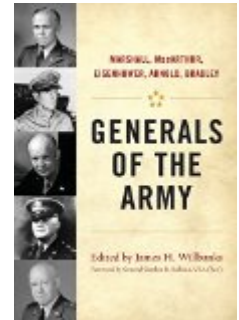


James H. Willbanks, ed.. *Generals of the Army: Marshall, MacArthur, Eisenhower, Arnold, Bradley*. Lexington,: University Press of Kentucky, 2013. xi + 262 pp. \$35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8131-4213-5.



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The Civil War era saw the birth of campaigns the magnitude of which was unprecedented before--and unmatched since--in North America. The battles were dramatically affected by a number of technological advances such as the railroad, the telegraph, mass production, and weaponry. These trends changed the face of war, calling for a new approach, specifically in officer training. The lessons of the Civil War were reaffirmed by the Americans who studied the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71).

Over time, the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point settled back to teaching the basic concepts, essentially disregarding the lessons of these wars. It was up to other institutes to teach these relevant lessons to American officers. The art of war was being taught at professional army schools such as the Corps of Engineers School (1866) and the Artillery School (1868). In 1881 the commanding general of the army, General William T. Sherman (1869-84) ordered the establishment of a new school for training infantry and cavalry officers, a large percent-

age of whom made up the officer corps of the US Army. The school later became the US Army Command and General Staff College.

It was not merely a thirst for studying past wars that dictated the establishment of the school. Following the Civil War, the professional officer corps was in a sorry state. Many perished in the war or retired shortly after. What junior officers of lieutenant and captain rank that remained had never been properly and professionally trained, but rather promoted from within the existing ranks. USMA graduates too suffered from a stagnated intellectuality as a result of their long and demanding service at the solitary frontier strongholds. While these officers did eventually become skilled at commanding and operating small mobile forces--a result of their tasks at the frontier and the post-1865 American Indian Wars--they were far from able to command large units or run regular warfare. Another reason was the dedication of the American army to preparing for a large-scale war following the Napoleonic model, while learning the lessons of the Civil War

and those of the European wars, specifically the Prussian war campaigns.

Fort Leavenworth, MO, was selected as the site for the new school for advanced training, the School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry. Infantry, cavalry, and light artillery units would be commanded there by young officers as part of their training in joint operations. The beginning was rough. The companies stationed at Fort Leavenworth belonged to different regiments, making it difficult for the officers to practice regiment- and brigade-level operations. The infantry and cavalry were often unavailable for training, as they were regularly dispatched to fight Indians alongside the school's instructing officers. In 1894 a brigade headquarters was established, consisting of organic regimental units: the 20th Infantry Regiment and the 6th Cavalry Regiment. Additionally, the War Department allocated instructors who held single positions. The program was reorganized under the command of Col. Alexander McCook, the third commander of the school. Remedial studies were forgone, leaving the emphasis on tactical issues. Arthur L. Wagner and Eben Swift joined as instructors, developing training techniques to match their newly created military doctrines. The two also developed corps-free war games conducted on maps. The students ventured outside the classroom, learning tactics in the areas surrounding Fort Leavenworth.

In 1898, on the eve of the Spanish-American War, the Infantry and Cavalry School played a major role in US Army developments. Still, graduates were few and too junior in rank to effectively influence the entire officer level--and subsequently the army at large--and guide it toward a war in Spain and the conflict in the Philippines. During this period (1898-1902), studies were put on hold and the instructing regiments were dispatched to the Philippines.

