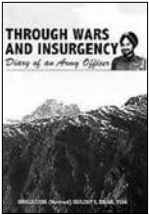


# Book Reviews

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## **Through Wars and Insurgency: Diary of an Army Officer**

*Brigadier (Retired) Kuldip S. Brar, VSM*

Pentagon Press 247 pages, Rs 595

Review by **Rahul Chutani**

An autobiography aptly titled, “Through Wars and Insurgency : Diary of an Army Officer” by Brigadier (Retired)Kuldip S. Brar, VSM is a very lucidly written and easy to read account of his life inter twined with some great moments in the history of India. The author joined the Army as an Other Rank and was subsequently commissioned in 4 DOGRA. During the course of his career, he was actively involved in the wars of 1962 and 1971 as also saw insurgency in multiple locations. He retired as Brigadier after 33 years of Service and the account in his autobiography spreads over a span of seven decades.

The officer has beautifully narrated the events in his life starting from early years in Malaya and the experience and impact of the Japanese invasion on his mind. The author also briefly covers the INA trials as also partition days. He also brings out how twice they were up stick from their home in Malaya and subsequently from their home in Punjab, now in Pakistan as a result of Partition. The crux of the book, is however, the Battle of Walong which the author had fought as a young officer and the capture of Sehjra enclave by his Brigade where he was the Brigade Major.

The lessons brought out by the author, reflecting on the Battle of Walong of 1962, need a mention as he says, “ ...fighting in the twentieth century and an important lesson that stood out was the need for not only physical courage which alludes to personal bravery in the face of the enemy, but also moral courage

especially among senior commanders, to fearlessly air their views based on their professional expertise when faced with unreasonable and unattainable missions set by the political leadership, even at the risk of dismissal from service.”

Some other lessons from the Battle of Walong brought out by the author mention how the plan for defence of Walong was flawed, how our forces were clueless of the concept of operations, strengths and weaknesses of the Chinese Army and how despite warnings from Generals, our leaders had ignored the warnings and not create a requisite security apparatus. The wounds of Walong seem to surface as the author writes, “ The warriors of Walong felt like Field Marshal Slim’s Forgotten Army in World War II”, when he talks of valour of so many of his colleagues going unrecognised, when it came to honours and awards. As a passing note, the author also brings out the joy that any soldier would experience on meeting colleagues who were presumed dead but resurfaced alive.

Events of 1971 war, when he was the BM of the Brigade that captured Sehjra enclave are written in a fast moving manner. The script makes fast reading and relives the tension and action in good detail. How the battles have moments of confusion, crisis, getting out of communication with commanders, enemy shelling, and loss of good men prior to eventual victory have been well covered.

The officer was selected to attend the Staff College in Australia and the personal anecdotes of the time he spent there as a forced bachelor as the government did not pay for families to accompany for the Australian Staff Course brings out the apathy in our policies as a Nation. Even when the officer, on his own managed, to get a job for his wife, based on merit, he still had to leave his children behind simply displays how poorly the Defence officers were paid. Also the officer mentions the fact that how he and the officer from Pakistan were always kept in separate syndicates all throughout the course.

Towards the latter part of the book, in the chapter titled, “Formation Commander-Naoshera”, the author narrates an incident that took place, during the course of the Flag Meeting with his counterpart from Pakistan. He has mentioned how an attempt was made by the Pakistani Brigadier to subvert his loyalty, by indulging in loose talk which had religious overtures and how the author extracted a virtual confession in writing along with the Pakistani officer’s signatures admitting unprovoked firing carried out by them on the LC.

The book also has a brief account of certain events and planning in the Army HQs which makes an interesting read, particularly the experiences of the author in the Operational Logistics and also in the Military Training Directorates. He has

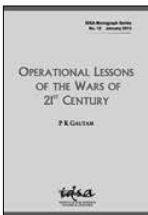
covered an account of the brilliant execution of Brass Tacks as also the Checker Board series of Wargames.

Post retirement the author was deeply involved in the camps established in the state of Punjab, to wean away the youth from joining the militant cadres. He has covered his experience of heading the Theh Kanjla camp in great detail which makes a very informative read.

The book is written in a manner which is just apt for fast reading and the author has interjected his family details, photographs and sketches intermeshed with the historical events of our nation, to which he was a witness to or where he played an active part in. The events covered are relatively contemporary and important when compared to the various encyclopedias of Military History that don our libraries of distant lands and unknown forces. The chapters on Battle of Walong, Capture of Sehjra, the anecdotes from his experiences in a friendly foreign nation while attending the Staff Course, tenures at Army HQs and flag meeting with his enemy counterpart on the Line of Control, make it a must read for all young officers of the organisation and those interested in Military History.

