

# REVIEWS

**Toward a Revolution in Military Affairs? Defense and Security at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century**, Thierry Gongora and Harald von Riekhoff, eds., Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn., 2000, 206 pp. with index, \$62.50.

Since this is a professional journal catering to a professional audience, let me put the bottom line up front: This book costs more than \$60. That one factor alone effectively places it in the "Gee, I'd buy it if I could but..." category. In effect, the only members of our community with enough disposable income to readily purchase this book are those least likely to do so, the lieutenants. Yet in the specialist market of military theory, especially in the even rarer realm of "Academic Military Theory," a high price is the cost of business since the number of books printed is generally fairly small.

The reason for that should be fairly obvious; this is not a book created for popular consumption. The manuscript is based upon revised versions of academic papers presented at a conference held by the *Institut Québécois des Hautes Études Internationales* in Quebec City, Canada, in 1997. In addition to the editors (who wrote a 20-page introduction), the book contains essays from nine other international authors, none of whom will be immediately recognized by most readers. Depending upon your point of view, that may be either the book's greatest selling point or its most distracting element. In either case, it should be noted that reading even one of the short selections that makes up the book is heavy going. This is not the work of intellectual featherweights.

While the book is interesting overall, three of the chapters are particularly fascinating. The first, "Military Revolutions and Revolutions in Military Affairs: A Historian's Perspective," written by West Point Professor of History Clifford J. Rogers, is far and away the easiest to read. Rogers explains how various historians have postulated the existence of various "Military Revolutions" in history since the mid-1950s. Effectively, he has written the "History of the History of Military Revolutions," but in addition to that he adds another element. Rogers makes clear that all "RMAs" are not "MRs." That is to say that unless the Military Revolution causes large collateral effects in society, it remains just that and does not qualify as a full Military Revolution.

The next chapter, and perhaps the most useful from a conceptual standpoint, is Martin C. Libicki's "What is Information Warfare?" This chapter is condensed from a longer work and Libicki does an admirable job of hiding the scars; the chapter stands alone very well. Although not all readers will agree with his proposed intellectual framework for organizing the various forms of "Information Warfare," the mere fact that this is the only work we have seen in recent years that clearly and plainly lists all the different types makes it stand out.

Jianxiang Bi, "The PLA's Revolution in Operational Art: Retrospects and Prospects" brings to light another fascinating aspect of the current era. While many of the other chapters address the RMA from an international standpoint, few do so with such clear writing and relevance to the serving American leader. (Admittedly, that was not the declared intent of the book, but the editors must have taken into account that the vast majority of their sales would be to Americans.) Bi explains in clear and forceful language a phenomenon that passed (or is still occurring, depending upon your perspective) within the People's Liberation Army of China as they struggle through the problems of picking a rational route through the minefield of available technology.

The other chapters in this work are significantly weaker than the three discussed above. Chapters on French perceptions of the American RMA and Russian inability to do anything without money are, effectively, useless to the tactical-level leader. (Some might argue to the operational level as well.) While it is notoriously difficult to weave together the papers presented at an academic conference, one gets the impression that these editors had decided beforehand that they were going to do so. And once they were saddled with lumping disparate discussions into some sort of common group, their efforts were not all that successful. Thus, while the essays listed above are certainly worth reading, the overall thematic cohesion of the book is loose, and the book as a whole does not justify the cost. Ask your local library to buy a copy instead.

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**Morals Under the Gun** by James H. Toner, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2000, 256 pages, \$29.95.

James Toner's *Morals Under the Gun* provides an example of a conservative religious movement affecting the American military. People in and out of the military should read this book if only to get a glimpse of the insinuation into our military culture of a non-secular agenda that challenges the professional military ethic.

Toner's thesis is that morality "flows from religious principle," and that, since the military needs morality, its ethic should also flow from religious values. Anyone concerned about the separation of church and state should have at least some initial misgivings. And military professionals concerned about unit cohesion, morale, and esprit de corps should be especially alert to the threat posed by the author's agenda. The danger is in the divisiveness of superimposing a religious value system on a secular institution composed of people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

The author appears to have strong conviction and commitment. Yet in his enthusiasm, he has lost objectivity; moreover, the book's numerous inaccuracies and misrepresentations further detract from its credibility.

