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Review Essays

Lawrence G. Kelley

Russell W. Ramsey

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Review Essays

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Afghanistan Revisited

LAWRENCE G. KELLEY

Is valor an acceptable substitute for tactical proficiency? The school solution is an emphatic "No!" but in fact the answer to this awkward question depends, at least in part, upon how forgiving the situation is. During its nine-year involvement in Afghanistan, Moscow awarded the title "Hero of the Soviet Union" to 86 of its "Internationalists,"[1] in 25 cases posthumously. Yet in 1989 it was the Soviets with their overwhelming technical superiority, firepower, codified teachings on military art, and vastly more experienced and professional army who withdrew, humiliated. Rhetoric about a 20th-century version of "The Great Game" notwithstanding, few had predicted that outcome, least of all their enemy, the mujahideen.

The mujahideen were united by a common foe but not a common command, vision, or goals, save for ejecting the atheistic, communist, expansionist invader from the north. Their resistance, more visceral than systematized from the outset, represented a triumph of endurance, ingenuity, and the exploitation of enemy weakness over logic. Their strategy, to the extent that it can be termed one, amounted to attrition warfare: a largely uncoordinated attempt to inflict "death by a thousand cuts," or to die in the attempt. The part-time, unpaid, all-volunteer mujahideen force lacked even a formal rank structure, much less standardized training; only 15 percent of its commanders had a military background. Command selection depended as much on family ties and theological purity as military competence. The mujahideen's often meager weaponry reflected the random diversity of cross-border arms bazaars, as well as the scavenging of ambushed Soviet and Afghan government (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, DRA) columns. Once Moscow began destroying the rural Afghan infrastructure and precipitated the mass refugee movements that characterized the war, the mujahideen's improvised logistics system--and sometimes their skins--depended directly on proximity to the Iranian and Pakistani borders, where foreign sponsors maintained stockpiles and harried bands could find sanctuary. Blood and parochial feuds rent the rebel movement. Yet despite all this they prevailed, turning what the Soviets called "the correlation of forces" on its head.

The mujahideen were willing to make up for their shortcomings by enduring hardship, accepting casualties, displaying determination, exuding esprit, learning quickly, and fighting to the last. To determine the reasons for their success more meaningfully than by simple reference to Napoleon's dictum on the relationship of the spiritual to the material, one needs to examine their practices in detail. This is the point of Lester W. Grau's combat-savvy, solidly researched studies titled *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* and *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War*.

The Bear Went Over the Mountain provides the Soviet side of the story. It takes its genesis from a 1991 lessons-learned volume compiled and published by the Frunze Academy, Moscow's combined arms academy for captains-majors, based on the combat experiences of its students. (One wonders how the Frunze work compares to the official lessons learned, which the GRU [military intelligence] systematically derived and then allegedly classified. A pointed criticism in the volume, written in characteristically veiled Soviet style, refers to a disconnect between efforts in

military history and operational-tactical training.) Grau translated, edited, and added to the book, providing US perspectives and an analysis of the Frunze comments as well as vivid insights into Soviet troop practice. Some of those insights (e.g., the poor state of hygiene and the debilitating effect of infectious disease on Soviet combat readiness) will surprise US officers. Others (e.g., that the mujahideen's primary source of gasoline was Soviet soldiers, who frequently sold their equipment and supplies to buy food or hashish) will positively flabbergast them.

Grau's second volume, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, provides the mirror image of the account: mujahideen tactics in the war, based on 1996 interviews with surviving participants. Both Grau and his coauthor for the second volume, Ali Ahmad Jalali, have credentials that generate credibility. Grau, an analyst at Ft. Leavenworth's Foreign Military Studies Office, is a retired US Army lieutenant colonel (infantry, Russian Foreign Area Officer) with Vietnam experience; Jalali is a former Afghan army colonel, mujahideen planner, and widely published journalist specializing in the area.

The two books have a parallel structure, but with distinctions. While the "Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces in Afghanistan," as the Soviet presence was officially termed, consistently fought the war using comparatively large-scale actions, the mujahideen generally relied on guerrilla tactics. Consequently, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain* encompasses the actions of units from platoon to army level, though its 49 vignettes focus on battalion, regiment, and brigade combat. The contributing officers served principally in company-grade command and staff billets in motor rifle, air assault, or airborne units (exceptionally, some commanded battalions at very junior rank) and typically returned home with decorations like the Red Star (roughly equivalent to the Bronze Star with combat V). *The Other Side of the Mountain*, at double the length and with double the number of vignettes, is the more expansive and detailed book, but it stresses the small-unit actions typical of partisan warfare. Given the immense casualties that the mujahideen sustained during the Soviet-Afghan War and in the vicious, protracted fighting that followed the Taliban takeover of the country, it is perhaps surprising that the authors could even locate sufficient veterans to provide these accounts, but they did.

