

## UNDERSTANDING LAND WARFARE

*Review by: Safia Malik\**

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**L**and warfare has remained a prominent factor in international politics. States have been developing strategies on operational and tactical levels to strengthen their land defence forces. Christopher Tuck's book, *Understanding Land Warfare*, is a comprehensive addition to the existing academic literature focusing on historical and changing contemporary land warfare concepts. The book is divided into three parts that contain eleven chapters. Part I, The Development of Land Warfare, underlines modern land warfare's fundamental concepts and historical development since 1900. Part II, What is Victory? highlights political and military gains in unconventional, low-intensity asymmetric warfare, including counterinsurgency operations, peace operations and hybrid warfare. Part III, The Future, explores possible developments in land warfare techniques while using Russia and China as case studies.

Part I contains five chapters: (i) Land Warfare in Theory, (ii) The Development of Modern Land Warfare, (iii) Modern Tactics, (iv) Modern Operational Art and the Operational Level of War, and (v) Land Warfare: Context and Variation. These chapters identify land warfare as different from the air and maritime domains of warfare because of the nature of the land itself (p. 41). The author points out that it is essential to understand the political significance of the land, including variability, opacity, mutability and pervasive friction, to develop strategies on tactical and operational levels. Apart from this, Tuck also examines the shift in conducting land warfare from more traditional means such as fire, manoeuvre, attrition and suppression to multi-domain operations combined with arms and mission command.

The author also underscores the ways that have changed land warfare by presenting two schools of thought – the evolution and revolution in modern land warfare. Proponents of evolution in contemporary land warfare give importance to the concept of a paradigm shift in land warfare. Thomas Kuhn introduced the paradigm shift concept in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Kuhn argued that key developments in scientific thinking took place in conditions in which one

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paradigm gave way to another. Until such a shift occurred, new evidence tended to be subsumed into old patterns of belief (p. 46). At the same time, proponents of the idea of revolution in modern land warfare argue that technological developments, economic changes, political developments and organisational innovations have produced sudden fundamental and structural shifts in the character of modern land warfare. Advocates of this view further argue that technological developments and emerging tactics would generate a revolution in land warfare techniques.

The author has underlined the varieties of military revolution: (i) Military-Technical Revolution (transformative effect of new technology), (ii) Revolution in Military Affairs (military methods used by armies including methods through which technology is employed), and (iii) Military-Social Revolution (the result of changes in political, social, economic and military patterns that have shattered the framework of military and economic power at various times). Concerning modern tactics of land warfare, the author highlights that it emerged during World War I to cope with the growing lethality of firepower. The period 1915–1918 marked the evolution of a modern tactical system of land warfare, including tactics based upon combined arms down to the lowest infantry sub-units, fire and manoeuvre, decentralisation, dispersion, suppression and cover and concealment.

The chapter on Modern Operational Art and the Operational Level of War focuses more on operational art and operational level thinking of modern armies. The operational level of warfare means to plan, conduct and sustain operations to achieve national strategic objectives. Whereas the cognitive approach of commanders to develop strategy supported by their skills, knowledge, experience and judgment is called operational art (p. 83). The author underscores that states traditionally struggled to raise and sustain more than one main army at a time. Consequently, the focus of land warfare tended to be tactical: commanders sought to fight a decisive battle that would destroy the enemy's main army (p. 86). The industrial revolution introduced the concept of mass conscription and provided material resources for states to employ larger armies. The author points out that the military objective during the nineteenth century was centred around the strategy of the single point to concentrate separate elements of an army against the enemy's forces and to fight a single decisive battle. In 1914, forces of industrialisation, especially in the form of railways, states could spread out and sustain multiple armies across multiple theatres of operation, creating conditions for what has been termed 'linear strategy.' In the chapter Land Warfare: Context and Variation, the author points out that theoretically, armies adopt techniques of victorious land forces, but in practice, due to variations and various challenges of military learning, including domestic context, organisational influence and cultural factors, armies might sometimes imitate other armies but they also often respond in different ways such as adapting to, compensating for and even ignoring developments elsewhere (p. 129).

Part II consists of three chapters: (i) Counterinsurgency Operations, (ii) Peace and Stability Operations, and (iii) Hybrid Warfare. The author discusses the historical

development of the theory and practice of counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency is defined as "comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain an insurgency and address its root causes" (p. 141). Land forces have developed various counterinsurgency techniques to meet new challenges. These techniques include the primacy of politics, long-term planning, effective intelligence, use of minimum necessary force, and winning the hearts and minds of the local population. The author examines that despite flourishing tactics of counterinsurgency operations, it remains a difficult task because every operation requires adaptation and innovation.

In the chapter *Peace and Stability Operations*, the author explores the decisive role of peace and stability operations in land warfare. Peace operations are still conducted in inter-state and intra-state operations contending with ambitious political mandates, severe humanitarian crises and confounding political dynamics. To play an active role in conflict prevention, conflict management and resolution, the author suggests revising the traditional concepts of military victory. He emphasises that victory is now associated with legitimate political solutions and stable long-term peace. The chapter *Hybrid Warfare* explores the influence of this concept on land warfare. In the contemporary world, the centrality of conventional land warfare is being challenged by the orchestrated application of the full panoply of military and non-military tools (p. 207).

Part III comprises three chapters: (i) *Future Land Warfare*, (ii) *The Paradigm Army*, and (iii) *Russia and China*. The author initiates a debate on future warfare by exploring the idea of *Network-Centric Warfare*. It reflects the broader and more fundamental transition from industrial to post-industrial information-based societies. The upcoming revolutions in military affairs will be shaped by information technologies where military land warfare tactics will be transformed from traditional tactics to networking, decentralisation, disaggregation, multi-service integration and non-linear approaches to warfare. Tuck argues that land forces create an external and internal environment conducive to rapid adaptation once the nature of the future land warfare challenge becomes apparent. The author summarises that states do not have the luxury of perpetual analysis when preparing their land forces for future choices that must be made, equipment procured, force structures developed and doctrines created (p. 261).

The remaining two chapters use Russia and China as case studies to identify the modern tactics of these states for future land warfare. Tuck identifies that US land forces are central to network-centric warfare, based on information-based military revolution since the end of the Cold War. For Russia and China, the author underlines that both countries have followed network-centric approaches in the conventional warfare domain, which aims to strengthen the ongoing information-based military revolution. Despite numerous geopolitical and strategic challenges, Russia and China have been engaged in military modernisation. The author also emphasises that Russia and China now have modernised land forces that are much more capable than in the

past. Both states' reform processes have featured a drive to produce smaller, more professional, high-technology networked militaries (p. 285). Apart from this, the author has also suggested investing in human resources to produce more professionally competent, educated and creative soldiers to be equipped with current tactics of land warfare.

The book is an interesting reading that critically examines both conceptual and practical aspects of land warfare. The author brings out traditional and contemporary land warfare techniques on a tactical and operational level. He has explored the significance of network-centric warfare techniques as a possible future of land warfare. According to the author, technological advancement is also an important but effective strategy; generalship and psychological dominance over the enemy are decisive factors in gaining victory in land warfare.