Sullivan.

Delendo est Carthago seemed the ultimate in imposing defeat until mutual assured destruction (MAD) came along, but salted soil and radioactive residue both raise doubts about such successes. Victory is a tricky word with many imprecise meanings. More important is what comes next. What makes a satisfactory outcome after the surrender, cease-fire, and peace treaty? There are a number of events that may happen: disarmament, reparations, loss of sovereignty and/or territory, change of government and/or system of government - both political and economic, and imposition of a new religion. Getting away with minimum damage may be a sort of victory. All of these may sow the seeds of future discord.

Martel uses case studies of the conclusion of past conflicts to illustrate the complexity of deciding when there is a winner but fails to extract the full value of these lessons. We celebrate the achievement of our independence but forget the failure to accomplish a major war aim. Despite the valiant efforts of Montgomery and Arnold, we did not add the Canadian provinces to these United States. We failed again in the War of 1812 (didn't even get close this time) and settled for a draw. Luckily, impressment and the blockade had become moot questions and the British had their second string at Ghent, so the peace terms were better than we deserved. The invasion of Mexico was an unprovoked war of conquest where we limited our objectives only because we didn't want to chew off more than we could handle. The highly populated area of Nova Espana had shown what they could do against an imperial power in securing their independence. Our Civil War was supposedly to preserve the Union and abolish slavery, but the evil of Jim Crow persisted for another century. The Spanish-American War gave Cuban independence, albeit with the strings of the Platt Amendment, but only exchanged colonial masters for Guam, Guantanamo, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. We did eventually pull out of the Philippine Archipelago but not until our bases there had apparently threatened the flank of the Japanese advance to the south and caused their attack on Pearl Harbor. Among our goals in the Great War were a world safe for democracy and peace among nations. No comment is needed about their durability.

In WWII, a measure of victory was established by the requirement of unconditional surrender, but it was immediately compromised by the terms given Italy and later those given Japan. In Korea, we receded from harsh demands to the acceptance of a truce with a third-rate power. At least things didn't accelerate to a global nuclear war; the independence of South Korea was preserved and she has since become a major economic power. North Korea, on the other hand, remains a festering sore, threatening world peace. About all that can be said about 'Nam is that more dominoes didn't fall and, again, no worldwide war. The Cold War was a prolonged confrontation rather than a "hot" one, and the conclusion was marked by a combination of circumstances.

Today, we're confronted with the situation where we've achieved success in military operations in two theaters, but the future seems less promising. Victory against non-state adversaries is difficult for conventional forces to accomplish and measure but is not impossible. I didn't expect the author to have a cure-all for getting through the quagmires we're now mired in but did hope for some useful historic precedents. Martel's background at the Naval War College and at RAND raised my expectations. Perhaps they were too high, although I did pick up some new and interesting information and perspectives on the subject.

***Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam.* By Kathryn Slater. Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 2007, 392 pages, $45.**

***The War Managers.* By Douglas Kinnard. (First published in 1977) Annapolis, Md: Re-published by the Naval Institute Press, 2007, 228 pages, $19.95.**

Reviewed by Commander Youssef Aboul-Enein, USN

The Vietnam conflict is one that cannot be avoided when studying American military history, strategy, and national policy. There are two books worth reading that enable a deeper reflection on how the United States makes decisions and prioritize threats to its national security. The first book is *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam* by Kathryn Slater, an associate professor at the University of San Diego. She takes a closer look at the French, American and South Vietnamese policies that led the United States to inherit the Vietnam War from the French. The focus is the decade of the 1950s to 1963. French officials exhausted by World War II and wanting to maintain its colonies in Algeria and Indochina sought American military equipment. To that end, Paris redefined the argument not in terms of preserving its colony, but as a bulwark to stem the growing tide of communist encroachment in Vietnam. The arguments made include that France's commitments to her overseas possessions prevented her from contributing fully to NATO. External events like the start of the Korean War and domestic politics like the communist scare driven by Senator Joseph McCarthy would also shape Vietnam policy, with the United States sending the Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) in September 1950. MAAG would be a permanent fixture throughout America's involvement in Vietnam and would, from its inception, take over the training of Vietnamese military officers and pilots. Readers will learn that Vietnam, a war associated with the Johnson and Nixon Administrations, was actually fiercely debated as early as during the presidency of Harry Truman. The book ends in 1963, with the transition of South Vietnam's social, economic and military programs from the reluctant French to the United States. According to the author, South Vietnamese President Diem, a Catholic, manipulated not only the French and American governments but utilized senior Catholic officials to influence policy. It is an excellent read as to the forces that drove the United States towards a course of action.

The Naval Institute Press has re-issued in soft cover a classic on America's involvement in Vietnam. General Douglas Kinnard first published *The War Managers* in 1977, and it reports on the views of over 60 percent of U.S. commanders in Vietnam from 1965 until the start of America's departure in 1973. This is a difficult read, but vital if we are to understand new ways to measure success in America's future conflicts. Some themes that come out of Kinnard's work included a disconnect between tactical successes against North Vietnam and the politico-military strategy of the war. Measures of success from the American perspective was gains on a map, and then body counts; this meant nothing for a protracted quasi-guerilla war of national liberation. Other criticism include shaping the Army of South Vietnam (ARVN) into an American fighting force instead of capitalizing on the thousands of years of Vietnamese fighting methods. The book raises questions on how the military should interact with civilian leaders, and that the Huntingtonian model of a clear separation between military and civilian affairs is not realistic. The book also discusses many little known facts of the Vietnam War, such as Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird's creation of a special office for Vietnamization, which the book considers to be a good idea that seemed to inject civilian control of policy options for the war, but ended up being a coordinating office. Kinnard sent 173 questionnaires to flag officers serving in Vietnam, and got over a 60-percent response. Their taking the time to answer this survey provides future American military leaders insight into how better to serve the United States and the senior leaders of its Executive Branch.

Chief of Infantry Reading List

The Chief of Infantry Reading List is available online at https://www.benning.army.mil/catd/cald/readinglist.htm (requires AKO login/password). The list is divided into four categories: Junior NCO, Senior NCO, Lieutenants, and Captains. In addition to the list, the site also contains a short narrative on each selection.

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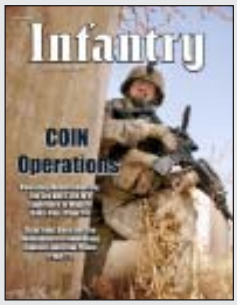

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Iraqi children gather around a 25th Infantry Division Soldier as he patrols the streets of Al Asiriyah, Iraq, August 4, 2008.