The vignettes can profitably be read as single episodes, but doing so risks focusing on the trees at the expense of the forest. Larger issues are at play here than the success or failure of individual battles, however significant their outcomes. In this connection the introductory and concluding essays by Grau, Jalali, and the dean of US experts on the Soviet army, Colonel David M. Glantz, USA Ret., were for this reviewer the most valuable parts of both books, tying ends together and putting disparate detail into perspective. The authors deserve an award for truth in packaging for their up-front declaration that the books are designed "for the combat arms company and field grade officer and NCO," but I dissent somewhat from this assessment. The aforementioned essays offer as fine an analytic summary of the Soviets' star-crossed military involvement in Afghanistan as I have seen and fully justify the expenditure by senior leaders of the hour it takes to read them. Additional noteworthy features of the books include an informative glossary, a listing of Soviet map symbols, and both large- and small-scale maps, most of which are in color in *The Bear Went Over the Mountain*.

The maps contribute mightily to the value of these books. Without them, orientation would be difficult and much of the impact would be lost. The reader would not notice, for instance, that the geographic distribution of vignettes in both studies centers on the eastern third of Afghanistan, closer to both Kabul and the mujahideen's Pakistani lifeline. Similarly, one needs to take the broad view to notice that the distribution of vignettes over time differs dramatically between the two volumes in the middle years of the conflict, 1983-85. The numerical high point for the mujahideen occurs in 1983, with 22 times the Soviet total of vignettes. The Soviet apex occurs in 1985, corresponding to the year in which Gorbachev precipitously (and unsuccessfully) ordered the Ministry of Defense to win the war on the battlefield. While various interpretations may exist for these differences, taken together with the admission by B. V. Gromov, the last commander of the 40th Army, that by 1985 Soviet commanders had recommended withdrawing from Afghanistan, the pattern suggests that the mujahideen's learning curve was substantially steeper than Moscow anticipated, and that their successes came more rapidly.

The approach used in the two books has inherent drawbacks, but the authors' comments and multisource verification significantly offset them. First, reliance on vignettes provided by participants well after the fact invites selective memory and self-serving, purposeful packaging. A comparison of the respective Soviet and mujahideen versions of the air assault on Maro stronghold, one of the few battles for which veterans of both sides relate their experiences,

graphically illustrates the point. The Frunze editors crafted their account to underscore tactical lessons and portray Soviet performance in the best possible light. They neglected to mention, however, that while resting on its laurels, the temporarily victorious Soviet force was nearly decimated by the Afghans, who regrouped and reinforced in Pakistan, then returned with a vengeance. Despite careful reading of all the vignettes in both volumes, I would not have recognized the Soviet and mujahideen descriptions of the battle as the same action had Grau not pointed it out. (Notably, Grau and Jalali plan to analyze 17 key battles from the perspectives of both sides in a future work.) Second, while recognizing that small-unit combat determined the tactical outcome of the Soviet-Afghan War, these infantry-centered books address important lessons learned by other branch arms only peripherally. The reader needs to look elsewhere for detailed insights in those areas. Fortunately, he will not need to look far. Grau's next book, tentatively titled *The Bear Looks Back: A Russian General Staff Retrospective on the War in Afghanistan* (forthcoming), delves into the perspectives of the logistician, engineer, artilleryman, tanker, pilot, chemical officer, and physician, all of which deserve attention.

The Soviets attempted to apply in Afghanistan the practices and large-formation tactics developed for war on the north German plain but discovered in short order how inappropriate they were. Thus, over time the General Staff switched its reliance from traditionally configured motor rifle units to the lighter, elite, better trained, and more professional airborne, air assault, reconnaissance, and *spetsnaz* (special purpose) forces. They also introduced new types of formations (mountain motor rifle battalions, material support battalions/brigades) and training specifically geared to in-theater combat requirements. The shift in stress somewhat mitigated the long-standing Soviet problem with low-level initiative, a quality which small-unit counterinsurgency warfare demands, and the absence of an effective NCO corps. However, it did nothing to eliminate one of the salient problems of the Soviets' involvement in the country, their failure (or inability) to commit enough infantry to win.

