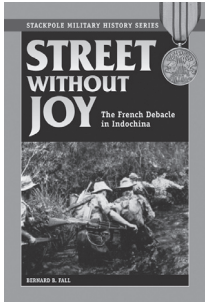


# MR Classics Revisited



**Street Without Joy**, Bernard B. Fall, reviewed by Lewis Bernstein, Ph.D., Seoul, South Korea

Very often, a book on an arcane subject illuminates an entire field or issue. Bernard B. Fall carefully observed the French efforts to hold Indochina against

a faceless and resourceful enemy. His work of sober reporting prods one to reconsider some of the shibboleths of contemporary American foreign policy. This impressionistic examination of the first Indochina War presents parallels to the current debate over military doctrine and the types of war for which U.S. armed forces must prepare. Fall's classic influenced the first American attempts to advise the South Vietnamese. It also reiterates the truism that the history of warfare is insignificant unless one knows what the fighting was about.

Fall visited Indochina and observed major and minor operations. Later historians have surpassed his research and modified some of his conclusions, but they have not captured the feeling of desperate urgency, excitement, exultation, and sorrow he felt as an Indochina eyewitness. Fall wrote in contact with the events and expressed the feeling and seeing of the thing. He conveys the perspective of a scholar who saw events as they unrolled and talked with others about what they have all witnessed and participated in. Fall also investigated the written records as rigorously as possible, using his own observations and the testimony of others to reconcile contradictions and clear up inconsistencies. While he relied upon his own eyes and ears, he used scholarly techniques to validate—or discount—the evidence of his own senses.

He tells of the slow, sure French defeat by a communist-nationalist insurgency. Unable or unwilling to

present an effective alternative to the Viet Minh message of independence, the French used traditional military methods against an independence movement. However, *Street Without Joy* is part reminiscence and part journal, not a comprehensive history of the French Indochina War or a revolutionary war manual.

Fall sympathizes with the common soldier of the French Union Forces. He respects and admires their courage, professional abilities, and élan fighting for a cause few at home cared about. The French Expeditionary Corps was mired in a war over which it had little control, subordinate to successive governors in Hanoi and governments in Paris who would not recognize Vietnamese dreams of independence and thus had little clue as to what might be needed to effectively defeat the Viet Minh.

The reader gets a clear picture of the author's divided and conflicted loyalties. Born in Vienna, raised in France, having fought with the Resistance in World War II and served as a postwar war crimes investigator, Fall came to the United States to study and first went to Vietnam as a Fulbright scholar. He knew and admired Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap for their abilities to unify and motivate their forces against the French and, later, the Americans. Despite this respect, he saw the two men as ruthless Communists, although he underestimated the strength of their nationalism and misunderstood the reasons they had become Communists.

Implicit in Fall's argument is a critique of the way the French and the Americans waged war. In summarizing the early American efforts in Vietnam, he draws parallels to the French failures and points out that the Americans made the same mistakes because they continued to fight as they always had.

The Americans had assumed the French failed because of co-

lonialism, discounting France's successful counterinsurgency experiences before Indochina. In fact, the French had developed new tactics, but failed to match the Viet Minh's war-making capacity. The Viet Minh were not tactically adventurous, but its members made war every hour of every day, which is the same path the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong took against the Americans. The French Army's high command did not understand the political nature of the war until it was too late; in any event, they were powerless to change policies made in Paris. Unlike the U.S. Army, which could fall back to preparing for a war against the Soviet Union in Central Europe after the end of the Vietnam War, the French were confronted with another counterinsurgency challenge in Algeria. Fall's book is a series of studies with the common theme of the French underestimating their foe.

Fall describes the breakdown of Franco-Vietnamese discussions on power sharing after the Japanese surrender. His account of the negotiations in Hanoi between Ho and the French representative, General Leclerc, reveals their mutual distrust and dishonesty. Leclerc at least understood the core Viet Minh demands and realized that no French army was strong enough to destroy this nationalist movement. French and Vietnamese intransigence ended negotiations.

