

Invitation to the Revolution

A Book Review by

FRANÇOIS L.J. HEISBOURG

Lifting the Fog of War

by William A. Owens with Ed Offley
New York: Ferrar, Straus and Giroux,
2000.
256 pp. \$25.00
[ISBN: 0-374-18627-8]

In an otherwise convincing case for reshaping the Armed Forces through a revolution in military affairs (RMA), William Owens invokes three arguments that do not entirely pass muster. First, he claims the U.S. military is faced by “imminent” and “general” collapse because of the gap between current levels of funding and the block obsolescence of weapon systems procured in the Reagan years. But he points out elsewhere in *Lifting the Fog of War* that America accounts for a third of all defense spending around the world, more than during most of the Cold War. Indeed, the United States and its allies in Europe and Asia command two-thirds of global expenditures on defense, and most other countries are neither actual nor potential adversaries. So notwithstanding the problems that the end of the Reagan buildup will undoubtedly spark, the significant amount of available resources does not make a *prima facie* case for a revolutionary treatment. Indeed many would argue, as Owens does occasionally, that American resource needs could be greatly reduced through a change of strategy rather than technological means. He complains in particular about an excessive number of open-ended military commitments during the Clinton years.

Admiral Owens, a former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also justifies an all-out RMA through his expectation that China will become a peer competitor of the United States by 2010–2015. He considers the quarter century between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of China as a strategic pause which must put to good use via a revolution in military affairs. The first

problem with this reasoning is that China is credited with technological capacities which seem exaggerated, at least in view of a tendency to downplay European potential. The nations of Europe have a combined gross domestic product several times larger than China’s and a level of defense spending more than twice as large. Yet Europe—second only to America in the use of information technology—is given short shrift, whereas China is credited with extraordinary RMA potential. This doesn’t mean that there isn’t a significant gap in military capabilities between the United States and Europe or that China won’t become an ever greater regional power that may act in an inimical manner. But unless it were inordinately careless, Washington should remain well ahead of Beijing in the RMA race, given the latter’s vast accumulation of low-tech legacy systems and a highly hierarchical communist leadership, factors which are clearly not RMA-friendly.

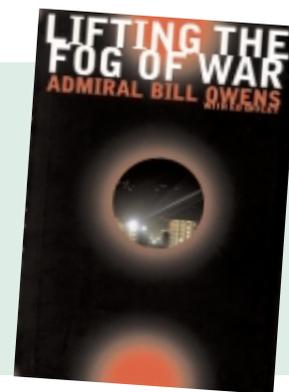
The second problem is that the United States may learn, as Britain did between 1815 and 1914, that what appears as a relatively brief strategic pause may actually be a lasting phenomenon. Owens rightly criticizes limited attempts at military reform during the first half of the 1990s, which posited a fairly rapid reconstitution of Russian military capabilities, but he may be making the same mistake by focusing on a medium-term Chinese surge. The United States has been used to dealing with a single major enemy, the Axis, then the Warsaw Pact. It doesn’t follow that the post-Cold War era is simply a waiting period to recast the 1941–90 paradigm: we are as likely to face a long period with multiple risks. The parallel drawn by Owens between the collapse of France in its race against Prussia

in 1870–71 and military prospects today is hardly compelling: America as an island superpower is far more reminiscent of imperial Britain after Waterloo.

Finally, Owens justifies support for the revolution in military affairs by arguing that it will challenge “hoary dictums” on the fog and friction of war. Without question, emerging technology increases the scope and depth of battlespace vision. And there is no doubt that the United States is uniquely placed to attain battlespace superiority. But an enemy can be relied upon not to cooperate: what can be hidden will be hidden; what can be made ambiguous will be made ambiguous. The Israelis had excellent intelligence on Egyptian dispositions on the eve of the Yom Kippur War in 1973; and the buildup of Iraqi forces along the border with Kuwait did not go unnoticed in 1990, especially because a typical system of systems aspect of technology (a radar-bearing aerostat) was actually being tested in Kuwait as Iraq invaded. Indeed, an immediate effect of RMA technology is putting constraints on warfighting: thus collateral damage in general, blue-on-blue casualties in particular, and targeting errors have become unacceptable because they can’t be blamed on technological limits. By comparison, anti-American crowds did not take to the streets in Gaullist France when its ambassador was killed and its embassy was bombed in Hanoi by American planes: such collateral damage was accepted as a misfortune of war. Greater battlespace awareness creates new standards of conduct, an evolution that one can only welcome—but which introduces new friction.

