

## Naval War College Review

---

Volume 46  
Number 2 *Spring*

Article 19

---

1993

# There's a War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II

Russell F. Weigley

Geoffrey Perret

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Weigley, Russell F. and Perret, Geoffrey (1993) "There's a War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 46 : No. 2 , Article 19.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol46/iss2/19>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## 156 Naval War College Review

Westmoreland, Cushman, and the others who served at the top.

Putting both stories into one volume just did not work.

WENDELL P.C. MORGENTHAU, JR.  
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps, Ret.  
Naval War College

---

Perret, Geoffrey. *There's a War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II*. New York: Random House, 1991. 623pp. \$30

For nearly a generation the United States Navy has enjoyed an admirable one-volume history of its role in World War II in Samuel Eliot Morison's *The Two-Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War*, published in 1963. The United States Army has had to wait for a comparable volume.

To mention this work in the same breath with Morison is altogether appropriate. Perret merits high praise for his eloquent style and lively and compelling writing. Furthermore, Perret's history actually excels Morison's, because his emphasis on operations offers a fuller development of organization, administration, and logistics, as well as of the ideas and doctrine that lay behind the fighting. Though both histories share many strengths, they also share a conspicuous shortcoming. Neither pays much attention to strategy—though a partial explanation might be offered that strategy belongs mainly to the history of joint commands rather than of the particular services.

Together with the long-standing need for such a book and Perret's exceptional literary quality, the aspect of this work that deserves most attention is its positive assessment of the fighting capacities of the United States Army.

Perret, a free-lance, nonacademic, military historian, earlier wrote *A Country Made by War: The Revolution to Vietnam, the Story of America's Rise to Power*, published in 1989. In that overview of the nation's military history, he stressed how profoundly war and military institutions have shaped the United States in spite of its declarations of abhorrence for war. He also suggests the existence of a considerable American aptitude for waging war—a theme he particularly reinforces by his decided opposition to the widespread and strong belief in the qualitative superiority of the German army over the American army in World War II.

The author states that his purpose in this work is to explain why the United States Army of the Second World War "was so good it never lost a campaign; I count the fall of the Philippines as being essentially a campaign fought by Filipinos under American direction. The wartime army lost only one battle out of more than a hundred fought around the world, in Tunisia at Sidi-bou-Zid. It suffered only one major check, the Rapido River crossing." Perret asserts that "no [other] army ever compiled such a record of victories." One could quibble about this or that battle (for example, was the fighting in the

Huertgen Forest in the autumn of 1944 in any meaningful sense an American victory?), but any exaggeration on Perret's part is slight. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the American army did not win simply because of materiel superiority, but that skillful leadership, bravery, and a savvy rank and file were also responsible. Of course its achievement is even more remarkable because it was built on such a scant prewar foundation.

Perhaps the best passages of all are those that trace the Army's transformation from a clumsy force barely capable of sustained offensive action (as it was in the First World War) to the efficient fighting machine of the Second World War, and how much of that transformation is owed to one man, General George C. Marshall. Of his many accomplishments, this was probably his greatest. Indeed, much of the transformation took place during the interval between Marshall's appointment as Chief of Staff on 1 September 1939 and the eve of Pearl Harbor. "In twelve months [immediately preceding 7 December 1941] the Army had moved forward about twenty years."

Another exemplary quality of this work is Perret's well balanced discussion of the various theaters of war. In an army history, the war against Germany naturally claims more space than the war against Japan, because the bulk of the Army's fighting power was eventually deployed in Europe. Nevertheless, historians and naval and Marine Corps officers interested in the

Pacific War will find plenty to ponder, including much about their own services in joint operations.

Perret believes that the World War II "army was one of the supreme American achievements of the twentieth century and that it is filled with lessons about the people of this country." His army is a reflection of the nation. It is a flattering image that we should enjoy, especially since so much of the country's image is negative. It may even reinvigorate us to confront less satisfying military tasks ahead.

RUSSELL F. WEIGLEY  
Temple University

---

Kimball, Warren F. *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman*. New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991. 304pp. \$19.95

Professor Kimball has published numerous works on Franklin Roosevelt and American wartime foreign policy, among them *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence, 1939-1945*, published in 1984. Following its completion, he published various essays that dealt with disparate aspects of Roosevelt's foreign policy. *The Juggler* is a collection of those essays, which were partially rewritten with the hope of illustrating the underlying theme of an internal consistency in Roosevelt's foreign policy during World War II.

Kimball borrowed the title from a remark made by Roosevelt in conversation with Treasury secretary Morgenthau