Fall discusses the military aspects of France's war effort, writing with a perspective that shows a wistful longing for a different outcome, one where France did not suffer the humiliating defeat at Dien Bien Phu and its final withdrawal by the end of 1956. He narrates the course of battles that are only obscure names to American readers—Tu Le, Cao Bang, Hoa Binh, Na San, and even Dien Bien Phu.

One finds all the major French and American actors here as Fall

skillfully melds military and political events together. This is especially evident in his description of Dien Bien Phu, where he depicts the French pleading with President Dwight D. Eisenhower for U.S. military intervention.

Fall concludes with chapters on the war in Laos, the second Indochina War, and the future of revolutionary war. He calls Laos a defeat for American interests and laments that the Americans in Vietnam are as arrogant as the French had been. Blinded by their contempt for French military skill, American officers overlooked the French Army's expertise in counter-guerrilla operations and ignored the political nature of the war. Fall's cogent summary of revolutionary warfare up to 1961 makes several points, to wit, the enemy did not use Army field manuals in practicing war, counterinsurgency campaigns cannot be improvised, and lack of sophistication does not equal lack of firepower.

Fall's book on the French war in Indochina offers a disturbing examination of failed policies. The parallels that present themselves to the alert reader can lead to reflection about the current trends in transformative military policy. Even if one disagrees with Fall's conclusions about counterinsurgency warfare, one must marshal one's thoughts in opposition. This is a disturbing book, not just for what it says about an earlier war, but for the parallels one may draw about a current one.

### Suggested Readings

David W.P. Elliott, *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930-1975*, vols. 1-2 (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2003).

George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001).

John T. McAlister Jr., *Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution* (New

York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).

David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Nguyen Du, *The Tale of Kieu*, trans. and annotated by Huynh Sanh Thong (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

Peter Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).

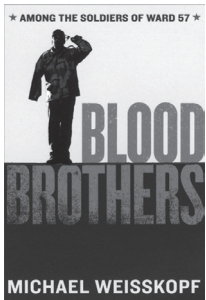
Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).

U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940).

Alexander Woodside, *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

## MR Book Reviews



**BLOOD BROTHERS: Among the Soldiers of Ward 57**, Michael Weisskopf, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2006, 289 pages, \$25.00.

In 2003, the American Soldier was selected as *Time* magazine's "Person of the Year."

Senior correspondent

Michael Weisskopf was sent to Iraq to write the story. He lived with a First Armored Division platoon for three weeks, often patrolling with the unit to get a better appreciation for the conditions under which its members operated. On 10 December 2003, the unit was moving along the streets of northwest Baghdad when it stopped momentarily near a mosque. Weisskopf was sitting in the back of a HMMWV with his photographer and two Soldiers. He was the only person who noticed

that something had been thrown into the vehicle. Weisskopf picked up the object and attempted to throw it away from the HMMWV. When he awoke, he found that his wrist "looked like the neck of a decapitated chicken."

*Blood Brothers* is the story of Weisskopf's recovery and rehabilitation from the grievous wound he received saving the lives of those he accompanied. Woven into the book are the stories of three Soldiers—Sergeant First Class Luis Rodriguez, Sergeant Pete Damon, and Corporal Bobby Isaacs—whom Weisskopf came to know during his time on Ward 57, the amputee ward at Walter Reed Army Hospital. A civilian would not normally receive treatment at a military facility, but a waiver was granted to Weisskopf because of the obvious courage of his actions.

