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Editor's Shelf

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Editor's Shelf

From *Parameters*, Summer 2000, pp. 131-32.

This issue brings the return of the feature "Editor's Shelf" to the pages of *Parameters*. While the feature in the past served primarily as an additional forum for capsule book reviews, it also provided a medium for editor's notes to readers and corrections or additions to articles. It will continue to serve those missions while providing a forum for editorial comment on events, initiatives, and actions affecting today's Army and the Department of Defense.

The need for abbreviated reviews is based on the fact the journal receives far more books than can possibly be reviewed; while some books demand review, others are not reviewed simply due to a lack of space or peripheral subject matter. The challenge is to do justice to that great number of volumes falling between the two extremes. A sampling of those books will be addressed in this and future issues. Bibliographical data may be found in the "Off the Press" section.

The Oxford Companion to American Military History, edited by John Whiteclay Chambers II, is perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of American military history ever compiled. Written by more than 500 experts and utilizing biography and historical research and analysis, the work provides an extensive presentation of war, the military, and the relationship of the American military and society. Including detailed maps, extensive cross-referencing, suggestions for additional reading, and a superb index, the *Companion* is a source for all matters pertaining to war and the American military way of life.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) annually produces a yearbook designed to provide an authoritative international source on trends in military expenditures, the arms race, and the status of various attempts at arms limitations or disarmament. This year's 30th edition, the *SIPRI Yearbook 1999 of World Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, continues SIPRI's reputation for competence and professionalism in its collection of facts and data, related analyses, and the presentation of solid research. SIPRI focuses its methodology on the review of open sources, as well as special studies, to provide the reader (researcher) with a thorough analysis of subjects ranging from major armed conflicts to military spending. Part III includes an in-depth review of the principal developments in nonproliferation, arms control, and disarmament issues for 1998. This work will prove invaluable to those researching these issues from an academic or professional perspective.

The Middle East Military Balance, 1999-2000 is prepared annually by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies in Tel Aviv. The editors, Brigadier General (Ret.) Shlomo Brom and Yiftah Shapir provide a complete and authoritative review of the military capabilities in the Middle East. It is a wealth of current and hard-to-find information on the balance of military power in the region, and many of the sources are propounded by the publisher to be unavailable outside the Jaffee Center. This is an indispensable resource for any student of Middle East politics and the related military forces, the consummate work of the Israeli perspective on the military balance in this critical region.

The Handbook of Central Asia: A Comprehensive Survey of the New Republics, by Giampaolo R. Capisani, provides an examination of the current economic, political, and social status of the five main Central Asian states--Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kirghizstan. The author examines the highly contradictory nature of the Soviet legacy exemplified in the delineation of these states that have never enjoyed an autonomous existence. Through in-depth analysis and a review of the history related to each of the political entities, the author has provided not only insight into the current status of each state, but more importantly a review of longer-term impacts, e.g., the geopolitical significance of the oil pipelines, the influence of Afghanistan instability, the consequence of ecological devastation, and the drying up of the Aral Sea. The specially commissioned maps and extensive bibliography make this one of the key reference works on the region. Unfortunately, the \$75.00 price tag may limit this excellent work to the shelves of

reference libraries.

Ann Sharp Wells is no stranger to American military history. The Assistant Editor of the *Journal of Military History*, she has previously coauthored several books on America's involvement in World Wars I and II, along with a work on Korea. Her latest contribution, *The Historical Dictionary of World War II: The War Against Japan*, traces the movement of the war from Japan's seizure of Chinese territory in 1931 to the use of atomic weapons by the United States in 1945. The work concentrates on the war in Asia and the Pacific and provides the reader and researcher with a comprehensive examination of the people and events that shaped 20th-century history. The book is a narrative overview of war, a chronology, with entries that offer a thorough explanation of its aspects. The book possesses an extensive bibliography making it perfect for research in military history, World War II, or international relations.

Once in a great while the editor overlooks a quality volume submitted for review or a reviewer may be unable to complete a contracted review. The former is the case with *Camp Colt to Desert Storm: The History of U.S. Armored Forces*, edited by George F. Hofmann and General (Ret.) Donn Starry. This seminal work examines how armor mechanization has changed over the past 80 years and how that change influenced the accompanying doctrine and tactics. The book traces the evolution of armor from World War I through the periods of the Korean War and Vietnam to the position of dominance armored forces obtained in American mechanized warfare by the 1990s. Of special interest to any student of the art of war is the discussion of the relationship between threat and technology. Political imperatives and technological advances required timely responses in adjusting military doctrine to counter technological threats or to take advantage of new technologies, placing the armor evolution in a whole new light.

A correction is required to the review of *Night of the Silver Stars: The Battle of Lang Vei* by William R. Phillips, reviewed in the Spring 2000 issue of *Parameters* (pp. 162-64) by Dr. Henry G. Gole (Colonel, USA Ret.). The phrase "the author fails to present an unbiased accounting" appears on page 163. These words and thoughts were solely those of the editor and not the reviewer. *Parameters* apologizes to both the author and reviewer for any confusion or concern the editing might have caused. -- RHT

For details on publishers and prices of books mentioned, see "Off the Press" or call *Parameters* at 717-245-4943 (e-mail: carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil).

Reviewed 10 May 2000. Please send comments or corrections to carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil