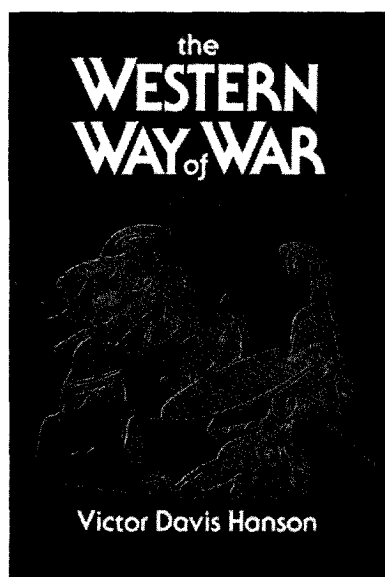


On Classical Warfare

reviewed by Williamson Murray

THE WESTERN WAY OF WAR: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece.
By Victor D. Hanson. Oxford University Press, New York, 1990,
260 pp., \$12.95. (Member \$11.65)



While holding the Homer Chair in Military Theory at Marine Corps University, I taught an elective in the Command and Staff College entitled "War in Ancient Greece." I believe that the study of war's place in ancient Greece, using the Greek authors themselves—Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon—attracts only those officers who are really interested in examining the fundamental issues that have been involved in "the Western way of war" from 500 B.C. to the present.

To begin the course, I used Victor Hanson's book, *The Western Way of War*, an examination of the sharp end of war in Ancient Greece. Hanson's book is not on the Commandant's Reading List. It should be, and since I participated in discussions that contributed to the creation of the list, I have only myself to blame. The enthusiastic reaction of my

students to the book has only served to underline my sloppiness, for Hanson has written an extraordinary book.

Hanson has drawn extensively from John Keegan's classic study, *The Face of Battle*. On balance, he has written a far better researched and in many ways a less flawed work—high praise indeed given the reputation that Keegan has enjoyed over the past two decades. On the face of it, this is a straightforward examination of the sharp end of war in the ancient Greek world. In the largest

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sense, however, Hanson's topic is the place of war in human society—an understanding of war that explains much about the rise of Western civilization to world domination.

Like Keegan, Hanson makes clear that his book is not about strategy or tactics, but rather about how the sharp, brutish "face of battle" looked to the hoplite infantryman. And we must understand that to an even greater degree than has been the case over the past 500 years of Western history (although

our record has been bad enough), war was the dominant activity for the Greek city-states. Not surprisingly, then, the great dramatist Aeschylus would have no words celebrating his literary triumphs carved on his tombstone but only the celebratory words, "The grove of Marathon, with its glories, can speak of his valor in battle/ The long haired Persian remembers and can speak of it too." One commentator entitled his study on the ancient Greeks *The Warring States of Greece*, an apt description of the endless series of conflicts the Greeks waged against each other.

Hanson, then, has set out to examine the sharp end of these conflicts. War in ancient Greece was a harsh, brutal clash of arms—no information warriors, no distant punishment, no pushbutton wars. In this world, war was a matter almost entirely of savage, face-to-face killing. As Homer wrote in *The Iliad*:

And he pitched Pisander . . . onto earth/
And plunged a spear in his chest—the man crashed on his back/
As Hippolochus lept away, but him he killed on the ground,
Slashing off his arms with a sword, lopping off his head/
And he sent him rolling through the carnage like a log.

Greek warfare rested on the toughness and willingness of the citizen soldier to defend his polis against its enemies. In this world there were no citizens who were not soldiers, just as the Greeks would have found Clausewitz's statement that "war is a continuation of politics by other means" a tautology. To them war and politics were inextricably and obviously linked. The heavily armed hoplite—the citizen soldier—marched out from his city-state on an almost yearly basis to confront similarly armed men—all drawn from the upper classes since the hoplite had to pay for his own, very expensive armor. The clashes of the phalanxes—consisting of the hoplites—represented the appearance for the first time in recorded history of disciplined armies, as opposed to armed mobs. And it was in that disciplined commitment to his fellow soldiers that the hoplite provided the Greek city-states their advantage in the wars with Persia. In a disciplined, articulated fashion, the phalanxes for over 300

years, year in and year out, rolled toward their harsh and terrifying clash of arms—one in which the hoplites stood defend-

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ing their homeland.