Much of Weisskopf's book is a personal quest to understand what

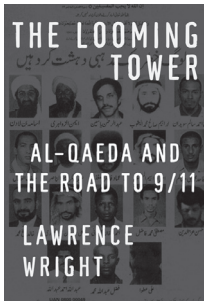
happened on the day he was injured. Although those around him proclaimed him a hero, Weisskopf was never quite sure he had done anything heroic. He could not remember whether he had knowingly picked up a grenade, which would have been an act of valor, or if he'd just picked up an unknown object out of curiosity. In addition to chronicling Weisskopf's journey, the book explores the challenges experienced by the three Soldiers: a career medic who lost a leg and could no longer deploy with his unit; a National Guardsman who lost both hands while inflating a helicopter tire; and a young infantryman who lost both legs and, for the better part of a year, suffered almost continuously from infection and other problems.

*Blood Brothers* tells a story many would understandably prefer to ignore. It is a trying experience to read about Soldiers who return from war

unable to attend to their most basic needs. The men of Ward 57 deployed in prime physical condition but returned with enormous disabilities. Weisskopf captures the tremendous

effort the government makes in treating its wounded Soldiers, noting that this commitment is greater than at any other time in history. One will likely find the individual stories dis-

turbing, yet the knowledge that our Nation keeps faith with its warriors, regardless of expense, is uplifting.  
**LTC James E. Varner, USA, Retired, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**



**THE LOOMING TOWER: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11**, Lawrence Wright, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2006, 469 pages, \$27.95.

Why did 9/11 happen? Government agencies, mass media outlets, and a presidential commission have offered various

explanations in such detail that the basic facts of the tragedy have become common wisdom in America. These explanations, however, focus primarily on what happened and how it happened. In *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright digs further.

Wright's compelling narrative traces the evolution of radical Islamic fundamentalism, from Arab resentment of American support for Israel to the competing radical Islamic movements in the jails of Cairo to the final deadly combination of money, motive, opportunity, and bureaucratic indifference that enabled Al-Qaeda to murder thousands of innocent victims in the space of a few hours.

Wright begins in 1948 with the tale of Sayyid Qutb, an angry, middle-aged Egyptian scholar whose brief hiatus in the United States reinforced his resentment of Western materialist values. Qutb's sojourn took him to California, New York City, and Washington, D.C., but he spent much of his time as a graduate student in Greeley, Colorado, where he observed Americans' paradoxical embrace of Christianity, racism, hedonism, and greed. Qutb left America in 1950, full of hatred for what he viewed as a "spiritual wasteland," and returned to Egypt. Wright tells us that "[Qutb's] sour impressions, when published, would profoundly shape Arab and Muslim perceptions of the new world at a time when their esteem for America and its values had been high."

Qutb returned to a nation on the

brink of collapse. Under the corrupt and negligent rule of King Farouk, poverty and despair spiraled out of control in post-colonial Egypt. When Gamal Abdel Nasser seized power in 1952, he appointed Qutb to a government post, but their uneasy alliance soon collapsed, and Qutb resigned. Nasser's secular vision of a modernized, pan-Arab socialism conflicted directly with the Islamic theocracy espoused by Qutb and his likeminded allies in the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1954, a failed assassination attempt emboldened Nasser to crack down on the dissident Muslims. Qutb spent most of the next 12 years in Egyptian jails and was executed in 1966 after his conviction for treason.

Qutb's jail sentence did not silence him. During his lengthy stay in the prison hospital he wrote *Milestones*, a radical manifesto rejecting scientific reason and embracing the principle of *takfir*, the excommunication of those Muslims who failed to properly embrace the laws of the Quran. Qutb's radical theology provided a convenient rationale for Muslims to violate the Quranic restriction against violence toward other Muslims. As Qutb predicted, his martyrdom would inspire disillusioned young men throughout the Arab world, most notably an idealistic Egyptian medical student, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and a pious, charismatic Saudi millionaire, Osama bin Laden.

