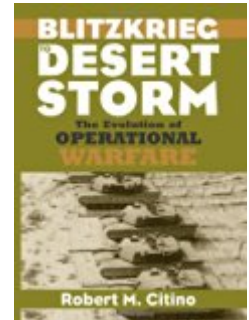


**Robert M. Citino.** *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004. x + 424 pp. \$39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7006-1300-7.



**Reviewed by** William Story

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The collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 stunned military historians. At a crucial moment, in the weeks and months after Saddam's fall when the invasion was becoming the occupation, accomplished historians suspended critical analysis of the situation to publish glowing accounts of the campaign.[1] Culminating their stories on April 9, 2003 (the high-water mark for the invasion when Saddam fled the American onslaught), these authors discounted the occupation's mounting challenges to recount a historic triumph. In *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare*, Robert M. Citino joins those who toasted success in lieu of weighing what it meant to invade a desert and occupy an Arab country riven by sectarian strife. Citino has long emphasized the importance of context, the difficulty of applying a model of previous successes to new situations, and the often-frustrating legacies of so-called victories. In most of *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm*, Citino continues to develop those same themes in analyzing far-flung conflicts and synthesizing theory and doctrine. His sixty pages of notes attest to quality work, and make valuable reading in their own right. In the final two chap-

ters, however, the book points to isolated combats as proof of scientific progress in the profession of American arms. Citino closes his work with an error-filled description of the march to Baghdad that validates General Tommy Franks's declaration of a "fast and final" campaign.

The first five chapters are Clausewitzian surveys of miscalculation and chance in which military success is so occasional that it demands the greatest of care and imposes humility on any who would take it for granted. Chapter 1 abridges Citino's earlier examinations of interwar German Army doctrine and training, and modern armies' disappointing attempts to fight industrialized wars efficiently, studies that launched his well-deserved reputation for brilliant analysis.[2] For decades, decisive victory was a chimera; but Heinz Guderian and other German generals solved the quandaries posed by new technologies to reap triumphs between 1939 and 1941. In chapter 2, the Wehrmacht's success united Hitler's enemies and led to larger difficulties that sapped German strength and initiative with catastrophic results. Citino turns to Allied tactics in chapter 3,

considering how British, Russian, and American commanders tried to replicate the Wehrmacht's campaigns. Repeatedly, national circumstances shaped each country's military efforts more than the notion of blitzkrieg, and the price of victory was a war of attrition.

After 1945, the Wehrmacht's early performance remained the grail of professional excellence, and would-be Guderians have ever since imagined themselves leading unstoppable armored columns to martial glory. In practice, even victories have often been Pyrrhic due to war's exorbitant costs. In chapter 4, Citino turns to Korea--a stalemate--as an under-appreciated example of how armies fight, what war is, and what it yields. The 1953 ceasefire's ambiguous non-victory left the belligerents uncertain what lessons to draw from the bloodshed. On the other hand, Korea's dramatic reversals; complex operations; infantry tactics; fast movements; alternatively strained and abundant logistics; hard fighting and slow diplomacy offer considerable material for studying modern war. Moreover, Korea's unresolved division underscores the limits of what operational warfare can achieve.

As in Korea, military success in the Arab-Israeli wars was less than definitive, and the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s was a futile curse. In 1971, however, India's campaign against Pakistan was decisive and quick. Contemporary observers extolled India's "blitzkrieg" tactics, but Citino argues persuasively that policy, strategy, timing, planning, and execution cumulatively made a decisive victory not only possible, but likely. Without taking anything away from the Indian accomplishment, the result turned on India's numerous advantages overwhelming Pakistan's numerous disadvantages. Perhaps most important, Pakistan preferred India's limited object--East Pakistani independence--to continued fighting. In Citino's view, India's 1971 success deserves study, but singular circumstances make the operation a case study, not a model.

Given the prudence that permeates Citino's writings, his philosophical transformation in the last two chapters is an enigma. It begins with an inexplicable passage in which Citino sets up a straw man and calls it Russell Weigley, attributing ideas to the eminent historian that Weigley explicitly rejected. According to Citino, Weigley's mistakes were common ones. For example, Weigley reduced American strategy to "gathering overwhelming force," destroying enemy armies, and forcing the enemy's unconditional surrender (p. 226). Further, Citino says, Weigley misinterpreted Ulysses S. Grant as an unsubtle butcher (p. 227). Citino lays himself the task of correcting these and others of Weigley's mistakes. The problem with Citino's assertions is that Weigley argued, in his seminal *American Way of War*, (that multiple tensions have roiled Americans' Efforts to define coherent strategies. As the nation grew and its enemies and the world changed, many American strategists desired and sought the enemy's unconditional surrender as the *sine qua non* of victory. In practice, warfare's tremendous costs and risks served to limit its use and its power of decision. In discussing Grant, Weigley argued that the general's reputation as a butcher was misconceived, and he praised Grant's operational brilliance, his ability to "master the flow of a long series of events," and the 1863 Vicksburg campaign as a masterpiece of maneuver that spared lives.[3] Weigley's analysis and Citino's comments on it are irreconcilable.

The missteps continue as Citino considers Vietnam, Desert Storm, American strategy in the 1990s, and the march on Baghdad. He begins by dismissing context and complications, and instead plotting a handful of events as points on a grand trajectory of upward progress. He turns Vietnam into an operational success by focusing on the American response to the Tet offensive, which entailed ten weeks of combat in 1968. Desert Storm validated the Army's operational development, but positive trends came under threat in the 1990s when Army doctrine writers introduced Op-

erations Other Than War and the Army became bogged down in Balkan peacekeeping missions. It was a time when policymakers and generals were muddling through responses to new world disorders, but Citino berates their efforts while ignoring their problems. Citino continues to evoke Clausewitz, but he embraces certainty, lamenting the Army's "post-1991 wrong turn" of promoting stability operations at the expense of heavy forces. Regarding humanitarian crises and the anarchy they spawn, Citino asserts "there are plenty of other organizations that do that sort of work, and probably do it better than the army" (p. 294).

Citino closes with a victorious rendering of the Third Infantry Division's march on Baghdad in 2003 as the most recent proof of what operational warfare and armored forces can accomplish. Using superlatives and hyperbole for effect, he offers the qualification that the victory's meaning is not yet clear. Some things, however, were clear immediately after Saddam fell: American supply lines were tenuous, American forces were exhausted, and American strategy lacked direction. In *Quest for Decisive Victory*, Citino cited such problems as the reasons armies frequently fail to pursue routed enemies to their final destruction. An observer schooled in Citino's canon would have seen Saddam's fall as a moment of dangerous opportunity, but Citino welcomed progress triumphant.

Despite these criticisms, *Blitzkrieg* is a valuable survey of wars and military theory, and I recommend it to historians and officers seeking a concise recounting of diverse conflicts. Citino offers insight, useful comparisons, and points of departure for vigorous debates on the structuring and use of military force, and a case study on how examining the past may not illuminate the present.

#### Notes

[1]. See, John Keegan, *The Iraq War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004); and Williamson Mur-

ray and Robert H. Scales Jr., *The Iraq War: A Military History* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003).

[2]. Robert M. Citino, *The Path to Blitzkrieg: Doctrine and Training in the German Army, 1920-1939* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999); and *Quest for Decisive Victory: From Stalemate to Blitzkrieg in Europe, 1899-1940* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2002).

[3]. Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 139.

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