

historical and social science literature, it is surprising not to see as detailed a historiographical analysis of competing interpretations of Jefferson's "Americanism" and a more robust review of the literature. While Cogliano develops the means side of his equation brilliantly, the ends of Jefferson's policy—which he characterizes as a "clear, coherent, ideological vision" (7)—are often anything but as the book moves through time.

Nevertheless, Cogliano has written a definitive diplomatic history which by virtue of its scope and range offers an invaluable service to Jefferson scholarship on several levels and which, by avoiding overly broad inferences about modern American foreign policy, keeps the focus where it belongs—on the highly contingent, often violent, and incessantly competitive universe of Atlantic statecraft in the early American period, and Jefferson's unceasing attempts to manage it to his advantage.

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Edward M. Coffman: *The Embattled Past: Reflections on Military History*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014. Pp. 211.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670514001004

Edward "Mac" Coffman has exerted tremendous influence over the direction of military history in the United States over the last forty years. It is wholly fitting that he should publish a series of reflections on the nature of his craft, partly autobiographical but mainly contemplative. He comments rightly that most historians dodge questions about how they actually "do history" (139). All but one of these chapters—an account of an interview with General Douglas MacArthur—have been published during three decades before 2006. Coffman's influence has been exerted not just by his scholarly example but through his influence as a teacher. His former students comprise a roll call of scholars currently dominating the profession: Richard H. Kohn, Jerry Cooper, Tim Nenninger, and Joseph T. Glatthaar among many others, including a cohort he never taught formally.

A son of Kentucky, Coffman was educated at the University of Kentucky where he majored in journalism, "but hoped that I might become an army officer." He had not hankered after the scholar's life, though as a schoolboy he had talked with Civil War and other veterans, sparking an interest thereafter in interviewing those who had lived through major historical events. These meetings "made me realize that history really happened" (4). Coffman joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), was commissioned into the infantry, and served a little less than two years as an Army officer, mostly in Korea and Japan. "My experience in the army," Coffman concludes, "has been invaluable in my teaching and writing about the military" (6).

After demobilization, Coffman decided after all that the academic life was for him and entered the University of Kentucky's graduate school. His mentor, Thomas D. Clark, the subject here of a handsome appraisal, was not a military historian but sympathetic to the subject. Coffman undertook a PhD on General Peyton C. March in which he utilized his enthusiasm for interviews. He got a temporary post at Memphis State University before gaining a fellowship to complete the PhD. He then encountered the second great influence on his career. He served as a research assistant to Forrest C. Pogue as he labored on his multivolume biography of George C. Marshall. Pogue, a great proponent of oral history and the subject of a warm appreciative essay, supported him for the post he eventually gained at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

In his rise to discreet dominance in his profession, Coffman was aided by his congenial, convivial, and hospitable character; he was approachable, not aloof, charming and helpful, self-confident but not dedicated to his own advancement. Coffman had a talent for making and keeping friends. Also, his military service helped open doors and people for the most part were happy to grant him interviews. He enjoyed good luck, too. Finally, he realized that no matter how good the research, a book is judged by the quality of its writing. Perhaps his journalism classes helped him fashion the clear, direct, and evocative prose on good display throughout *The Embattled Past*.

The range of Coffman's scholarship is also well exhibited in this book. He initially concentrated on the First World War—the most neglected of all American wars. As we approach the centenary of the US entry in 1917, Coffman's chapter "Why We Are Not Interested in World War I and Should Be" acquires a new interest. Coffman surveys the reasons why 1917–18 became "erased" from the American consciousness (104). Postwar disillusionment which stressed that the US joined the war under a false prospectus, spurred on by the "merchants of death," left a lasting legacy. Academic historians concentrated on the errors committed by Woodrow Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference and revealed no curiosity about the course of the war that produced these political conditions. Coffman devoted his energies to this task, first in his biography of March, *The Hilt of the Sword* (1966), and in his major study *The War to End All Wars* (1968). Coffman interviewed forty-five participants who had known March and continued with this technique. As for the war's influence on civil-military relations, Coffman's survey of US strategic policy included here stresses that the doctrine of civil supremacy had a distorting effect. It had been elevated by Wilson to the level of holy writ and the separation of the powers had become unhealthy. Soldiers were not expected to proffer opinions until they were engaged in a war, during which the civil power would depart from the scene while the soldiers sought victory. Consequently, General John J. Pershing received "extraordinary authority" (87) to do as he saw fit. The nominal chief of staff, Tasker H. Bliss, happily contented himself with the role of Pershing's chief of staff rather than his superior. This curious state of affairs, not repeated in 1941–45, contributed to the

“rather arrogant stance” of the American Expeditionary Force detected by Coffman (91) not only in relation to its bosses in Washington but toward its allies on the Western Front.

Coffman used his researches in this period as a basis for his broader interpretation of the US military tradition and his two social histories, *The Old Army* (1986) and *The Regulars* (2004), which may well form his most lasting achievement. Coffman has always demonstrated an ability to range across the entirety of American military history, and two of the most absorbing essays in this volume are “The American Army in Peacetime” and “The Duality of the American Military Tradition: A Commentary.” The interest of the first is self-evident. “It should,” Coffman writes, “be of value to know how the army has coped with the problems of decreased budgets and strength in the past.” But Coffman, like all good historians, is always reluctant to prognosticate on the basis of such comparisons. He admits that “the continuous, ever-changing inter-play of . . . factors is complex,” making “predictions tenuous” (13). In the second piece he surveys the often tetchy relationship between the regular army and the volunteers. Coffman notes that the National Guard has revived in recent decades as the regulars have been reduced.

In his reflections on his own techniques, Coffman gives pride of place to oral history. He believes that oral history “provides a human touch and richness that one cannot get from paper documents”; in his study of the latter he warns that “if a policy is at stake or a reputation is in danger, be suspicious” (134, 146). One could say the same about interviews—an ideal forum in which to rehearse a retrospective justification for both. But in the main, this is a wise, stimulating, and most interesting book. It reflects the outlook, technique, and interests of its distinguished author—a man who has adorned his profession with wit, humanity, and modesty. It should be of absorbing interest to all interested in this subject; not least to all scholars old and young. As Coffman sums up with characteristic wit: “when you sit down and face the blank sheet of paper”—or screen—“you welcome any help you can get” (152).

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James H. Lebovic: *Flawed Logics: Strategic Nuclear Arms Control from Truman to Obama*. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. Pp. 289.)

Rebecca Slayton: *Arguments That Count: Physics, Computing, and Missile Defense, 1949–2012*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013. Pp. 325.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670514001016

Today we look back and contemplate the awful shakiness of the world during the Cold War, when we were constantly rocking on the edge of a nuclear war.