Lifting the Fog of War

was the subject of a recent *JFQ* book lecture by the author which was held at the National Defense University on June 7, 2000, and televised by C-SPAN [see videotape 157710].



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But this criticism carries very little weight in light of bottom line in *Lifting the Fog of War*. The revolution is going to happen one way or another. Indeed, this is the major justification for going down the RMA road, in the same way that over the last two centuries only militaries which integrated the tools of the industrial revolution had a chance of prevailing. Revolution has become a necessary condition of proficiency, whatever the strategic context; by restoring maneuver warfare versus attrition, it is well suited to a volatile environment which demands flexibility and mobility.

Because it is built around pervasive, close-to-real time command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, the revolution in military affairs calls for jointness on all levels. Owens is at his best in discussing joint matters. This should be mandatory reading for all thinking members of the defense community. By emphasizing the organizational and cultural aspects of reform, he points out that RMA is unquestionably a revolution in *military* affairs, not simply a revolution in technology. It is regrettable that he does not consider the state of affairs in allied militaries. Lessons can be drawn from the Joint Chief of Defence Staff in Britain, longstanding British and French reliance on joint procurement structures, and movement toward joint professional military education. Such comparisons would be useful in addressing one American handicap vis-à-vis RMA: if the United States enjoys the unique advantage of global stature, it incurs the corresponding drawback of large force structures and organizations that find it hard to keep abreast of technological change as exemplified by Moore's law (the doubling of processing capability every 18 months). Finding the optimum balance between centralization (without which jointness won't happen) and delegation of authority (a condition for flexibility) will be key to the American revolution in military affairs.

Since most military operations after the Cold War have involved coalitions, there must not only be jointness within national militaries, but interoperability among allies and coalition partners. Owens does not go into detail on the freer flow of technology among allies, which is peripheral to his main theme. But as a European, this reviewer can only hope that, given his professional experience, he will find an opportunity in the future to focus on the inter-allied implications of the revolution in military affairs. **JFQ**

WINNING THE GOOD WAR

A Book Review by

COLE C. KINGSEED

A War to be Won:

Fighting the Second World War

by Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett
Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap
Press of Harvard University Press, 2000.
656 pp. \$35.00
[ISBN: 0-674-00163-x]

With more than 4,000 titles on World War II currently in print, why is another general history of the 20th century's greatest conflict necessary? Williamson Murray and Allan Millett answer that question with *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War*, a book that is likely to become the definitive single-volume account of military operations from 1939 to 1942. Having previously edited a series of works that advanced scholarship on military affairs in the 20th century—*Military Effectiveness* (New York: Routledge, 1988–89); *Calculations: Net Assessment and the Coming of World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1992); and *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996)—Murray and Millett are two of this country's premier military historians. Their latest collaboration is a balanced assessment of operational aspects of the war, from its roots to an epilogue which analyzes the conflict in retrospect.

The authors trace the origin of the war beginning with the rise of fascism. After concluding that by late August 1939 the strategic balance had swung significantly against the Western Allies, Murray and Millett opine that the long road to September 1, 1939, was paved with good intentions, which were not enough in the world of Hitler and Stalin. By the time Germany attacked Poland, only cold steel could defend Western interests and aspirations. Half a world away the drama was simultaneously unfolding as Japan embarked on a war of conquest.

To illuminate the tactical and technological adaptations leading to World

War II, the book has a chapter on the revolution in military affairs that occurred in the aftermath of the Great War. Innovation and experimentation prepared the belligerents in varying degrees for restoring mobility to the battlefield. By 1939 tactical refinements gave German troops an initial advantage, which their leaders subsequently squandered because of an inability to grasp the strategic balance between means and ends. Meanwhile, the Allies embarked on war mentally and physically unprepared.