Despite American victories, these wars raised two prime issues concerning the army at large and specifically junior officer training. The first

was a result of the rapid growth of the army, when following the war with Spain many untrained officers joined its ranks. The second issue was the rising need for staff officers experienced at recruiting and managing large-scale forces, the new reality born of a nationwide recruitment (a problem which would reappear as the United States entered WWI and even more so, WWII). During his term as secretary of war, Elihu Root led several other reforms, largely influenced by the writings of Major General Emory Upton. In the wake of the Franco-Prussian War, General Sherman sent Upton along with other officers to tour the militaries of the world. His instructions stated he was to focus on German academies for officer training. Upton published his impressions in an inclusive book in 1878.[1] One of his key recommendations was to found an academy for training American officers in the art of war, preparing them for high command and staff duties. When this failed to happen, Upton launched a campaign explaining the need for a new training system and all-around reorganization. Upton labored over a comprehensive essay specifying his conclusions and recommendations, but died in 1881 before its completion. The unfinished manuscript made its way to Secretary Root, who published it in 1904. [2] Root implemented nearly all of the recommendations proposed by Upton; aided by a series of congressional legislations he established the general command, making Fort Leavenworth the main institute for training American staff officers. November 1904 saw the first class of the Army War College, the school for large-unit command. One of its notable students was Captain--later General of the Armies--John Pershing, who would command the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in WWI.

The curriculum consisted of one year of studies; excelling students were selected for another year at the Army Staff College. Many officers had been trained by the eve of WWI. Several, including Douglas MacArthur, George Marshall, and William (Billy) Mitchell, along with their instruc-

tors. had key roles in shaping the military during the interwar period and, in the case of MacArthur and Marshall, WWII as well. The school was shut down once more in 1916, at first due to the war with Mexico and then following the US entry into WWI. Hundreds of officers trained between 1902 and 1916 made up the majority of the AEF staff officers under General Pershing. Of the twenty-six divisions sent to France, twenty-three were composed of Fort Leavenworth graduates. The same held true for core staff and field armies. Thus, one can say that during WWI the US Army was under the intellectual influence of Army Staff College graduates. The school became the primary institution for developing US Army leadership and doctrine. The operational success of the AEF is to be attributed to the training of the staff officers, even if at the time of their studies some courses appeared irrelevant.

The importance of command and staff institutions increased in the years after the war. Now the army could teach its officers different subjects based on the experienced gained during the big war, namely, the contributions of graduating staff officers. The curriculum underwent further change during the interwar period. More emphasis was placed on staff, tactics, and logistics studies; students were trained in division- and core-level combined arms operations. Armed with theoretical knowledge and training, American officers filled the ranks of the steadily growing military in the years preceding WWII. Many held senior staff and command positions in US Army divisions, corps, and armies. Their theoretical education, transformed into practical experience, forged the army into a well-oiled war machine. Five officers shone above the rest and led the American victory over Germany, Italy, and Japan.

This book follows the collective experiences of five generals who attended the college, four of whom--Marshall, Arnold, MacArthur, and Eisenhower--were promoted to the rank of general of the army, or five-star general, during the war.[3]

While the promotions were mostly given for reasons of prestige, in light of Montgomery receiving the rank of field marshal, there is no denying the grand impact the five had in defeating the Axis. The first chapter of this book surveys the history of the training schools, emphasizing the changes which took place after WWI. The following five chapters are each dedicated to a general and stand as mini-biographies, stressing the impression Fort Leavenworth had on their military careers and, naturally, their actions during WWII. The final chapter examines the enduring importance of the US Army Command and General College.

The editor opens by stating that the biographers had no intention of compiling a hagiography. This apology seems out of place; a worthy biography is not only the life story of a public figure, nor is it measured by the personal details it reveals. A worthy biography is one which reveals the general history of the period in which the subject lived while exposing the forces that shaped him. In other words, a biography should explain the dialectic relationship between the subject and his period. One of the big issues in biography writing is the question of balancing empathy and criticism: without empathy, the biography might become cynical; without criticism, it becomes an alienating hagiography.

