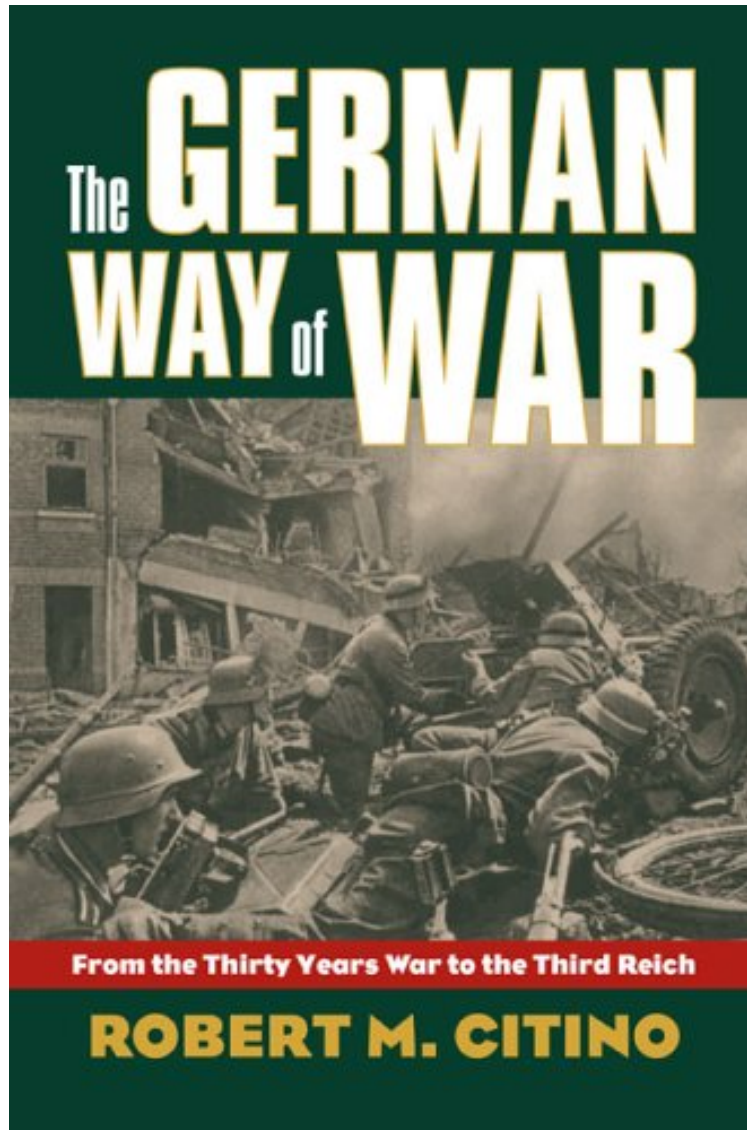


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The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich (Modern War Studies)

Robert Michael Citino
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Robert Michael Citino : The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich (Modern War Studies) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich (Modern War Studies):

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Work -- Explains Many Otherwise Unresolved

