

BOOKS

THE GESTALTS OF WAR

by Sue Mansfield

(Dial Press; 274 pp.; \$16.95)

THE WAR TRAP

by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita

(Yale University Press; 223 pp.; \$24.00)

Gordon C. Zahn

War, notably the imminent prospect of a "final" war, is beginning to dominate public discussion, as well it might. Debates and demonstrations, ecclesiastical pronouncements and other statements from on high have given voice to a deep concern that, until recently, seems to have been repressed. Any contributions to a better understanding of these issues by competent social scientists are to be welcomed, and this applies to the two volumes under review.

Mansfield's subtitle describes hers as "an inquiry" into the origins and meanings of war as a social institution—a modest statement of purpose and, considering the range of subject matter indicated, deservedly so. Mesquita goes a step beyond this to offer "a general theory of war and foreign conflict initiation and escalation." If both fall short, as I believe they do, both also deserve credit for the imagination and initiative they display.

Although Sue Mansfield's principal focus is psychological, she shows a good grasp of the contributions made by cultural anthropology and comparative religion. Her discussion of war and human nature is fairly standard stuff, but she does provide some valuable insights into the part ascribed to warfare in ancient myths and primitive religion. The introduction of the "gestalt" frame of reference, not to mention the sometimes intrusive terminology, is less compelling than the author obviously believes it to be. The gestalt approach works well when applied to the behavior of individuals in situations of conflict and war, but the mechanism accounting for what is, in effect, a contagion or duplication of such gestalts among whole populations in wartime needs more careful development; otherwise we are left with the dubious notion of a reified society operating

through a kind of "collective gestalt." Had the author omitted the gestalt formulation altogether, it would not have lessened the value of her inquiry to any significant degree.

Mansfield's writing style makes the book eminently readable, something that only the specialist is likely to say of Mesquita's. The latter's chapter titles and introductory paragraphs offer considerable promise, but the promise is dashed almost immediately as the author plunges into his elaborate mathematical models and calculations. This reader confesses to being intimidated at the start and soon giving way to something verging on resentment.

The key to Mesquita's general theory and the propositions he derives from it is the assumption that wars are initiated (or evaded) by decision-makers on the basis of "expected utility." The idea that leaders start wars if they expect to come out ahead and avoid wars they expect to lose seems reasonable enough, even without pages of mathematical equations and diagrams to support it. And when we add the author's well-advised reservations that every situation must take into account special contingencies, personality factors, and other imponderables, one must admire his continued confidence in the "generality" of his theory. Mansfield, I suspect, would have much to say about the operative gestalt of such decision-makers as a factor in their determinations of expected utility.

Mesquita's "expected utility maximizer" is, in his terms, "a particular type of rational actor"—but be warned that his interpretation of "rationality" relates to that which is calculated or calculable. Thus to him Adolf Hitler was an eminently "rational" leader. Still, if one accepts the terms, limitations, and approach, the theory works. One might quibble over the hint of circularity in his empirical validation, which indicates that initiators of war (presumably the most likely "expected utility maximizers") do come out ahead more often than not. Some military theorists might ascribe this more to the advantages of advance preparation and surprise. Readers who have kept in good repair their facility for more ad-

vanced mathematics may find the book well worth struggling through.

As for me, perhaps my bias in favor of "classical sociology" is at fault, but I found both books overshadowed by W. I. Thomas's "definition of the situation" concept as well as the famous "theorem" derived from it. If men define a situation as real, it *is* real in its consequences. This says it all and says it better. What we need from the social scientist that is not provided by either of these studies is a clearer and more coherent identification of the nature and sources of the "definitions" (the gestalts, if you will, of the leaders and the led, along with the "expected utility" calculations of both) that dominate international relations today. With this we could begin to develop a deeper awareness of the dreadful consequences that are almost certain to result if those definitions are not broadened to include the moral considerations that are too often lacking—and quite impossible to express in mathematical terms. [WV]

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN DEVELOPING NATIONS

by Göran Hedebrö

(Iowa State University Press; viii+142 pp.; \$7.95 [paper])

Arnold Zeitlin

With the Development Decade of the '60s came the conviction among educators, developers, and communicators that it was only necessary to deliver the gospel of development and the people of the underdeveloped world would see the light and find their way. Transistor radios and infant television systems carried the message by sound and picture. From the seminar rooms of the Third World sprang a new breed of development journalists. As Göran Hedebrö recalls the thinking of this period: "The key to national development was seen as a rapid increase in economic productivity. The role of the media was to mobilize human resources by substituting new norms, attitudes and behaviors for earlier ones in order to stimulate increased productivity." But, he concludes sadly: "Socioeconomic gaps between developed and developing countries are increasing instead of decreasing; the number of il-

literate in the Third World is growing; health facilities in the Third World do not meet even the most basic needs; famine and malnutrition are still prevalent." Obviously something has gone wrong, not only with the spread of the development gospel but with everything else.