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## **Operational Lessons of the Wars of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

*Col PK Gautam (Retd)*

**IDSA Monograph Serial 12 of 2013**

**Reviewed by Col MS Shergill**

PK Gautam's monograph on Operational Lessons Of The Wars Of 21<sup>st</sup> Century , is an eminently well researched publication which provides a wealth of historical data and insights into these wars. The author has covered the recent wars in Iraq, Libya, Georgia, Lebanon and Afghanistan and offers a fresh perspective into the operational dimension of war, the relevant lessons and the insights that can be discerned from them.

The book has been divided into well defined chapters with each chapter covering the war in a different country, adequately supported by good historical data and an insightful assessment of each war, A separate chapter has been dedicated to the emerging trend of cyber war and its implications on future warfare. As the author brings out, the monograph is focused on the operational

lessons of war and not on the political or strategic ones or those which amplify various concepts of international relations.

The book begins with an assessment of the trends of warfare where the author succinctly brings out that though the *nature* of war is unchanging, its *character* changes with time and technology. This highlights the importance of the study of ancient classics on *nature* of war by Kautilya, Clausewitz and SunTzu even though the *character of war* is constantly changing due to the improvement in technology and Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA).

Gautam analyses the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the same chapter as there are many commonalities in both these wars hence the lessons drawn are common .The indispensable role of the Infantry during the contact stage of battle has been verified in these wars, putting to rest any doubts raised by the increasing use of technology by the RMA. The inescapable need for “boots on ground” or “infantry renaissance” has been amply demonstrated in these wars .The author emphasizes that inspite of Network Centric Warfare and the RMA, making the organization non hierarchical , the role of the individual leader still remains paramount ; it is infact made harder with wider dispersion and small team operations in modern conflicts.

The Lebanon War ( Israel – Hezbollah) has been covered in great detail , starting from the events that led to the war to the lessons learnt. The author brings out the negative “plasma effect” on Israeli ground force commanders wherein they rely more on the plasma computer screens at the cost of actual ground assessment. He also highlights the Israeli affliction for imitating US military thinking leading to an over reliance on ‘off the shelf’ American doctrines as against original thinking.

The Russo – Georgian War (2008) has been discussed at length wherein the author compares the 5 day war of August 2008 to the Sino– Vietnam war of 1979, because, just as China had initiated a major military modernization plan due to the lessons learnt in 1979, Russia too adopted deep and radical reforms in its military setup after this conflict. One of the reforms adopted was to prune the top heavy Russian military to improve efficiency. The author opines that the Indian Army, after the AV Singh report implementation on rank up gradation has become top heavy thus adversely impeding its war fighting capability.

The chapter on Libyan War (2011) traces the origins of the attack by the Britain and France led international mission on Gaddafi’s forces. A major lesson learnt is the emergence of civil war in the country after the military operations, just as it had happened in Iraq and Afghanistan, leading to even greater unrest

in these territories .The author also highlights the Responsibility To Protect (R2P) by the international military force and the need by the military on use of force keeping in view the integrity and sovereignty of the state.

In a separate and well researched chapter on Cyber War, the author covers the multifaceted and complex nature of this emerging aspect of 21<sup>st</sup> century wars wherein the increasingly network centric and wired militaries are becoming more and more vulnerable to attacks. Various examples of cyber warfare in recent times have been included and a roadmap covering varied scenarios has been recommended for the future to prevent against any cyber attacks.

Having drawn extensively from primary and secondary sources, the author provides a dispassionate and exhaustive compilation in a separate chapter on “Summary Of Lessons” in which he sums up the common lessons of all the modern wars in a lucid manner .The monograph assumes significance in the present geostrategic order and PK Gautam’s analysis and recommendations merit serious attention.

The book will provide a ready reckoner for all related future studies in this field since it is a meticulously researched and a very well presented endeavour. The IDSA monograph is eminently readable for it’s fresh insights and will be a valuable addition to all military libraries.

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**On the German art of War: TRUPPENFUHRUNG**  
*Translated and edited by Bruce Condell and David T Zabeck*

Lynne Rienner Publishers Rs 995

Reviewed by Lt Vijay Thakur

The manual ‘Truppenfuhrung’, laid out in twenty three chapters, comprehensively covers the art of war that was practised by the German Army from 1934 till the end of World War II in 1944. The superior operational and tactical doctrine adopted by the German Army led to stupendous German successes in the first two years of World War II, incl the conquest of Poland, France and also the first month of

invasion of the erstwhile Soviet Union. The speed with which the German tank units cut through the Polish defences resulted in giving a new name to the lexicon of warfare: blitzkrieg, meaning the 'lightning war'. The magnitude and speed of German victories in the summer of 1941 were indeed astounding. Between June and October of 1941, a series of encirclements of Russian armies was carried out by the Wehrmacht on a scale hitherto unrecorded in history, resulting in more than two million prisoners of war.

