

# THE SWORD'S OTHER EDGE

Trade-offs  
in the Pursuit of  
Military Effectiveness

EDITED BY DAN REITER



*"The Sword's Other Edge* presents a path-breaking new perspective on how states and non-state actors pursue military effectiveness, focusing on trade-offs they often must confront. Previous work focusses either on gains or losses in effectiveness that technologies and tactical innovations provide. This new volume presents a coherent approach to understanding the net effect on effectiveness of changes in the ways that states employ military power. The authors provide insights into critical dimensions of contemporary foreign policy issues, including drone strikes, military robotics, counterinsurgency, ISIS, nuclear weapons, rising military threats from Russia, and others. The chapters and examples are filled with rich historical depth, including case studies of World War II, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Korean War, and others, as well as quantitative analyses of the ongoing Philippine insurgency, and of all conventional wars since 1800. A must-read for students, policy makers, and concerned citizens."

Allan C. Stam, Dean and Professor, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia

*"How should states employ force? Eschewing simplistic arguments, this fascinating volume studies the trade-offs militaries inevitably struggle with. From financing, to force mix, to tactics, the chapters show us that there is no free lunch in war; every choice has costs and benefits. Policymakers would do well to heed the lessons in this volume."*

Jacob N. Shapiro, Professor of Politics and International Affairs, Princeton University

*"The Sword's Other Edge* is a must-read for students of war. For starters, it does a fine job showing that military effectiveness is a function of a host of different factors, which are nicely catalogued in the book. Moreover, it makes clear that maximizing military effectiveness often involves significant costs, and thus policymakers and strategists need to think hard about the resulting trade-offs. Toward that end, Reiter and his fellow authors provide a first-rate framework for analyzing the various trade-offs that arise when a country tries to employ its fighting forces in the most effective way possible."

John J. Mearsheimer, R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago

**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

ISBN 978-1-108-40413-6



9 781108 404136 >

# REITER'S THEORY OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

CAMBRIDGE



# The Sword's Other Edge

Trade-offs in the Pursuit of Military  
Effectiveness

Edited by

DAN REITER

*Emory University*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108416726](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108416726)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108241786

© Cambridge University Press 2017

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2017

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Reiter, Dan, 1967– editor of compilation.

Title: The sword's other edge : tradeoffs in the pursuit of military effectiveness / edited by Dan Reiter, Emory University.

Other titles: Tradeoffs in the pursuit of military effectiveness

Description: New York : Cambridge University Press, [2017] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017023082 | ISBN 9781108416726 (alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Military readiness. | Military policy – Political aspects. | Military art and science – Case studies.


Classification: LCC UA10 .S867 2017 | DDC 355/.0332–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017023082>

ISBN 978-1-108-41672-6 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-40413-6 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.



## *The Sword's Other Edge*

This book is the first work to build a conceptual framework describing how the pursuit of military effectiveness can present military and political trade-offs, such as undermining political support for the war, creating new security threats, and how seeking to improve effectiveness in one aspect can reduce effectiveness in other aspects. Here are new ideas about military effectiveness, covering topics such as military robotics, nuclear weapons, insurgency, war finance, and public opinion. The study applies these ideas to World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the 1973 October War as well as to ongoing conflicts and public policy debates, such as the war on terror, drone strikes, ISIS, Russian aggression against Ukraine, US–Chinese–Russian nuclear competitions, and the Philippines insurgency, among others. Both scholarly and policy-oriented readers will gather new insights into the political dimensions of military power and the complexities of trying to grow military power.

DAN REITER is the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Political Science at Emory University. He is the award-winning author of three books, *Crucible of Beliefs: Learning, Alliances and World Wars*, *Democracies at War* (with Allan C. Stam), and *How Wars End*, as well as dozens of articles about the causes, prosecution, and termination of war, alliances, domestic politics and international relations, nuclear weapons, terrorism, and other topics. He is a recipient of the Karl Deutsch Award, given annually to the leading scholar of international relations under age forty or within ten years of having received a PhD.



