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## Peacekeeping on the Plains: Army Operations in Bleeding Kansas,

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in the world, [war with Japan] was the least likely to happen.” After all, the two countries shared an alliance that dated to the beginning of the century. Extension of the “ten-year rule,” first promulgated in 1919, saw war in the Far East as highly unlikely for at least another decade. As Bell makes clear, this rule underlay a compromise between the Treasury, concerned about costs, and the Admiralty, which sought completion of its Singapore naval base and more ships. By the mid-1930s, an out-of-office Churchill began to change his position, now expressing (as were Whitehall ministries) growing concern about Japan’s intentions. However, his greater worry about a rearming Germany dominated naval needs in the Far East. Even in 1939 he argued the unlikelihood of a Japanese attack on far-off Singapore, just as he (and others) felt naval power alone could hold off aggression. Events, of course, proved this to be wishful thinking.

B. J. C. McKercher, the sole revisionist here, teaches history at the Royal Military College of Canada. He sees Churchill’s famous speeches against Hitler’s Germany in the late 1930s as revealing a politician on the make: “Quite simply, he sought the premiership above all else; thus, his criticisms of British foreign and defense policy were less selfless than either he or his disciples later claimed.” McKercher’s arguments help balance excessive praise (years later) of Churchill’s stance in this period. He strongly defends prime ministers Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain as working to rebuild British defenses just as Churchill was attacking their seeming inaction. Munich is seen here—as by other revisionists—as a vital play for time to allow rearmament to reach full

effect. Churchill’s years in the political wilderness “resulted from his own follies, primarily his antipathy to Baldwin and Chamberlain,” during which, he argues, “Churchill consistently exaggerated threats.”

David Jablonsky teaches at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and makes clear Churchill’s fascination with what technology offered to overcome potential enemies. There are a host of interesting Churchill quotes on the impact (sometimes literally) of newly developed dum-dum bullets, improved pistols, and later the tank and the airplane. At the same time, Churchill was often concerned about possible unintended effects of technological choice, as well as the ethics of applying certain approaches. As the author notes, “The basic problem, Churchill came to realize, was that technology had changed the scale of warfare.” Before and during the war, he was fascinated with technical options, not all of them workable. Those that did work—such as signals intelligence—made a huge difference in the outcome.

This is a very useful collection, carefully researched and written, adding insight to what we know of Churchill’s varied diplomatic and military roles in a world that moved from cavalry charges to hydrogen bombs. Michael Handel would surely be pleased.

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Mullis, Tony R. *Peacekeeping on the Plains: Army Operations in Bleeding Kansas*. Columbia: Univ. of Missouri, 2004. 273pp. \$40.50

Tony Mullis, a serving officer in the U.S. Air Force, takes a close look at a

time when approximately 10 percent of the U.S. Army was intimately involved in one of the most challenging and politically charged assignments ever given to the U.S. military. Assigned occupation duties in a land where tribal loyalties had been the primary form of government, Army officers, in cooperation with diplomats appointed by the president, were tasked to assist a fledgling democracy attain statehood while avoiding incipient civil war. The task was complicated by the infusion of ideologically motivated outsiders, most of them heavily armed. The two main local factions committed a variety of atrocities, including the massacre of innocent civilians. Elections, new to the area, were viewed with open suspicion by most of the population. Local militias were often little more than muscle for political leaders. Many of the thornier underlying political issues had religious and economic overtones. Several Army officers assigned to these duties were involved in scandals, and at least one associated court-martial received national attention. Meanwhile, powerful individuals in Washington disagreed, sometimes publicly, over tactics, strategy, and policy in the affected region. To make matters worse, ingrained organizational barriers and an inherent resistance to change prevented promising new technologies from being used with maximum effectiveness. Finally, while the Army may have portrayed its role as one of neutral professionalism, both Democrats and Republicans were using the results of the occupation as a key component of their respective strategies for the next presidential election. The year was 1854, and the theater of operations was the Kansas Territory.