The main reasons for the collapse of Allies in 1940-42 were superior German tactics and doctrine. Blitzkrieg that overwhelmed France, won crushing victories at Kiev and Kharkov in Russia and on a smaller scale, won victory in the Western Desert at such battles as Gazala, Tobruk in 1942. The Blitzkrieg was based on superior German doctrine which envisaged the integration of air attacks, tanks and infantry, with emphasis on speed, penetration and concentration of fire power. Herein lies the importance of this manual, which brilliantly covers the essential aspects of the doctrine practised by the Germany Army during World War II. It can be said with good reason that many German generals went into battle and succeeded with the pistol in one hand and 'Truppenfuhrung' in the other.

To appreciate fully the significance of Truppenfuhrung which has remained untouched by the scholars at large, it is pertinent to know about the three German generals who formulated it. German Ludwig Beck, who joined the Army in 1898 held numerous important assignments till he retired in 1938. Post retirement, he wrote a number of treatise on military subjects. General Stulpnagel received several decorations for his distinguished service during both World Wars. General Werner Von Fritsch while excelling in military history and tactics, served with the Military History Division of the German staff during 1913-14. It is interesting to note that the editors have dedicated this book to the memory of General Beck, one of the three authors of Truppenfuhrung.

Truppenfuhrung was formulated after due deliberations by few minds who expressed their views how the war should be executed. This German doctrine focussing on combined arms and manoeuvre warfare was not meant to be applied across the board, instead the German hierarchy and the staff were expected to use their discretion in applying/updating it. For example the concept of combined cavalry/motorised force which was found unviable on ground was eventually discarded from the doctrine. The doctrine has been very well translated into english and edited by David Zabecki and Bruce Condell, thus making it more easily accessible than the original German version. It is important

to mention here that Truppenfuhrung also influenced the 1940 and 1944 editions of US Army Field Manual FM 100-5. Even the British and the Russians updated their own doctrine taking many inputs from Truppenfuhrung. The book is laid out in two parts, part one contains chapters about various tactics at different stages, like recce, security, marches and so on where as part two deals with tactics involving ways of Armed Combat Vehicles, Air Force and Air defence Units. The editor's introduction, which precedes the first chapter gives out a synopsis and a overall analysis of the book in an interesting manner. The chapter devoted to introduction is particularly significant not only because it sets the stage for this brilliant manual but also because it describes certain underlying fundamental principles on which depends success in warfare. It may be mentioned here that though the methods and the resources employed for war may have been different through the centuries, but the principles are the same.

The most commendable part of the manual is its opening chapter which describes the characteristics and requirements of good military leadership, an important key element on the battlefield in a very lucid manner. Applying the lessons of this chapter, excellent military leadership was displayed by the great armoured German leaders such as Mainstein, Kleist, Guderian and Rommel at the tactical and operational level, during the World War. The chapters on 'Order of Battle' and command describe two of the very important issues of war. The book says that the mission and the situation lead to the decision of the course of action. As stated in Wedemeyer Report "Better a faulty plan or decision permeated with boldness, daring and decisiveness, than a perfect plan enmeshed in uncertainty". Once a course of action has been initiated it must be pursued with full determination and be abandoned only when there is an overriding reason to do so.

The chapters on reconnaissance, security and marches give out detailed insight into these aspects. The details pertaining to reconnaissance methods and coordination are very comprehensive wherein highlights of different methods such as aerial, photographic, ground, motorised and mounted reconnaissance are given out in an interesting manner. Guidelines pertaining to the conduct of operational as well as tactical reconnaissance are as relevant today as 70 years ago when Truppenfuhrung was initially published. The chapter on attack provides a very imaginative and practical description of various issues, such as execution of attack and combined arms coordination, assembly areas for attack, meeting engagements and conduct of attack against prepared defences. The guidelines pertaining to use of combined arms is indeed one of the important principles

of German doctrine. The portion covering the execution of attack describes in a lucid manner various aspects of coordination between the infantry, artillery and armoured elements. Different aspects pertaining to conduct are given out in a very logical and practical manner. The line of thought on 'pursuit' in the subsequent chapter as the guarantor of victory has been contested by many historians suggesting the applicability of this approach only at the tactical level.

