

Pitney, John J., Jr. *The Art of Political Warfare*. (Red River Books 2001), pp. 246. \$14.95 ISBN 0806133821 pb.

This book was one of a couple of books which escaped being reviewed in earlier editions of this publication. Though it is a little late, the book is significant enough to remind readers that it is still around and still has some relevance. The author, John J. Pitney, Jr. has been involved in both practical politics with the U.S. House Republicans and is currently in academe in the California university system. He brings a mix of the scholarly and practical approaches to his analysis which leavens the topic significantly while still retaining a readable style.

His approach is simply to examine how we use warfare analogies when we describe virtually all aspects of modern politics. Anyone who teaches about government and politics has done this, as have our political leaders and the press, so his starting point is certainly one which is common. It also will remind academics of their days as graduate students when we were asked to look at the obvious, but to think about the obvious in different terms or to question the premises differently. In fact, for me the absolute best part of the book is the end when the author states that we should take other common viewpoints, themes, or metaphors and examine them in a broader context. Some topics he suggests which would be interesting applications to our conceptions of politics include ecology, physics and mechanics, medicine, games, theater, and education.

Specifically, he develops chapters around the military analogy in the following areas: strategy, leadership, coordination, rallying the

troops, “demoralization, deception, and stealth”, intelligence, geography and logistics and friction. In developing each of these areas, he uses both history and present politics to build his case. His encyclopedic level of quotations is impressive in itself, drawing from a wide range of actors and authors. However, this is also one of the problems with his examination. Quotes are so frequently utilized that the flow of the book can get choppy, and the individual chapters may work better by themselves rather than in a collection as in this book. On a personal note if I did not see another citation from Clausewitz, Sun Tzu (*The Art of War*), Newt Gingrich, or James Carville I would rest happy.

The book has been well-reviewed and still has utility. I would suggest that it is more of a reference text than a unitary volume. The author does succeed in getting the reader to view some of our old habits in new ways. How many books do that?

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