

Book Reviews



***The Cold War: A Military History.* By Robert Crowley, ed. New York: Random House, 2005, 461 pages, \$27.95.** Reviewed by CSM (Retired) James Clifford.

This is an anthology of essays covering our longest war, the Cold War. Edited by Robert Crowley, the founding editor of *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* and editor of three previous anthologies about the Civil War and the two World Wars and author of several original books including the popular “What If?” series, it contains 27 essays. Of the selected essays, all but four previously appeared in *MHQ*. Those four are excerpts from books. The line-up of authors is a who’s who of historians such as Simon Winchester, David McCullough, Dennis Showalter, Victor David Hanson, and Williamson Murray.

These essays cover the entire 33-year span of the Cold War from the earliest days in the late 1940s to the last gasps of the Soviet empire. In between they examine the wars in Korea and Vietnam, Cuba, aerial reconnaissance, and Berlin. They can be taken in their totality or as individual selections as the needs or interests of the reader dictates. Each is written within the context of the struggle to defeat the worldwide threat of communism in the aftermath of World War II without expanding the Cold War into a World War.

The importance of this book is its reference to the larger strategic issues. A book of essays on the military actions alone would serve no purpose other than the entertainment and education of the reader. While these goals alone are usually adequate, in this case it would not have been. As it is assembled, readers are drawn into an examination of how these events were not isolated incidents but part of a strategy on the part of the Soviet Union and the United States to face each other, sometimes by proxy. To truly understand this period in American history one must be able to tie all these events together in context rather than view them in a vacuum. Through this book readers will be able to make the necessary

connections. But to what end?

One may be tempted to look upon the Cold War as a historical period with little to offer us today. To fall for that would be a serious mistake. If anything, this book shows us that America operates on the world stage and that we must take a larger view to every event. It teaches us to put events into a worldwide perspective, to think tactically, operationally and strategically. Today’s challenges of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, increasing pressures on fossil fuel energy sources, the increasing economic might of China, and Russian attempts to reestablish itself as a world superpower are themes that must be addressed strategically.

***Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War.* By BG Robert H. Scales, Jr. Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2006, 435 pages, \$9.95.** Reviewed by BG (Retired) Curtis H. O’Sullivan.

The victory may have seemed certain, but there were doubts — then and later — whether it was complete in several respects. In the unseemly haste to achieve a Madison Avenue type of slogan with a hundred-hours ground war, things were left dangling. The opportunity to wipe out the Republican Guard had passed. The hopes of the Shiites in southern Iraq were raised only to be cruelly dashed. There were those who thought Saddam could and should have been removed, although there is doubt the full coalition would have supported that. Events 12 years later also raise the question of whether Baghdad could have been controlled if seized. However, this work is not intended to cover the broad issues of policy. The focus is on the operational and tactical levels of war. Political and diplomatic decision making are mentioned only to set the stage.

The groundwork is laid by the forging of the post-Vietnam Army, which did make certain whatever victory that was achieved in Kuwait and Iraq. The story unfolds with

Desert Shield, planning an offensive, shaping the battlefield, and the climax of the attack — “the Great Wheel.” It culminates with restoring calm after the “Storm.” Each chapter leads off with a personal vignette, which enlivens the narrative. The 70 black and white photographs help as well, but some are a bit dark. Not enough maps is a frequent criticism but is not the case here. Although there is a minimum of military jargon, I found the glossary handy.

BG Scales, who is president/commandant of my alma mater — the Army War College — is well qualified to be director and one of the principal authors of this study project.

There are other works that give a different and/or broader perspective on this conflict, but this book — within its intended scope — is outstanding. It is well researched and readable. Perhaps most important, it gives insights into our conduct of future wars.

***The Road to Disunion (Two Volumes)* By William W. Freehling. First volume subtitled *Secessionists at Bay: 1776-1854* and the second volume *Secessionists Triumphant*. First volume published in 1991 and the second volume published in 2007 by Oxford University Press, UK.** Reviewed by CDR Youssef Aboul-Enein, USN.

William Freehling is an award-winning historian and author, whose book *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1839* (Oxford University Press, paperback 1992) won the prestigious Bancroft Award, typically considered the highest prize for books published on or about the Civil War. Professor Freehling teaches at the University of Kentucky and for the past three decades sought to understand a single central question: why were the southern states on a path to disunion? This single question led to three decades of reflection,

