



CHACR TAKE AWAY NEWSLETTER

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INTRODUCTION

This is the CHACR Take Away newsletter, which we will issue regularly from now on. The aim is to continue advancing the mandate of CHACR to enhance the British Army's conceptual component of fighting power. As we are entering the summer leave period this newsletter looks somewhat different from the previous ones. It is designed to provide you with reading material over the summer leave period. **The views expressed or studies shared in this document do not represent the official views of the British Army, Ministry of Defence or any components thereof, but only those of their authors and are shared to stimulate thinking and discussions.**

LATEST FROM CHACR

CHACR continues to fulfil its mission with multiple activities and initiatives in support of the Army while in remote working conditions.

Check out our website or follow us on Twitter @CHACR_Camberley to keep up to date with our outputs.

A WORD FROM THE CHACR DIRECTOR

As summer leave approaches (indeed some of you will be reading this whilst already on that leave) I suspect that not many of you this year will be sitting by the villa or hotel pool or on a sunny Mediterranean beach. But, whether taking your break at home or abroad, filling the long days with a stack of books remains the best of ways to rest your body while exercising your brain. And it is important, I believe, to be as varied in your reading habits as possible: you can't expand your mind with narrow reading. As Matthias Strohn observes elsewhere on the pages of this website, Sir Michael Howard explained long ago that the only way to understand history in a truly useful way is to study it in breadth and in depth. I agree completely - so, as a military professional, one would be expected to read widely about one's profession (from global strategic trends, to doctrine, to technological developments to military history), but, at the same time, to try to avoid wave-topping subjects and thus relying upon the most superficial of insights. For the academic fellows on the CHACR team a common and slightly depressing frustration is to be asked to research a subject (often against very tight deadlines, but sometimes with time to conduct the research in real depth and with real meaning) and to produce a well-balanced and nuanced paper on the subject in question, only to receive, almost by return email, a request to provide a one-page exec summary for 'busy officers' so they 'do not need to read the whole piece'. Well, for the next few weeks, one hopes, you will not all be 'busy officers', so please take the opportunity to 'read the whole piece' in as many different ways as possible. In this edition of the CHACR newsletter we have done our best to provide you with an eclectic, entertaining and informative range of things to read over the coming month. We have tried to provide you with Sir Michael's exhortation to 'breadth'. We would urge you to try to read as widely as you can and, should any particular subject, topic, or book catch your imagination or your attention in such a way as to leave you wanting more, then please find your own ways to dig in to your own chosen 'depth'. Have a good summer.

Maj Gen (Ret) Dr Andrew Sharpe

CHACR TEAM RECOMMENDS

1,000 Years Of Annoying The French by Stephen Clarke.

Stephen Clarke is a Parisian who knows how to push the boundaries of the 'Entente Cordiale' - which, as he points out, is a very recent state of affairs in the long and fractious relationship between France and Britain. This is a well-researched tongue-in-cheek look at the history of Franco-British relationships. Enjoyable to read if you are English, irritating to read if you are French, the book takes one on a humorous canter through cross-Channel to-ing and fro-ing, packed with historical breadth (and the odd bit of new and amusing depth).

The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy In Historical Perspective by Hew Strachan.

Using a rich backdrop of military history case studies to make his case, Strachan contends that the wars since 9/11 in Iraq and Afghanistan have led to widespread frustration and a sense of failure. Blame for these failures has been attributed to poor strategy, a lack of consistent direction, ineffective communication, and poor governmental coordination. Strachan posits that these failures resulted from a fundamental misreading and misapplication of strategy itself. He argues that the wars since 2001 have not in reality been as "new" as has been stated, and that the U.S. and Britain need to adopt a more historical approach to contemporary strategy in order to identify what is really changing in how the West wages war. The book is a must read for students of strategic thought and policy analysts who seek to better understand the interconnected nature of war and strategy.