Hanson's careful and judicious use of a wide range of sources, from the historical to the literary, allows him to examine fundamental questions that have puzzled soldiers and leaders in the Western world for the past 2,500 years—at least to the extent possible to recover a world long since lost and to describe the indescribable. How did they fight? Why did they fight? How did they maintain their courage to face battle again and again? How did they achieve victory? What actually happened in the minds and to the bodies of soldiers on the sharp end? And, finally, what were those qualities that allowed the Greek poet to write:

Do not fear the multitudes of their men nor run away from them./ Each man should bear his shield straight at the foremost ranks/ And make his heart a thing full of hate and hold back the flying/ Spirits of death as dear as he holds the flash of the sun.

Hanson has thus written a book for warriors: for those interested in the real profession of arms and for those who want to understand the continuities of leadership, cohesion, courage, faith, and, above all, duty. This is indeed a book for warriors.

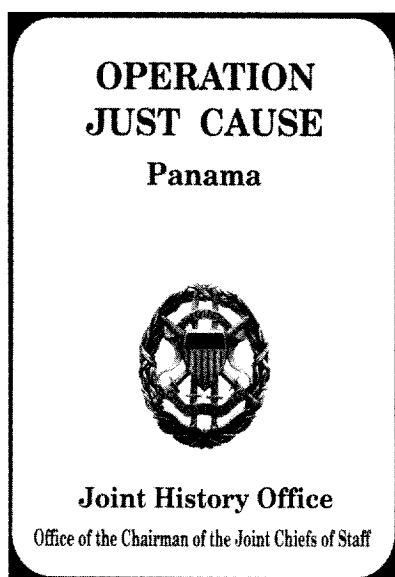
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>Dr. Murray, a professor emeritus of history from Ohio State University, is currently the Charles Lindberg fellow at the Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC.

The Invasion of Panama—Lessons Learned

reviewed by Col Charles E. Richardson, USMC(Ret)

OPERATION JUST CAUSE—PANAMA. By Dr. Ronald H. Cole. Joint History Office, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 74 pp., Free.



Operation JUST CAUSE—Panama is a product of the Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The document:

... traces the involvement of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff in planning and

directing combat operations in Panama. The study begins with the initial development of contingency plans in February 1988 and concludes with Gen Manuel Noriega's surrender to U.S. officials on 3 January 1990. Relying primarily upon Joint Staff files and interviews with key participants, the author, Dr. Ronald Cole, provides an account of the parts played by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Joint Staff, and the commander in chief (CinC) of U.S. Southern Command in planning for operations in Panama and their roles in the combat operations that followed.

The monograph is a quick read. Dr. Cole provides a short overview in which he states that the Goldwater-Nichols Act is "viewed as the most significant defense legislation since the National Security Act of 1947." He provides some details as to the justification for the need for such legislation. He then skips to 1988 to explain the deteriorating relationship between the United States and Panama. Dr. Cole sets the stage for the replacement of Gen Frederick F. Woerner, USA, as the commander in chief (CinC), U.S.

Southern Command by Gen Maxwell R. Thurman, USA. With Gen Thurman in command, Dr. Cole captures the intensity and aggressiveness of the new commander in chief, (CinC). This was a wake-up call that resounded until operations in Panama were completed.

The document has some dates and numbers that differ from the notes of my experiences in Panama during the invasion. Also, Dr. Cole says little

“I would recommend this monograph for those who wish to better understand the delicate transactions that take place in the National Command Authorities when commitments of U.S. forces are contemplated.”

about the accomplishments of Task Force Semper Paratus, which was made up of a Marine rifle company, a Marine light armored infantry company, and a fleet antiterrorist support team and assigned to "secure the Bridge of the Americas, the Thatcher Ferry Bridge Highway, and other western approaches to the Canal." Those things aside, the author does a commendable job by bringing readers to the front seat of events that occurred in Panama from 1988 to 1990.