Soviet manpower and personnel problems severely affected operations. In all, 620,000 Soviets served in the conflict. In nine years only about 15,000 (2.4 percent of the force) died there, but fully 470,000 (73 percent) became casualties, of which an astonishing 416,000 fell victim to infectious disease (hepatitis, typhoid fever, meningitis, malaria, dysentery). Medical conditions routinely incapacitated 30 percent of unit strength. Given the fact that three-fourths of the combat units in the 40th Army were involved in providing convoy and other types of security, and considering the noncombat missions (e.g., guard duty) that the units also performed, Soviet commanders had to contend with serious availability problems. The unimpressive quality of Soviet conscripts in the 1980s, who suffered from severe morale problems, exacerbated the situation. Large-scale draft-dodging, de facto lowering of standards to make quotas, the rising proportion of non-Slavs with rudimentary knowledge of Russian in the draft-age population, widespread passive resistance to the Afghan war which grew as casualties and disenchantment mounted, *dedovshchina* (hazing), drug involvement, and the unwillingness of a dispirited force to run lethal risks in the name of an increasingly questionable cause typified the period. The desperate courage and selfless commitment that had distinguished the Red Army in World War II more accurately characterized the actions of the mujahideen than those of the Limited Contingent. Units of the latter preferred to entrench themselves in bastions surrounded by mines and preregistered artillery fires, and to venture forth only in numbers, normally during the day. The mujahideen owned the night, and the Soviets rarely contested their claim. As a prominent mujahideen commander put it, "The enemy infantry was the weakest part of their armies--DRA and Soviet. . . . We intended to fight to the last man and they didn't." Tactically the Soviets may well have understood what was required, but they did not, or could not, execute it.

Moscow's strategy envisioned buying time to consolidate and stabilize its client in Kabul. It called for holding urban areas while pushing the DRA army out to fight in the countryside, no more than 15 percent of which the government ever controlled. Grau writes, "The DRA [did] most of the attacking and dying." The Soviet army viewed the DRA as cannon fodder and scarcely held a higher opinion of the Afghans as a whole, which created a fundamental, if familiar, contradiction for counterinsurgency warfare. In Grau's words, "Soviet policy seems to have been to terrorize the population, not to win them over to the government's side." Soviet commanders had massive amounts of supporting arms at their disposal and, to minimize casualties, routinely substituted firepower for the commitment of infantry. Such practices as the use of unannounced artillery barrages to initiate sweeps, indiscriminate bombing of infrastructure, defoliation of crops, and destruction of herds (orchestrated in part by none other than Dzhokhar M. Dudayev, then a senior officer in Soviet strategic aviation and later the renegade first President of Chechnya, whose nation endured the brunt of similar tactics) caused 1.3 million deaths and the displacement of one third of the 17 million population of Afghanistan. The Soviet-Afghan War also served as the test-bed for an array of new hardware, including the BMP-2,

BTR-80, *Vasilek* 82mm automatic mortar, AGS-17 grenade launcher, 9P140 *Uragan* multiple rocket launcher, several models of the Mi-24 *Hind* helicopter gunship, and the Su-25 *Frogfoot* attack aircraft, all of which, along with other systems, were widely employed.

Nonbelligerents suffered greatly from atrocities committed by Soviet forces (and avidly documented by the newly unleashed Soviet press) in retaliation for mujahideen actions on this frustrating, nonlinear battlefield. It is little wonder that rural Afghans considered the Soviets and their DRA allies oppressors, not liberators, and that the mujahideen enjoyed willing, generous popular support. The sources of that support included surprising numbers of Afghans in official DRA structures and army units, which were pervasively penetrated by mujahideen sympathizers, collaborators, and agents.