The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme by John Keegan

The Face of Battle is military history from the battlefield: a look at the direct experience of individuals at the "point of maximum danger." In his scrupulous reassessment of three battles representative of three different time periods, Keegan manages to convey what the experience of combat meant for the participants, whether they were facing the arrow cloud at the battle of Agincourt, the musket balls at Waterloo, or the steel rain of the Somme.

Mr American by George MacDonald Fraser.

The *Flashman* novels and the *General Danced At Dawn* series are well-known to a military readership. *Quartered Safe Out Here* has to be a compulsory title on any meaningful British Army reading list. So you are probably well familiar with the brilliant George MacDonald Fraser. One of his most accomplished works, but also, sadly, one of his least read, is *Mr American*: a superb insight into Edwardian England, filled with historical detail that is the hallmark of his usual detailed research, along with emotion, humour, pathos and bathos (and a cameo appearance by Harry Flashman). This book is a 'must read'.

The Adventures of Simplicius Simplicissimus

First published in 1668, *Simplicissimus* tells the picaresque, brilliantly described adventures of a boy swept up in the Thirty Years War and the terrible things that he experiences. Some of it is realistic, some fantastical, but the overall effect is an unmatched picture of Europe torn apart by a seemingly endless war from which nobody can escape. The Thirty Years War was the bloodiest conflict in European history (as per ratio of populations killed), and it is a war that is not well-known in the English-speaking world. This book is a good introduction to a conflict that shaped European history and remained the focal point for European nations and their histories for centuries.

The Future of the Professions by Daniel Susskind and Richard Susskind

Many of us have spent the past four months working primarily from home, prompting speculation on the future of the office. This book predicts the future not only of the workplace, but of 10 prominent present-day professions, including doctors, teachers, lawyers, accountants and consultants. It anticipates the systems that may replace them in the future, as we shift to an increasingly automated society. *The Future of the Professions* explains how artificial intelligence and other related systems will dramatically alter how specialist professions engage with society. While the book does not address the future of every profession, nor tackle the challenge of digital security, it does pose important questions about the capabilities of humans and machines.

CHACR TEAM RECOMMENDS

Scipio Africanus - Greater Than Napoleon by Basil Liddell Hart.

Liddell Hart is one of those oft-quoted authors in military circles, but he is one that, increasingly, seems to be oft-quoted but rarely read! If you have read one of his books, then it is probably that staple of staff college reading lists *Strategy* (which is actually about what we now call Operational Art). But, if you would like to combine a *fascinating* gallop through some of the great names of military history, with a really interesting insight into the importance of understanding that war is about combining the professional competence of being good at 'how we fight' with a profound understanding of 'what we are fighting for' then you will get huge enjoyment and value from this study by Liddell Hart.

Revolution by William Manners

As GPs begin to prescribe bicycling, and cycling becomes an increasingly popular mode of transportation, there is no better time to visit the history of the bicycle. *Revolution* explores the invention of the bicycle and the development of cycling in 19th-century Britain, America, France and Australia. The book illustrates the life-changing impact of the bicycle for people across the whole spectrum of society. Two wheels provided an economical, personalised mode of transportation that afforded unprecedented freedom. Bicycling influenced fashion, music, the women's liberation movement; changed socialisation patterns and made the countryside accessible to thousands of city-dwellers. *Revolution* gives new appreciation for the ubiquitous bicycle as a wonder of the Industrial Revolution that transformed Britain and the world.

The Light that Failed: A Reckoning, by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes,

In this book, Krastev and Holmes analyse the advance and retreat of Liberal Democracy in the last 30 years through the lens of 'imitation'. In doing so they track the hope, despair, misunderstandings, complacency, resentment and retaliation that has marked the path of Global Liberalism since its assumed triumph in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The book exposes the profound importance of 'deep' national culture to individual societies, and how the West's superficial understanding of how Eastern European, Russian and Chinese cultures interacted with the concept of Liberalism, generated the tensions we live with today. A key example is the fact that for Western Europe, Liberalism was

the antidote for the Nationalism that tore the Continent apart in the first half of the 20th Century. For Eastern Europe however, Nationalism was a critical factor in their liberation from the Soviet yoke between 1945 and 1989. This reality is poorly understood and poorly managed in the West. Holmes and Krastev also explore how leaders such as Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and Viktor Orban were able to copy those aspects of Liberalism which helped them gain access to the 'club', but have since exploited Liberalism's contradictions to ruthlessly consolidate power at home and expand it abroad. If you want

Military Blunders: The How and Why of Military Failure by Saul David.