## *Contributors*

**Dr. Filippo Andreatta** teaches International Politics and Strategic Studies at the University of Bologna and is Director of IP LAB in Trento.

**Dr. Emanuele Castelli** is Assistant Professor in Political Science at the University of Parma.

**Dr. Joseph Felter** is a fellow at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University.

**Dr. Jeffrey A. Friedman** is Assistant Professor of Government at Dartmouth College.

**Dr. Michael C. Horowitz** is Professor of Political Science and Associate Director of Perry World House at the University of Pennsylvania.

**Dr. Jason Lyall** is Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of the Political Violence FieldLab at Yale University.

**Dr. Dan Reiter** is the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Political Science at Emory University.

**Dr. Caitlin Talmadge** is Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the George Washington University.

**Dr. Lorenzo Zambernardi** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the University of Bologna.

**Dr. Rosella Cappella Zielinski** is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Boston University.



## *Acknowledgments*

This project originated within the activities of the Research Center on International Politics and Conflict Resolution, created in 2012 by the Bruno Kessler Foundation (FBK) in Trento, Italy. Earlier drafts of most of the chapters of this volume were originally presented at the Military Effectiveness Research Seminar in Trento, June 23–25, 2015. We would like to acknowledge the generous financial support FBK provided for the seminar. We also are deeply grateful for the many thoughtful comments provided at the seminar by Joseph Grieco, Tyson Chatagnier, Ted Hopf, and Pascal Vennesson. Our great thanks as well to Moira Osti for all her able logistical efforts.

# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page vii</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>x</i>
1 Confronting Trade-offs in the Pursuit of Military Effectiveness DAN REITER	1
2 Force Protection and Its Trade-offs EMANUELE CASTELLI AND LORENZO ZAMBERNARDI	31
3 War Finance and Military Effectiveness ROSELLA CAPPELLA ZIELINSKI	58
4 Forced to Fight: Coercion, Blocking Detachments, and Trade-offs in Military Effectiveness JASON LYALL	88
5 Sources of Military Effectiveness in Counterinsurgency: Evidence from the Philippines JOSEPH FELTER	126
6 Military Robotics, Autonomous Systems, and the Future of Military Effectiveness MICHAEL C. HOROWITZ	161
7 Too Much of a Good Thing? Conventional Military Effectiveness and the Dangers of Nuclear Escalation CAITLIN TALMADGE	197

8	Making Trade-offs without Assessing Probabilities: The Costs and Benefits of Vague Information in National Security Decision Making	227
	JEFFREY A. FRIEDMAN	
9	Conclusion: The Complexity of Military Effectiveness	254
	FILIPPO ANDREATTA	
	<i>Index</i>	268

## *Figures*

5.1 Average rebel casualties per operational incident, 2001–2008	<i>page</i> 145
5.2 Average government casualties per operational incident, 2001–2008	147
5.3 Average civilian casualties per operational incident, 2001–2008	149
6.1 Relationship between military robotics and autonomy	164



## *Tables*

4.1 Coercion and the War-Fighting Trade-offs of Blocking Detachments	<i>page 97</i>
5.1 Select Characteristics of Philippine Insurgent Groups	138
5.2 Comparing Building Blocks of Effective COIN Forces	141
5.3 Average Battle Deaths per Incident from Counterinsurgency Operations in the Philippines, 2001–2008	144
6.1 Military Robotic Systems Matrix	170
6.2 Elements of Military Platform Effectiveness	171
6.3 War-Fighting Trade-offs When Substituting Current-Generation UAVs for Manned Attack Aircraft	175
9.1 Typology of Reductionist Theories of Military Effectiveness	255

# 1 *Confronting Trade-offs in the Pursuit of Military Effectiveness*

DAN REITER

Since antiquity, perhaps the most commonly studied question of international politics has been, Who wins wars? Very regrettably, violent conflict in the international system has endured into the twenty-first century, notwithstanding the “End of History” hope that the close of the Cold War might usher in a new era of permanent peace. Many wars between states have been waged since 1990, and even more conflicts within states have erupted and raged. Millions have died in violent, political conflict since then, and there is no end in sight to this curse on humanity.

