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Editor's Shelf

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Editor's Shelf

Ensuring appropriate recognition for the ever-expanding volume of books that crosses my desk is not an easy proposition. There always appears to be a number of works that simply will not neatly fit into a standard genre for review. The following are but a few offerings reflecting that editorial conundrum.



Over the past 50 years, and before, a rather unique form of military historiography has been cultivated by historians. Most of these works have taken the form of reference books, military encyclopedias, or sequential histories of a particular period or conflict. Several that readily come to mind are *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, edited by John Whiteclay Chambers; Charles Messenger's splendidly edited *Reader's Guide to Military History*; and the classic *The Encyclopedia of Military History*, edited by R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor M. Dupuy. Now joining that list and certain to gain classic status is a two-volume set edited by James C. Bradford. *A Companion to American Military History* is part of the Blackwell Companions to American History series and provides readers with a comprehensive analysis of the historiography of the US military from the colonial era to present-day Afghanistan. Bradford assembled the works of 60 eminent scholars and military leaders to provide not only a historical perspective on the American military experience, but also an examination of works on military culture and other little-known aspects of military life. Essays include analyses of the military and music, sports in the military, ethics, and a number of even more diverse themes. The editor was careful in not restricting his examination only to the Army; rather, he includes pieces on all branches of the armed services, along with issues related to the National Guard, reserve forces, and militias. This set is a valuable tool and should be in the library of every modern-day military historian, and, in fact, historians in general. The only thing restricting the set's total acceptance by the reading public at large is the fault of the publisher, a list price of \$350. A price tag that is certain to doom this wonderful work to the shelves of library reference rooms.

Our good friends at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) continue to provide books examining the numerous processes required to produce a solid foundation for nations seeking a peaceful future. Laurel E. Miller (editor) and her colleagues at USIP have produced what will most certainly be hailed as one of the definitive studies on constitutional development in emerging states. *Framing the State in Times of Transition: Case Studies in Constitution Making* analyzes constitution-making in post-conflict nations to include the many associated risks and opportunities for failure. This volume will be of immense value not only to members of the international community responsible for aiding societies emerging from civil strife; it also has tremendous application for the military members of country teams in support of redevelopment efforts. A must read for those senior officers working at the strategic level in support of regime transition and stability operations.

For any member of America's military, the principal title of this next book will ring bells, especially for those who have experience in the research and development arenas. *The Department of Mad Scientists* immediately elicits a strong emotional re-

sponse or vestiges of disbelief, knowing that the title is shorthand for one of the most controversial and secretive Pentagon-led agencies. The full title reveals all, *The Department of Mad Scientists: How DARPA Is Remaking Our World, from the Internet to Artificial Limbs*. Michael Belfiore provides readers with an insider's account of how this agency goes about defining future technology for the military and the world at large. The author was given unprecedented access to research sites across the country, where he was able to witness the results of the agency's numerous projects and interview a number of its creative and visionary scientists. Spawned during the Eisenhower Administration in the 1950s as a result of the Soviet launch of Sputnik, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) represents a unique blend of military officers and white-coated scientists. The agency is responsible for any number of technological breakthroughs; to name but a few, the Internet, global positioning systems, and a plethora of robotic vehicles. The author recounts a marvelous record of achievements by an organization that most Americans do not even know exists. Originated with a general focus on the military application of technologies, the spinoffs of the technologies have had tremendous impact on every sector of American society. Belfiore tells readers it is not mad scientists but rather a group of dedicated and sane engineers that is responsible for this ground-breaking research. The book will certainly be of interest to military officers associated with research and development communities or with the application of technology.

Strategists and military planners are constantly reminded that Afghanistan is not Vietnam. Yet, every new book or analysis regarding the political dynamics associated with either conflict continually refers to compelling similarities. This is certainly the case with Thomas L. Ahern's *Vietnam Declassified: The CIA and Counterinsurgency*. For those who experienced the large silver birds and helicopters of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) overhead in Vietnam it is somewhat difficult to accept Ahern's thesis, that it was the rural Vietnamese support (or lack thereof) for the Viet Cong that was the primary factor in determining the level of insurgency in Vietnam. And it was the CIA's involvement in the rural pacification programs that established the protocols responsible for strengthening the ties between the central government in Saigon and the peasants in the countryside. The author highlights the many flaws of the South Vietnamese government, and America's failure to analyze the political dynamics between the insurgents, central government, and peasants, failures that the author portends mirror ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ahern believes it is the ability of America and its allies to win the support of the general public that will determine the future of those conflicts. This account of the CIA's role in pacification programs in Vietnam should be required reading for officers and agency representatives participating in counterinsurgency operations.

America's School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II is the latest work by Peter J. Schifferle. The author, a long-time faculty member at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, presents a superbly documented and well-written study of how and why Fort Leavenworth was the critical link in producing the generation of military officers that would lead America to victory in World War II; a generation still smarting from the bloodshed of the First World War. Schifferle skillfully interweaves personal accounts of combat operations during the war with the influences of the Leavenworth curriculum. In a marvelously researched and documented work (over 100 pages of notes and bibliography), the author details the essential elements required for war preparation that only a Leavenworth education could provide.

This book is perhaps the best examination to date of the pedagogy, students, faculty, and curriculum of Fort Leavenworth during this critical era in American history. For those who serve at other military educational institutions, the concluding claim that Leavenworth has become the “Intellectual Center of the Army” may be a matter for discussion. The one thing that is certain, however, is the fact that Fort Leavenworth was instrumental in educating one of the greatest generations of military officers ever to lead American forces in combat. A book that anyone associated with military education would appreciate having in their library.

Just when you thought you might know everything there was to know about a particular period or event in US military history, someone comes along with a new and revealing interpretation. That is the case with Thomas E. Hanson's *Combat Ready? The Eighth U.S. Army on the Eve of the Korean War*. Hanson, who is a lieutenant colonel in the US Army, has a doctorate from Ohio State University and has served as an instructor in the Department of History at the US Military Academy. The author provides a brilliant analysis of the combat preparedness of the Eighth Army from 1949 until the onset of hostilities in Korea in 1950. He counters the traditional belief that the Eighth Army was a ragtag bunch of poorly trained and equipped soldiers. Hanson tends to focus his analysis of the Eighth Army's capabilities on the good side of things. True, the soldiers of the Eighth did participate in some rather discouraging battles during the initial phases of the conflict, but to their credit they made tremendous strides in terms of combat readiness prior to the commencement of hostilities. Thanks mainly to some excellent leadership and committed collective training they were able to transform their ranks into a professional and competent fighting force. Hanson makes a convincing case for understanding that how a force trains in peacetime will most certainly reflect how they fight in combat. This book provides a whole new view of the Eighth Army and how it prepared for combat. Not a revisionist history, but a proper and well-documented account of how an army that was almost broken transitioned into an effective fighting force. A great read for any leaders or military historians suffering under a “pervasive myth” regarding the abilities of the Eighth US Army prior to conflict in Korea. – RHT □

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