Toner tackles important issues and does so with zeal and passion. But his proposed cure for any perceived problems with ethics in the military might be worse than the disease. Furthermore, in spite of its outward trappings to the contrary, this work does not represent serious scholarship and hence cannot offer plausible, reasoned guidance to military professionals seeking solutions to problems in the area of military ethics.

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**Marines Under Armor: The Marine Corps and the Armored Fighting Vehicle, 1916-2000** by Kenneth W. Estes, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 2000, 267 pages, \$32.95 (hardcover).

This book is the first compressive history on the development of an armor doctrine in the Marine Corps. It is not a book on combat operations. The author, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, mainly served as a tank officer interspersed with military academic tours of duty. He received a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland. His thesis is that attempts at modernization of the Marine Corps in the 20th century underwent a frustrating history that was driven by an obsession over deployable light forces rather than developing a heavy seaborne combined arms mechanized force.

Drawing on untouched archival resources, numerous interviews, and supported by an excellent listing of Marine Corps armored fighting vehicles and units, Estes provides new information and analysis on the development of mechanization and how it affected amphibious warfare doctrine. Estes' history begins with the first wheeled armored car for constabulary duty to the experimental light tank platoon of M1917 Six-Toners deployed to China in 1928 as Marine accompanying weapons. Soon it became apparent that ship-to-shore transportation of armored vehicles would become a problem. As a result, Marines preferred an amphibious tank and light tank capable of being transported in a lighter to the beach. This led the Marines in the 1930s to pursue sporadic efforts to develop a tankette, the unsuccessful Marmon-Herrington. These developments on the eve of war with Japan, the author argues, were the beginnings of the Corps' obsession with lightness that for low-intensity beach assault depended on cargo afloat and M3 Army light tanks to support the landing force.

After the Tarawa blood bath in November 1943, doctrine changed because innovating Marines, such as Louis Metzger, Lemuel C.

Shepherd, Jr., and Arthur J. Stuart were strong proponents for more powerful armored fighting vehicles for advanced amphibious assault. Marine Corps leadership was forced to recognize that high-intensity assault operations now depended more on improvements in air and naval fire to support a combined arms landing force that required M4 mediums tanks, flamethrower tanks, and improved armored amtracs, the work horses of the Pacific. By the war's end, the Corps had effectually demonstrated its ability to employ armor as part of a combined arms force.

When the Korean War broke out, the Marine Corps like the Army had to improvise from a weak interwar posture. The author weaves very effectually through the problems the Marines experienced in using refurbished tanks in small numbers for security and as antitank weapons. As before, the Corps depended on a limited number of acquired Army tanks, the M26s, to replace the World War II Sherman series. One of the most interesting parts of the book is the author's discussion of the postwar Marine Corps infantry leadership that adopted a new dogma of lightness. This doctrine depended on the Ontos M50 antitank vehicle referred to as the "Thing," which represented a reversion to the Army's failed tank destroyer doctrine abolished after World War II. This antitank doctrine degraded the size and health of the Corps' tank force.

The author also gives special attention to the "ugly duckling," the Army's rejected M103 heavy tank. Only the Marine Corps introduced it to active service. Tank crews, according to Estes, preferred its weight and the enormous firepower of its 120mm gun. However, it was mainly the M48A3 that effectually supported the Marines in Vietnam. Yet after the war, little thought was given to the value of armor in large-scale operations. Instead, Estes argues, tankers became wedded to the M48s in the postwar period, while the amtractors looked for an improved amphibious vehicle, the LVTP-7 series, for employing the infantry as a mechanized war-fighting force. In the 1980s, the Marine Corps introduced the surrogate light armored vehicle (LAV), a new weapon that represented the acceptable vogue of lightness. With the acquiring of the LAVs, Estes argues, there was failure of developing a doctrine on mounted operations suitable to the Fleet Marine Force advance amphibious operations.

The Gulf War confronted the Corps with the problems of fighting a mobile campaign in the desert. The Marines went to war with their LAV-25s and outdated Army tanks, the M60A1s, and the hurriedly issued new M1 Abrams. Purchase of the Abrams tank, the author maintains, was shrouded by the antitank mentality that believed current equipment was suitable and that TOW missiles would defeat Iraqi armor. Concluding, Estes maintains the Marine Corps is still beset with an emphasis on lightness and a doctrinal

weakness regarding the lethality a mobile mechanized force could provide in advanced amphibious warfare. The Marine Corps, he argues, has yet to come to grips with the value of armor in large-scale mobile operations in high-intensity landing operations.

