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## On War: The Best Military Histories

*Rick Atkinson, Carlo D'Este, Max Hastings, James McPeherson, Allan Millet, Tim O'Brien, Gerhard Weinberg*

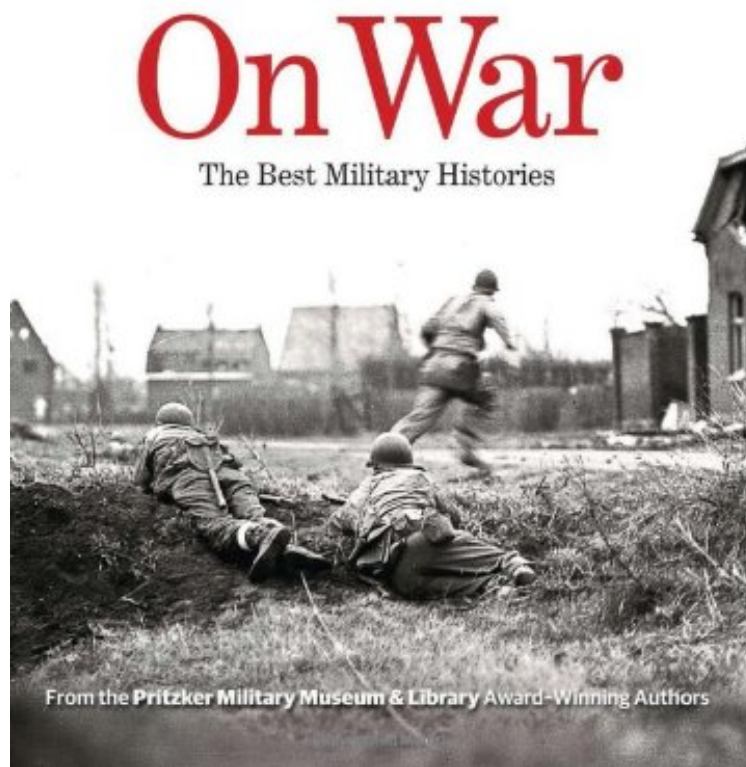
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**Rick Atkinson, Carlo D'Este, Max Hastings, James McPeherson, Allan Millet, Tim O'Brien, Gerhard Weinberg : On War: The Best Military Histories** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On War: The Best Military Histories:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Anyone who likes history this is a great book. I was raised during the war years ...By Robert C. VaillancourtAnyone who likes history this is a great book. I was raised during the war years and it brought back some of my memories watching news reels and reading news articles.7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. "On War" vs. "On War"By Ray LimbachI bought this book being intrigued by the premise of modern day historians writing about Clausewitzs concepts of On War. These are the theses of various authors, who

