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Angelo Codevilla and Paul Seabury, *War: Ends and Means*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2006. Pp. 382. ISBN 978-1-57488-610-8.

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Angelo Codevilla and Paul Seabury are clear about their purpose: “This book was written to open contemporary minds to the essential truths of war, lest those truths intrude of their own accord” (1). Americans, residents of the “magic kingdom,” know little of war because it little impacts their lives. After 9/11, “The inhabitants knew enough to be frightened, but not enough to understand.” This new edition of the 1989 original has been edited by Codevilla (Seabury died in 1991) and updated with an expanded treatment of “victory,” as well as new chapters on “Indirect Warfare and Terror,” post-Cold War conflicts, and the two wars in Iraq. The book is a valuable and comprehensive primer on basic issues in warfare for its targeted non-professional readers. The writing is lucid, without jargon, and can be read in sections. At every step, *War* offers multiple examples to support its conclusions, while foregrounding questions that free people must understand.

The overall architecture of the book is built from the abstract to the concrete, in four parts: How Wars Start, How Wars are Fought, How Wars End, and Wars of Our Time. The Introduction lays out seventeen “basic realities” that the authors believe the present generation needs to understand about war. The most fundamental of the book’s premises relates to the basic cause of war, which is not, contrary to the social scientists that *War* opposes, such “deterministic” factors and “generic causes” as biology, culture, arms races, balances of power, etc. Such categories do not separate “correlation from cause” and as a result cannot offer reliable predictions. Nor is it true that personal aggressiveness among citizens makes a nation more likely to go to war: “A nation of submissive robots may be more easily led to battle than one of aggressive individualists” (38). The best explanations, *War* maintains, are “voluntaristic”: wars are chosen human actions, taken for moral purposes, and war is a clash of purposes. This explanation views accidents and circumstances of necessity as causally unimportant to the choice to fight or not.

War places the responsibility for war on human beings and disavows mechanistic excuses for waging war or failing to do so when it is necessary. There is a complex relationship between the leadership of a nation and its population; a regime cannot fight a war if the population is not willing to do so. But how this works on a social and cultural level is less than clear. On the one hand, culture is not an explanation for war; neither culture nor genes, *War* maintains, changed for the Japanese after 1945 (272–3). The culture changed slowly, but the Japanese “propensity for war” changed quickly (37). On the other hand, “some cultures are indeed inherently more peaceful than others” (36). *War* is clear that the “causes” for which men fight—and their moral purposes—must be defeated, by “stripping hope from the enemy’s causes” (55–6). But missing here is a firm recognition of ideology and its role in the waging of war. History suggests that cultures dominated by certain systems of

ideas or moral goals are indeed inherently more warlike, and can be led very quickly by an ambitious leadership to a violent expression of the dominant ideas of a given culture.

War consistently focuses on the proper goal of a war—to establish peace, with due emphasis on the varieties of peace, from the peace of the grave to the peace of a dictatorship. In every case, peace is a condition that follows from a certain “satisfaction”: “peace is kind of satisfaction or tranquility in the order of things” (15). For example, in the nineteenth century, the British ruled Afghanistan, “never totally but with much less trouble than the Soviets” in the 1980s. “The explanation is simple. The Afghans never saw the British as a threat to what they hold dearest: Islam They saw the Soviet occupation as a mortal threat to their immortal souls” (28–9). But does this not demand an ideological explanation? Is it not the ideas of the Afghans that allow them to value Islam as they do—and the ideas of the British and the Soviets that motivated them to act as they did? And how would this relate to *War*’s derivation of the western conception of peace from the Christian tradition, which “values peace so highly because peace is conducive to spiritual life” (16)? Christians have fought over their own and others’ immortal souls for centuries—and Muslims have a tradition that seeks the spiritual life. Was peace really the “primordial goal of Christian statecraft” when Christians came to rule the Roman state? Is not the separation of church from statecraft a political requirement of peace?

There are multiple issues at stake here. *War* maintains, for instance, that because deterministic explanations have failed to distinguish correlation from cause, they have failed to predict any war or peace (36). Yet *War* also affirms that the very attempt to make predictions is flawed: “history’s clearest teaching about war is its utter unpredictability” (11). Part of the problem is that *War* does not offer an adequate alternative to the “deterministic” explanations it rejects. It substitutes “regimes” as the difficulty: people of all sorts “are animated by particular regimes that call forth certain human qualities and suppress others” (37). The regime is more than the government: it is “the persons who set society’s tone, its habits, who enjoy its best fruits, and who make it what it is” (332). For Iraq under Saddam Hussein, this was “the ruling Ba’ath Party, which was coterminous with the elite of the country’s Sunni Muslim majority—a bare minimum of some two thousand people” (332). But why did the majority accept this regime and allow it to set the society’s “tone”? What exactly are the “qualities” that regimes elicit in some cultures and not others, and why don’t people necessarily embrace peace when a regime is removed?

One of the sharpest conclusions in this book is that victory is the *sine qua non* of peace. Indeed, but why? If the problem of just war is “a problem of regimes” (247), then why didn’t replacing a regime necessarily alter a nation’s “propensity to war”? Why did Germany, whose regime was replaced in 1918, launch a new war twenty years later, while Japan, whose emperor (and many of its politicians) remained in place after 1945, did not? Japan’s culture, *War* maintains, has been the same after as it had been before the war; it was “turned” to commerce by MacArthur in a “cultural conquest” because he induced the Japanese to “want” this (272–3). But why do they now “want” this? If it is “impossible to define peace” because it is a “kind of satisfaction or tranquility in the order of things” (15, 274–5), then why are the Japanese now satisfied? How did Allied victories in 1945 end the ideologies—and the claims to territory, vengeance, and the like—that had brought about a continental war between France and Germany? The authors omit to discuss the ideas that

led the Germans and the Japanese to make war in the 1930s and to reject it for two generations since.