Geography dictated tactics in this war, as it had in previous Afghan conflicts, and the mujahideen held the home-court advantage. Acclimatized, tough, traditional warriors, they knew the terrain, could dictate the terms of most engagements, and normally wielded the initiative. They preferred to prey on soft DRA targets but would brazenly hit the Soviets in their own backyard, immediately outside 40th Army headquarters, as well. Jalali terms mujahideen tactics "short-hit and long-run" in a conflict that rewarded endurance and survival. Although the rebels still died in massive numbers, they knew that no single battle would turn the tide and fought appropriately. Following an attack on a column they would take the spoils and depart quickly, preempting reaction. When surrounded, they often succeeded in exfiltrating through enemy lines, at times with the tacit connivance of Soviet forces, who preferred a kind of conditional *modus vivendi* with the *dushmany* (as the Russians called the mujahideen) to aggressive, costly close combat.

To offset the Soviets' superiority in firepower the mujahideen attacked shortly before dark and hugged their enemy, undermining the 40th Army's ability to counter with effective artillery fire and airstrikes. They employed their weapon of choice, the versatile, low-tech RPG-7, with skill and ingenuity against armor, personnel, structures, and, in barrages, even helicopters. True, Stingers and Oerlikon cannons supplied by the United States starting in late 1986 acted as a kind of force multiplier, permitting the rebels to wreak havoc on Soviet aviation assets, where Blowpipe and SA-7 *Grail* missiles had earlier proven inadequate to the task. These new capabilities forced the Soviets to begin resupplying remote outposts only at night and, after development of the Stinger night sight, to substantially increase flight altitudes. Additionally, success in this area inspired the mujahideen to undertake even more aggressive actions in others. But the rebels' favored weaponry embodied simplicity itself: long-range Enfield rifles designed a century ago and antivehicle mines. (The Soviets themselves preferred antipersonnel models, of which they left an estimated 13 million behind.) Thus, technology influenced but did not did not dictate the outcome of this conflict. The mujahideen's ancestors would easily have recognized their tactics.

Many operational generalizations apply to the Soviet-Afghan War. The tactics used were essentially timeless, dictated by channelization, choke points, and terrain restrictions (e.g., in the green zones). In this backward country with primitive roads and no rail network, the battle for control of the lines of communications assumed immense importance. Deceit, deception, and surprise affected the fortunes of the sides enormously. Both belligerents repeatedly committed what should have been lethal errors involving predictability and complacency, yet did so with impunity because the other side failed to learn or apply key lessons. The mujahideen routinely reused ambush sites and observed inadequate security in local areas. They often organized deficiently for combat; their warriors, hungry for battle and spoils, scorned support functions. Without warning or coordination, mercurial rebel detachments would depart the battlefield, leaving yawning gaps in the lines. The Soviets, for their part, often reused helicopter landing zones, ignored proper reconnaissance, and littered or smoked in battle positions. Understrength, unmotivated, risk-averse, and intimidated by the prospect of ambushes, not to mention capture and its all too probable consequences[2], they suffered from a siege mentality and conceded the initiative to the enemy. The DRA army was even worse. Its conscripts not only ran at the first sign of serious combat, but entire units--officers and conscripts alike--defected to the mujahideen. Frequently, out of some combination of sympathy and fear, DRA soldiers would betray their units to the rebels, a practice that often explained mujahideen successes. The reader will be indebted to Grau and Jalali for their detailed insights into all of these areas.

A legitimate question arises as to whether, or to what extent, Moscow actually learned the lessons of Afghanistan. In this connection evidence from the First and Second Chechen Wars (1994-96, 1999-?) suggests that the Russian High

Command may have understood and recorded those lessons but has not consistently applied them. These conflicts have similarities, among them the central role of geography (particularly the mountains) in determining the character of warfare, the internally splintered nature of the Moslem partisan force opposing Moscow, and the role of international aid in fostering the rebels' campaign. Other similarities include the hodgepodge task organization of the Russian joint command, enormous and lopsided use of firepower to minimize attrition despite the foreseeable political consequences, generation of mass refugee movements and civilian casualties, reliance on experienced and elite formations for small-unit conflict, unimpressive performance by conscripts, thankless treatment of returning veterans, and widespread disregard by both sides of the law of war. But those are topics for another essay. At this point, whether valor and endurance will suffice to carry the day in Chechnya remains to be seen. What is clear is that absent a devastating Russian strike with chemical weapons and fuel-air-explosive (about which Zbigniew Brzezinski recently sounded the alarm), the victor will require no small amount of both the aforementioned qualities.

NOTES

1. Recipients included such subsequently prominent, and occasionally notorious, figures as P. S. Grachev (Russian Defense Minister), B. V. Gromov (Deputy Defense Minister), A. V. Rutskoi (Vice President of Russia and an instigator of the abortive October 1993 mutiny), and V. I. Varennikov (CINC, Ground Forces).