The heart of Wright's tale lies in the developing relationship between these two men. Wright suggests that Zawahiri first met bin Laden while passing through Jeddah en route to Afghanistan. Like thousands of other young Arabs in the early 1980s, Zawahiri was drawn to the holy war against the Soviet invaders. Bin Laden also answered this call, traveling to the Pakistani city of Peshawar, where he gained prominence as the main sponsor of Arab jihadis traveling through Pakistan en route to combat. Zawahiri, meanwhile, had assembled

a group of Egyptian jihadis and was practicing medicine in Peshawar, where he eventually became bin Laden's personal physician.

Bin Laden's initial quests for military glory led to several humiliating defeats. During a minor skirmish in 1987, however, his outnumbered band forced an attacking Soviet force to withdraw. The brief encounter entered jihadist mythology as the Battle of the Lion's Den. Bin Laden and his Arab fighters became heroes, and their reputation for reckless courage would attract hundreds of followers to their nascent organization.

Wright's narrative follows the two leaders from Afghanistan to Sudan. There, under the protection of an Islamic regime, Al-Qaeda took shape. Intent on purifying the world by restoring Islamic rule, bin Laden identified the United States as his main enemy. His family wealth supported hundreds of followers, who established a training camp near Khartoum. Zawahiri, meanwhile, remained focused on overthrowing the Mubarak regime in Egypt. Egyptian officials, however, captured a computer that enabled the arrest of more than 800 members of Zawahiri's group. In 1993, Zawahiri himself was vilified by Egyptian Muslims when his attempt to assassinate Mubarak killed an innocent schoolgirl. He eventually merged the remnants of his group with Al-Qaeda, creating a tragic synthesis between bin Laden's mesmerizing influence and Zawahiri's deadly brilliance.

Wright's final chapters, a series of missed opportunities to avoid tragedy, will infuriate readers. He briskly details Al-Qaeda's early, clumsy attacks against American targets and the bureaucratic rivalries that repeatedly disrupted American efforts to dismantle the terrorist organization. Wright's account allots plenty of blame to both the current and previous administrations, but

his description of bureaucratic intransigence at the CIA and the National Security Agency prove particularly frustrating.

In the end, Lawrence Wright's thoughtful and compelling examination of Islamic extremism provides a convincing answer to questions about the causes of 9/11. More important, he explains why so many desperate young men continue to answer the call to jihad, and why the "long war" we are fighting is so aptly named.

**LTC William Latham, USA, Retired, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**DETERRING AMERICA: Rogue States and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction**, Derek D. Smith, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, 197 pages, \$24.99.

Given current events involving North Korea, *Deterring America: Rogue States and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction* is especially timely. The author, Derek Smith, argues that the United States needs to reevaluate its foreign policy and strategies concerning the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Smith offers a theoretical and historical analysis of WMD proliferation and prescribes alternative methods for response that will not be viewed as overly aggressive or arrogant and therefore will not perpetuate the problem. Although Smith is comparatively new to the field of international relations, he has excellent academic credentials (Harvard, Yale, Oxford) and has published several articles on nonproliferation topics.

The first part of *Deterring America* introduces the dilemmas involved in deterrence theory, discusses the rationality behind brinkmanship diplomacy, and explains why the United States feels it cannot adopt a reactive position on proliferation. The second part applies the principles discussed in part one to U.S. experiences with Iran and North Korea. This portion covers the risks of applying existing policy without properly understanding adversarial perceptions. The last part assesses the various counter-

proliferation strategies available to the United States; the political, legal, and moral implications of preemptive or preventive war; and ways of working within the existing international system to create a "global quarantine" against WMD proliferation.

Smith's ideas are not entirely original, but he does an excellent job of combining the thoughts of multiple prominent theorists into a concise and coherent argument. His discussion of brinkmanship is illuminating, as is his explanation of how "rogue" nations and non-state actors apply deterrence. Smith points out that Iran and North Korea have different goals and that dealing with each country therefore entails different risks. Without going into great detail, he implies that Iranian aspirations are rooted in radical ideology and North Korea's are based on power. Unfortunately, Smith limits his discussion of Iran by referring the reader to other works on the subject. In addition, although he touches on complications associated with the emerging threat of small dirty bombs, Smith regrettably remains focused on larger scale WMD proliferation.