War is explicit about the need to specify objectives as the only way to pierce the “fog of war”: “Anyone entering the fog is best advised to fix his eye on the only reliable compass, victory” (70). The “only reliable guide through the fog of war is an understanding of one’s own purposes” (304–5); the “fog” is itself “the result of the unpredictable interaction of incalculable human factors” (63). “Purpose is the very essence of war” (43), and only with reference to a purpose can we derive and understand our objectives. Because war is a clash of purposes, it is necessarily unpredictable, and a battle is “uncontrollable chaos” (59). Precise planning, akin to Robert McNamara’s counting of the number of howitzers the United States would need in the next war, is the wrong approach (68). The only way to pierce the fog, *War* maintains, is to focus on victory, based on knowledge of the enemy, with a firm understanding of the ends to be achieved. Granted, such a focus is crucially important, but, paradoxically, *War* also complicates any understanding of the causes and goals that should motivate nations. It is surely easier to say that we should focus on victory as our purpose than to determine which regimes we should target and why, and what we should do after they fall.

War’s analyses of events in our own time—the Soviet Empire, the Balkan wars, Somalia, and America’s two forays into Iraq—should be required reading. In particular, the discussion of how ill-defined or undefined American purposes led to failure in Iraq in 1991—precisely because it was impossible to derive proper objectives without those purposes—connects the book’s theoretical conclusions with the practice of war. “In short, the U.S. government never formulated a set of objectives that, if achieved, would have satisfied the purposes for which it entered the war” (307). As a result, the American army “killed thousands of people who meant little or nothing to the issue of the war,” the Iraqi faceless soldiers, while leaving alive “the one man who meant everything,” Saddam Hussein (317). Since America had “no political or military weaknesses, Saddam could rely only on the muddleheaded thinking of its leaders” (310).

War takes a particularly contentious position on the issue of terror today, downplaying the importance of ideas and claiming Islamic fundamentalism has little effect: “Political circumstances more than religion were responsible for the rise of religious terrorism against both locals and westerners” (189). The unification of anti-western political movements with Islamists—including attempts by secular regimes to “put on an Islamic face”—has both strengthened these movements and watered-down their religious essence. The claim that Islamic fundamentalism is the cause of terrorism is a “fallacious conclusion” (192) that has led us to chase Osama bin Laden through the mountains rather than ending the regimes that threaten us.

But the question remains: why did those regimes “put on an Islamic face,” including scathing anti-American rhetoric, if not to appeal to the religious beliefs of their populations? *War* is certainly right to observe that the U.S. policy of targeting individual terrorists while allowing regimes to escape is wrong and that the fall of bad regimes—in Berlin and Moscow—was the *sine qua non* of peace (343). But the fall of those regimes was accompanied by an identification of the evil ideologies—Nazism and Communism—that underlay them. If history is any guide, until and unless the ideology behind Islamist terrorism is

identified, the fall of any particular regime will only lead to a new one—as the fall of one Kaiser in 1918 led to a new Kaiser in 1933.

From the political and material conditions of war, to the differences between land, sea, and air battle, to propaganda, intelligence, and political warfare, a wealth of issues here bear upon present-day war making. To take just one example, *War* does a superb job of demystifying nuclear weapons. Contrary to popular understanding, nuclear warfare would not have been a matter of pushing a button and annihilating the world. To stop a Soviet land invasion of Europe, thousands of weapons would be needed, with varying levels of power and with different applications. The purpose of nuclear testing is not to make bigger bombs, but to make them smaller and more precise. “Between the 1960s and the 1990s,” the U.S. Army had some four thousand nuclear artillery rounds in Europe alone, and nuclear land mines made the Soviet-Turkish border the safest part of NATO defenses. Such weapons restored the advantage to the defense in ground combat, which also offered an “enormous incentive to shoot first” (134–6). As in many areas touched on in this book, experts will find these issues familiar, but most Americans will not; the authors have done a valuable service by collecting them in a single volume.

This book is by no means a militaristic treatise: it condemns, for instance, certain Allied actions in World War II, in some cases stretching the evidence. Japan, it is claimed, was “asking to surrender since April 1945” (132), an (undocumented) assertion not born out by statements of Japanese leaders at the time. Strategic bombing “meant the outright murder of millions” and was pursued by the Roosevelt administration because it was “overcome by hate, and irrational and unjust desire to punish rather than to win” (236–7). Scrutiny of FDR’s relationship with Stalin is welcome, and *War* rightly challenges its impact on the conduct of the war, but leaves open certain question of ends and means, and why these murderous methods led to long-term peace. The book integrates the moral and the practical here—the military goal of killing those “most likely to stop the killing” is both ethically responsible and practical. But why were the practical results of such actions in World War II as good as they were? Perhaps it was necessary—despite the horror—to inflict such pain on the population that had elected Hitler, and built his gas chambers, in order to crush the desire for war.

The comprehensiveness of this book spurs such questions, and readers should take my criticisms as constructively intended. One hates to interject a problem with the final production of such a book, but it is necessary. The index has been neither properly compiled nor checked. As the book progresses, page references in the index go increasingly askew: for example, “Japan, intentions of, 231–32” is actually at 233–4. There is no entry for Hiroshima, which appears on pages II, 132, 236, and perhaps elsewhere, although there is one for Dresden (listed at 235, actually 237). Carthage, listed at 267 (actually 269), is unlisted at page II. The Introduction has not been properly indexed. One hopes for correction of such blemishes in subsequent printings of this important book.