

# REVIEWS

## A Call For Doctrinal Reform

**The Principles of War for the Information Age** by Robert R. Leonhard, Presidio Press, Novato, Calif., 1998. 288 pages. Retail, \$30; Amazon.com, \$22.

In this, the deadliest century in human history, there has been no shortage of pundits, journalists, historians, and not a few veterans touting their personal observations, opinions, and experiences as the newest immutable theory of warfare. Few of these offerings passed contemporary scrutiny, let alone the tests of time. A few names, none without some intellectual battle-scars, survive and stand out, J.F.C. Fuller and Richard Simpkin come immediately to mind. When military historians of the future sit down to develop their revised syllabi on "War and Its Theorists," there will be a third name to add — Robert Leonhard.

This is Leonhard's third book of pure military theory. His first two, *The Art of Maneuver and Fighting By Minutes* carry the progression of his thought over the course of the past decade. In this book, Leonhard takes on not just the methods that the Army actually uses (despite what the doctrine suggests) but the foundation of much of our base doctrine itself. According to his analysis, the current "Principles of War" that the U.S. Army uses are out-of-date by at least 150 years. They are better described as "Principles of Battle" and are, therefore, inappropriate as guidance for an army in pursuit of "Operational Art."

In his dissection of the history that brought the principles into U.S. Army doctrine, Leonhard acknowledges that he follows along a fairly well beaten track. Other historians have pointed out how the U.S. came to incorporate the principles. Where Leonhard deviates, and what makes this book worth double the cover price, is in his analysis of why each and every principle is either irrelevant, misapplied, or misunderstood as they are currently listed. His debunking of the concept of the "Offensive" through illustration of the true objective (initiative) is exemplary. It is the stuff of OPD sessions and true professional development. Agree with his theories or not, every professional should own this book and use it to develop his peers. It is a book to read, think and argue about, and in that it succeeds exactly as Leonhard intended.

In fact, about the only distractions within this book are Leonhard's awareness of his role and the lack of footnotes and bibliography. The first is evident throughout the text as he acknowledges that some of these views and theories will likely offend a segment of his peers and superiors. While this may be true, and though Leonhard takes some perhaps justifiable delight in tweaking a few doctrinaire noses, there is really very little to be gained

from the inclusion of this in the text. It may work counter to his intent as some junior or future leaders read his book before they become truly knowledgeable or committed to the current doctrine, and through his comments become aware that there is (or was) some dispute over the validity of his vision.

As for the need for additional documentation, one should recognize from the outset that this is not a book filled with stuffy academic prose, nor should it be. Leonhard writes in an easy, almost conversational style. Moreover, much of what he presents is the creation of his own very fertile mind, and as such requires no documentation. My criticism is not intended to change any of those attributes, rather to supplement them. A more complete bibliography and some explanatory footnotes embedded in the text could go a long way towards creating the next generation of theorists in a future release of this book.

All in all, this was a good read. Though not every one of his new principles is flawless in this reader's opinion, they are good starting points for doctrinal reform and more than any other American military theorist presents elsewhere. The book, readily available from all on-line booksellers if not carried by your local bookstore, is a bargain at twice the retail price.

ROBERT L. BATEMAN  
CPT, Infantry  
West Point, N.Y.

**The Three Meter Zone** by CSM J.D. Pendry, Presidio Press, Novato, Calif., 1999, 230 pages, \$24.95 (hardback).

"The three meter zone" is the zone of the first-line noncommissioned leader. It is the zone of day-after-day, in-the-face, hands-on leadership. It is the most critical leadership zone; if what is done within the zone is done with common sense and high standards, the product will be an outstanding soldier. If what is done within the zone is done poorly and to low standards, the product will be an elimination action or, even worse, an unmotivated, untrained, unfit soldier who is merely marking time until ETS. As our Army is suffering from dramatically high attrition rates among first-term soldiers, CSM Pendry's short book is both timely and useful. He clearly explains how first-line leaders can develop themselves and their leadership style, and how they can lead their soldiers to success. I recommend this book be read by sergeants and by company-grade officers. I encourage all battalion and brigade commanders to add it to their unit's professional reading list.

CSM Pendry focuses first on the leader, and explains how he developed his own leader-

ship style. He shows how he changed many of his opinions over the years, and how he critically examined his values to develop a solid foundation for his leadership style. He includes an interesting discussion of the need for counseling of the battalion CSM by the battalion commander, which can be read with profit by every NCO who intends to become a "command team" member. He relates that it was crucial to his own development to simply sit down and write out what the Army values mean to him (he includes, but goes beyond, LDRSHIP). It was not easy for him to do, but when finished, he had his position, he knew where he was going, and he knew how he planned to get there. Another concept he found useful was the "personal battle focus," his own mission essential tasks, means of assessing where he was, and plan to get where he wanted to be. CSM Pendry emphasizes the critical importance of *being the example* of what we want our soldiers to be — never easy, but absolutely essential to success within the three-meter zone.

In the second half of his book, CSM Pendry focuses on standards and discipline for soldiers — knowing them, respecting and rewarding them, motivating them, training them, and physically training them. The longest and most important of these sections covers "knowing them." Here, CSM Pendry emphasizes that different styles must be used for different people, with the goal of moving the soldier out of the three-meter zone of constant supervision and detailed instructions, into the "fifty" or "one-hundred meter" zones of increased responsibility and autonomy. Readers will find his comments on the need to know and be partners with civilian employees, on the need to welcome newly promoted NCOs into the corps, and on the need to communicate with and participate in low-profile events with soldiers to be very thought-provoking.

Finally, every leader should read his comments concerning how too many NCOs and company grade officers have "willed" the Single Soldier Initiatives for Quality of Life to fail; he correctly indicts many leaders for willfully failing to support the program and our own soldiers as the best of them try to improve their style of life.

CSM Pendry has no magical formulas for leaders. He has thought critically about how he leads; he has improved as a leader by applying his insights. Read this book, take up his challenge to critically examine ourselves and our styles. We can become masters of the "three-meter zone" as well. The entire Army will benefit.

CSM DAVID L. LADY  
Command Sergeant Major  
U.S. Army Armor Center