

1983

## Marxism and the Science of War

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### Recommended Citation

Mearsheimer, John J. (1983) "Marxism and the Science of War," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 36 : No. 2 , Article 12.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol36/iss2/12>

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traditional gladiatorial practices in the face of creeping managerialism must be counted as one of the greater successes of the Marine Corps in Vietnam . . . . The Army had gradually abandoned many of its traditional leadership modes and disciplinary habits in conformity with the new bureaucratic order . . . . When that happened, the effectiveness of Army units dropped considerably while indicators of unit disintegration rose alarmingly.”

Strangely, in *To Serve With Honor* Gabriel makes no direct or indirect reference to the US Marine Corps in any capacity. The omission, insofar as proving the need for a new code of ethics, may be fatal.

Why, in fact, did no general officer in Vietnam speak out against body counts, exaggerated sortie rates, and other false reporting of performance statistics aimed at pleasing superiors? Again, would a new code provide the corrective? Was it the failure of an ethical code that the German generals did not speak out against Hitler? Nobody would object to greater stress on moral integrity, courage, discipline, and other traditional battlefield virtues. The business or managerial ethos has little effect on performance below division level. Given its flaws, could we possibly be excusing serious leadership failure in the field by confusing principle with method?

James Brown and Michael Collins broaden the discussion of *Military Ethics and Professionalism* to cover three recent developments dramatically affecting the role of the professional soldier to which neither the military nor society has yet adjusted. In addition to Vietnam, the All-Volunteer Force and vastly increased numbers of women—mostly “liberated”—into a historically macho and male-dominated institution, have had consequences not even partially under-

stood. All contributing authors share the thought that something has been lost or changed and that the present situation is unsatisfactory.

Sam Sarkesian’s opening essay is useful but may put ethics on too high a level of abstraction for most readers. Thomas E. Kelly adds considerable survey material in a more practical approach toward bringing the widespread moral problem into sharper focus; Lewis Sorley finds overemphasis on statistical indicators to be less an ethical problem than a coverup for incompetence. Richard Gabriel, not wholly consistent with views expressed in his treatise on ethics above, pleads for a recapture of some aspects of the old professionalism, to rediscover successful military organizations of the past, rather than to develop new methods.

There is much of interest here, much material for wardroom and war college discussion. Is a new code of ethics really necessary; should it apply mainly to officers or to enlisted personnel as well? Perhaps a Civil War story may illustrate the latter point. When General “Uncle Billy” Sherman sternly rebuked a plundering soldier, he was told, “You can’t expect all the cardinal virtues for \$13 a month.”

Gabriel’s book, the first treatise on military ethics written by an American, and the Brown-Collins reader, both appear at a time of increasing exploration of the military officer and his moral obligation to society. Whatever the motivation, the subject merits our careful attention.

PAUL R. SCHRATZ  
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Semmel, Bernard, ed. *Marxism and the Science of War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. 302pp. \$45 paper \$17.95

This book is a collection of writings about war by key Marxist thinkers of the

past two centuries. There are selections from the works of such past giants as Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, as well as more contemporary thinkers like Marshal Sokolovskii, Régis Debray and Admiral Gorshkov. In addition, the editor has written a very useful introductory essay which places the various selections in a broader context.

In the West, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the question of how Marxists view war: although the policy community has examined closely the writings of contemporary Soviet thinkers, it has paid scant attention to the writings of Engels, Trotsky and Lenin; and although the academic community has spawned thousands of works on the ideas of those founding fathers, it has had little interest in their views on war. Ironically, many of these well-known Marxists were deeply immersed in nitty gritty military questions. Engels, for example, wrote pieces on the history of the rifle and the development of infantry over time. Engels was so well-versed in military affairs that he was known to his friends on the left as "the general." Lenin and Trotsky also wrote extensively on military affairs; the latter's pieces provide some of the most interesting reading in this volume.

It is clear from this book that disagreement is widespread among the different authors concerning the central questions they are addressing. For example, Marx, Lenin, Mao and Régis Debray have very different views about the tactics of revolution. In the case of Engels, his views on the nature of warfare appear to have changed greatly over time; one can distinguish clearly between an "early" and a "late" Engels. Upon finishing this book, one cannot help but wonder if it is possible to speak of a Marxist view of war.