Hedebro, an economist who teaches journalism in Sweden, blames the failure on the "whole development philosophy of which the communication model is a part." That sweeping conclusion is the spine around which Hedebro has wrapped his 100-odd-page thesis. He has made a little book that is more dangerous in its innocence than in its cunning and insinuations.

What really was wrong with the idea of development through the media, Hedebro suggests, was the insistence on retaining the freedoms of speech, press, and information flow. What really is needed is some form of government manipulation of the media to advance economic and social development.

"The dominant philosophy of development explicitly presumed that the press would be privately owned with little or no interference from the government," Hedebro writes. "This Western tradition of long standing is implicit in the hallowed principle of 'freedom of the press.' In the development perspective, however, the drawbacks are obvious. Since the chief purpose of a privately owned press is to produce a profit for the owners, development subjects are taken up only if they are considered profitable....Coverage of development problems has been only slight and sporadic...."

And that is not all, Hedebro insists. Because news organizations are preoccupied with the profit motive, their news reporting is called into question by a significant issue: The Western industrialized countries, with their enormous appetites for the raw materials of their former colonies, actually promote world poverty by preventing newly independent lands from using their resources for their own benefit. Hedebro then proceeds to devote an approving chapter to the use of the media for development in China, Tanzania, and Cuba, countries where the media are tightly controlled—and where development results have been less than sparkling. It is enough to stimulate speculation about what might happen in a developing country if, in fact, a free media were operating.

Hedebro's villain is everybody's: the United States. To begin with, he explains, the development philosophy was designed according to an American image: Middle-class consumer societies throughout the Third World. And so too it was the United States, in its role of "liberator" after World War II, that "proclaimed the principle of a 'free flow' of information between countries as a cornerstone of its policy." This "free flow," Hedebro suggests, was actually a device to promote the sale of U.S. news and entertainment media abroad, not the reflection of a genuine concern. There is no mention of the fact that such a concern is embodied in the First Amendment, which has been around since 1791—well before the end of World War II.

Hedebro lurches from misunderstanding to contradiction to confusion over the media's role. He accepts early in the text the proposition "the mass media can teach new skills"—with no sign of recognition that for a teacher the media are but tools. Much later in his thesis he decides that "the media cannot teach people everything"—without seeming to be aware that without good teachers the media are useless. He does finally concede that "there is no direct link between the learning of new ways and a heightened living standard," but he never pursues the lesson.

Nowhere does Hedebro explore the content of the media or the credibility of those who are trying to use them. Instead he accepts such dubious or unproven propositions as that media reporting of the Third World is misshapen if not outright false. He perpetuates the myth of Third World helplessness before Western media. Consequently he does not grasp that the media are there to be used and that the Third World is filled with inventive publicists. There are many presidents and prime ministers of inestimable ability capable of commanding media attention, but leaders of the stature of Leopold Senghor, Lee Kwan Yew, Indira Gandhi, and Julius K. Nyerere have failed to use the media effectively. Many have hired inexperienced, fearful aides to deal with the press; and these souls explain away their failure by crying that the media are biased against them. The hirelings naturally claim that freedom of information works against them because only when they control the press and other media can they make their messages heard.

There is certainly room for keen examination of the role of the media in the development process. The issues Hedebro raises cry out for serious study. But one should never confuse, as Hedebro endlessly does, the content and integrity of the message with the effectiveness of the media. [WV]

FROM THE CONGO TO SOWETO: U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD AFRICA SINCE 1960

by Henry F. Jackson

(William Morrow & Co.; 324 pp.; \$13.95)

Ross K. Baker

The African continent was one area George Kennan omitted when he set forth his containment doctrine. It simply was not politically relevant in 1947. The only states wholly free of colonial control were Liberia, Ethiopia, and South Africa; and all three were counted solidly in the Western camp. It would be another ten years before Sudan and Ghana gained independence and ushered in a decade of almost continuous decolonization. Certainly the Eisenhower administration cannot be said to have been particularly attentive to Africa; Lebanon probably had more intrinsic policy fascination for Secretaries of State Dulles and Herter than all of Africa. Although the term "benign neglect" would not be coined by Daniel Patrick Moynihan for another ten years, and then in a different context, it applies quite comfortably to America's Africa policy of the 1950s.

With the advent of the Kennedy administration, Africa became, for better or worse, an object of intense interest to U.S. policy-makers. One of John Kennedy's few memorable utterances while he was in the Senate was a chiding reference to French policy in Algeria—hardly a tip-off to the active role that his presidential administration would play in Africa.

What led American policy-makers to consider Africa seriously was the realization that it held some importance in our ideological struggle with the Soviet Union. Had the USSR and China showed no interest in Africa, it is a safe bet that American activity there would have been limited. Had the Communist states indeed sought influence in Africa and had the former colonial powers—