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Michael A. Bonura, *Under the Shadow of Napoleon: French Influence on the American Way of Warfare from the War of 1812 to the Outbreak of WWII*. New York: New York Univ. Press, 2012. Pp. xi, 306. ISBN 978-0-8147-0942-9.

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*Under the Shadow of Napoleon* is an excellent book, but its main argument is wrong. I will explain that paradox in this review, beginning with the book's shortcomings. Michael Bonura (PhD Florida State), an active duty US Army officer who has taught at West Point, maintains in chapter 1, "A French Way of Warfare," that, in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era, the French created a combat model closely emulated by the US Army. The French archetype became so entrenched as to represent, Bonura argues, a Kuhnian paradigm<sup>1</sup> that persisted until the German blitzkrieg of 1940. But talk of paradigms and paradigm shifts presupposes an entire way of thinking about a subject, including the sorts of questions to be researched and the very language to be used in describing that subject. Kuhn's ideas apply best to scientific knowledge, where dramatic changes are both more possible and more perceptible. When it comes to such human activities as war, the notion of a paradigm shift is seldom germane, especially at the macro level. There are too many continuities in human nature and interactions to allow for complete breaks from the past—as debates over military revolutions have long demonstrated.

Historians, nonetheless, delight in debunking the supposedly predominant approaches that one group or another takes to fighting. Bonura explicitly relates his paradigm to a way of warfare and struggles mightily to make it conform to the Kuhnian model.

Every nation conforms to certain ideas concerning the relationship between citizen, state, and war and acceptable types of soldiers, armies, practices, and traditions. Such conceptualization, which I refer to as a way of warfare, shapes the way a nation thinks about the acceptable uses of its military. This is different from a way of war that describes a nation's strategic and military traditions. For example, it could be argued that the British way of war during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries utilized their island position and a strong navy to defend the country and achieve their political objectives. However, this is not a way of warfare, because it does not encompass the way the British thought about war, mobilized for war, fielded an army, or engaged in battle. This definition of a way of warfare privileges armies and land combat because armies encompass every facet of national life, whereas the limited numbers and technical skills required by a navy or air force prevent the same kind of involvement by the nation. The strategies, organization, execution, tactical regulations, training methods, and operations of armies on the battlefield do not create a nation's way of warfare. These elements reflect the ideas represented by a nation's way of warfare.

These ideas influence the formation of an army's intellectual framework of the battlefield. This framework is the mechanism by which an army employs its nation's way of warfare on a battlefield against its enemies. This framework, adopted in large part by the leadership of the army, carries with it various assumptions about the nature of war and the requirements for victory, all consistent with the national way of warfare. In a certain sense, the army's intellectual framework of the battlefield is the manifestation of that way of warfare. (3)

Frankly, I have no idea what this means or how it relates to a paradigm; little in the rest of the text clears up the matter.

This theoretical confusion aside, in chapters 2, "Bringing French Warfare to America, 1814-1848," and 3, "American Adaptation of French Warfare, 1848-1865," Bonura argues that, after the War of 1812, the US Army adopted the French Revolutionary way of warfare, conception of the battlefield, and/or combat methods. He identifies a French "dedication to offensive operations that resulted in an assault, the creation of an infantry army composed of nonspecialized infantry units, a linear but noncontiguous understanding of the

1. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: U Chicago Pr, 1962).

battlefield, a desire to combine the effects of all auxiliary arms into the main infantry battle, and the adoption of nondogmatic tactics executed through the initiative of the officer corps” (36–37). He claims that Winfield Scott introduced this framework to the US Army, that it became well established in Army schooling and doctrine, that it was practiced consistently in American battles, and that it changed only in 1940 when George C. Marshall recognized that German warfare did not fit the paradigm.

These claims are at best questionable, at worst simply incorrect. To the degree that Americans adopted such a framework, many of its elements derived from native, not French, sources. They relied on nonspecialized infantry units, because a small standing army expanded with citizen soldiers mobilized for war did not have time to train men in specialized tasks. As Wayne Wei-siang Hsieh has shown, noncontiguous battlefield tactics reflected the broken nature of North American terrain as much as French influence.<sup>2</sup> As for training conscript armies, Americans struggled until World War II to combine auxiliary arms into the main battle. The Army’s tactical doctrines were relatively simple and undogmatic by necessity.<sup>3</sup> All of the Army’s innovations in World War II, save perhaps tank destroyers, had been in the works long before the fall of France, most of them prompted by study of American experiences in the First World War.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the US Army’s intellectual framework of the battlefield whenever possible incorporated naval forces for provisioning, transport, and fire support in ways almost entirely foreign to French Revolutionary and Napoleonic warfare.<sup>5</sup>