have received the Pritzker Literature Award, and were chosen by them for this anthology to represent a modern understanding of war in their various fields of study. The question is; did they succeed? Carl von Clausewitz stated: the political aim remains the first consideration. We see, therefore, that war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means. The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose. With this in mind I look at the first entry by James M. McPherson and *We are all Americans*, from *Battle Cry of Freedom*. His entry on the use of black soldiers in the South towards the end of the civil war was interesting. From a political point of view the south looked at this option at the beginning of the war and discarded the notion. At the end of the war, they once again failed politically to understand that their limited resources, especially in manpower, had isolated them from their goal. Allan Millett's *Assault from the Sea* from *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, was a fascinating look into *The Strategic Context of Amphibious Operations*. Looking at Japan, Great Britain and the United States and their approach to their objectives by the use of strategic amphibious landings, Dr. Millett gives us an in-depth look at advances and lessons learned from the countries mentioned. Clausewitz recognized that Theory will have fulfilled its main task when it is used to analyze the constituent elements of war, to distinguish precisely what at first sight seems fused, to explain in full the properties of the means employed and to show their probable effects, to define clearly the nature of the ends in view and to illuminate all phases of warfare in a thorough critical inquiry. Gerhard Weinberg's entry from *Visions of Victory* focuses on Adolf Hitler and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Keeping in mind what Clausewitz wrote above, he had also stated prior to this in 1804 that The political object of war can be of two kinds: either to totally destroy the adversary, to eliminate his existence as State, or else to prescribe peace terms to him. I correlate this statement to the two political heads of states that Dr. Weinberg writes about, respectively. Carlo D'Este contributed a section of his book *Patton, A Genius for War* about the battle of the Bulge. Clausewitz writes in his chapter *On Military Genius* about the qualities of a commander. He perceives high intelligence coupled with determination, to overcome adversity. I am reminded of the following: once conditions become difficult, as they must when much is at stake, things no longer run like a well-oiled machine. The machine itself begins to resist, and the commander needs tremendous will-power to overcome this resistance. As each mans strength gives out, as it no longer responds to his will, the inertia of the whole gradually comes to rest on the commanders will alone. The last three authors: Rick Atkinson (*Army at Dawn - WW2*); Sir Max Hastings (*Catastrophe 1914: Europe Goes to War - WW1*) and Tim O'Brien (*The Things They Carried - Vietnam*) show a wide range of what war entails, from the national, to the unit and finally the individual experiences. In combination, I am reminded of Clausewitz's concepts of the fog of war and especially the moral and friction. Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is very difficult. Countless minor incidents the kind you can never really foresee combine to lower the general level of performance, so that one always falls far short of the intended goal. In conclusion, there is much to correlate between this book *On War* and Clausewitz's book *On War*. Did the authors from the Pritzker Military Museum Library write in conjunction with Clausewitz's theories? Probably not. One can find though much of Clausewitz in each of the essays provided. We are inspired by the quality of our current professional soldiers, their commitment that has inspired a nation. Again, Clausewitz: No matter how clearly we see the citizen and the soldier in the same man, how strongly we conceive of war as the business of the entire nation the business of war will always be individual and distinct. Consequently, for as long as they practice this activity, soldiers will think of themselves as members of a kind of guild, in whose regulations, laws and customs the spirit is given pride of place. I salute Carl von Clausewitz and his teacher Gerhard Johann David von Scharnhorst, the founder of the *Militärische Gesellschaft* to produce, *The Enlightened Soldier*. I also salute the Pritzker Military Museum Library for their recognition of military historians and their contributions to form *The Enlightened Soldier*. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Russ Sutton Very good prospective

As long as men have gone into battle, men have studied war. Herodotus and Tacitus were classic historians, analyzing the background of events. Thucydides used interviews to tell the story of the Peloponnesian War and Plutarch wrote biographies of famous people like Caesar and Alexander. Sun Tzu, Homer, and Clausewitz remain required reading for those studying military affairs today. Collected here for the first time are key works by this century's leading military historians, all recipients of the Pritzker Military Museum Library Literature Award for Lifetime Achievement in Military Writing. The Pritzker Literature Award honors writers whose work adds to the public's understanding of military history and the role played by the military in civil society. In the tradition of historians dating back to ancient times, these authors and scholars demonstrate the numerous ways to write about military history. The surreal fiction of Tim O'Brien's *Vietnam* is just pages from an in-depth look at General George S. Patton by today's leading biographer, Carlo D'Este. Max Hastings and Rick Atkinson use their backgrounds to add a journalistic touch to modern studies of World War I and World War II, respectively. Gerhard Weinberg examines global leaders during World War II as Allan Millett discusses the developing technology that allowed them to further their causes. And James McPherson, the preeminent living Civil War scholar examines crisis in America with accessible and articulate literary skill. This anthology provides just a sample of the remarkable works by these renowned authors, who will be read by military

history enthusiasts and the general public for generations to come.

"Three of the seven essays collected here deal brilliantly with World War II; the others, equally brilliant, are well worth reading." (World War II Magazine) "...well worth its price... handsomely designed, nicely illustrated... It surely whets one's appetite to delve deeply into the originals" (Journal of America's Military Past) "...well written, informative, and thought provoking, providing insights not only on their primary subjects but also, more broadly, on the nature of war, military service, and soldiers. Useful even for the seasoned historian, On War would also make a fine introduction to military history for any thinking person." (NYMAS )