This grim legacy means that twenty-first-century scholars and policy makers still must think about how both to avoid conflict and to use force effectively in the event of conflict. Even peace-loving leaders need to think about using force effectively, to deter and if necessary fend off violent attacks and in pursuit of humanitarian missions. Leaders must think both about how to engage effectively in long-standing forms of conflict, such as conventional and insurgent wars, and about how to engage in new forms of conflict, such as cyberwarfare and drone strikes.

This book endeavors to help scholars and policy makers better understand the pursuit of military effectiveness, past, present, and future, making two central contributions. First, it pushes the study of military effectiveness in new directions, exploring elements of military effectiveness that are just emerging in the twenty-first century and applying new ideas to the study of enduring questions of military effectiveness. Though this is a scholarly area that has received substantial attention, especially in recent years, the contributions in this book demonstrate that there is yet much to be learned.

Second, the book presents and develops an essential and often underappreciated proposition: *the pursuit of military effectiveness often incurs important trade-offs*. Most phenomena or policies thought to affect military effectiveness do not have simple, limited consequences,

either for a belligerent's likelihood of success in combat or for other values the belligerent might hold dear. The contributions in this volume each discuss a particular element of military effectiveness within the context of exploring how the pursuit of that aspect of effectiveness risks incurring trade-offs. The trade-offs discussed in these chapters fall into three categories: political support, security threats, and war fighting. Failure to recognize these trade-offs encourages a reductionist, incomplete view of military effectiveness that falls short of a complete understanding of war and undermines quality decision making.

This chapter serves to frame the rest of the book. It first discusses the concept of military effectiveness, presenting a new definition. It then lays out the three categories of trade-offs. Last, it presents a road map of the chapters in the rest of the volume.

### Thinking about Military Effectiveness

Scholars, political leaders, and generals back to antiquity have considered what factors might help militaries win wars, including ancient Greek historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides as well as Chinese thinkers such as Sun Tzu. Machiavelli paid great attention to mastery of the art of war as part of the art of statecraft. Enlightenment thinkers and political leaders such as John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Thomas Paine applied their broader political ideas to narrower military effectiveness questions, for instance, examining factors that determine how effectively a society can muster resources for war and motivate its soldiers to fight and die in battle.<sup>1</sup>

Observers past and present have focused not only on how belligerents win wars but also on how belligerents and their militaries accomplish the smaller, instrumental tasks that accumulate to eventual victory in war. Focusing on the individual tasks within war rather than just observing who wins and loses wars enables avoiding the assumption that war winners performed all war-related tasks well and war losers performed all war-related tasks poorly. History is, of course, littered with examples of militaries that performed many war-related tasks well but still lost the war, such as Germany in World War II, or performed

<sup>1</sup> Reiter and Stam (2002, esp. Chapter 3); Gilbert (1986).

many war-related tasks poorly but managed to win the war, such as the Soviet Union in the Winter War.

There is space here to survey very briefly only recent political science scholarship on military effectiveness, a limited selection of the vast amount of social scientific and historical work on military effectiveness. In general, modern political scientists have examined a range of phenomena associated with the successful accomplishment of tasks that contribute to victory in war. A mainstream line of thinking has emphasized the importance of military-industrial power for winning wars and in turn explored whether factors such as domestic politics or having a central bank affect the ability of belligerents to acquire the economic resources needed to field powerful militaries.<sup>2</sup> Other work has examined the sophistication and the size of belligerents' armed forces, examining factors that make a military more or less likely to adopt (effectively) a particular strategic or technological innovation, and in turn other studies have examined whether higher levels of military technology affect conflict outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Other studies have argued that it is not only the forces being deployed in combat but also the plans for the deployment of forces in combat that strongly affect effectiveness. Military strategy, doctrine, and force employment are all seen as determinants of operational success in conflicts such as conventional wars, aerial bombing campaigns, and nonconventional conflicts such as counterinsurgency and counterterrorism campaigns (and scholars have also looked at factors, such as domestic politics and combat outcomes, that shape how states choose their strategies, doctrines, and force employment strategies).<sup>4</sup> Several works have taken Napoleon Bonaparte's dictum that "the moral is to the physical as three to one"

