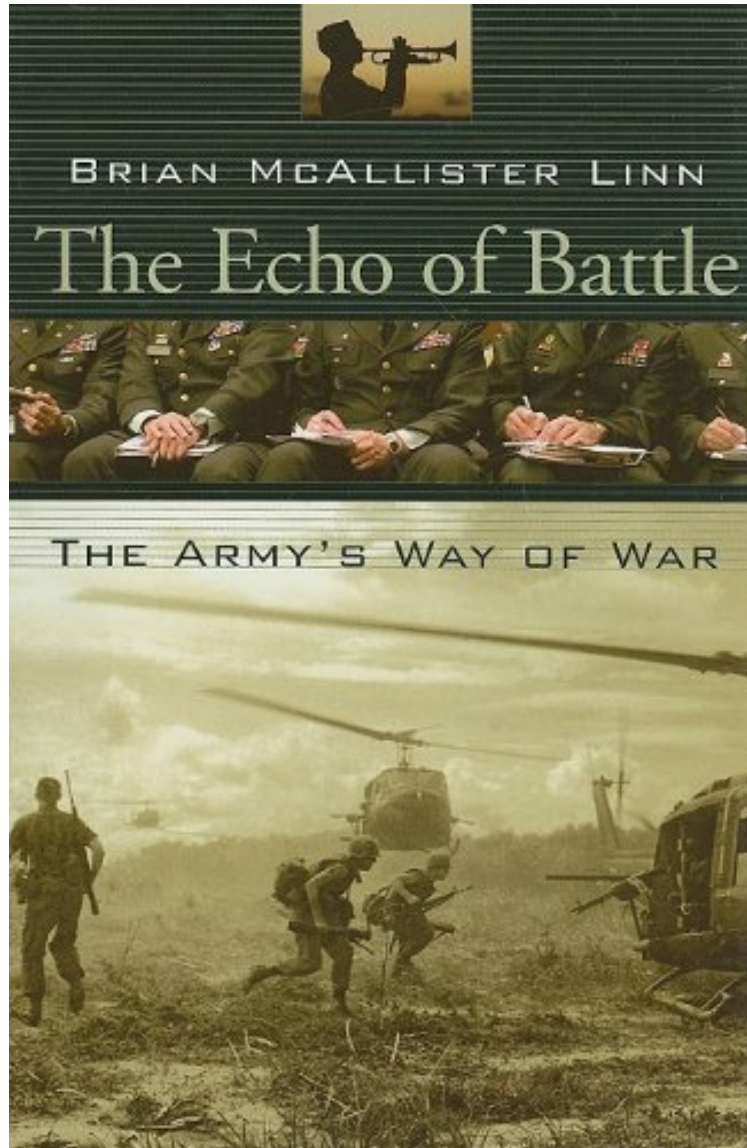


[Library ebook] The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War

The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War

Brian McAllister Linn

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Brian McAllister Linn : The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A Fresh Look at the Army as an Institution By D-Bo It is always refreshing when an author tackling a topic takes a fresh tack or introduces a new perspective. Brian Linn has done just that, in his book The Echo of Battle. This history of the U.S. Army is not a battle history, reminding the reader of the Army's actions from Valley Forge to the march to Baghdad, with stops at Gettysburg, Meuse-Argonne, Bastogne and

the Ia Drang. Instead, he views the Army as an institution, and tries to identify what elements have remained constant over its 200+ year history, and as it has evolved, along with the nation it defends. To that end, Linn suggests that there are three broad strands of thinking within the Army---Guardians, Managers, and Heroes. Each, he notes has its strengths, but also its weaknesses, and more importantly, its blind spots. These blind spots, often tied to bureaucratic origins and perspectives, are remarkably constant and consistent over the course of the Army's history. Reality is bent to fit the procrustean bed of each strand's perspective, rather than compelling each to reassess its shibboleths and received truths. As a result, the Army repeatedly goes through similar fits and starts of reform, and often makes similar mistakes. The current debate about whether the Army should focus on counter-insurgency or high-intensity combat is not a new one, but instead a replaying of a longstanding argument among the strands. Linn's volume provides much food for thought, and complements more traditional battle histories of the Army. It is a valuable addition for anyone interested in studying the military as an institution.

