

1984

With Shield and Sword: American Military Affairs, Colonial Times to the Present

Mark Stoler

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

Recommended Citation

Stoler, Mark (1984) "With Shield and Sword: American Military Affairs, Colonial Times to the Present," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 37 : No. 2 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol37/iss2/14>

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.

signed into law by President Lincoln and issued as General Order, Number 100. (See Richard S. Hartigan, Lieber's Code and *The Law of War* (Chicago: Precedent, 1933).)

Hartigan's concluding chapter mentions the two World Wars of our century and their lethal effect on civilian populations. He alludes to the Vietnam war with particular reference to the difficulty in that bitter conflict of distinguishing between civilians and lawful combatants. Finally he raises the question of sanity as well as of morality of nuclear warfare which he regards (*pace* many informed military technologists) as essentially nondiscriminatory—not forgetting to identify certain strategic bombings of World War II as culpable as well.

Despite the sketchiness of its final chapter, *The Forgotten Victim* makes a useful handbook for anyone who wants just war theory (with emphasis on the principle of discrimination) at a fingertip's reach. It is really surprising how the author has managed to pack into so few pages the essential points of the development of just war doctrine. He has succeeded as well in supporting each point with apt reference to theological and juridical authority, each in turn, backed by what the old rabbis would call, a suitable proof-text. A new edition, a change of title, and a soft-cover format would help this book to reach the wider audience it deserves.

J.G. BRENNAN
Naval War College

Hassler, Warren W. *With Shield and Sword: American Military Affairs,*

Colonial Times to the Present. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1982. 462 pp. \$29.50

While the study of US military history has undergone a major transformation and expansion during the past few decades, the field continues to be plagued by a paucity of comprehensive, up-to-date and readable syntheses. In *With Shield and Sword*, Warren W. Hassler has attempted to fill this gap by writing a survey of US military history, from colonial times to the present, which integrates an analysis of military policies and key personalities with the more traditional land, sea, and air operations.

Hassler is well qualified for such an ambitious task. A Professor of History at Pennsylvania State University for nearly thirty years, he has written extensively in the field of US military history, most notably in the areas of the Civil War and the President as Commander in Chief. He has also been a visiting Professor of Military History in the prestigious Morrison chair at the Leavenworth Command and General Staff College and at West Point. His knowledge of the field is comprehensive and outstanding, a fact illustrated not only by the enormous amount of data presented in the text itself, but also by his extensive notes and bibliography and by his use of a very wide variety of unpublished and published primary as well as secondary sources.

In many ways, Hassler is quite successful in providing a comprehensive survey. His 388 pages of text are arranged into fifteen chronological chapters which provide brief but inci-

sive coverage of the country's military campaigns, legislation, theorists, traditions and leaders, both civilian and military. The book is well written, clearly organized, and easy to follow. It offers the reader numerous valuable and balanced conclusions, especially on the strengths and weaknesses of different presidents, service secretaries and commanders, as well as an enormous amount of factual data. Clearly, it is an important synthesis which will be of great value to anyone studying American military history.

Unfortunately, *With Shield and Sword* is also marred by a series of problems which limit its usefulness. The maps included are insufficient in number and inadequate in detail, and some of the coverage is unbalanced. Only one chapter of 33 pages, for example, is devoted to military affairs since 1945. Moreover, the primary emphasis in most of the chapters and in terms of total pages remains the battlefield and its leaders. Other military-related issues are indeed discussed, but those discussions are at times too brief and incomplete, and they are seldom integrated with the more detailed battle analyses. The result is some choppiness and confusion. The traditional American fear of a standing army, for example, is mentioned on numerous occasions but never fully explained. The origins of the cold war are dismissed with a single sentence. And virtually no mention is made of the new social history which has so transformed our study of the military.

Hassler's emphasis on traditional military history is matched by a use of

traditional themes and conclusions which, in this author's opinion, is simply not warranted in light of the recent literature he cites. His analyses of the causes of specific wars and military interventions, for example, are quite dated as well as incomplete. Equally dated in light of recent scholarship are his very negative assessments of Jefferson, Madison and Wilson as commanders in chief; as is his central theme that the United States has always been militarily unprepared and has done so well only because of luck and the ability of key individuals to improvise. In effect, this is the old Emory Upton thesis updated, and while it clearly retains some validity, its continued use as the central theme of American military history does not do justice either to recent scholarship or to the facts.

While a welcome synthesis of considerable value to the student, scholar and professional, *With Shield and Sword* is thus a traditional military history which is weakened by a lack of depth and continuity regarding key issues and by its emphasis on traditional themes and conclusions. The lack of depth may very well be an inevitable aspect of such a comprehensive undertaking, and the value of having so much diverse material in a single volume clearly outweighs this shortcoming. One wishes, however, that the author had relied more on the provocative themes and conclusions contained in the recent scholarship he so often cites.

MARK A. STOLER
University of Vermont