Questions Concerning German Strategy By David M. Dougherty This is another excellent book by author Citino who consistently maintains a very high level of scholarship and analysis in all his works. Although the sub-title is "From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich", the Thirty Years War was from 1618 to 1648 and this book really starts with 1675 and the birth of the Prussian Army. Some may criticize Citino's thesis because it does not look at other German states like Hannover and Bavaria, but the Prussian dominance from 1870 onwards renders other studies relatively meaningless to understand why the Germans did what they did in World Wars One and Two (militarily.) The central theme is that the German Army was organized and constructed for a very rapid mobilization of well-trained troops able to drive a single campaign through to the defeat of the enemy. However, the infrastructure of the German economy was left relatively intact, so long wars caused unacceptable stresses and defeat. The three Prussian wars in the 19th century proved the validity of the quick war, and the strategy for defeating the Entente in World War I followed the same line. Unfortunately for the Germans, the campaign of 1914 against the French and British did not achieve victory, and in some respects, its failure doomed German aspirations. In World War II, Hitler, the OKH and OKW all constructed plans for rapid campaigns, and initially in Poland, Holland, Belgium and France they were successful. Barbarossa did not achieve its ends in Russia, however, and the turning point was reached according to Halder and other high-ranking officers following the setbacks before Moscow. A single chance remained -- that of defeating the remaining Soviet armies in the summer offensive of 1942, but by July (well before Stalingrad) the handwriting was on the wall. The German logistical concepts were also oriented towards quick campaigns, and both in the winter of 1914/15 and 1941/2 the German armies experienced severe supply problems. What had gone wrong was simply that a long campaign was not planned for, and commanders were forced to improvise to an extreme degree. Some writers have even characterized the German Army of 1940/41 as a *Schaufensterarmee* (show window army), all for show instead of being a well-supplied, long term military machine. Following France's defeat in 1940, Hitler even reduced military equipment production -- an act in hindsight that appears to be the ultimate in folly. A second major point in Citino's work is the development of the officer corps and its *Auftragstaktik* (mission-oriented tactics) and the issuing of orders specifying the mission and leaving execution up to the field commanders. Bolstering this was the Army's excellent training of officers, both in staff and line functions, and the pushing of authority and responsibility for accomplishing the mission all the way down to the squad leader and assistant squad leader level. Although American films like to present German officers and men as blindly following orders, in actual reality German officers and NCOs enjoyed more freedom in decision-making than American officers. Not surprisingly, after World War II the American Army adopted German training and testing methods on a wholesale basis. With respect to discipline and ruthlessness, Citino noted that the German Army carried out 22,000 death sentences in World War II as compared to only 48 in World War I. These are undebated statistics, but the vast majority of death sentences were carried out on the Eastern Front while the Wehrmacht was in retreat, and commanders such as Schoerner and Model consistently resorted to draconian methods to maintain effective resistance. It is quite possible that such methods were necessary, since the two commanders named were better able than others to halt the Soviet advances late in the war. At any rate, this is a thought-provoking and highly interesting book. It is a significant addition to the military historian's library, and I recommend it without qualification. It is difficult for me to understand some reviewers' low ratings. Even if one resists the author's thesis and conclusions, this book is so well done that it deserves a high rating. The reader would be well advised to read this book in conjunction with Citino's other fine work on German Army doctrine and training, "The Path To Blitzkrieg." 14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. From the new breed of military historians By S. M. H. Klauber Professor Citino, along with historians like Robert DiNardo (more diplomatic history) and Geoff Megargee are amongst a new breed of military diplomatic historians. They seem to take off with Dennis Showalter as their touchstone (no problem there!), and merge with folks like David Glantz to give us a new view of German military history, especially, of course, WWII. If you want to be state of the art in your knowledge, you have to read these guys. You will not be sorry. They are utilizing the inspiration of Showalter- definitive writings intertwining diplomatic military histories, to write some great stuff. This book is amongst that "great stuff". I have one qualm with the book. It is really the Prussian-German way of war, not going into, e.g. traditions of Bavaria, Saxony, etc. That would have been interesting, very interesting in fact, but might have made the book prohibitive in length and discourse. Still, I'd like to know what influence, if any, the Bavarian military tradition had on the army established in 1871 by the German Empire, and afterwards. This is a small qualification for a first-class book. The book brilliantly sets out its thesis of a steady and somewhat predictable (attack the enemy wherever they are) military tradition in the German Army from the Great Elector through 1945. Relevant examples are given to support the thesis, and Professor Citino convinced me of his point of view. Fascinating sections on Frederick the Great, (the first) Von Moltke, Von Schlieffen, and Hans Von Seeckt. Don't you think a new bio of Von Seeckt is needed? I also like his analysis of the willingness of the German General Staff to accede to the wishes of Hitler, then try and expunge its record post 1945. It never ceases to amaze me that it is only in the past 5-10 or so years that we have started to see Hitler as more than a parody. Finally we can admit that he was often quite on the ball skilled, although ultimately deranged wrong-headed. This, of course, leaves aside his penchant for Genocide. Also, read the footnotes- especially about Terence Zubler's book (Pg. 352, note 19), "the most important book on WWI in decades". To bad the damn book is so

