
BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE AMERICAN MILITARY

Perhaps the best long view of the U.S. military is **The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy** (Macmillan, 1973, cloth; Ind. Univ., 1977, paper). Russell Weigley describes the military-political ups and downs of American history from the Battle of Bunker Hill to the battles in Vietnam. Some of Weigley's assertions are debatable, notably his thesis that, as its resources grew, the U.S. military usually came to favor an "annihilative" strategy against any foe. (In fact, the Joint Chiefs went along with a presidential "limited war" policy in Korea, as in Indochina.) Nowhere, he concludes, "does the use of combat offer much promise for the United States today."

Depicting **The Impact of War on American Life** (Holt, 1971), editor Keith L. Nelson serves up a piquant anthology of cartoons, polemics, and commentaries since 1900 dealing with pacifism, preparedness, and the military's influence—with a heavy focus on the Cold War era.

Good unofficial histories of the individual services (in contrast to good histories of U.S. wars) are rare. Weigley's scholarly **History of the United States Army** (Macmillan, 1967) is one of them. Most recent, and more popular in style, is J. Robert Moskin's **The U.S. Marine Corps Story** (McGraw-Hill, 1975), which describes not only the Marines' battles overseas—from the Bahamas expedition (1776) to Vietnam and the costly 1975 *Mayaguez* affair—but also their difficulties at home, notably with proposals after World War II and after Vietnam to abolish the Corps or re-

duce its size.

Two generals' biographies that illuminate the ethos of military life as well as the rigors of wartime command are Forrest C. Pogue's **George C. Marshall: Education of a General, 1880–1939** (Viking, 1963), which describes the early career and slow promotion of the imposing soldier who later shaped and led the U.S. Army in World War II, and William Manchester's breezy **American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880–1964** (Little, Brown, 1978). Manchester depicts the imperious general's days at West Point, as well as later triumphs and failures.

Good generals depend on good troops. **The American Soldier: Vol. 1 Adjustment During Army Life; Vol. 2. Combat and its Aftermath** (Princeton, 1949, cloth; Military Aff. Aero, 1977, paper) is an ambitious effort by sociologist Samuel A. Stouffer, et al., to analyze extensive surveys of enlisted men before and during combat in World War II. The authors find the wartime GI a "civilian in uniform," highly resistant to the Old Army's caste system. Group esprit rather than ideology has motivated Americans in battle. **Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War** (Washington: The *Infantry Journal*, 1947; Peter Smith reprint, 1978) is combat historian S. L. A. Marshall's vivid exegesis of lessons learned from postbattle interviews in World War II. Among his findings: Americans fight better when they cheer and shout; only one out of four riflemen in close combat actually fired his weapon at the foe.

On a more abstract level, Samuel P. Huntington's **The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil Military Relations** (Harvard, 1957) traces the evolution of the modern officer corps since the early 19th century as a body of professionals with "expertise, responsibility, and corporateness." He sees necessary tensions between military values (duty, honor, country) and those of a liberal democratic society.

Far more detailed, and philosophically at odds with Huntington, is sociologist Morris Janowitz's pioneering study, **The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait** (Free Press, 1960, cloth; rev. ed., 1971, paper). Janowitz traces the changing social origins of the U.S. officer corps (less Southern, less aristocratic); the increasing stresses on family life (with a high divorce rate in the Strategic Air Command); the new focus on "managerial" styles; the increasing collaboration between soldiers and civilian leaders after World War II. No longer, observes Janowitz, are the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps isolated from the larger society in peacetime; he favors more interaction.

During the late 1960s and early '70s, the military was blamed by academics and pundits for America's failures in Indochina and the heavy burdens of the Soviet-American arms race. In 1970, sociologist Charles Moskos, no supporter of the war, was moved to observe, "Anti-militarism has become the anti-Semitism of the intellectual community."