*Deterring America* is both opportune and pertinent. By arguing for the establishment of an unambiguous global norm against WMD proliferation, Smith adds to the debate about the UN's role and relevance in dealing with such an important subject. Military professionals will find this book to be a valuable complement to the National Security Strategy.

**MAJ Douglas E. Brown, USA, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**THE BLOG OF WAR: Frontline Dispatches from Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan**, Matthew Currier Burden, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2006, 282 pages, \$21.00.

Back in the day, Soldiers used to communicate from the frontline by mail, or what we today call snail mail. Now, technology enables service-members to communicate by e-mail or by posting accounts of their exploits on blogs. They are increasingly doing the latter; in fact, there is a veritable tidal wave of blogs detail-

ing the unvarnished feelings Soldiers have about their experiences in the combat zone. Matthew Burden's new book, *The Blog of War*, saves the reader the time and trouble of surfing through these endless sites in search of the most interesting details and anecdotes about service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For anyone who has served in the military, many of the experiences the book reprises will be familiar: the awkward goodbyes, the intense camaraderie, the looking out for fellow Soldiers. What may not be familiar are the innermost feelings of those who have been exposed to continuous violence in a harsh environment or seen the horror of sudden, violent death. In an effort, perhaps, to show our common humanity, Burden balances the harsher blog entries with those about the social (nonviolent) interactions between U.S. Soldiers and Iraqi citizens. But it's the Soldiers' reactions to violence that really stand out. A great part of our fascination with war memoirs stems from our need to know how otherwise ordinary men and women cope with extraordinary pressure and the prospect of instant death. On this count, Burden's sampling of blogs is particularly insightful.

This book came to me for review shortly before the Army released its new recruiting slogan, "Army Strong." My initial response to the slogan (and the blogs) was tepid until I saw a video previewing "Army Strong" and then read Burden's book. Now, I get it. The book describes the strength of character instilled in the men and women who are put in harm's way; its blog entries depict their toughness and courage as they carry out the tough missions assigned to them. Their sense of duty is admirable—they may not like what they are experiencing, but they are professionals and know it is their duty, no matter how unpleasant their tasks may be. Some bloggers are on their second and third tours, which says even more about the strength of their character.

*The Blog of War* is organized by subject (e.g., "Life in the War Zone," "The Healers," "The Warriors"). This serves to orient the

reader quickly to the different blogs' subject matter and the writers' various perspectives; however, it can be confusing to someone trying to view the war from a chronological perspective. Readers trying to understand how attitudes about the war have changed over time will have to consult other sources. Still, Burden's peek into the new phenomenon of Soldiers' blogs provides a rich, visceral picture of how the current wars are affecting the Nation's warriors.

**LTC David Van Laar,**  
**USA, Retired,**  
**Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**BEYOND SHOCK AND AWE: Warfare in the 21st Century,** Eric L. Haney with Brian M. Thomsen, eds., Berkley Publishing Group, New York, 2006, 258 pages, \$24.95.

In *Beyond Shock and Awe*, Eric Haney claims that the future operating environment will be even more complex than today's, and he ponders how the U.S. might structurally and psychologically transform to meet the challenge. Broad in scope, Haney's book contains a mixed bag of contemporary analyses from an array of authors. From the indifferent to the insightful, the book attempts to forecast the nature of future warfare. Pragmatically, it suggests how we might train, equip, and structure any future force.

How the U.S. military should continue to transform is a topic of immense importance, especially against the backdrop of what promises to be an enduring war on terrorism fought with increasing legal constraints. At a time when innovative thinking is positively encouraged, *Beyond Shock and Awe* offers some cogent suggestions; overall, however, it falls short of providing novel thinking on the subject.