*Peacekeeping on the Plains* clearly began life as a doctoral dissertation. In its introduction Mullis lays out his basic premise. Debunking the perhaps popular conception that the United States has but recently come to experience peace operations, Mullis shows that the U.S. Army has been involved in missions of this type since the first days of the Republic—though this historical involvement has long been overlooked and underanalyzed. Mullis seeks to begin correcting this omission by examining in some detail the 1855 punitive expedition against the Lakota (of the Great Sioux Nation) as an example of the Army's efforts to keep peace in "Bleeding Kansas." Chapter 1 gives an overview of the U.S. Army's involvement in peace operations, and chapter 2 provides background information on the issue of slavery and the creation of the state of Kansas. Chapters 3 and 4 take a detailed look at the 1855 punitive expedition led by General William S. Harney. Chapters 5 through 8 deal with Army operations supporting civil actions in Kansas from 1854 to 1857. A conclusion and epilogue complete the work.

As was often demonstrated during the 1990s, the line between peace enforcement and war is often difficult to determine. This was no less true in 1855. The U.S. Army used deadly force against the Lakota, took hostages, and committed various acts that would, by the standards of today, be judged illegal. Yet, as Mullis points out, these operations were carried out with a political objective in mind, and, in the main, they were effective. Furthermore, Harney's success did have a positive impact, in that they influenced other tribes to remain peaceful. Such results would seem to have contemporary parallels with peace

operations conducted by the French in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the British in Sierra Leone, and the U.S. Marines in Liberia.

The parallels between current operations in Iraq and those of the Army in bleeding Kansas are even more strongly apparent. Faced with a unique and unwelcome mission, the Army faced a steep learning curve. There were missed opportunities and at least several instances of officers engaging in dubious ethical behavior in order to take advantage of perceived business opportunities. The initially appointed political leadership proved too vacillating and incompetent to deal with the complex difficulties inherent in the situation. Furthermore, the entire issue was a red-hot political football, which the newly created Republican Party was using to excoriate the incumbent Democrats.

Like those against the Lakota, the peace operations in Kansas were eventually successful. Nationalizing factional militias, deploying federal forces to prevent civil strife, and arresting infiltrating partisans all contributed to political stability and a safe election environment. Yet, as Mullis points out, several facets of policy either failed or were badly flawed. These included the failure to utilize the telegraph to transmit information rapidly to and from the area of operations. Mail was simply too slow to be operationally relevant—the telegraph could have been a powerful tool in the hands of the administration.

*Peacekeeping on the Plains* helps fill a gap in the coverage of some of the formative experiences of the U.S. Army. This is valuable in and of itself. However, the more immediate contribution of the work is to identify lessons learned in the

mid-1800s that may be applicable in the early years of the twenty-first century. However, as one would expect given the immense technological differences between the eras, these lessons are rather general in nature.

For example, it proved impossible to craft orders so detailed as to cover every situation the occupying forces encountered. Until local authorities began exercising authority they technically did not possess, the result was a paralysis of action. In connection with the Lakota reprisal, Mullis also makes a convincing argument for assigning older and presumably more mature officers to positions that would in these operations, under normal circumstances, go to younger officers.

Mullis's work also shows that the central conundrum of peace operations was as valid in the mid-nineteenth century as it is today. Enough troops with the right leadership can impose a peace, and might even be able to enforce a peace, but unless the root causes of conflict are resolved the peace has to be pinned into place by bayonets and will not endure. The peace imposed on the Lakota by the U.S. Army did not last long; it took a civil war and the destruction of the Confederacy to deal with the root causes that led to bleeding Kansas.

As mentioned earlier, this work is clearly derived from a dissertation, and for that reason, while it is intellectually stimulating, at times the writing is somewhat ponderous, repetitive, and dry. Yet the contribution this work makes to understanding both past and present eras of significance makes the effort worthwhile.

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