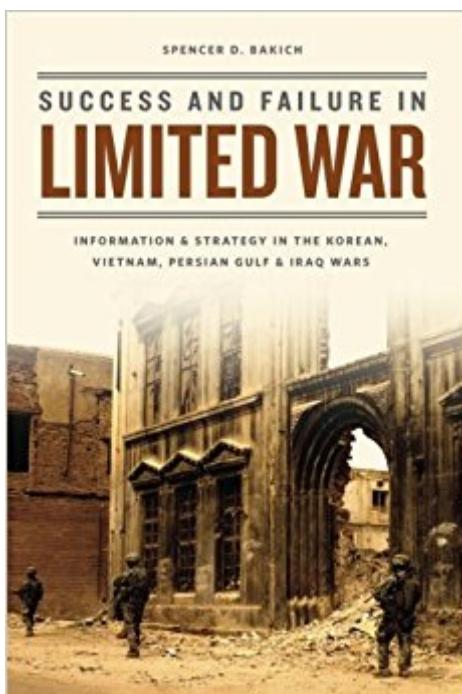


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# Success And Failure In Limited War: Information And Strategy In The Korean, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, And Iraq Wars



## Synopsis

Common and destructive, limited wars are significant international events that pose a number of challenges to the states involved beyond simple victory or defeat. Chief among these challenges is the risk of escalation; be it in the scale, scope, cost, or duration of the conflict. In this book, Spencer D. Bakich investigates a crucial and heretofore ignored factor in determining the nature and direction of limited war: information institutions. Traditional assessments of wartime strategy focus on the relationship between the military and civilians, but Bakich argues that we must take into account the information flow patterns among top policy makers and all national security organizations. By examining the fate of American military and diplomatic strategy in four limited wars, Bakich demonstrates how not only the availability and quality of information, but also the ways in which information is gathered, managed, analyzed, and used, shape a state's ability to wield power effectively in dynamic and complex international systems. Utilizing a range of primary and secondary source materials, *Success and Failure in Limited War* makes a timely case for the power of information in war, with crucial implications for international relations theory and statecraft.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“This groundbreaking treatise . . . endeavors to explain America's mixed success with limited war since 1950 by way of a new theoretical approach to analyzing policy-strategy formulation and execution at the highest levels of government. . . . With over eight hundred endnotes gleaned from more than four hundred authoritative sources, this is first and foremost a scholarly work. Those in the international relations community seeking to understand the puzzle of

America's recent strategic performance in limited wars will find this information institutions approach a worthy adjunct to the more established theories. Those who read purely for pleasure will enjoy the four case studies, each offering a unique take on the various policies and strategies crafted and the decisions made at the highest levels of government. In short, the book has much to offer, to the serious reader and dilettante alike. (Naval War College Review) "The book demonstrates how psychological inclinations can be checked and shaped by institutional context, as well as the idea that leaders can acquire useful information about their opponents even in the absence of costly signaling. Bakich thus presents a promising framework for thinking about policy making during limited wars as well as other endeavors where it is difficult to alleviate uncertainty." (Aaron Rapport, University of Cambridge Perspectives on Politics) "Recommended." (J. P. Dunn, Converse College Choice) "Despite all the interest in preparing for short, sharp wars, including counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts at various operational levels, no effective conceptual basis for such conflicts has been formulated. In *Success and Failure in Limited War*, Bakich has taken a big step toward plugging that gap by stressing and clarifying the much tighter bonds between military action and diplomacy in limited wars. . . . The author's approach really proves its worth in explaining the debacle of the second Iraq war. His analysis of the co-optation of intelligence, the virtual crippling of the National Security Council, and systemic organizational flaws is both compelling and deeply troubling. . . . Bakich has opened a rich new vein of research into international relations in matters of war and peace. *Success and Failure in Limited War* will inform and guide future students of civil and military decision-making in crisis and conflict for years to come." (John Arquilla, US Naval Postgraduate School Michigan War Studies Review) "Bakich addresses an important puzzle—the sources of mixed strategic success in US experience with limited wars since World War II—by advancing a novel argument concerning the role of 'information institutions.' *Success and Failure in Limited War* provides a very useful framework that both complements the mountain of historical and decision making literature on the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, as well as integrates emerging insights from many insiders regarding contemporary decision-making in the two Iraq wars. The real payoff: Bakich compensates for gaps in the dominant realist, domestic politics, and constructivist arguments." (Adam N. Stulberg Georgia Institute of Technology) "Well-researched. . . . Bakich's theoretical approach proves to be a useful tool in discovering some of the causes for success or failure and lays out very clearly how flaws in a state's information institutions can have disastrous consequences in limited war. He gives policy makers and thinkers places to look to find hidden dysfunctions and provides a very

convincing case against stove piping and relying too much on a sole institution for analysis. (RealClearDefense) "Bakich has given us a must read study: he brilliantly explains how information flows (and their absence) definitively shape the success of wartime decision making and he provides a highly readable history of the limited wars that have consumed US foreign policy over the past sixty years. Policy makers, scholars, and students alike will find this book invaluable." (Jeffrey W. Legro University of Virginia) "Even more than most enterprises, limited wars are characterized by uncertainty, and Bakich's great contribution is to focus on the role of institutions that gather and process information in influencing their outcomes. With a good theory involving both diplomats and the armed forces and thorough case studies, this book is both fascinating and important." (Robert Jervis, Columbia University author of "Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War") Bakich here offers a rigorous and well researched study, which makes the link between analysis of foreign policy, strategic studies, and international relations. (Stéphane Taillat Politique Afrique (France))

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