Perhaps the book's best piece is John Helfers' "Hearts and Minds in 2025: How Foreign and Domestic Culture Will Shape the Future Battlefield." This well-written essay delves into the expected dynamic complexity and ill-defined nature of modern warfare, particularly the need for cultural knowledge, in a balanced, informative manner.

Helfer concludes that "by taking the time to understand the person, group, or society, how they live and operate, and how they can be dealt with either from a platform of peace or, if necessary, a position of force, our military and nation can hope to truly exhaust all other methods before resorting to force." Given the lessons of Iraq, few should disagree with such findings.

Unfortunately, not all chapters are as well-considered or thorough as Helfers'. "War by Deception and Wishful Thinking" and "French Algeria and British Northern Ireland: Legitimacy and the Rule of Law in Low-Intensity Conflict," are two such examples. The latter is an erudite but overly selective analysis of two insurgencies in just eight and a half pages. Such brevity is frustrating—despite some important lessons learned about the critical importance of civilian control of the military.

On balance, *Beyond Shock and Awe* is a light yet thought provoking read. Easily digestible in bite-size essays, the book raises a number of issues worthy of consideration concerning the training and structuring of military forces. It is not, however, a serious study, and some readers may be frustrated by the superficial nature of some of its chapters.

**MAJ Andrew M. Roe, J3 Ops,**  
**British Army, Basra, Iraq**

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**HOUSE TO HOUSE: Playing the Enemy's Game in Saigon, May 1968,** Keith Nolan, Zenith Press, Osceola, WI, 2006, 368 pages, \$24.95.

Keith Nolan is well known for his critically acclaimed histories of the Vietnam War. His 11th and latest book, *House to House*, should be equally well received and may in fact be one of his best books to date.

Following the Tet Offensive in February and March 1968, and prior to the start of the Paris Peace talks, Hanoi needed a political goal. North Vietnamese leaders therefore embarked on an operation to prove they could once again invade Saigon. Their purpose was to cause as much damage as possible by compelling U.S. and Vietnamese

forces to fight in and destroy the city's neighborhoods. *House to House* tells the story of four 9th Infantry Division battalions that fought in the southern suburbs of Saigon in May 1968, including one battalion that entered combat for the first time.

Nolan gives us an unvarnished, realistic portrayal of life in an infantry unit fighting an elusive enemy. The chaos associated with urban combat (including civilians on the battlefield and media interaction) is realistically portrayed through first-person accounts. The book also provides an excellent and thorough account of the leadership challenges the officers and NCOs faced while fighting in urban terrain. It considers their failings and shortcomings as leaders, the emotions associated with losing men to booby traps and ambushes, and the causes and effects of poor discipline. One of the most valuable and interesting aspects of this book is the detail it offers about the motivations and thoughts of leaders and their subordinates.

Nolan concludes that the U.S. forces won a pyrrhic victory. Although they defeated the enemy, they flattened neighborhood after neighborhood of the predominantly pro-American Vietnamese who lived in southern Saigon. The friendly population was caught in the middle.

*House to House* is exceptionally well written and easy to read, and it evinces a depth of research that readers may not find in other literature written about urban operations today. It is filled with remarkable stories that are seamlessly weaved together. I highly recommend it to all readers because of its relevance to the challenges facing leaders today.

**LTC Robert Rielly,**  
**USA, Retired,**  
**Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**OUTPOST KELLY: A Tanker's Story,** Jack R. Siewert, The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2006, 150 pages, \$19.95.

In the summer of 1952, the UN and North Korea were working on a diplomatic solution to the Korean War. At the same time, there were continuous battles along the

future border, often involving small changes to the front lines and the seizing of key terrain. *Outpost Kelly* is the account of one of these battles. Written by Jack Siewert, the book focuses on the role that Siewert's tank platoon played in helping the 15th Infantry Regiment win the fight for Outpost Kelly in July 1952.

