

A more ambitious, even imperial, note is struck in the *Weekly Standard* (Jan. 18, 2002) by Reul Marc Gerecht, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. His target is Iran. He argues that the United States should attack “with enormous force” if it finds clear links between Tehran and Al Qaeda, using unspecified “military actions” against Lebanon and other parts of the “Iranian world” even if it does not. The goal: to topple the mullahs (along with Saddam) and “sow the seeds for a new, safer, more liberal order in the Middle East.”

Writing from the left in the *Nation* (Jan. 21, 2002), University of Maryland political scientist Benjamin R. Barber declares that the real enemy is global capitalism and “corrosive secular materialism. . . . The war on terrorism must be fought, but not as the war of McWorld against jihad. The only war worth winning is the struggle for democracy.”

“Yesterday’s utopia,” he declares, “is today’s realism.”

In the *New York Review of Books* (Jan. 17, 2002), writer Ian Buruma and Hebrew University philosopher Avisha Margalit argue that the war is not a “clash of civilizations” but a struggle with Islamist revolutionaries whose ideology is little different from that of Western totalitarians past. Like the fascists of Italy, Germany, and Japan and like communists since Karl Marx, Osama bin Laden and his allies loathe Western culture with its diversity, freedom, rationality, and unheroic bourgeois existence. Yet it is unheroic accountants and undercover agents rather than “special macho units blasting their way into the caves of Afghanistan,” the authors say, who are best suited to combating the new ideologues.

So the question remains: What kind of war?

## *Kids in Combat*

“Caution: Children at War” by P. W. Singer, in *Parameters* (Winter 2001–02), 122 Forbes Ave., Carlisle, Pa. 17013–5238.

Armies and guerilla forces around the world have discovered a potent new weapon in the past few decades: children. The U.S. military will soon have to come to grips with the challenge.

According to Singer, an Olin fellow at the Brookings Institution, children under the age of 18 are fighting in more than 75 percent of the world’s armed conflicts. Africa is the epicenter. In Sierra Leone alone, up to 20,000 children currently bear arms; “roughly 80 percent of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) organization is aged seven to 14,” Singer reports. In Uganda, the antigovernment Lord’s Resistance Army is composed almost entirely of children, including some 12,000 who were abducted over a 10-year period (and at least one five-year-old). Child soldiers—abductees and volunteers alike—have also fought in Palestine, Sri Lanka, Chechnya,

Kosovo, Guatemala, Mexico, and many other places. In Colombia, kids comprise roughly 30 percent of some guerilla units. In Myanmar, 12-year-old twins Luther and Johnny Htoo led the antigovernment God’s Army until their recent surrender.



*Johnny and Luther Htoo, 12-year-old twin brothers and leaders of the Myanmar-based “God’s Army” guerilla group, recently surrendered to Thai security forces.*

The United Nations conservatively estimates that there are now 300,000 active child combatants worldwide, including an unknown number of girls. More than 50 states recruit children.

Singer cites two reasons for the rise of the child soldier. The vast numbers of children living in poverty provide an ample supply of recruits and candidates for forced service. And a worldwide glut of powerful small arms in the wake of the Cold War—perhaps 550 million—makes it easy to equip these children. In Uganda, an AK-47 costs no more than a chicken.

The use of children in war is not only a violation of international law in itself but tends to lead to more violations. “Experience has shown that [children] are among the most vicious combatants,” Singer reports, in part because they are

often brutalized as part of their training. Children also suffer greater casualties than adults. Commanders often use them as shields or cannon fodder in order to spare their more valuable adult fighters.

U.S. troops must be prepared to confront children, Singer warns. Six British soldiers were taken hostage in Sierra Leone in 2000 when they refused to fire on child soldiers. An obvious alternative is to target their adult leaders. Another tactic is to “fire for shock” rather than for “effect.” That means “heavy use of smoke and demonstrative air, arms and artillery fire” in order to scare an enemy into flight or surrender. The sad irony, says Singer, is that the highly mobile, lightly armed forces that the United States increasingly relies on for far-flung missions “may be the most ill-equipped of all to respond.”

## *How Britannia Lost the Waves*

“The Continuing Argument over Jutland” by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Autumn 2001), Univ. of Virginia, One West Range, P.O. Box 400223, Charlottesville, Va. 22904-4223.

The Battle of Jutland, one of the great naval battles in modern history, fascinates British sea historians the way Gettysburg fires the Southern imagination, each spawning a steady stream of critical studies. Both battles held out the tantalizing promise of total victory—yet each ended in a measure of failure.

According to Rubin, an emeritus professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, a cataclysm such as Jutland seemed predestined once Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm II decided in the early 1900s to build a navy capable of challenging Great Britain’s domination of the seas. It may have been the greatest mistake the Kaiser (who was a grandson of Queen Victoria) made, since it ensured that Britain would not ally itself with Germany in case of a European war.

Both navies were constructing a new class of superbattleships patterned after the HMS *Dreadnought* (launched in 1906), an 18,000-ton warship bristling with ten 12-inch guns, capable of 21 knots. By the time World War I broke out in 1914, the British navy had 20 such

ships, while Germany had 13.

By May 1916, frustrated by a British blockade, the German navy tried to lure the superior British Grand Fleet into a trap in the North Sea along the Danish coast. But the British, privy to German wireless communications, were already steaming eastward as the Germans headed north. The ensuing sea battle would pit 150 British vessels against 100 German ships.

What should have been a decisive victory for the British never materialized. Their force, under the overall command of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, blundered several times, and its officers showed little initiative. Miscommunication and bad luck cost the British several chances to wreak havoc on the German fleet. At one point, Admiral Hugh Thomas-Evans led his dreadnoughts straight at the Germans, apparently because he was awaiting orders from Jellicoe’s flagship to turn away. The British lost several battle cruisers when advanced German armor-piercing shells penetrated their magazines.