**Book Review**

**Military Power**

**Stephen Biddle**

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**Preface**

Biddle argues that although many scholars and policy makers believe future wars will be predominantly different from the past ones he argues that continuity rather than change prevails in the character of warfare. He further argues that real causes of battlefield success is stable since World War I, although there were many technological developments. Contary to many scholars and policy makers who believe that gross numerical strength and material resources are the main sources of the prevailing the battlefield, he argues that both material and non-material factors interact to produce success on the battlefield. He dubbes the paerticular nonmaterial variable as “force employment” and details how it interacts to produce battle outcome. (Biddle, 2006, p. ix). Preface ix.

**Chapter 1 Introduction**

He argues that altough the questions like “what causes victory and defeat in battle?” are life-and-death questions, the answers often fall short. He takes World War I, World War II, 1973 Arab-Israel War and Gulf War as example and states that in the whole of these wars, results baffled the participants. Nobody expected four year stalement and trench war which exhausted many resources in World War I, nobody expected German swift victory in France in World War II, nobody expecte Israeli defeat and help request in 1973, and finally nobody could have estimated such a minimum casualty of Coalition Forces in Gulf War(Biddle, 2006, pp. 1–2).

His points for the methodology in analyzing the subject is remarkable. He says that, most analyses are either rigorious but narrow, or broad but unrigorious. He asesses that mathematical models are emphasizing material factors alone, meanwhile “holistic assessments” takes into account factors such as strategy, tactics, morale, combat motivation, or leadership or as well as just material but treating these varaibles less systematically. He further assesses that “real progress demands rigor and breadth: a systematic treatment of both material and nonmaterial variables”. To conduct such an treatment he proposes “one key nonmaterial variable: force employment”, and he defines this as “the doctrine and tactics by which armies use their material in the field” (Biddle, 2006, p. 2)

Since he assesses that there are number of patterns of force employment, he prefers to held a particular pattern of it. And he dubbs this pattern as “the modern system”. According to him modern system “has been pivotal in the 20th century and is likely to remain so”. (Biddle, 2006, p. 2)

He argues that “since at least 1900, the domianant technological fact of the modern battlefield has been increasing lethality. Even by 1914, firepower had become so lethal that exposed mass movement in the open had become suicidal. Subsequent technological change has only increased the range over which exposure can be fatal. To perform military missions in the face of this storm of steel requires armies to **reduce their exposure**, and since 1918 the central means of doing so has been modern system employment”.(Biddle, 2006, pp. 2–3)

His treatment of the subject of modern system is like intervening variable for the outcome of the battle. He suggests that numbers matters only if they can be exploited by modern-system force employment(Biddle, 2006, p. 3). Hew proposes two examples of this argument, one is Iraqi Army in Gulf War, although they seem to be powerful by numbers, they have been mismanaged, and lost the war, and the second is North Vietnamese Army, although weak in numbers, mananeged properly and made unexpected resistance in the war. According to him these results challenged a wide variety of standard views. (Biddle, 2006, p. 3)

He advises to be more cautious on the propositions of Revolution in Military Affairs which indicates that long-range precision air and missile strikes will dominate future warfare while ground forces role would be limited by scouts etc. He says that overgeneralization of the results of Gulf War may lead to make false policy decisions(Biddle, 2006, p. 4).

**What is Military Power?**

He claims that war outcomes is not product of military power alone. And this military power can mean different things in different context like offence or defence etc. He proposes that if capability is the ability to succeed at an assigned mission, different states will thus assess capability very differently for the same forces. And he further states that no single concept of “military capability” can apply to all conflicts in all places and times(Biddle, 2006, p. 5).

In his analysis he picks the **mission of controlling territory** in mid- to high-intensity continental warfareto evaluate capability. He than selects three criteria to assess success in these missions: the ability to destroy hostile forces while preserving one’s own, the ability to take and hold ground, and the required time. He than offers offensive and defensive definitions of capability. He defines offensive military capability as “the capacity to destroy the largest possible defensive force over the largest possible territory for te smallest attacker casualties in the least time; and he defines defensive military capability with conversing the offensive one: “the ability to preserve the largest possible defensive force over the largest possible territory with the greatest attacker casualties for the longest time. (Biddle, 2006, p. 6)

He then selects the unit of analysis as “operation”. And he expands as the operation as a series of interconnected battles resulting from a single prior plan. These interconnected battles in a single theater constitute a campaign. He gaves the example of Normany Campaign which constitutes Operations EPSOM, GOODWOOD and COBRA. By mid- to high-intensity conflict he means in between of guerilla warfare and global thermonuclear war, namely regional conventional wars such as Afghanistan War, while excluding the two extreme ends. (Biddle, 2006, p. 6)

**Methodology**

He states that since there is no overarching methodology to explain capabilty, he combines historiography with formal theory, case method, statistical analysis, and simulation experimentation. (Biddle, 2006, p. 9)

His emphasis on history part is the role of doctrinal adaptation for the wars course and outcome. And the formal theory facilitates to overcome the limites and complex interconnecting claims of the historiography by using mathematical language to describe relationships. Though, this also has limites, because it abstracts away real issues in sake mathematical clarity. So he places history first. And harness these claims with mathematical analysis. (Biddle, 2006, p. 9)

He tests this approach with three methods. First one is **case study** to provide maximum theoretical leverage. Then he applies a **small-n- ase method** to characterize the variables, like force employment which he claims never had been tried before. To generalize the results he compliments the case studies with a series of **large-n statistical analyses**. He inserted the new variable of force employment with ***treating it indirectly via enabling assumptions and proxy variables***. He also includes ex ante experiments via a simulation tool, changing key features while holding all other aspects constant to deduce a more systematic framework which is not experienced by real time fights. (Biddle, 2006, p. 10)