The mini-biographies at hand are a perfect example of balance. They provide the life stories of five leaders who not only achieved mighty victories, but also--and this may very well be their greatest success--created a war machine out of practically nothing, trained it, equipped it, and drove it across unprecedented geographical territory in military history terms. Before the United States joined the war the army consisted of several thousand soldiers; by the end of the war the numbers towered above 16 million. The number of divisions grew from eight in 1939 to ninety-four by the end of the period.[4] Thus the lives of these great generals converge with American mili-

tary history and the military history of WWII. The biographers succeed in stringing together a life story and placing it within history.

In examining American army actions in Europe, in the broad geographical sense, one notices an impressive learning curve beginning with the first battles in North Africa, through the Sicily and Italy campaigns, and ending in the northern Europe operations, from the Normandy invasion to the end of the war. Perhaps the peak of this process was in the defense battles run by the American forces against the German offense of 1944, the Battle of the Bulge. American military operational efficiency increased in the Pacific Ocean theater, a fact which sheds new light on US Army senior command. Many have stated that the senior strategic ranks in the German military system were the most efficient, yet this only holds true if one treats the strategic level in its most basic form.

Strategy, per Clausewitz, is the art of concentrating the masses at critical points in the war arena. This was the essence of Napoleon Bonaparte's genius. Strategy connects individual battles, making them a tool used for achieving war goals. The strategist must therefore define battle objectives according to the goals of war. In other words, he must outline the war plans.[5] These definitions are confined to the art of war management, and actually extract all war-preparation activities (force building, recruitment, training, and doctrine writing) from the field of strategy. The second half of the nineteenth century saw an expansion in the field of strategy, which began to include the actions required by commanders prior to the outbreak of war. Strategy has thus ceased to be a purely operational matter.[6]

American military history is a unique case. From the American Revolution to WWII, the American army was forged in war[are. This is why many of the primary operations performed by the US Army in the majority of the wars eventually failed. Yet by the end of the wars the United

States landed crushing victories, such that directly translated to political success.[7] This was the greatest strength of American military commanders, from George Washington to George Marshall. Some of them may have commanded corps at the battlefields, but they viewed their role as military builders, leaving the actual operation to the commanders in the various theaters. Their strategic role did not stop at commanding fighting corps; it required constructing an efficient war machine during battle. Taking the modern definitions of strategy into consideration, one can easily contradict Martin van Creveld, who claimed strategic superiority to be a common factor among senior generals and the general staff of the German army in WWII, compared to their American counterparts. The five generals discussed in this book succeeded in bringing their academic knowledge into practice and the consequential victories in WWII.

The book is a great introduction to the lives, military careers, and contributions of generals in American (and world) history. These mini-biographies expand on the role of the generals and place them in American military history, especially during WWII. In this regard, the book is also a study of the WWII Army high command. The biographers succeeded in placing the life stories of these generals within the grand historical context resulting from the dramatic events of the war.

This book is a cornerstone in the study of the shaping and training of American officers, alluded to by the final chapter. The methodology deployed by the writers may serve as a solid foundation for future studies on the effects of the Army War College on the actions of other generals and divisions, corps and army commanders, who fought in different theaters and not just WWII. The book also works as study of the history of Fort Leavenworth as a significant institution for training the US Army officers corps since its establishment and to this day. It begs a follow-up study of fleet admirals in WWII and beyond, complete with an analy-

sis of the advanced training undergone in the corresponding naval academies, and its contribution to WWII successes.

Notes

[1]. Emory Upton, *The Armies of Asia and Europe: Embracing Official Reports On the Armies of Japan, China, India, Persia, Italy, Russia, Austria, Germany, France, and England. Accompanied by Letters Descriptive of A Journey from Japan to the Caucasus* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1878).

[2]. Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States from 1775* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1904).

[3]. General Omar Bradley was promoted to the rank of general of the army in September 1950.

[4]. We must bear in mind that General MacArthur also had Navy and Marine forces under his command in the Southern Pacific Ocean theater.

[5]. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), book 2, ch. 1; book 3, ch. 1.

[6]. See the historical-theoretic discussion in Beatrice Hauser, *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3-28.

[7]. A possible exception is the War of 1812.

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