For the balance of their analysis, Murray and Millett focus on geographic theaters and make a significant contribution to an understanding of World War II. In considering the German conquest of France in 1940, for example, they conclude that the success of the *Wehrmacht* did not rest upon operational doctrine developed because of defeat in World War I. Rather it resulted from intelligent maturation of doctrine from 1917 to the Polish campaign. German capabilities were evolutionary, not revolutionary. The unifying theme was a coherent combined-arms approach to modern war.

Another aspect of this book is its balance; the Pacific Theater receives attention equal to that given to Europe. According to the authors, Midway represented the high-water mark in Japanese expansion but not a shift in the strategy of seize-and-hold. Japan still possessed advantages over the United States, but its high command temporarily lost the initiative. By 1944 dependency on oil spelled disaster as American submarines sank an increasing number of enemy merchant ships. With defeat inevitable, Imperial headquarters transferred the best army units and commanders from China and elsewhere to the inner defenses of Fortress Japan. The tenacity of enemy defenders on Iwo Jima and Okinawa convinced Truman and his advisors that the atomic bomb was a legitimate weapon to terminate the conflict.

If the intent of the authors is to challenge historical conventions, they succeed. Nowhere is this approach more evident than in their assessment of those commanders who waged the war. Of particular interest is Omar Bradley, whom they describe as the most over-rated American general of the war. Mark Clark, Simon Bolivar Buckner, and Douglas MacArthur also fare poorly, as does Chester Nimitz, whom Millett and Murray characterize as very cautious. Dwight Eisenhower gets high marks for managing the generals under his command, as "fractious and dysfunctional a group of egomaniacs as any war had ever

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Unloading British vehicles on D-Day.



National Archives

seen." Among the senior commanders, George Patton emerges as the most competent and the only one who understood the use of Allied ground mobility to exploit enemy tactical and operational weaknesses.

With due respect to other members of the Grand Alliance, the authors nonetheless confer the highest accolades to Soviet commanders, who mastered what their own theorists only dreamed of in the 1930s: operations that paralyzed an enemy by striking deeply into rear areas. The offensive by Soviets in summer of 1944 completely destroyed the Germans in perhaps the finest operational victory of the war. A subsequent offensive into the Balkans was equally impressive, "a masterful marriage of military operations to the goals of politics and grand strategy." Soviet commanders exhibited

outstanding capabilities in deception, planning, and conducting operations.

In the final analysis, Murray and Millett have produced a superlative, balanced operational history of World War II. Separate appendices addressing military operations, the conduct of war, weapons, and the primary literature of the conflict provide additional luster.

Was the Allied victory worth the cost? The authors indicate that it was, for as *A War to Be Won* reminds us, the conflict unleashed by Japan in 1937 and Germany in 1939 came close to destroying the centers of world civilization and imposing imperial regimes founded on racial superiority, slavery, and genocide. The enemies of democracy did not succeed because of the extraordinary efforts and sacrifices made by Allied soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen to whom this book is dedicated.

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CHANGING THE GUARD IN LATIN AMERICA

A Review Essay by

FREDERICK M. NUNN

Over the past half century the United States has viewed Latin American militaries mainly in relation to its own national agenda and values. The emphasis must now change to a nonideological study of professional military institutions in transition. To share expertise and enhance cooperation Washington must appreciate these dynamic organizations on their own terms.

Systematic study of the political role of militaries in Latin America began during the 1950s. Policy-oriented writing was regional rather than national in scope and laced with Cold War issues. Of central interest was an inclination by officers to intervene in politics. Some observers regarded this military political activism as originating in Cold War policies formulated in Washington. Still others viewed it as emerging from class conflict or socioeconomic factors that presaged a capitalist-communist confrontation in the region, an idea that Edwin Lieuwen developed in *Arms and Politics in Latin America*, which probed controversies surrounding intervention by the military in domestic politics. This volume was followed by *Generals vs. Presidents: Neo-Militarism in Latin America*, which Lieuwen published four years later.