research, and scholarship resulting in this two-volume history, the second of which was completed in 2007. This is a significant contribution to the political and social history of the antebellum South, and is essential to gaining a deeper understanding of the American Civil War. This book is recommended for those who have already spent time studying Civil War battles. Readers will understand the nuances of the debate over slavery and secession among the Confederate states. For instance, there were Southern leaders who wanted to phase out slavery gradually; other reactionaries wanted to keep the vile institution intact. Virginians understood and reflected on Thomas Jefferson's views of slavery as a curse, and that God's justice cannot sleep forever. This attitude would be in total contradiction to the powerful Senator John C. Calhoun from South Carolina, who considered slavery a blessing. The first volume explores differences in the debate over slavery, which the author considers the central corrosive issue of which all other arguments, such as state's rights, are based. The complexity of the debate over slavery from 1776 to 1854 corroded such wider issues as whether America could spread despotism or democracy as more territories and states came under the jurisdiction of the United States? Readers will learn of how the Gag Rule was imposed as a means to stop the national debate on slavery, a rule that only served to highlight with clarity the immorality of the institution. The Gag Rule, also known as the Pickney Resolution, was passed in the House but failed in the Senate in 1836. The first volume continues by delving into the mechanics of the Missouri Compromise, the Annexation of Texas, and ends with the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. The central focus of these pieces of legislation is the corrosiveness of racial politics, and readers gain insight into the unwillingness of states such as South Carolina to compromise

with Virginia over the issue. The divisiveness that would impact the Confederate states as they fought Union forces in the American Civil War is apparent.

The second volume discusses the need to reconcile unlimited slaveholder power with limited republican power. South Carolina Governor James Hammond took up the mantle of defending slavery beyond the argument of a necessary evil, by using scripture and various arguments that only seemed to exacerbate the exploitive nature of the institution. The book traces the evolution of Stephen A. Douglas, the Illinois senator and presidential candidate who ran against Abraham Lincoln. Chapters explore in detail the first beginnings of what would be the American Civil War, such as the 1854 skirmishes between pro and anti-slavery militia. This was not made easier by the Supreme Court decision of the Dred Scott case that ruled that any person of African ancestry could not claim citizenship in 1857. The institution was tearing the nation apart, with seminal events like John Brown's 1859 raid, in which he sought a violent solution to abolishing slavery. The rise of Abraham Lincoln, and his famous campaign speeches on how slavery is tearing at the national fabric of the United States, with his famous "House Divided Speech." The author takes us on a narrative journey that ends with the firing of the first shots at Fort Sumter in April 1861. From these two volumes, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the American Civil War as it unfolds and the decisions made by both Union and Confederate leaders. An understanding of American history is incomplete without reading about the Civil War, which although a tragedy, made the United States a stronger nation. One may disagree with Freehling on some points, but there is no doubt this is a significant work of scholarship on the events leading up to the Civil War.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- This French victory early in the war denied Germany the knockout punch it needed to defeat France and resulted in four years of trench warfare:
 - First Marne
 - Soissons
 - Ypres
 - Paschendale
- Place these battles in chronological order:
 - Soissons
 - The Brusilov Offensive
 - 2nd Marne
 - Verdun
- The size of a U.S. infantry division in WWI was roughly:
 - 5,000 men
 - 10,000 men
 - 15,000 men
 - 20,000 men
 - 28,000 men
- First use of poison gas by Germany on the Western Front was at:
 - 2nd Battle of Ypres
 - Sommers
 - 1st Battle of Marne
 - Belleau Wood
- The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk resulted in a separate peace between the Central Powers and:
 - Russia
 - Poland
 - Romania
 - Hungary
- This system of defensive barriers extended, by war's end, from the North Sea to the foothills of the Alps:
 - Minefields
 - Bunkers
 - Trenches
 - Barbed wire barriers
- What brought the U.S. into the First World War?
 - German sinking of the Lusitania
 - Alleged German atrocities in Belgium
 - The Zimmermann telegram
 - Diplomatic pressure from France and the UK
- The U.S. President during America's entire involvement in WWI was:
 - William McKinley
 - Teddy Roosevelt
 - William Jennings Bryan
 - Woodrow Wilson
- The two German generals whose leadership proved so successful in initial campaigns on the eastern front were:
 - Hindenburg and Ludendorff
 - Ludendorff and von Moltke
 - Von Moltke and Kesselring
 - Rommel and Hindenburg
- Which of the following battles was not fought in WWI?
 - Verdun
 - Belleau Wood
 - Falaise Pocket
 - Brusilov Offensive
 - Tannenberg

(Answers on next page)

Quiz courtesy of Chris Timmers



U. S. Army photo

Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment plan their next movement during Operation Viper Shake April 21 in Afghanistan.

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***Infantry Magazine* Contact Information**

E-mail — michelle.rowan@us.army.mil

Telephone — (706) 545-2350/6951 or DSN 835-2350/6951

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ANSWERS TO QUIZ: 1) a 2) d, b, c, a 3) e 4) a 5) a 6) c 7) c 8) d 9) a 10) c