The chapter on defence deals with the methodology of defence in different situations and discusses in detail about disengagement, withdrawal and delaying action. The concept covered in the manual was arrived at after validation by the Germans during World War I. The detailed and methodical way in which this operation of war has been covered, clearly indicates a balanced approach by the German authors towards offensive and defensive operations.

The chapter on Combat under special conditions, goes on to outline essential aspects pertaining to situations of darkness/ fog, combat in built up areas, jungles, mountains, defiles and crossing of water obstacles. Detailed and very practical tips on fighting in built up areas include exploitation of these areas in attack as well as defence and methodology of attack on the enemy inside the built up area. These guidelines hold good in the present context of counter insurgency operations that the Indian Army is currently engaged in. Similarly, useful advice on the conduct of combat in jungles (referred as combat in woods) gives out the peculiarities of jungle warfare and various points to be kept in mind while operating in jungles. Of importance are the efficacy of various weapons, advance in this type of terrain and mechanics of attack. The description about 'Partisan Warfare' to support the main force in the enemy territory through multiple raids or small scale attacks is indeed valid even today.

The successive chapters on cavalry and Armoured Combat Vehicles merits special attention, because it is here that General Beck states that the armour is no longer required to be used in support of slow-moving infantry, but is to take advantage of its own speed and weight to operate independently kilometres ahead of the advancing columns. It also envisaged the pincer movement that was widely and successfully used in first triumphant months of the German advance in 1941.

The topic of the next two chapters is Air Force and Air Defence units. Here, the author highlights the need for close coordination between air and ground elements, especially Air Defence units as a necessary condition for success. Certain guidelines for reconnaissance, fighter and bomber aircraft are given. The following chapter takes up the subjects of communications, another important



elements in any war. Though the methods of communication given in the doctrine such as carrier pigeons and messenger dogs are now outdated and irrelevant in the present context, the system of dispatch riders is still prevalent in the Indian Army. It may also be mentioned here that the chapter takes into account the emerging weapon technologies, wherein the manual talks about air-to-air communication between combat aircraft, which was not existent then.

The eighteenth chapter on Chemical Warfare, recapitulates essential aspects pertaining to the use of chemical agents. The nineteenth chapter titled 'Smoke' is devoted to various methods to make use of smoke both in offensive as well as defensive operations.

The four chapters on logistics related issues, such as Logistic Support in the area of operations, transportation, armoured trains and quartering stresses on key issues of sustenance in war. The chapter on 'quartering' describes how the units can be housed in three categories of accommodation, buildings in towns/cities, bivouacs partly in open and partly in towns and bivouacs fully in the open. The instructions cover every minute detail of quartering and is relevant even now to the modern logistician. In this regard, the mastery of German in exploitation of railways during the two World Wars has been established beyond doubt. Railways was considered by Germans as a separate arm and utilised to the optimum capacity to further their mobilisation.

Guidelines for written communications enumerated as an annexure gives out very practical and useful advice on preparation of combat reports and war diaries. Similarly the second annexure asserts essential points in preparing schematics, sketch maps, panoramic sketches and situation maps.

Lastly the 'German Analysis of US Field Service Regulations' covered as an appendix presents a detailed assessment of the US Field manual from the German point of view. The project was executed by General Franz Halder along with six distinguished and well reputed members having domain expertise in this field. The analysis came to the conclusion that the US manual FM 100-5 was a well written manual, which bore many commonalities with the German manual. This analysis is indeed worth reading. Zabecki and Condell have correctly identified the only handicap in this manual, wherein the main focus of *Truppenfuhrung* is devoted to the tactical level of war.

The problem in referring to German source as against drawing on English source is well known. Towards this end, the excellent English translation of '*Truppenfuhrung*' is a useful addition to military history. Zabecki and Condell have referred to various primary and secondary sources to carry out a detailed

analysis of the manual. The translation of ‘Truppenfuhrung’ presents the classic in a plain and comprehensive manner, recreating in the reader’s mind the essence of the German Army doctrine of war.

The tenets of German Army doctrine contained in Truppenfuhrung are equally valid even today as it was during World War II, when it was proactively applied on the battlefield. Notwithstanding the strides made in weapons and technology, the basic methodology of operations, combined arms concept and peculiarities of mission execution still remain unchanged. The students of military history, who with their easy access to the works of Clausewitz and other British/American memoirs, can now further hone their knowledge by reading the well written and detailed work of doctrine by German generals Ludwig Beck, Werner Von Fritsch and Otto Von Stulpnaegel. Truppenfuhrung is thus a book for military professionals, research scholars and historians who are keen to understand German Army doctrine for war.

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