*Outpost Kelly* details the events leading up to and through the battle. Siewert describes how his temporary support mission evolved into a longer and much more exciting combat operation. We see how his small attached unit quickly becomes an integral part of a larger scale combined arms fight, providing stationary direct-fire support to infantry—a non-doctrinal mission for armor. Siewert is forced to improvise new and effective tactics, techniques, and procedures.

*Outpost Kelly* also looks at the many factors that contributed to friction at the tactical level: monsoon weather, difficult terrain, inadequate intelligence, maintenance and equipment problems, and the boredom and complacency engendered by the long, static days between fighting. More importantly, however, we learn how Siewert overcame these issues through effective leadership and planning. In the end, despite numerous forces conspiring to thwart them, Siewert and his platoon succeed in providing superb support to the infantry at the critical moments in the battle, thereby ensuring victory and the seizure of Outpost Kelly.

Siewert's book is a must-read for tactical leaders. It clearly demonstrates the importance of troop-leading procedures and the mental agility required to adapt to an ever-changing battlefield. Siewert does an excellent job conveying how leaders and soldiers cope with the excitement, fear, ambiguity, and confusion of combat. Organizational leaders can also benefit by observing how doctrine was adapted to best utilize weapons and systems in a difficult wartime environment. Finally, Siewert brings us the underreported history of the hill fighting in the latter stages of the Korean War. Perhaps someday we will gain the historical benefit of a view of the battle

for Outpost Kelly from the North Korean perspective.

**MAJ Lance K. Calvert, USA,  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**BLACK CADET IN A WHITE BASTION: Charles Young at West Point**, Brian Shellum, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2006, 175 pages, \$16.95.

On the second floor of the Combined Arms Research Library is a special meeting site: the Charles Young Room. Near the door to the room is a framed photograph of the room's namesake along with a brief description of his achievements. The picture shows an African-American man, perhaps in his 30's, dressed in a U.S. Army uniform of the early 20th century. The inscription tells us he was the third black graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, the senior black officer in World War I, and the first black U.S. military attaché. For most who pass by the picture, that information is likely to be as much as they want to know about this relatively obscure man from the Army's past. That is unfortunate, for the story of Charles Young is an inspiring one of courage and victory against long odds.

Defense Intelligence Agency historian Brian Shellum undertakes the project of recounting Young's remarkable life. *Black Cadet in a White Bastion* is the first in a series of books Shellum plans to write toward that end. This initial book takes the reader from Young's humble beginnings in southern Ohio, where he grew up the son of former slaves, to his graduation from West Point after five lonely years in which he fought the ostracism of his fellow cadets, a draconian disciplinary system, and crushing academic challenges that nearly drove him from the Academy. Shellum, a West Pointer himself, builds a compelling biographical narrative. He has done impressive detective work, and where the historical record is slim, he makes judicious conjecture.

Perhaps one hears the cliché "triumph of the spirit" too often. However, Young's life was truly such a triumph. Beyond telling the story of an American hero, Shellum

reminds us that the U.S. Army's recent achievements in race relations followed a long, unfortunate record of bigotry and exclusion.

**LTC Scott Stephenson,  
USA, Retired,  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**GRANT: A Biography**, John Mosier, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006, 186 pages, \$21.95.

This latest biography on General Grant is well worth reading. Written by John Mosier, it is part of the ongoing "Great General Series" that so far includes works on Patton, Eisenhower, LeMay, MacArthur, and Stonewall Jackson. Mosier, a noted historian, has published other historical works, to include *The Myth of the Great War* and *The Blitzkrieg Myth: How Hitler and the Allies Misread the Strategic Realities of the Second World War*.

Mosier's new book differs somewhat from the many other well written biographies on General Grant. Concise and very informative, it focuses mostly on Grant's generalship, strategy, and legacy. In doing so, it paints an illuminating picture of what made General Grant so uniquely effective among his many capable peers.

