

Book Reviews



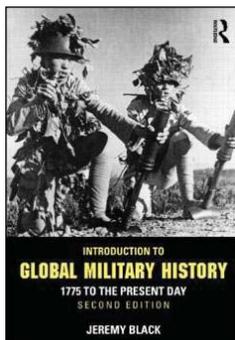
Introduction to Global Military History: 1775 to the Present Day

By Jeremy Black

NY: Routledge, 2013, 319 pages

Reviewed by

CPT Nathan A. Jennings



Jeremy Black's impactful work, *Introduction to Global Military History*, is a richly informative and comprehensive narrative of how warfare has evolved across the world landscape since 1775. Arriving in its much-improved second edition in 2013, the book offers a marked departure from most Western-centric military histories now used in both academic and popular study with a concerted effort, according to the author, to "re-examine earlier struggles" in a "context of plurality" with shared emphasis on Asian, African, and Latin American affairs. Thus, while the author, who is also a noted professor at the University of Exeter in England, both chronologically and regionally incorporates seismic confrontations that have typically defined military history projects, like the Napoleonic wars and World Wars I and II, he studiously maintains balance by "moving away from the idea that there is a clear hierarchy of importance in military history and an obvious pattern of development."

With such a dynamic approach, *Global Military History* provides an excellent primer for military professionals in regionally aligned brigades and special operations units seeking general understanding of how human conflict has evolved between 1775 and now. Beginning with the American Revolution and Napoleonic era as "the origins of modern war" and concluding with careful presentation of the West's current focus on "terrorism and rogue states" in Southwest Asia and Africa, Black employs engaging writing across 13 relatively condensed chapters that are replete with maps and pictures to capture and retain the reader's attention. While this format — and the work's necessary dearth of analytical depth and detail in any single period or event — will not serve for advanced or graduate studies, it nevertheless achieves its aim of priming newcomers to military history with a comprehensive description of how humanity has waged war in diverse settings over the previous two centuries.

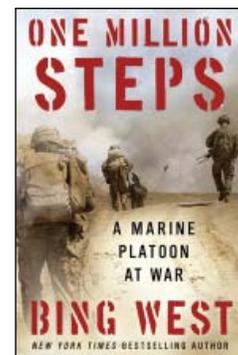
First published in 2005 and now substantially enhanced with updated chapter introductions and conclusions, primary source perspectives, case studies, color maps, and an annotated bibliography, *Global Military History* finds greatest import in its explicit imperative to "include more discussion of Asian developments than" in previous works. Recognizing that the majority of the world's population lived and lives in East and South Asia during the period covered, the author discards "the notion that they were somehow passive victims of the inexorable rise of Western military dominance." This includes

not just discussion of familiar confrontations between American and European powers and Asian, African, and Latin American peoples during the World Wars and decolonization, but also lesser studied events between and within less industrialized societies such as Chinese and Indian civil instability, the Arab-Israeli wars, and the Indian-Pakistani conflicts. The picture on the book's cover, which displays Chinese soldiers from the Sino-Japanese War instead of traditional images of Western combatants from places like Gettysburg or Normandy Beach, symbolizes this shift, or broadening, of emphasis.

Taken as a work that carefully weaves the often sporadic and haphazard development of armed conflict into an eminently digestible narrative, *Global Military History* should be considered for defense professionals seeking introductory understanding of the history of warfare at continental scale or in specific regions. Throughout the study, the historian eschews definitively committing to either traditional "war and society" approaches or the more recent "cultural turn," but rather seeks broader and more nuanced engagement with evolving "social, cultural, political, and economic" influences, in addition to technological factors, as he balances context and "the military dimension." While the resulting focus moves rapidly between events and geography, a necessary limitation due to the book's intended purpose and the ambitious span of history explored, it nevertheless allows maximum exposure to the rich, if unfortunate, diversity of conflicts that have plagued humanity during the modern and post-modern eras. Moving beyond the "Eurocentricity" of studies still used in most military academies and universities, Black's innovative work — and its emphasis on incorporating Asian, Latin American, and African conflicts as developments worthy of attention on par with Western affairs — arrives as a much-needed complement to the current field of military histories.

One Million Steps: A Marine Platoon at War **By Bing West** **NY: Random House, 2014,** **320 pages**

Reviewed by CPT Jake Miraldi



Bing West's latest book, *One Million Steps*, continues his unique and prolific reporting on the wars of the last decade. Over the course of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, West has been a constant presence. In Iraq, he lived and patrolled with Marines in Fallujah. In Afghanistan, he chronicled Army and Marine operations in support of the 2009-2010 surge. In *One Million Steps*, West embeds with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines — specifically 3rd Platoon, Kilo Company — which is isolated in a small combat