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful. A non-battle military history

By R. W. Levesque

Brian McAllister Linn has written an excellent book -- not on America's wars, but on how military theorists have interpreted the lessons of their wars, and then developed ideas on how the "next war" would be fought and what needed to be done to prepare. At root Linn argues that while many historians focus on the relatively few years of actual conflict in order to determine an American "way of war," he argues, "that the Army's way of war has been shaped as much or more by its peacetime intellectual debate as by its wartime service....In short, the army's peacetime thinkers, as much as its wartime commanders, have defined the service's martial identity, identified as its mission, determined professional standards, and created its distinct war of war." Linn concludes that while the officer corps shares a unifying ethic and ideology, it has never shared a unifying philosophy of war. In fact the author argues that the Army's thinkers generally fall into three groups with a differing approach to war. First are the Guardians, who said the war was an art and science, but that the art succeeded primarily through the application of science. The second group is the Heroes (read George S. Patton); they believe success in war depends on the human element and they reduced war to the idea of it being armed violence directed towards the achievement of an end. The last group is called the managers (read George C. Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower); this group believes superior administration, resources, and detailed planning secure victory. Linn's historical approach is to analyze the writings of a variety of military authors and theorists IN BETWEEN WARS and then explore how the various groups interpreted previous wars and developed recommendations on what needed to be done to prepare for their version of what war would be. In other words this history is more a review of military thinking vice a review of war. In this sense the book makes for interesting reading simply because it is not a traditional approach to analyzing how the US Army fights. At the same time I believe Linn does make pretty good argument that if you want to understand how the Army fights, you need to know how it prepared. The only issue I have is that I believe his intellectual framework for grouping military thinkers is a bit simplistic. Although intellectually you may be able to group them, in practice no single approach is a war winner; it is the mix, depending on a given situation, that leads to success or failure. Although one may prefer a Patton to an Eisenhower, it's doubtful WWII could have been won without the successful combination of the two (and many others). The bottom line is that I would recommend this book to anyone studying how the US Army fights, in addition to more traditional war and battle histories, in order to have better understanding of an American way of war.

15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Thinking About the Army Thinking

By Retired Reader

The central theme of this book is that the professional officer corps of the U.S. Army has been guided by three basic concepts that affect their thinking even today. The author identifies these concepts as "Guardian", "Heroic", and "Manager" which he then explains through examples and exposition. He traces them from the creation of a professional U.S. Army after the War of 1812 to the present. The Guardian concept was the basis for the Army's strategy for the defense of the continental U.S. that was later expanded to include U.S. overseas possessions. As originally conceived (circa 1820-1821), this strategy was to be executed by the construction of harbor defense fortifications along the Eastern seaboard. It later included the Western seaboard and finally U.S. overseas possessions. According to Linn this harbor centric strategy continued up to WWII, but was hampered by the failure of Army planners to allow for the enormous changes especially in naval technology and later the development of military aircraft. Linn maintains that although the emphasis on harbor defense is long past, the concept that U.S. Army strategy should focus the defense of the continental U.S. is still the guiding influence of Army planning, which should surprise no one. Coexisting with the Guardian Strategy were two doctrines which also guided Army thinking. What Linn calls the "Heroic" concept maintains that leadership, esprit, and raw courage are the most important factors in winning battles is the first such doctrine. The second is what he calls the "Manager" which classifies success in war and battle as based on scientific management principals following scientifically derived formulas. Although Linn attempts to treat the two as mutually exclusive, in practice they clearly are not. His "Heroic" doctrine clearly is applicable to tactical and operational level military operations while his "Manager" doctrine makes sense at the strategic level. Neither is incompatible with the "Guardian" strategy. Again Linn maintains that the Heroic and Manager concepts continue to guide the thinking of the professional officer corps today. This is a small book, but it tackles an interesting subject and provides a unique look at the factors influencing past and current U.S. Army thinking. Yet it contains some odd lapses, for example the first post-graduate Army school was the (Coast) Artillery School established at Fort

Monroe, Va., in 1824 not 1868 as Linn appears to believe.