<sup>2</sup> Organski and Kugler (1980); Desch (2008); Beckley (2010); Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003); Schultz and Weingast (2003); Lake (1992); Reiter and Stam (2002, Chapter 5); Cappella Zielinski (2016); Poast (2015); Shea (2014).

<sup>3</sup> Evangelista (1988); Rosen (1991); Gartner (1997); Horowitz (2010); Biddle and Zirkle (1996); Goldman and Eliason (2003); Biddle and Long (2004); Resende-Santos (2007); Lyall and Wilson (2009); Biddle (2004); Levi (1997).

<sup>4</sup> Biddle (2004); Avant (1994); Kier (1997); Arreguín-Toft (2005); Gartner (1997); Mearsheimer (1983); Stam (1996); Pape (1996); Horowitz and Reiter (2001); Krepinevich (1986); Johnston (2012); Johnston and Sarbahi (forthcoming); Peic (2014); Lyall (2009, 2010); Price (2012); Long (2014); Jordan (2009); Reiter and Meek (1999); Snyder (1984); Merom (2003); Brooks (2008); Grauer and Horowitz (2012). For a discussion on several aspects of military effectiveness, see the contributions in Brooks and Stanley (2007).



to suggest the importance of troop morale for affecting military effectiveness, exploring factors affecting soldiers' motivations to fight and die, such as nationalism, regime type, small group bonding, and social cleavages.<sup>5</sup>

Further studies have explored a variety of other sources of military effectiveness, such as military leadership quality, civil-military relations, human capital factors such as education, and wartime coalitions.<sup>6</sup> Some have also developed more subtle arguments, such as that the ability to win wars is strongly determined by the decision to start wars and that states that are smarter about starting wars, such as democracies, are more likely to win.<sup>7</sup> Others have proposed that the likelihood of victory is related to the nature of the stakes the states are fighting over.<sup>8</sup>

Though debates continue to rage over the sources of military effectiveness, and the sources of military effectiveness vary across different modes of conflict, one overall pattern is that nonmaterial sources of military effectiveness, such as military strategy, domestic political factors, nationalism, and military leadership, are likely at least as important as military factors, such as the balance of forces or sophistication of weaponry.

This body of work has examined factors that affect the abilities of belligerents to accomplish tasks that contribute to victory. We define military effectiveness in line with this theme, conceiving military effectiveness as *the degree to which militaries can accomplish at acceptable costs the goals assigned to them by political leaders*. We make two observations about this definition. First, within the political ends-military means chain of grand strategy, our definition focuses on military means, leaving aside how leaders conceptualize political ends. Second, though the definition incorporates efficiency, it does not equate effectiveness with efficiency. In this regard, our definition deviates slightly from the efficiency emphasis of the widely used definition of

<sup>5</sup> Shils and Janowitz (1948); Levi (1997); Peled (1998); Reiter and Stam (2002, Chapter 3); Castillo (2014); Rosen (1996); Reiter (2007); Posen (1993); Lyall (2016). For critique of the small group thesis, see King (2016).

<sup>6</sup> Rotte and Schmidt (2003); Reiter and Wagstaff (forthcoming); Quinlivan (1999); Brooks (2008); Pilster and Böhmelt (2011, 2012); Choi (2003, 2012); Lake (1992); Biddle and Long (2004); Talmadge (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Bueno de Mesquita (1981); Reiter and Stam (2002); Weeks (2014). See also Desch (2008); Brown et al. (2011).

<sup>8</sup> Sullivan (2012).