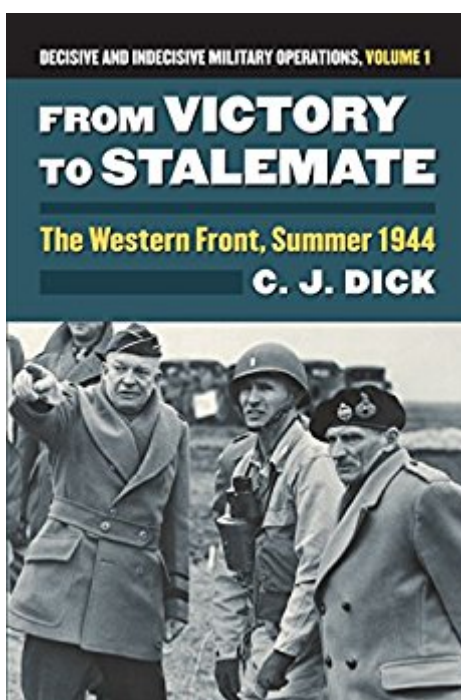


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From Victory To Stalemate: The Western Front, Summer 1944 Decisive And Indecisive Military Operations, Volume 1 (Modern War Studies)



Synopsis

By the summer of 1944, the war in Europe had reached a critical point. Both the western Allies and the Soviets possessed the initiative and forces capable of mounting strategic offensives against the German enemy. Writing a study of operations on first the Western then Eastern Front, respected military analyst C. J. Dick offers rare insight into the strengths and weaknesses of generalship on both fronts, especially the judgments, choices, and compromises made by senior commanders. At the same time, he clarifies the constraints imposed upon leadership--and upon operations--by doctrinal shortcomings, by logistics, and, not least, by the nature of coalition war. *From Victory to Stalemate* focuses on the Western Front, specifically American, British, and Canadian operations in France and the Low Countries. Dick's lens throughout is operational art, which links individual tactical battles to broader strategic aims. Beginning with the D-Day landings in Normandy and the strengths and weaknesses of the armies, including their military doctrines, Dick goes on to analyze the offensives launched in the high summer of 1944. He considers the strategic factors and plans that provide the context for his main concern: the Allied commanders' handling of army, army group, and theatre offensive operations. Dick's analysis shows us an Allied command limited by thinking that is firmly rooted in the experience of small wars and the World War I. The resulting incremental approach was further complicated by a divergence in the ideas and interests of the Allied forces. The man responsible for pulling it all together, Dwight D. Eisenhower, proved remarkably capable in his role as statesman; he was to be less effective as a military technician who could govern such difficult subordinates as Bradley and Montgomery. As a result, the Allied offensive faltered and became a war of attrition, in contrast to the Soviet effort on the Eastern Front.

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Customer Reviews

Due to the scale and circumstances of eastern front as compared to the western front there are some differences in format and content between Mr Dick's two volumes but the main theme is present: The operational art of war and how it effects the end results. In this book like the second volume the introductory chapters are important and sets the stage for the rest of the book. The coalition aspect of the Western Front adds complexity that is not encountered in volume two. Much time is covered on the three largest Allies and their commanders: US, GB and Canada. Each countries' war history and operational war doctrine is explained. The differences in this experience and doctrine are highlighted and the author then shows how these differences along with different personalities disrupt the smoothness of prosecuting the war. Intelligence gathering and application is also important. The author is trying to accomplish several objectives. First, that coalition warfare involving different countries that have different motivations, different experiences and different ideologies can sometimes be difficult to command and is usually not as efficient or effective as a solitary country and command structure. The author believes that if the coalition had been working better together, having a single consistent operational doctrine that the war could potentially have been over by the end of 1944. The author provides key examples where personal friction between US and British commanders as well as having differing principles of operational doctrine and the inability of changing those differences for the good of the coalition produced many examples where the Allies had less than ideal results. If the Allies had been working more closely operationally should have vanquished the Germans in a more soundly manner on a repeated basis. The miscues at Falaise and Caen are prime but not the only examples where results could have been even better. Doctrinal changes during and post Operation Cobra are also highlighted as well as the reasons for the advance slowdown or stalemate as the Allies approached the German border. Eisenhower, Bradley, Montgomery come under close scrutiny and are bestowed with criticism that's hard to refute. In regards to operational doctrine the author spends a lot of time discussing the

deficiencies the overall command had as well as individual armies. The issues concerning planning, preparation and execution as well as timing and coordination between the Army Groups are gone over in detail. Tactical concerns like where to strike, when to strike and with what force are discussed. Other concerns like officer leadership, intelligence gathering, training and motivation are also covered. Comparisons with the German forces on these issues are also made as well as an explanation why the Germans foiled the Allies for such a long time. The author extends his analysis by comparing the differences in operational doctrine and command decisions between the west and east, showing good and bad. Also, if Stalin had been less rival and more ally to the west then there was an even greater chance of the war ending by the beginning of 1945. There are 14 b&w maps, a capable Notes section, a Bibliography and an Index to assist the reader but there are no photos. I know there are already a number of good books covering the issues of the Western Allies but Mr Dick also does a good job in explaining the doctrinal issues within the framework of the alliance so that the reader will have a better understanding of the difficulties facing the Allies in their quest to reach Germany. I would rate this book as one of the best and when "From Defeat to Victory" is added to the mix a stellar presentation is provided. If you have an interest in learning more of coalition warfare and operational doctrine then this book and really the two volume set should be on your short list.

I read the second volume on the Eastern Front first which operations on a larger picture. The author uses a more granular approach in the West to illustrate the problems the Allies faced at the logistical, tactical and operation levels. Bradley and Montgomery do not emerge favorably from this study: pettiness, egos and mistakes. The book is amply footnoted for those who wish to pursue the matter into greater detail.

Coupled with volume 2 this is a very interesting examination of the doctrinal and operational differences of the major armies of world war 2, including the effects of leadership in this study. Many interesting 'side' notes and points of consideration detailed in both the overviews, and the detailed look at the major operations studied.

I highly recommend this thoughtful account of Allied operational practice in France in 1944. The author brings clear operational theory to his critique.

An excerpt from David A. Powell's review on StrategyPage.Com 'Dick's aim is not

to provide a detailed, comprehensive history of the campaign. While he provides enough of a narrative for readers to follow the course of events, he spends most of his time analyzing the decisions made by the Allied top commanders: Eisenhower; his two army group commanders Bradley and Montgomery, as well as several of the army commanders, among them George Patton, Courtney Hodges, Miles Dempsey and H. G. D. Crerar. Numerous corps commanders also merit comment, but Dick's primary focus remains unswervingly on the top tier of command. Dick contends that because neither the American or British armies had an articulated understanding of the operational level of war (Operational Art, as it were) western military efforts fell short of winning the war in Western Europe in 1944. Dick argues that an army with a deep understanding of the Operational Art understands that every effort should contribute to the ultimate goal; without that focus peripheral or secondary operations too easily distract field commanders from their primary objectives. For the full review, see StrategyPage.Com

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