

Reviews

Douglas Fermer, Three German Invasions of France – The Summer Campaigns of 1870, 1914 and 1940. Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2013. Bibliography, Index, Photos 30, Maps 11, 273pp. ISBN: 978-1-781-59354-7 Hardback. £25.00.

Germany and France maintained a difficult relationship stemming back to the pre-German unification period of both Prussia and Napoleonic France. Three wars were fought between the two nations during the 70 years from 1870 until 1940; each reflecting a period of political, doctrinal and societal change within each nation state. Fermer's book looks at the root causes and the execution of these wars with a view towards highlighting the impact on these conflicts upon the French army and society primarily and secondarily upon Germany.

Fermer's analysis is balanced and insightful. Despite the breadth of the topics that he has undertaken to review, he does so in a succinct manner; the renditions of his observations are easy to follow and are well developed. His approach is to look at each of the individual engagements as a part of a greater whole. This facilitates a linear examination that clearly identifies the connections and causations between the wars.

Fermer divides his book into four distinct parts, each addressing the individual conflicts as well as the precursor period in France leading up to 1870. Each section establishes the environment of the period and the main changes that had occurred as well as the main lessons to be learned from each encounter. Central throughout is the political atmosphere which remains the main cause of the military escalation between the nations. The use of the military as a tool for political gain must be balanced and extremely carefully applied; Fermer shows that, leading to 1870, the Germans were extremely adept at this but limitations in political acumen in both Germany and France were felt to a greater degree as time marched on. Hubris in French and German leadership was legion.

Fermer also undertakes a detailed evaluation of the impact of success upon both the victor and vanquished both doctrinally and psychologically. His investigation reveals that the German approach to lessons learned following their actions was far more in depth (and taken far more seriously) than their French counterparts. The French were further handicapped by their political instability and ongoing intra-national divergence. This manifested itself in inconsistent recruitment and armament policies as well as challenges in foreign policy.

Also, included in the book is a comprehensive listing of the references used and of particular note is the number of primary source documents cited by the author. Overall this is an outstanding rendition of the turbulent period encompassing the three conflicts. The author has drafted a narrative that recounts the characteristics of the conflicts themselves, the underlying causes (primary, secondary and beyond) and the results politically, militarily and societally thus providing the reader with a complete understanding of the period. Fermer's book is an excellent account and source.

CHRIS BUCKHAM
Independent Scholar

Brian McAllister Linn, *Elvis's Army: Cold War GIs and the Atomic Battlefield*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 2016. x + 444pp. 20 illustrations. ISBN: 978-0-674-73768-6. £22.95.

With *Elvis's Army*, Brian Linn assumes the mantle of the late Russell Weigley as the dean of historians of the U.S. Army. In his earlier *The Echo of Battle*, Linn surveyed the intellectual currents running through the history of that army. *Elvis's Army* scope is much narrower: the period from the end of World War II through the beginning of large-scale American involvement in Vietnam. Linn casts a wide net, covering strategy, doctrine, equipment, the composition of both the officer corps and other ranks, the operation and influence of the draft, the integration of blacks and women, attempts at moral education, and public relations campaigns. This scope precludes an overarching framework like the Hero, Guardian, and Manager typology postulated in *Echo of Battle*. Yet the reviewer regards that as an improvement: Linn provides a nuanced portrait of a powerful organization filled with thoughtful, dedicated individuals but undermined by a deep institutional insecurity stoked by hostile political trends, impossible strategic demands, and rapid technological change.

Throughout *Elvis's Army* lurks the dilemma caused by the incongruity of a national desire for the forceful containment of communism and President Dwight D. Eisenhower's refusal to spend what he considered to be unsustainable sums on defence. His solution was the 'New Look'—a policy of reliance on the overwhelming use of nuclear weapons to be delivered by air and naval forces. Out-of-favour army leaders discerned the absurdity of the New Look as a military strategy but struggled to offer politically and military feasible alternatives.

Linn begins by contrasting the vision of an implausibly professional and technologically advanced army offered by then-Brigadier General William Westmoreland with the