2. The mujahideen's nonchalant admissions of law of war violations (summary executions of DRA officers, burying Soviet advisors alive, decapitation of the corpse of a Soviet pilot as a commander's trophy) in *The Other Side of the Mountain* are remarkable for their naïve candor. Needless to say, the well-edited Frunze volume contains no mention of Soviet excesses.

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The Reviewer: Colonel Lawrence G. Kelley (USMC, Ret.) is a former A-4 pilot and Russian Foreign Area Officer (FAO) with extensive experience in the former Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic, and Eastern and Western Europe. A graduate of Princeton (A.B., Russian) and Georgetown University (M.A., government), he flew close air support in Vietnam in 1972. Colonel Kelley served nine FAO assignments, including tours with the US Military Liaison Mission to CINC, Group of Soviet Forces in Germany; the On-Site Inspection Agency (twice); Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Navy Staff; NATO, and elsewhere.

Review Essay

Strategic Reading on Latin America

RUSSELL W. RAMSEY

As we begin a new century, a bright shining star in Latin American history is an edited work from professors Lewis Hanke and Jane M. Rausch titled *People and Issues in Latin American History: From Independence to the Present* (2d ed., 1998). All the great names and issues both salutary and troubling in the region's history since the early 1800s are here in short, pithy readings, edited with honesty and elegance. Sadly, Professor Hanke, one of Latin American history's grand old men and certainly the premier scholar of the Western Hemisphere's human rights tradition, passed away before this superb volume was published. Here we can read Simon Bolivar's appeal to Bolivians to proclaim a constitution based on principles traced from ancient Greece, and we can find three different appraisals of Fidel Castro's Cuban revolution. Also in the mix are short, pertinent readings on land tenure, *caudillismo*, urban society, industrialization, Latin American views of the North America giant, and much more. For any introductory course on Latin America, this is the perfect book to be read in conjunction with Robert T. Buckman's regional introduction, *Latin America 1999*, from the excellent Stryker-Post Series.

Thomas O'Brien's 1998 work *The Century of U.$. Capitalism in Latin America* and Terry L. McCoy's *The 1999 Latin American Business Environment: An Assessment* offer the reader a nicely opposed pair of views on the region's current economic situation. For Professor O'Brien, all US investment in Latin America has been a manipulative, profit-seeking venture that has contributed to undemocratic governments and societies. His factual descriptions of US investment and its political consequences are quite good. For Professor McCoy, the regional economic climate is guardedly optimistic, and neo-liberalism is an authentic world trend with overall positive trajectories for Latin America.

Daniel Castro's edited volume *Revolutions and Revolutionaries* (1999) and Kevin J. Middlebrook's edited collection *Electoral Observation and Democratic Transitions in Latin America* (1998) offer comparative strategic insights on the political condition of the region. Castro's revolutionary potpourri shows how the indigenous social and economic injustice issues within Latin America were manipulated by both giants during the Cold War, and have now died back into specific armed challenges heavily connected to the drug war in Colombia and Peru. Middlebrook's work is a good portrait of what election supervision efforts can do with their often limited resources; one is struck by how much more successful these efforts have been in the Western Hemisphere than in the Eastern Hemisphere.

Brian Loveman's 1999 volume *For la Patria: Politics and the Armed Forces in Latin America* revisits the tempestuous field of the Latin American military forces and their role in modern politics. He examines their historical status as independent actors functioning in politically and economically nonintegrated societies, concluding that military attitudes now tend to accept democracy but that military coups d'etat could reoccur if economic development fails in the region. Your reviewer examines the history of Latin American military behavior and the US mentorship role in the second printing of the 1997 volume *Guardians of the Other Americas: Essays on the Military Forces of Latin America*. A 1999 follow-up volume, *Addenda to Guardians of the Other Americas*, offers several recently published essays examining policy and behavioral aspects of the Latin American armed forces. These essays will be incorporated into the next edition of the original work, which is currently under publication in Spanish in Quito, Ecuador, by the Defense Ministry.