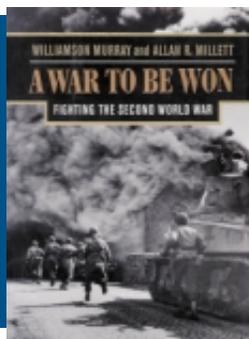
In *The Military and Society in Latin America*, John Johnson explored cultural and historical ingredients influencing domestic military activities. He found an activist military profession as one dimension of a process of change that would modernize the region. A bolder argument supporting sociocultural cause and effect was *Latin America: The Hegemonic Crisis and the Military Coup* by José Nun, which offered a class-conflict interpretation of military political activism stemming from its representation of bourgeois interests at the expense of the lower classes.

All these works stimulated interest in determining the cause of intervention: social origins, dialectics, U.S. influence, or an idiosyncratic strain of militarism? Such questions led students of military

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A War to be Won

was the subject of a recent JFQ book lecture by the authors which was held at the National Defense University on May 8, 2000, and televised by C-SPAN [see videotape 156997].



Arms and Politics in Latin America

by Edwin Lieuwen
New York: Praeger, 1960.

**Generals vs. Presidents:
Neo-Militarism in Latin America**

by Edwin Lieuwen
New York: Praeger, 1964.

**The Military and Society
in Latin America**

by John J. Johnson
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964.

**Latin America: The Hegemonic
Crisis and the Military Coup**

by José Nun
Berkeley: Institute of International
Studies, University of California, 1969.

**The Military in Latin American
Socio-Political Evolution:
Four Case Studies**

edited by Lyle N. McAlister
Washington: American Institutes
for Research, Center for Research
in Social Systems, 1970.

**Yesterday's Soldiers: European
Military Professionalism in South
America, 1890–1940**

by Frederick M. Nunn
Lincoln: University of Nebraska
Press, 1983.

**The Army and Politics in Argentina,
1928–1945: From Yrigoyen to
Perón; 1945–1962: From Perón to
Frondizi; and 1962–1973:
From Frondizi's Fall to the
Peronist Restoration**

by Robert A. Potash
Stanford: Stanford University Press,
1969, 1980, 1996.

**The Military in Politics:
Changing Patterns in Brazil**

by Alfred C. Stepan
Princeton: Princeton University Press,
1971.

(Note: Some of titles listed herein are out of print or
have been reissued in other editions.)

**The Politics of Military Rule in
Brazil, 1964–1985**

by Thomas E. Skidmore
New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

**Chilean Politics, 1920–1931:
The Honorable Mission
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by Frederick M. Nunn
Albuquerque: University of New Mexico
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**The Military in Chilean History:
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by Frederick M. Nunn
Albuquerque: University of New Mexico
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**The Rise and Fall of the Peruvian
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by George D.E. Philip
London: The Athlone Press, 1978.

**Military Reformism and Social
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by David Booth and Bernardo Sorj
New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.

**The Armed Forces and Democracy
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by John S. Fitch
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University
Press, 1988.

**The Time of the Generals: Latin
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in World Perspective**

by Frederick M. Nunn
Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press,
1992.

**The Constitution of Tyranny:
Regimes of Exception in Spanish
America**

by Brian Loveman
Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press,
1993.

**La Patria: Politics and the Armed
Forces in Latin America**

by Brian Loveman
Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1999.

On close study, military intervention in domestic politics resembled participation in political processes of nations which were compensating for immature civilian institutions. That is, the armed forces were as much part of the sociopolitical world as apart from it. Their actions were like those of a profession with a corporate identity, which while ideally outside the realm of politics was in practice an integral component of it.

This research not only produced more focused case studies but drew on both evidence from the region and international scholarship on civil-military relations. *Yesterday's Soldiers: European Military Professionalism in South America, 1890–1940*, by this reviewer, relied on sources from Latin America and Europe—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, France, and Germany—to assess the long-term impact of European military missions and exchanges on regional thinking.

Robert Potash produced an authoritative trilogy between 1969 and 1996 entitled *The Army and Politics in Argentina*. He chronicled the history of army forays into and retreats from the arena of politics for the better part of the past century. Political propensities had their origins prior to the arrival of the United States as a hemispheric power and their consequences are thus of a historical nature. However unsavory, these actions were part of national historical and political processes.