There is one point, however, on which almost all the authors agree: the impor-

tance of Clausewitz. Marx's comment that "the chap has a common sense that borders on brilliance" is shared by the others. What impressed them most about Clausewitz is his understanding of the intimate relationship between war and politics. Marxists agree wholeheartedly with Clausewitz's assertion that war is a continuation of politics by other means. Of course, there is little agreement over purely political matters.

Another key issue addressed in this book is whether or not, when focusing on questions of military strategy and tactics, it is possible to point to a specifically Marxist theory of war. This has been a contentious issue among Soviet policymakers since 1917. In the aftermath of the Revolution, military theorists like Michael Frunze and Marshal Tukhachevsky argued that Marxism dictated that the Soviets should *always* pursue offensive operations and that they should never engage in positional warfare. Instead, they should focus on guerrilla-like operations where a high premium is placed on maneuver. Trotsky took the opposite view. He claimed that "military affairs are very empirical, very practical affairs" and "cannot have any eternal laws." Trotsky's views were accepted by Lenin.

Today, there is much debate about whether war would be a continuation of politics if nuclear weapons were employed. Although many Marxists believe that nuclear weapons require a major modification of how one thinks about war and politics, it is clear that a number of Soviet thinkers believe that their ideology provides a way of incorporating nuclear weapons into their traditional view of the relationship between war and politics. In the words of one Soviet thinker, "Marxist-Leninist methodology makes it possible to solve the question of the interrelation between politics and

armed force in the possible nuclear war in a consistently scientific way." Not surprisingly, it is never made clear how that feat is accomplished. One hopes that in the Soviet Union today there are a large number of Trotsky-like figures whose more empirically based views will prevail in a future crisis.

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Bradford, Ernle. *The Battle for the West: Thermopylae*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980. 255pp. \$12.95

From its title one might understandably infer that this is either just another "battle" book or a new popular account of the gallantry of Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans. Such, however, is not the case.

Ernle Bradford believes that European history cannot be understood correctly unless one recognizes the paramount influence of ancient history. Likewise, ancient history must be examined within the context of the cultural conflict between the Persian (Iranian) Empire and the Graeco-Roman world. Bradford defends the cultural superiority of the Greeks but he does not ignore the achievements of the Persians.

In *Battle for the West* Bradford narrates the key events of 481-479 BC and places in their proper perspective the motives and goals of the principal players in this historical drama and the resultant consequences for each. The critical land engagements at Thermopylae and Plataea are contrasted with those on the sea at Artemisium and Salamis. The Sicilian sideshow receives a chapter to itself to complete the canvas of Xerxes' two-pronged assault on the West. The military developments and political finagling are handled deftly by the

Xerxes, unlike his father Darius, was interested in far more than merely absorbing the Greek city-states into his imperial dominions. In tacit alliance with the Carthaginians, the campaign begun in 481 BC was the prelude to conquest of the Mediterranean basin. His objective was the same as would be that of Alexander the Great. And, given the resources available, the odds in Xerxes' favor were better than they ever were for Alexander.

The defense of the Pass of Thermopylae ("Hot Gates") is the pivotal event in the story. Bradford refutes those commentators who do not grasp the significance of the sacrifice of Leonidas and his men. Their deaths ignited a torch, not a funeral pyre. For a brief period thereafter the citizens of the various city-states developed a pride in themselves as Greeks that enabled them to unite as a single people against the Persian threat.

Bradford's sympathies throughout the book are decidedly with the Spartans, "those strange and remarkable people, whose virtues the West would do well to emulate in our time." He points out accurately that the Spartans have traditionally received bad press for the simple reason that they produced no literary figures of their own. The story of the Persian Wars remained the monopoly of Athenian poets, dramatists, and historians. Given the defeat of Athens by Sparta during the Peloponnesian War at the end of the fifth century BC, it behooves the student to weigh Athenian accounts very carefully indeed. Bradford suggests how "distasteful" it was for Athenian (and later) historians to have to acknowledge the fact that a Spartan admiral was in command at Salamis and a Spartan general was in command at Plataea—the decisive victories against the Persians.

Bradford is the product of an English