Stephen C. Rabe's 1999 work *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* continues his 1988 critique of the Eisenhower-era anticommunism policy in Latin America. In the present work, he pounds on the Kennedy counterinsurgency doctrine as basically unnecessary and productive of abusive, retrograde regimes, in total contravention of the noble ideals presented in the Alliance for Progress. Professor Rabe's historical trace of the Kennedy-era counterinsurgency doctrine is excellent; your reviewer can attest to this as a first-person participant as well as a historian of the issue. The harsh historical judgment seems unwarranted, however, given the fact that the end product of the counterinsurgency policy in 1990 was a region ready for and generally accepting of democratization and economic liberalization, and given that the internal defense of

small societies during great-power struggles is never pretty to watch. One can conclude that without the counterinsurgency policy started by President Kennedy and continued by every President thereafter, Latin America would have suffered a half dozen communist regimes, and the "basket-case country in the back yard" population would be much larger than merely Cuba and Haiti. Richard D. Downie's 1998 *Learning from Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War* is the best operational description yet written on the US counterinsurgency policy. However, his quest for the correct universal application that would have worked well in El Salvador and in the Colombian drug war is perhaps quixotic.

We shift now to individual country situations. Richard C. Thornton's 1998 book *The Falklands Sting: Reagan, Thatcher, and Argentina's Bomb* is a real James Bond story at the national security policy level. He examines the idea that not only did Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher invent her "splendid little war" in 1981 to shore up sagging Conservative policies, but also that President Ronald Reagan's national security team actually supported Dame Margaret's war as a way of defusing the production of nuclear weapons in the Southern Cone of South America. The review of diplomatic events is solid history; one can accept or reject Thornton's Byzantine explorations.

Lee K. Durham's occasional paper "Reality v. Perception: Democracy Under President Fujimori" (1999) is one of the few pieces extant that examines what Latin American military professionals and their families actually think about incomplete democracies such as Peru under President Alberto Fujimori. Professors Gabriel Marcella and Richard Downes edited *Security Cooperation in the Western Hemisphere: Resolving the Ecuador-Peru Conflict* (1999). It shows how US Ambassador Luigi Einaudi and US Army Colonel Glenn R. Weidner led peacemaking efforts that resolved the 1995 border conflict between Ecuador and Peru in a manner that should become a world model for conflict resolution (for a full review, see the Winter 1999-2000 issue of *Parameters*, pp. 137-39).

Professor Harvey F. Kline's 1999 study *State Building and Conflict Resolution in Colombia, 1986-1994* deals with the troubling question of why a country so excellent in rural peacemaking in the 1960s could have fallen victim to the FARC narco-guerrillas in the 1990s. He traces the ways in which Presidents Virgilio Barco (1986-1990) and Cesar Gaviria (1990-1994) failed to build a unified civil-military peacemaking system in the rural zones long flagellated by the earlier banditry and guerrilla violence. Canadian Professor Dennis Rempe has recently produced two important articles on Colombia, en route to a full-length treatment on rural violence in Colombia since the 1970s. "The Origin of Internal Security in Colombia" will appear in the Winter 1999 issue of *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, and "An American Trojan Horse? Eisenhower, Latin America, and the Development of U.S. Internal Security Policy, 1954-60" appeared in the Spring 1999 issue. Rempe's work will ultimately be phase two of your reviewer's forthcoming *Soldados y guerrilleros*, the history of the Colombian violence from 1946 to 1965.

Thomas L. Percy's 1999 work *We Answer Only to God: Politics and the Military in Panama, 1903-1947* provides a vital and completely original theory of civil-military relations in Latin America. Percy opines that the US policy of demilitarizing Panama by means of institutionalizing a national police resulted in a highly politicized police institution which, in fact, made and broke governments in Panama during the years when textbooks tended to label Panama a democracy.

The quality of scholarly books about Latin America which examine national security issues is much higher than it was during the Cold War. Little by little, the scholarly world is abandoning the lamentable predisposition to see the region through the eyes of neo-Marxism and dwell more on the actual political and economic setting, with sincere analysis of US regional policy. All of this bodes well for the US policy of military-to-military engagement. Despite vicious accusations from bitter neo-Marxists who cannot admit that Latin America rejected their millenarian dream, the US Army's tutorial role in Latin America since 1940, when it took on that role, is an achievement that redounds heavily to the institution's credit.

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The Reviewer: Russell W. Ramsey is a civilian professor at the US Army School of the Americas. He holds the Ph.D. degree in Latin American history from the University of Florida and has written many articles and books on Latin American military topics.

Reviewed 1 February 2000. Please send comments or corrections to carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil