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The World Atlas of Warfare: Military Innovations that Changed the Course of History

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Holmes, Richard. *The World Atlas of Warfare: Military Innovations that Changed the Course of History*. New York: Viking Studio Books, 1988. 304pp. \$40

Richard Holmes has set out to chart the history of the art of war and its impact upon our world. His central theme is stated to be the evolution of technology applied to war, but he does not address technological developments in detail and leaves many fundamental ones unmentioned. On the other hand, he gives significant attention to the important interplay between military events and social, economic, and political institutions; and he illustrates these events vividly with maps, graphics, and fascinating photographs. His atlas reaches back several thousand years in its coverage of warfare, but appropriately devotes more than half the book to events of the 20th century.

Holmes is a military historian of international standing. A senior lecturer at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, England, and a serving officer in the British Territorial Army, he addresses his book to readers with a general interest in the history of the art of war. Most of the text will be familiar to those well-grounded in military history, although the manner in which Holmes and his contributors present their material may be of interest to many already intimate with the subject. In particular, because of the worldwide geographical scope of its long historical view, many will find it a convenient source

of illustrations for speeches and articles.

The atlas concentrates on conflicts of primary interest to Great Britain. Military events in South America, except for the few direct interactions with Great Britain, are largely ignored, and the entire military history of the Orient (Indo-Persia, China, Japan) prior to this century is allotted less than 20 pages. The concluding chapters of the book address guerrilla warfare and terrorism, nuclear warfare capabilities of the superpowers (including a discussion of Star Wars), and the multitude of conflicts in the four decades since the close of World War II, bringing its coverage to the middle of this decade.

The book succeeds in identifying clearly the factors that caused the wars and examining those factors that shaped them. It also demonstrates how, in a number of cases, strategic expectations of military and political leadership failed to be realized in conflict. For example, "strategic" bombardment, whether employed by the Germans against England or by the Allies against Germany and Japan, failed to destroy the morale of the civilian population, as had been expected by proponents of such bombing. In candidly drawing these insights from the past, the treatment is balanced and focuses upon only the most significant aspects of warfare.

Eric Grove, currently associate director of the Foundation for International Security, wrote the chapter on the Pacific in World War

II. The key events are adroitly summarized, and technical issues affecting battle outcomes as well as the strategy involved are addressed. Because the book is directed toward a British audience, it includes some aspects of the Pacific war that are not always emphasized in American histories.

Throughout the book there are brief profiles of key military leaders, including Yamamoto and Spruance. These vignettes are a definite asset to this work.

In sum, *The World Atlas of Warfare* is well written and interesting, and its index and bibliography are well-organized and useful. I expect that I will refer to this book a number of times in the future.

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Saward, Dudley. *Victory Denied*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1987. 376pp. \$18.95

In 1697, Father Francesco Lama described an aerial ship of war, but concluded that: "There is one small difficulty that cannot be solved; God will never allow man to construct such a machine since it would create many disturbances in the civil and political governments of mankind." So much for medieval prophecy in matters of technology and warfare.

By the end of the First World War, aerial ships of war capable of dropping bombs well behind the battle lines had been built and used,

albeit with little strategic consequence. These machines did, however, inspire great prophecies of future military victory, most notably by Giulio Douhet in Europe and Billy Mitchell in America. Of the world's air forces, the Royal Air Force was most influenced by these optimistic prophecies of easy victory through aerial supremacy and the bombing of the enemy's military, industrial and economic base.

Dudley Saward's book (first published in 1985 in the United Kingdom) is an account of the rise of the RAF's air power from 1920 to the defeat of Germany in 1945. While he has taken up an ambitious and important task—to relate the role of the RAF and "strategic" air power to the outcome of the war in Europe—the book is oddly flawed in that it contains no mention of the influence of either Douhet or Mitchell nor of the prewar roles of "Boom" Trenchard or "Bomber" Harris. Saward's book fails to make any connection between the earlier prophecies of victory through "strategic" air power and the realities of the European theater. "Strategic" air power did play an important role in the Second World War, but not quite as expected by its proponents before the war.

Nevertheless, Saward's book is an important contribution to the history of that form of air power. He was graduated from RAF Cranwell in 1934 and served in the RAF throughout the war, working on the development of electronic aids for precision night bombing. This perspective