

**Fischel, John T. Civil Military Operations in the New World.  
Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.**

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Volume 18, Number 1, Spring 1998

URI: [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs18\\_01br08](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs18_01br08)

[See table of contents](#)

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Publisher(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (print)

1715-5673 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

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Cite this review

Day, G. (1998). Review of [Fischel, John T. Civil Military Operations in the New World. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.] *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 18(1), 170–172.

**Fischel, John T.** *Civil Military Operations in the New World*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.

John T. Fischel is an American soldier/civilian who has taken contemporary US army experience with Civil Military Operations (CMO) and laid it out warts and all for the interested reader. He analyzes in detail the Panama operation (Promote Liberty) and its attendant supporting plans Blue Spoon and Just Cause. His analysis from the insider's (staff officer's) perspective is thorough and unemotional. He then moves to the better known operation, Desert Storm, and situates the place of CMO in the overall campaign plan. Finally, he looks at Somalia and Haiti from the same perspective. What emerges is a comprehensive headquarters level view of the "fog of peace." The fog of peace is those critical operations that follow combat action and put a society back on its feet.

These examples fill a fascinating range in size and outcome. One point is completely clear, CMO may have been a forgotten science during the Cold War but in contemporary interventions they are even more important than the combat operations. In small "messy" interventions, CMO is the exit strategy. Time and again Fischel makes the telling point "the termination of small wars has often been messier than the fighting." Although the US has had extensive experience in CMO throughout the last fifty years, it would appear that the exclusive Cold War emphasis on combat skills has poorly prepared it to navigate through the fog of peace.

Fischel stresses the need for a comprehensive strategy, i.e. one in which military and political goals are well defined, realistic and adequately resourced, which can be used to determine end states. He contrasts the often detailed military strategies and their very specific end states with the more woolly general directions for civil-political end states. He points out that it is one thing to have a general objective such as to support "democracy" but quite another to implement it on the ground. This is particularly true in countries with little or no democratic experience to build on. Operations to restore civil life after a conflict conducted by either occupying or liberating forces must have a set of well-defined end states or further confusion will ensue. As is often the case he makes the telling point that the devil is in the details.

Fischel takes as his point of departure the US experience of Japanese and German restoration after World War II. He moves directly to contemporary conflict with a passing acknowledgement of the powerful Vietnam and Latin American civic action experience in the sixties and seventies. He rightly acknowledges that there is much less difference in reality between occupation and liberation, in terms of the responsibilities of the military power, than may have previously been thought.

There is an inevitable imperial tone to the book. The US army is massive, very difficult to stop when moving, and when it mobilizes for CMO does it like no other country in the world can. Fischel's treatment of the Iraq (Provide Comfort) and Somalia (Restore Hope) operations provides examples of both the best and the worst of current CMO. He acknowledges that these were essentially US led operations and does not try to hide their deficiencies. In Provide Comfort the personalities involved put an operation together "on

the fly" and made it work. Fischel pays tribute to the way that for the good of the local people the senior US civilian Dayton Maxwell placed himself lower in the command chain than his rank required, thereby enhancing mission success at the expense of "turf." This type of improvisation is what produced the necessary critical mass of goodwill for the operation to succeed. In Somalia Fischel candidly explains "[t]he central thesis of this section is that unity of effort was lost when the US military refused to allow the elaborate command and control structure it had created to work in the way intended." (p. 197) Fischel goes on to talk about local tactical successes in Somalia (meaning presumably work such as that by the excellent Australian contingent) and the failure to link them to the strategic level, a level dominated by the US.

It is impossible to conceive of effective interventions in the future that are not either explicitly or implicitly backed by the USA. Further, interventions will of necessity be messy "fog of peace" operations not the massive clash of ideologies leading to total war for which so many forces including Canada's so foolishly still prepare. If peace operations are to be done well then the lessons of CMO are as important or arguably moreso than weapon and combat training. In his final more philosophical chapter Fischel outlines three fundamental truisms: that strategic vision must articulate an end state that is achievable not only in military terms but also socio-political ones; that the uniformed part of CMO i.e. civil affairs as practiced by the US army, is a vital component of any modern force commanders resource structure; and finally, that CMO if it is to be done properly is a multi-agency and highly civilian activity. The point is that the interface between the civilian and military ways of life and value systems has to be made more open and more receptive to two-way traffic.

On balance this is an honest and important book (albeit peppered with acronyms). It is highly US-centric as it set out to be. The US is and must be a key factor in all interventions in the future. We, other committed actors, must understand and if possible influence the way the US establishment does business. This book tells us how they have done business in the recent past and illuminates their likely modus operandi for the near future. I, personally, shall be taking it with me when I go back into the field as a civilian peacekeeper at the sharp end of CMO.

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