From Lexington and Gettysburg to Normandy and Iraq, the wars of the United States have defined the nation. But after the guns fall silent, the army searches the lessons of past conflicts in order to prepare for the next clash of arms. In the echo of battle, the army develops the strategies, weapons, doctrine, and commanders that it hopes will guarantee a future victory. In the face of radically new ways of waging war, Brian Linn surveys the past assumptions--and errors--that underlie the army's many visions of warfare up to the present day. He explores the army's forgotten heritage of deterrence, its long experience with counter-guerrilla operations, and its successive efforts to transform itself. Distinguishing three martial traditions--each with its own concept of warfare, its own strategic views, and its own excuses for failure--he locates the visionaries who prepared the army for its battlefield triumphs and the reactionaries whose mistakes contributed to its defeats. Discussing commanders as diverse as Dwight D. Eisenhower, George S. Patton, and Colin Powell, and technologies from coastal artillery to the Abrams tank, he shows how leadership and weaponry have continually altered the army's approach to conflict. And he demonstrates the army's habit of preparing for wars that seldom occur, while ignoring those it must actually fight. Based on exhaustive research and interviews, *The Echo of Battle* provides an unprecedented reinterpretation of how the U.S. Army has waged war in the past and how it is meeting the new challenges of tomorrow.

The Echo of Battle is a masterpiece. With its appearance, Brian Linn establishes himself as the preeminent military historian of his generation. (Andrew J. Bacevich, author of *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*) Brian Linn's *The Echo of Battle* is one of the most significant books ever written on the American military experience. It places him on the top rung of military historians. (Allan R. Millett, University of New Orleans) Brian Linn's account of the Army's long internal debate over its mission and fighting concepts is timely and provocative. His interpretation renders a tough judgment of the service's past efforts to adapt to change. *The Echo of Battle* should make today's discussions of how the armed forces will visualize and prepare for future conflict better informed and more self-aware. (L. D. Holder, LTG, US Army (retired)) Brilliant, original, and very entertaining. *The Echo of Battle* is an extraordinary lens that brings today's U.S. Army into sharp focus by looking into our past. Brian Linn has written a masterful book. (Rick Atkinson, author of *An Army at Dawn*) An unsettling but stimulating review of American military planning. (Kirkus s 2007-09-01) This is a well-researched book, full of insight and good sense. (Lawrence D. Freedman *Foreign Affairs* 2008-05-01) I expect this book to stir considerable controversy and healthy debate. Younger officers may well come to view it as a Bible of sorts. I expect it to sell very well at the Army's educational institutions where I have been recommending it since reading the first chapter. It has the potential to transform professional thinking in the most positive way. This book demonstrates Linn's mastery of the language of the profession in readable English, something all too rarely seen. (Douglas V. Johnson II *Journal of Military History* 2008-04-01) [A] remarkable new history of how the army anticipated future wars and analyzed past ones... Linn's assessment of army thought in the post-Cold War era is especially enlightening. This is an exceedingly well-crafted book that belongs on all shelves supporting the history of the U.S. military tradition. (E. A. Goedeken *Choice* 2008-09-01) Few books could be more timely than Brian Linn's *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War*. Linn has written a serious and comprehensive intellectual history of the U.S. Army. He traces Army thought from the American Revolution to the war on terrorism. It is hard to imagine a scholar more suited to take on the task... Linn's overview of the Army's efforts to deal with the new world disorder is unparalleled. (James Jay Carafano *Army* 2008-02-01) *The Echo of Battle* is a masterpiece. With its appearance, Brian Linn establishes himself as the preeminent military historian of his generation. (Andrew J. Bacevich, author of *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*) About the Author Brian McAllister Linn is Professor of History at Texas AM University.