Mosier does offer a brief look into Grant's formative years. Two items in particular lend insight into the future leader's makeup: he taught himself algebra at an early age, and he was a reasonably talented artist. Both accomplishments suggest an adept intellect and a capacity for abstract thought not usually accorded Grant. Mosier contends that these qualities would contribute greatly to Grant's effectiveness as the commander of all Union forces later in the Civil War.

The author also touches on Grant's civilian life after his service during the War with Mexico and before the Civil War. It is widely believed that Grant was a failure at civilian life, but Mosier again confounds conventional lore by providing evidence that Grant was a relatively successful and happy middle class person. He earned at least enough money to provide a comfortable brick home for his family, and he remained happily married to the same woman for his entire life.

Another of the book's strengths lies in its analysis of the many battles and campaigns Grant participated in during the Civil War. Mosier clearly shows how Grant's grasp of the art of war exceeded that of his subordinates, superiors, and enemies. For example, Grant's conception of how to prosecute the war successfully differed vastly from that of his fellow Union officers and even President Lincoln. Ultimately, of course, Grant's view was proven correct. The general's understanding of the changes that the new technology (rifling in cannon barrels, improved firearms, the telegraph) wrought on war was similarly unique. He was also something of an innovator when it came to campaign planning. No adherent of any of the accepted warfighting theorists of his time, Grant designed campaigns according to terrain, enemy forces, and resources. As a result, unlike many of the other Union generals during the war, Grant sought to destroy the Confederate Army and occupy its territory instead of simply fighting battles to seize terrain.

Overall, Mosier does an excellent job explaining Grant's genius for the art of war. He attributes Grant's success to the general's near-encyclopedic knowledge of military history, his ability to think abstractly, and his propensity for issuing clear, concise orders; and he shows how each of these characteristics are clearly apparent in all of General Grant's major battles

and campaigns. *Grant: A Biography* gives us a lucid, enlightening picture of the general and what made him truly unique. I strongly recommend this book to any reader who wants to quickly gain insight into this extraordinary soldier.

**LTC Thomas G. Meara,  
USA, Retired,  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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**A REVOLUTION IN ARMS: A History of the First Repeating Rifles**, Joseph G. Bilby, Westholme Publishing, Yardley, PA, 2006, 280 pages, \$26.00.

Following in the steps of his earlier work on Civil War weaponry, Joseph Bilby's *A Revolution in Arms* describes how the search for rapid-firing projectile weapons reached a turning point in the 19th century. Focusing on the Civil War era, Bilby details the introduction to the American battlefield of the first breech-loading rifles and, more importantly, metallic rim-fire cartridges.

While scholars of the American West are sure to be familiar with the famed Winchester and Spencer rifles that "conquered" the Plains, Bilby relates the lesser-known tale of the technological innovations that gave rise to those weapons. Men like Benjamin Henry and Christopher Spencer, despite facing resistance from military bureaucrats and other weapons makers, developed firearms that pushed the boundaries of firepower.

This book is more than just a technological history. It also discusses how the new firearms were implemented during the Civil War. Using bureaucratic reports and personal accounts from officers and enlisted men, Bilby demonstrates how repeating rifles increasingly found their way into the eager hands of Soldiers over the course of the war. Unfortunately, the slow arrival of repeating rifles prevented a systematic effort at maximizing their potential. Bilby argues persuasively that their use on the battlefield was "improvised," and that the officer corps made little effort to incorporate the weapons into existing doctrine. As a result, the "revolution" Bilby speaks of appears to have been a purely technological one.

At times, the book strays from its focus, offering extended and unnecessary accounts of campaigns and battles in which repeating rifles played a minor role. However, Bilby's comprehensive depiction of repeating rifles from their initial conception in the minds of their creators all of the way through their first use (and misuse) on the battlefield reveals the mixed record that the American military has had with technological innovation. This makes the book a recommended read for dedicated scholars as well as casual readers who seek a better understanding of both the Civil War and the evolution of firepower on the battlefield.

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