Indeed, the "warfare state," the "military-industrial complex," and the "selling of the Pentagon" were widely assailed in books and the news media. ROTC programs were eliminated at top universities, and West Point was flayed for being in-

sufficiently humanistic.

A dispassionate analysis is Adam Yarmolinsky's **The Military Establishment: Its Impact on American Society** (Harper, 1970). Yarmolinsky, a former aide to Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and sometime Harvard law professor, provides a lucid Big Picture. He finds that the military, since 1940, has become more "civilianized" under the pressures of politics, technology, and involvement in foreign policy. Yet, a homogeneous "military-industrial complex" is a myth. Rival service chiefs, rival contractors, and Congressmen from affected localities vie for the defense budget dollar. Military contracts are vital to a few large but low-profit aerospace firms (e.g., Lockheed, General Dynamics) and regional shipyards, but they count for little at General Motors, AT&T, and the nation's other leading corporations.

Especially since the early 1960s, the power over the armed services held by Secretaries of Defense and their civilian aides has vastly increased (with mixed results). And, in the end, Yarmolinsky observes, "the military is at any time no more powerful than the President of the United States—the commander in chief of the armed forces—is prepared to allow it to be."

At presidential order, the United States has intervened militarily in many places besides Vietnam since World War II: Korea, Lebanon, the Taiwan Straits, Laos, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Cambodia. Have the generals always been the most eager to intervene?

No, says Richard K. Betts of Brookings as he examines the advisory role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and lesser military men since 1945 in **Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War**

Crises (Harvard, 1977). Each service chief's views were shaped in part by his own service's organization and doctrine. But by and large, the military were no *more* eager to intervene in crises overseas than were the President's top civilian advisers. Sometimes they were *less* eager, as in the case of Laos in 1961. Once U.S. troops were in battle, however, the military tended to urge more forceful policies than did the civilians, as in Vietnam after 1965. For better or worse, "military advice," writes Betts, "has been most persuasive [to Presidents] as a veto of the use of force and least potent when it favored force."

Books on nuclear strategy, arms control, and national politico-military policy abound, often with recipes for better performance (see "Strategic Arms Control," Background Books, *WQ*, Autumn 1977). Many seem written with an eye on the day's headlines; the author's arguments and assumptions are soon made stale by events.

This weakness also afflicts most recent books on the draft, the all-volunteer force, and the post-Vietnam army. **Unionizing the Armed Forces** (Univ. of Pa., 1977, cloth & paper), edited by Ezra S. Krendel and Bernard Samoff, is a compendium of essays on what was once Topic A but seems to have faded. In **Women and the Military** (Brookings, 1977, cloth & paper), Martin Binkin and Shirley J. Bach,

an Air Force officer, suggest that women could fill one-third of all Army enlisted positions and 94 percent of Air Force jobs but concede the need for more studies first. **Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation** (Knopf, 1978) is a useful, partly anecdotal critique of the Vietnam draft, its inequities, and its evaders by Lawrence M. Bachir and William A. Strauss. **The Report of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Force** (Government Printing Office, 1970) lays out the original Nixon rationale for ending the draft; many of its assumptions have proved optimistic. Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage assail Army careerism and bureaucracy in **Crisis in Command** (Hill and Wang, 1978) and contend that the all-volunteer force will not improve matters.

Sam C. Sarkesian's **The Professional Army Officer in a Changing Society** (Nelson-Hall, 1974) tends to view the military in a broader context. Much remains the same, even after Vietnam. Anti-Pentagon polemics have abated. Yet American society has changed, he says, and the military profession must adapt to a new environment, without sacrificing its competence and esprit: "All the reorganizations, concerns for weapons technology, and changing strategic posture that may be necessary . . . are meaningless if the [military profession] does not have solid support from the society at large."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Advice on books for this essay came from Samuel F. Wells, Jr., Charles Moskos, David MacIsaac, and researchers at the Defense Department, the Army War College, and the Brookings Institution.