

The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 42
Number 1 *Parameters Spring 2012*

Article 5

3-1-2012

Editor's Shelf

Robert H. Taylor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters>

Recommended Citation

Robert H. Taylor, "Editor's Shelf," *Parameters* 42, no. 1 (2012), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.2620.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by USAWC Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters by an authorized editor of USAWC Press.

Editor's Shelf

Our friends at the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Historical Office have made another sterling contribution to the Secretaries of Defense Historical Series with *McNamara, Clifford, and the Burdens of Vietnam, 1965-1969*. The many recognized talents of Edward J. Drea are once again highlighted in this brilliant examination; expose is too strong a word regarding the incumbency of Robert S. McNamara. Drea highlights McNamara's interaction with President Lyndon B. Johnson's White House; his successor as secretary of defense Clark M. Clifford; the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Congress; and other agencies of government during this volatile and dangerous time in the nation's history. The author portrays McNamara's early attempts to check the momentum of the war in Vietnam as sincere, but, unfortunately, lost in his public statements supporting the war. It was this duplicitous manner that would later color McNamara as the ultimate hypocrite. Drea gives credit where it is due, thoroughly examining the rationale behind the Secretary's "systems analysis approach" to managing the amorphous Department of Defense. He correctly determines that even McNamara's great energy and intellect was no match for the never-ending attacks by Congress and the administration on his various cost-cutting programs, favored weapons systems, and attempts to limit strategic arms. Clifford's brief, but significant, tenure is analyzed with the same rigor as that of his predecessor. The role that McNamara and Clifford played provides readers with a greater perspective in which to place the conflict in Vietnam and to gain a better understanding of the impact of war on national security policy and American society. This volume deserves its place of honor alongside the previous five volumes in this series on the shelves of anyone having an interest in US foreign and national security policy during this tumultuous period.

Perhaps no historian today understands the true meaning of war better than Professor Williamson Murray (Professor Emeritus of History at The Ohio State University). Wick has been researching and writing on war and peace for as long as this student of history can recall, and that, in genealogical terms, is a long time. I believe the first book of his, at least the first that I recall, was coauthored with Al Bernstein and MacGregor Knox in 1994, *The Making of Strategy*. For those of you who might have missed some of the author's earlier offerings, he has provided readers with a new book that captures many of his thoughts on the role that history has played in how we think about the present and the future. The collection, *War, Strategy, and Military Effectiveness*, examines several of the author's timeless and recurring themes; his unequalled interest in history and those who created it; a continuing fascination with similarities in human behavior related to the past and present⁷ and his unwavering belief that the study of strategy and military history is essential to understanding war and peace in the future. And if you were thinking that by devouring this book you might have captured all the insight this prolific historian and author has to offer, we will have to disappoint you. The folks at Cambridge University Press recently recognized Professor Murray's many talents and have released *Military Adaptation in War, With Fear of Change*. This work examines one of the most critical questions associated with warfare, namely, how to adapt when placed

under the extreme rigors and stresses of combat. Both these books are must-haves for students of military history and warfare in the twenty-first century.

To truly understand warfare and all it entails, one must come to know those who execute it. The Oxford Library of Psychology, published by Oxford University Press, one of the oldest and most highly respected publishers, provides readers with a comprehensive set of handbooks, designed to meet distinct needs in various fields. *The Oxford Handbook of Military Psychology*, an edited work by Janice H. Laurence and Michael D. Matthews, is the latest in this series. Laurence, an associate professor at Temple University, and Matthews, a professor at West Point, both have specialized expertise regarding soldiers' performance in the military setting. The list of contributors to this superb effort reads like a "who's who" in the study of human behavior and military psychology. From combat-related stress to terrorism, from ethics and human rights to crime on the battlefield, and yes, from the role played by lack of sleep to gays in the military, the editors have covered just about every aspect of military psychology. The topics presented in this work describe the myriad ways in which psychology impacts warfare and vice versa. For those who may incorrectly assume that any text related to psychology would be too esoteric for their reading pallet, this reviewer will attest to the readable and pragmatic nature of each offering. This is a reference that should be in the library of every senior leader in today's military.

The United States Army Center of Military History (CMH), and its forerunner the General Staff Historical Branch, have published quality volumes regarding America's military since 1943. Unfortunately, from the point of advertising or accessing their products, the majority of CMH titles are only available to the general public through the Government Printing Office (GPO), a process unknown to many. A former chief of military history at the United States Center of Military History, John Sloan Brown, has provided readers with an insightful view of the US Army as it tried to redefine itself following the Cold War era. *Kevlar Legions: The Transformation of the Army, 1989-2005*, is the story of the American Army's transformation into a highly capable ground force, primarily through the incorporation of rapidly emerging technologies. This was a period of centrally directed and institutionally driven transformation that exploited products of the Information Age, while simultaneously adapting to the demands of the post-Cold War strategic environment. Brown adroitly highlights the fact that this was a time when the Army did much more than simply modernize equipment; it developed new doctrine, reorganized, modified training to support new requirements, and actually changed the culture of the service to meet requirements. It was an army capable of rapidly deploying to meet the demands of high-end conventional combat, while at the same time retaining those skills and equipment necessary in the low-intensity and counterinsurgency arenas. Brown is not only a masterful historian; he is a superb storyteller. This comprehensive, yet readable, work is testimony to his many talents. – RHT □