The achievement of Alfred Stepan in *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil* was his dissection of various political stances of soldiers in the largest and most powerful country in the region. He showed that what emerged from the 1964 overthrow of civilian authority was an institution bent on resolving national problems based on a military ethos. Military leaders and their civilian allies alike did not look amiably on the form and content of their democratic system. Thus they held power until devolution in 1985.

A few years after civilians regained the reins of power, *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964–1985*, by Thomas Skidmore, confirmed what many students of civil-military relations in the region had deduced. In his research on Brazil, the political nature of professionalism exacerbated militaristic tendencies to the point where militarism (a willingness and propensity to find solutions to national problems based on the military ethos) was inseparable from military professionalism

institutions in Latin America to rethink the approach to armed forces and political behavior. Rather than treat activism as a regional phenomenon, some efforts shifted to comparative research and case studies on soldiers within the national

sociocultural matrix. Their findings challenged and refined cause-and-effect relationships advanced by Lieuwen and Johnson. One study that revealed such variations was *The Military in Latin American Socio-Political Evolution: Four Case Studies*, edited by Lyle McAlister, on Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.



Ministerial meeting in
Manaus, Brazil,
October 2000.

DOD (Helene C. Shikoff)

(the state or condition of being professional in the dictionary sense).

On the other coast of South America, Chile and Peru were also put under the microscope. *Chilean Politics, 1920–1931: The Honorable Mission of the Armed Forces* and *The Military in Chilean History: Essays on Civil-Military Relations, 1810–1973*, which this reviewer published in 1976, exposed the historical background of the uprising in 1973. Soldiers have played critical parts in the foundation and development of Chile in the 19th century—as well as repression of dissidence. In 1924 and 1925 the military moved against a faltering, irresponsible government. Led by army officers, a civil-military coalition forged a new constitution and recast the role of government, demonstrating in retrospect that the 1973 uprising was not as aberrant as it first appeared.

Peru is also a noteworthy case. *The Rise and Fall of the Peruvian Military*

Radicals, 1968–1976, by George Philip, and *Military Reformism and Social Classes: The Peruvian Experience, 1968–1980*, by David Booth and Bernardo Sorj, both address distinct characteristics of the 1968–80 experiment with military socialism. Overlapping the heyday of militarism in Latin America, the early years of the regime boasted dynamic efforts to solve cultural, economic, political, and social problems based on priorities established by soldiers. The professional military uniqueness of Peru was matched only by its militaristic typicality.

These works have led to an attempt to find a new synthesis based on multi-archival sources and multidisciplinary approaches. Almost three decades after Lieuwen's seminal work on military politics came *The Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America* by John Fitch, followed by *The Time of the Generals: Latin American Professional Militarism in World Perspective* by Frederick Nunn and two volumes by Brian Loveman, *The*

Constitution of Tyranny: Regimes of Exception in Spanish America and La Patria: Politics and the Armed Forces in Latin America. These works deal with aspects of relations between military professionals and society. Each is also characterized by synthesis and recognizes the uniqueness and comparability of military institutions in the region and elsewhere and evinces interdisciplinary methodology. They explore both the origin of military activism and resurgence of democratic institutions and renewed efforts to reestablish civilian oversight of defense establishments and recast civil-military relations.

Today the pages of Latin American military journals contain essays devoted to the realities of the new world order: peacekeeping, internal roles and missions, relations with the civil sector, hemispheric cooperation, narcotics, terrorism, and the United States. In some respects the military within the region have better views of their counterparts to the North than the reverse, a condition facilitated by *Military Review Hispano-American*, the bimonthly Spanish-language edition of the journal of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. A Portuguese-language version also appears on a quarterly basis for Brazilian readers. Conversely, readers in the United States need greater access to military literature produced by counterparts in Latin America. Even the translation of selected articles published in the region can provide a window for readers in the Armed Forces without a command of Spanish or Portuguese. It would enhance the awareness of North Americans and add to common ground for regional military cooperation. **JFQ**

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