expensive!! Another "must" for your WWII library. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Nice Contribution to the Literature By Stephen M. St Onge Michael Citino has a simple thesis: from the day of its founding in the 1640s, the Brandenburger/Prussian/German army has had a specific philosophy of combat: give your subordinates near autonomy, be aggressive, keep the war 'short and lively', and go for flank and rear attacks. This philosophy has its upside (tiny Brandenburg-Prussia became a major power). It has its downside (the Brandenburger/Prussian/German armies had little idea of what to do if the war became prolonged). The book is thoroughly enjoyable, and it illuminates much that was mysterious about Brandenburger/Prussian/German military history. The survey of the literature on the German Army in the notes is quite valuable for those looking for more information, and the emphasis on what the said Army DID, rather than what it SAID is especially valuable. The flaws? The maps are abysmal (small, no scale unless copied from somewhere else, not many of them, and a constant mention of places not found on the maps). And you have to wonder about anyone who admires the work of such self-contradictory authors as Paddy Griffiths and David Glantz. Also, the book is rather repetitious at times. Overall, I found it quite valuable, and I'll be both reading more of Citino's works and looking into sources he recommends in his notes. Recommended.

For Frederick the Great, the prescription for warfare was simple: kurz und vives ("short and lively") - wars that relied upon swift, powerful, and decisive military operations. Robert Citino takes us on a dramatic march through Prussian and German military history to show how that primal theme played out time and time again. Citino focuses on operational warfare to demonstrate continuity in German military campaigns from the time of Elector Frederick Wilhelm and his great "sleigh-drive" against the Swedes to the age of Adolf Hitler and the blitzkrieg to the gates of Moscow. Along the way, he underscores the role played by the Prussian army in elevating a small, vulnerable state to the ranks of the European powers, describes how nineteenth-century victories over Austria and France made the German army the most respected in Europe, and reviews the lessons learned from the trenches of World War I. Through this long view, Citino reveals an essential recurrent pattern - rapid troop movements and surprise attacks, maneuvers to outflank the enemy, and a determination to annihilate the opposition - that made it possible for the Germans to fight armies often larger than their own. He highlights the aggressiveness of Prussian and German commanders - trained simply to find the enemy and keep attacking - and destroys the myth of Auftragstaktik ("flexible command"), replacing it with the independence of subordinate commanders. He also brings new interpretations to well-known operations, such as Moltke's 1866 campaign and the opening campaign in 1914, while introducing readers to less familiar but important battles like Langensalza and the Annaberg. The German way of war, as Citino shows, was fostered by the development of a widely accepted and deeply embedded military culture that supported and rewarded aggression. His book offers a fresh look at one of the most remarkable, respected, and reviled militaries of the past half millennium and marks another sterling contribution to the history of operational warfare.

"Takes the reader on a sweeping march through 300 years of Prussian/German military history and operational thought as Citino explains the 'why' of the German style of waging operational war. He does an exceptional job explaining the operational conduct of the German army during both world wars and how its style of fighting eventually contributed to the defeat of the Third Reich." #8212 Armor "Citino is one of the most insightful historians of operational warfare working today, and his gifts for narrative and puckish myth-busting do not fail him here. This is a fascinating and important book that challenges many conventional ideas and suggests others that are worthy of debate and future study." --Journal of Military History "Citino combines colossal scholarship with massively entertaining material. It is all here: the great captains from Frederick the Great to Erich von Manstein, the great theorists from Clausewitz and Moltke to Schlieffen and Guderian, the pivotal battles that shaped European history, and a humanist's splendid recreation at every turn of the ambiance of the German army and Central Europe." --Geoffrey Wawro, author of *The Franco-Prussian War* "Very few historians have mastered this literature as well as Citino or possess his ability to describe battles and campaigns and lay out complex operations in such a lucid manner." --James S. Corum, author of *The Roots of Blitzkrieg* "The most up-to-date work on its subject, written with style and verve." --Arden Bucholz, author of *Moltke and the German Wars, 1864-1871* From the Back Cover "Citino combines colossal scholarship with massively entertaining material. It is all here: the great captains from Frederick the Great to Erich von Manstein, the great theorists from Clausewitz and Moltke to Schlieffen and Guderian, the pivotal battles that shaped European history, and a humanist's splendid recreation at every turn of the ambiance of the German army and Central Europe." --Geoffrey Wawro, author of *The Franco-Prussian War* "Very few historians have mastered this literature as well as Citino or possess his ability to describe battles and campaigns and lay out complex operations in such a lucid manner." --James S. Corum, author of *The Roots of Blitzkrieg* "The most up-to-date work on its subject, written with style and verve." --Arden Bucholz, author of *Moltke and the German Wars, 1864-1871* About the Author Robert M. Citino is professor of history at Eastern Michigan University.