



## **Patton's Way: A Radical Theory of War**

***James Kelly Morningstar***

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For World War II historians and General George Patton enthusiasts, a recent book published by James Kelly Morningstar, is worth the read, offering a unique theory and biographical sketch of Patton not yet explored. For current, young military leaders, Morningstar's study resurrects Patton in an easily digestible volume and brings him into relevance in the 21st Century. For those interested in understanding the foundations of many current tenets of Army doctrine, *Patton's Way: A Radical Theory of War*, offers insight into how an oft misunderstood figure of WWII pioneered doctrinal concepts that we practice today – “mission command,” joint and combined arms operations, shaping the operational environment and fighting large-scale combat operations.

Morningstar, a West Point graduate, is an Army combat veteran of the Gulf War, where he served as a Tank Company Commander. Following the Gulf War, he served in a wide range of assignments from Germany, to Bosnia, to Washington, D.C. Following his career in the military, he taught Military Science at Georgetown University and, currently, teaches history at the University of Maryland. In his first book, he presents nearly five years of research, providing a theory of Patton and Patton's way of war that suggests Patton was ahead of his times, ahead of his peers and often his own worst enemy.

The heart of the book is a case-study analysis of Patton's time as Commanding General of the U.S. Third Army and the breakout from Normandy. It is organized according to Morningstar's assertion that Patton's way of war was “crafted from revolutionary ideas on strategy based on shock, combined arms operations, flexible command and control and integrated intelligence systems.” These concepts, familiar to today's military and captured in its doctrinal publications, were unorthodox and ground-breaking in Patton's era.

Familiar biographical works present four over-arching theories of Patton. He is a risk-taker, the “lucky gambler” and swashbuckling cavalry officer of legend. He is America's first great “tank commander” and tactician. He is the untamable attack dog, unleashed by his superiors in times of need. Finally, he is a “win at all cost” general, driven by ambition and a will to succeed. In nearly all these theories, Patton is cast as a dramatic, costumed maverick, unwilling or unable to comply with his superiors and current doctrine. Morningstar refutes these theories, while supporting many of their descriptions of the man. Morningstar's Patton is romanticized as unrestrained by norms, a “modernist whose rapid, bold strokes contradicted the craftsman's traditional philosophies and practices and confounded conventional critics.” Patton is a renaissance man, an unappreciated genius with an innate tactical and operational understanding for battle, a coup d'oeil, that set him apart from his peers.

The major contributions of this volume reside in how Morningstar reviews the current literature on Patton and refutes long-standing representations and simple caricatures with well-researched and documented anecdotes from Patton's life. The author adds to the knowledge and history surrounding Patton as a controversial historical figure, most importantly, through detailed and wide-ranging excerpts from Patton's own writing. With the help of the author, the reader sees the General through his own eyes in the valuable collection of passages from Patton's articles and publications.

Following the more traditional case-study chapters, the author concludes with chapters that capture Patton's legacy. Morningstar drives home Patton's contributions to contemporary Army doctrine, a doctrinal approach to war that was lost in the years following Patton's death and a generation of political generals that approached warfare from an orthodox, traditional mindset that evolved only after suffering significant set-backs and growing pains during the last half of the 20th Century. In the end, the reader comes away with a greater respect for Patton, both as a warrior and a student of war. The biography serves as a reminder for the importance of life-long professional development, as well as discipline in character and action, both on and off the battlefield. Finally, Morningstar demonstrates that Patton's leadership continues to echo in our current doctrine and battlefield challenges. **IAJ**

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