"Hurray, boys, we've got them!" General Custer reportedly told his troops before the Battle of Little Bighorn. As this shrewd, controversial book shows, military disaster comes in many forms, except, in hindsight, the unexpected. The military historian Saul David surveys the six major mistakes that generals have often made through history. His book both vividly describes some of the worst military blunders perpetrated over the last two thousand years and analyses the psychological and tactical factors at play to show why these disasters occurred.

On China by Henry Kissinger

In 1971, as President Richard Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger was tasked with the re-establishment of relations between the United States and China, a relationship that had been on ice for nearly 25 years, since the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949. Since his first secret journey to Beijing, Kissinger has continued to engage in high-level diplomacy with China's leadership, providing him unique insight into contemporary Sino-Western relationships. This book details China's history from the classical era to the present, describing the roots of its thousand-year-old approach to international relations, the origins of China's national strategic culture, and the evolution of China's relationship with the West over the past 50 years. An important reflection as our relationship with China faces renewed tensions.

CHACR TEAM RECOMMENDS

White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War 1919-1920 and the 'Miracle on the Vistula' by Norman Davies

As we approach the centenary of the Battles of Warsaw in August 1920, Norman Davies' searing history of the conflict between Poland and Soviet Russia contains many insights for military personnel facing the 'persistent competitions' of the contemporary world. Davies tracks the vortex that consumed Eastern Europe as Poles, White Russians, Bolsheviks, Ukrainians and Baltic States fought for survival, national supremacy or to expand regional influence in the aftershocks of the First World War. British and French failure to understand the local perspectives conflict undermined their attempts to build or control Polish military capacity. Hubris and jealousy in the Soviet High Command undermined their ability to exploit this opportunity. Innovation, courage and no-little amount of skill enabled the Poles to prevail. A fantastic case study on how to engage and constrain effectively.

The shock of the old: Technology and Global History since 1900 by David Edgerton

This provocative book explores the relationship between technology and societal developments in the 20th century. Whereas many would have us believe that technological invention has been responsible for these, Edgerton points out that most inventions fail and that rapid change has often been driven by repurposing extant capabilities. For him, how we use things is more important than developing the new. As we glibly use phrases such as 'sunset v sunrise' capabilities, to frame our current debates, this book is a reminder that all that glitters is not necessarily gold.

The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction by Ashley Jackson

One of the OUP's excellent series of short introductions, Ashley Jackson's survey of the British Empire is a useful start point for the key debates that seek to understand Britain's influence on world affairs in the last 400 years. In the context of the Black Lives Matter protests, this is a subject that requires re-engagement, if we are to understand how it continues to be perceived around the world. In this respect, the section on the legacy of the Empire is particularly important, highlighting the cost and benefits it imposed on all those affected by it. You might not agree with all of his conclusions, but his point that to disengage from the debate surrenders the ground to the political point scorers is well made.

The Scottish Clearances: A History of the Dispossessed by Sir Tom Devine

This recent history places the impact of the change on Scottish society since the sixteenth century in its widest context. Sir Tom illustrates the vulnerability of peasant societies increasing in size when faced by economic and political challenges combined with devastating events such as war or extremes in climate. While this narrative has often been seen as exclusive to the Highlands in the late 18th and 19th centuries, Sir Tom highlights the fact that it applied to the Lowlands as well. These complex and multi-factoral events are worth the study as we reflect on similar pressures around the world today.



ABOUT THE CHACR

You can learn more about the CHACR at www.chacr.org.uk

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