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Ralph W. Ashby et plur. al., *The Encyclopedia of Warfare*. London: Amber Books, 2014. Pp. 1024. ISBN 978-1-78274-023-0.

Review by Larry A. Grant, *The Citadel* (lagrant@sc.rr.com).

*The Encyclopedia of Warfare* provides an overview of the history of armed conflict—wars, campaigns, empires, rebellions, and counterinsurgencies, according to the publisher’s description—from the legendary events surrounding the death of the third-millennium BCE Assyrian king Nimrod to the Arab Spring uprising against Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, in some five thousand entries by twenty-nine contributors.<sup>1</sup> The book’s structure is generally chronological. The opening chapter, “Ancient Wars,” covers about three thousand years (ca. 2500 BCE to 500 CE); subsequent chapters survey later periods of shorter duration.

Individual entries occasionally deviate from strict chronological order, “so that the reader [can] get a sense of how a war or campaign developed without constant interruptions from the other theatres or conflicts ‘off stage’” (20). Thus, in the chapter on “Wars of Empire and Revolt, 1815–1914,” the order of sections is South American Wars, 1815–1830; Zulu War, 1817–1819; Greek War of Independence, 1821–1830; Spanish Civil War, 1820–23; Italian Wars of Independence, 1848–1870; and Ottoman-Turkish Wars, 1828–1878. Readers will need to do some page-flipping to find exactly what they are seeking, but the book does include a chronological table of wars.

Each chapter section is further divided into subsections, some of them on individual battles. For instance, the section on Native American Wars, 1817–1890, comprises subsections on the Arikara War, 1823, the Winnebago War, 1827, and others involving Native Americans. Brief synopses are provided for the principal battles of each conflict. Battles that cannot be neatly categorized are gathered under rubrics like Other Wars, 1859–1861, or Other Indian Wars, 1878–1890.

Many full-color maps clarify battlefields and maneuvers. The Publisher’s Note explains that “Maps have been created for this volume where original sources either do not exist, or else wildly contradict each other. In each case we have striven to use whichever is the most widely accepted and/or correct variant” (20). The maps indicate political divisions in contrasting shades of red and blue. Buff and light blue are used for land and water features. Roads and built-up areas (and occasionally terrain contours) are in gray. Movements of forces are shown in solid dark red lines for victors and dark blue lines for the defeated. Dashed lines in the same colors represent secondary movements. A distance scale and key to symbols are provided for each map.

The book’s shorter entries follow a template that includes a title and date and about a paragraph of narrative, often—but not always—with the names of the relevant commanders, forces engaged, and battle outcomes. Thus, the entry for Fort Donelson (13–16 February 1862) informs us that Gen. U.S. Grant and Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote besieged the Cumberland River fort and that the surrender of the defending Confederates gave Federal forces their first land victory of the war. This entry comes in the section on the American Civil War, 1861–1865, between the entries on Roanoke Island and the Hampton Roads naval battle between CSS *Virginia* and USS *Monitor*. This arrangement departs from the stated intent to group related events together in order to give readers a sense of the continuous progression of campaigns. Also, the entry fails to specify the considerable distances between the western, eastern, and naval campaigns of the Civil War and the independence of actions taken in the various theaters.

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1. Ralph Ashby, Nell Aubrey, Tim Benbow, James Bosbotinis, Thomas Conlan, Kelly DeVries, John Dorney, Kevin Dougherty, Martin Dougherty, Lee W. Eysturid, Westley Follett, Paul Gelpi, Stephen Hart, Phyllis G. Jestice, David Jordan, Hunter Keeter, Savvas Kyriakidis, Michael Neiberg, Peter Polack, Alex de Quesada, Rob Rice, Scott M. Rusch, Frederick Schneid, Gary Sheffield, Robert J. Thompson III, Stephen Turnbull, L.B. Wilson III, Andy Wiest.

By contrast, the chapter on World War I features discrete subdivisions on naval and land battles and separates operations in the Balkans from those in Italy. The campaigns of the US Civil War would have benefited from a similar arrangement. After all, the Isonzo is not half as far from Belgrade as Hampton Roads, Virginia, is from Vicksburg, Mississippi; moreover, American theater commanders in the Civil War often enjoyed a degree of independence comparable to that of their First World War counterparts.

In his foreword to the book, the eminent military historian Dennis Showalter writes that the *Encyclopedia of Warfare* “eschews a Western-centric perspective that too often sacrifices understanding for familiarity” (21). It is not clear that this is achieved in the end. Nor is Showalter’s claim that the *Encyclopedia* “encourages and facilitates refocusing on war’s essential elements: the planning, conduct and result of using armed force” fully borne out. Readers are often left to discern the role of these elements on their own. The inclusion of non-Western entries in a Western-centered list of battles does not in itself ensure a balanced account. Most of the entries, like the one on Fort Donelson, give only very basic descriptions of key events. The rough outlines of campaigns and wars may be construed only by reading many specific entries. And, too, the political, social, and economic contexts of the canvassed wars are glossed over or simply ignored.

Students and teachers of military history will find the entries in the *Encyclopedia* to be good starting points for research, but they will be frustrated by the lack of any bibliography or footnotes. The publisher asserts that providing proper documentation would have exceeded the “capacity of current binding machines” (20). But, even a short essay on recommended “further reading” would have been invaluable to readers pursuing particular research interests. The book does, however, helpfully provide a list of wars and campaigns, a standard timeline of notable civilizations, and two thorough indices, one general and the other of battles and sieges.

Despite its shortcomings, this new *Encyclopedia of Warfare* will meet the needs of students and general readers seeking an inexpensive,<sup>2</sup> one-volume reference work on the history of warfare.

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2. Publisher’s list price is \$64.95, but the book is available at deep discounts online from, e.g., Barnes and Noble and Amazon.