The most scathing portions of the book are the author criticisms of Marine Corps commandants. He argues they could not grasp more modern concepts of combined arms where tanks and mounted infantry would play key roles in future advanced assault operations. Estes accuses the commandants of too much personalization of budget decisions. He criticized General Robert H. Barrow for refusing to buy tanks and equivocations of Generals Alfred M. Gray and Carl E. Mundy, Jr. He is also critical of General Charles C. Krulak as wanting to eliminate the Marine Corps tank fleet.

No doubt Estes' armor history will raise considerable concerns, both positive and negative, about the inability of Marine Corps leadership to accept an enlightened mechanized doctrine that takes in consideration maximum organizational combat effectiveness with the Fleet Marine Force. Estes' controversial book fills a void on Marine Corps armor and amphibious doctrine. It is highly recommended, especially since the Army is currently confronted with the issue of light versus heavy and rapid deployment. The Marine Corps' dilemma over an armor doctrine is a lesson Army leaders need to look at as they attempt to build the Objective Brigade Combat Team. This reviewer feels that Estes' book also brings to light that, in today's military, there seems to be again a problem in learning lessons from the past and the might have been. Military history and its analysis is excellent mental PT. As such, it can provide a reservoir of knowledge for the decision-making process necessary to anticipate and adapt.

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**Bloody Ridge: The Battle that Saved Guadalcanal** by Michael S. Smith, Presidio Press, Novato, Calif., 2000, 264 pages, \$27.95 hardcover.

Guadalcanal, in the Solomon Islands, was the site of the first major American offensive against the Japanese in the Pacific War. From August 1942 to February 1943, American and Japanese forces battled on land, sea, and in the air for control of that steaming tropical island. None of those battles, however, had the ferocity or decisive impact of the Battle of Bloody Ridge.

Author Michael Smith's first book is the story of "the battle that saved Guadalcanal," and denied the Japanese their best opportunity to drive the Americans into the sea. Smith is an active duty naval officer with a gift for vivid narrative that brings this tale to life. Although the entire Guadalcanal cam-

paigned covered months of operations, Smith's book focuses on August and September of 1942 when the issue of victory or defeat was truly in doubt.

Smith provides an excellent overview of the early naval and ground portions of the Guadalcanal campaign, highlighting the surprise amphibious assault by the 1st Marine Division and the rapid capture of Henderson Field, the airfield that was the operation's principal objective. Defending the airfield, however, was a difficult challenge for the Marines. The Japanese wanted it back, and they reacted with fury.

Although numerous other books have been written about Guadalcanal, Smith's effort showcases the leadership, tenacity, and exemplary battlefield conduct of the Marines who were outnumbered, sick, tired, short of supplies and ammunition, and who were starving on half rations. Living in squalid, disease-ridden tropical conditions, and fighting in rugged, jungle terrain, the Marines defeated numerous Japanese attacks. Guadalcanal turned out to be the Imperial Japanese Army's first major defeat of the Pacific War.

As Smith carefully relates, the inland side of the Marine perimeter around Henderson Field was not as heavily defended as the beaches. The inland perimeter was defended by the 1st Marine Raider Battalion and the 1st Parachute Battalion. Colonel Merritt A. "Red Mike" Edson commanded the Raiders. Strung out along an elevated terrain feature later dubbed Bloody Ridge, Edson's Raiders and elements of the Parachute Battalion met a vicious night attack by 3,000 Japanese soldiers on September 13, 1942. Outnumbered four to one, the Marines somehow held despite turned flanks, penetrations, and violent hand-to-hand combat.

With gripping description, Smith tells of the confusion, miscommunication, heroism, cowardice, and overall chaos on both sides during a frenetic nighttime battle. He also drives home the lessons of patrolling, reconnaissance, simple plans, terrain appreciation, and small unit leadership. The Marines won, and Henderson Field was saved, but at great cost in blood and reputation. Smith's battle analysis is right on target and he skillfully lays out the good and bad points of both sides' conduct in the fight.

To get a more complete picture of the overall Guadalcanal campaign, read Richard B. Frank's *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle* (1990). To read more about the legendary "Red Mike" Edson, read Jon T. Hoffman's *Once a Legend* (1994). Smith's book fits in nicely with other historical works on Guadalcanal, and is a well-balanced portrayal of the pivotal action in that campaign.

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