While French methods of combat clearly influenced American land warfare, so did British, German, Russian, and Japanese military thinking, not to mention the historical conditions of war-making in North America. In short, the American intellectual framework of the battlefield was always its own thing, never under the sway of any one foreign paradigm. Paradoxically, that conclusion makes *Under the Shadow of Napoleon* a valuable study. For Bonura has written a remarkable, sweeping tale of how professional army officers translated a range of intellectual and cultural influences into coherent thought about and preparation for fighting on the battlefield. This is one of the most compelling works to date on the early and ongoing development of a professional US Army.

Given his emphasis on battle, Bonura naturally concentrates on tactics, with comparatively little attention to the strategic concerns of mobilization and war planning or the operational art of campaigning. He skillfully deploys a wide range of sources to describe the education of professional officers and how their study of doctrine and tactical problems was applied during actual battlefield situations. Chapter 2 draws on personal accounts by officers and other observers, official records, general and infantry regulations, and the curriculum at West Point to show how officers originated the tactics they put into practice on the battlefields of the Mexican War. The portions of chapter 3 on the Civil War discuss doctrinal revisions and curricular changes at West Point, the knowledge gleaned by military observers in the Crimea War, and the subtle but telling differences in popular military literature in both the North and the South.

Chapters 4, “German Professionalism and American Warfare, 1865–1899,” and 5, “American Warfare in the Progressive Era, 1899–1918,” treat the growth of German influence from the aftermath of the Civil War through the First World War. Once again, Bonura reviews tactical doctrine and the West Point curriculum, noting that, as the US Army incorporated German ideas, systems, and techniques, the components of the intellectual framework grew in number and complexity. Officers and their teachers looked overseas for military ideas and traveled abroad to witness foreign wars. And, too, army professionals added branch schools and the staff school at Leavenworth to the educational system. The War Department was reorganized on

2. *West Pointers and the Civil War: The Old Army in War and Peace* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Pr, 2009).

3. On the non-Napoleonic use of artillery in the Civil War, see Robert M. Epstein, “The Creation and Evolution of the Army Corps in the American Civil War,” *Journal of Military History* 55 (1991) 21–46.

4. See, e.g., Michael R. Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945* (Norman: U Oklahoma Pr, 2011), and Peter J. Schifferle, *America’s School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence: U Pr of Kansas, 2010), with reviews by, respectively, Ingo Trauschweizer, *MiWSR* 2011-049 – <http://www.miwsr.com/2011-049.aspx> and Patrick Rose, *MiWSR* 2012-006 – <http://www.miwsr.com/2012-006.aspx>.

5. Consider, e.g., the battles and campaigns of Yorktown, Lake Champlain, Vera Cruz, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Overland, Santiago, Manila, etc., and, later, those of World War II and the Korean War.

the lines of the German staff system, and the War College opened its doors. All this enriched the intellectual environment of the military and fostered a professional cadre that guided the Army through the imperfect, but ultimately successful, battles of the Spanish-American and First World Wars.

In his final chapter, “The End of French Influence on American Warfare, 1918–1941,”<sup>6</sup> Bonura takes the efforts of Army officers seriously, never accusing them of not fighting war in the supposed right way (that is, like the Germans in 1940). He clarifies just how these men, despite financial constraints, by reading widely and understanding the lessons of their own experiences, managed to meld foreign ideas into their own military worldview.

For these reasons, and despite the flaws of its overall thesis, I highly recommend *Under the Shadow of Napoleon*. Studies of the intellectual history of the US Army are few and far between, and Bonura’s thorough, well-written account of tactical level developments can be placed alongside the strategic studies by Russell Weigley<sup>7</sup> and Brian Linn.<sup>8</sup> That’s not bad company.

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6. This chapter would have benefited from a fuller absorption of several important studies of continuity between the interwar period and World War II: see Schifferle and Matheny (note 4 above) and Henry G. Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934–1940* (Annapolis: Naval Inst Pr, 2002).

7. *Towards an American Army: Military Thought from Washington to Marshall* (NY: Columbia U Pr, 1962) and *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (NY: Macmillan, 1973).

8. *The Echo of Battle: The Army’s Way of War* (Cambridge: Harvard U Pr, 2007).