

Military Review

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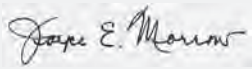
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Sharp Pens Sharpen Swords: Writing for Professional Publications

Colonel John M. Collins
U.S. Army, Retired

It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

—Chinese Proverb

Most modern writers prefer computers to pens, 21st-century swords are mainly ceremonial, and Thomas Edison's incandescent bulbs long ago replaced candles, but the title of this article and the quotation remain figuratively correct because intellectual pathfinders who shed light on politico-military problems and then suggest solutions perform invaluable services. The message to readers and writers is: It is never too early or too late to make your mark. I have selected the following 15 publications from nearly 100 outlets because they offer aspiring authors a rich menu of publication options.

Trailblazers

The *Infantry Journal*, activated in 1904, was a typical trailblazer.¹ Charter members who gave that brainchild an auspicious start included two famous flag officers and two precocious second lieutenants. Major General Arthur MacArthur, Doug's daddy, wore a Medal of Honor; Major General Tasker Bliss culminated his career as the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) (1917-1918). Second Lieutenant George Catlett Marshall, who became CSA shortly before World War II, retired with five stars and later served as Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State; four-star General Walter Krueger, commissioned from the ranks, commanded the Sixth U.S. Army during all of its campaigns in the Southwest Pacific.

A 679-page anthology called *The Infantry Journal Reader*, published in 1943, reprinted 178 handpicked articles.² The list of authors includes many names that were little known in the early 1930s but now are illustrious: German Panzer leader General Heinz Guderian; U.S. Army General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, who headed the China-Burma-India theater during World War II; Flying Tigers leader "Colonel" Claire Chennault; Ole "Blood and Guts"

General George Patton; General William Lee (the father of U.S. airborne forces); and British Captain B.H. Liddell Hart, an oft-quoted strategist. Harold Lamb, who later wrote 14 highly respected military histories, and Robert Strausz-Hupé, who founded the Foreign Policy Research Institute, are representative of standout civilians.

Forty other contributors to *The Infantry Journal Reader* might have become famous, but nobody ever will know because they hid behind ludicrous pseudonyms like Whitenred, Blackanblue, Stonecold, Tentage, Tenderhide, Trenchcoat, Chevron, Hungry, and Heelclicker, despite assurances that "the politics of an author makes no difference. Democrats, Republicans; New Deal, Old Deal; Right, Left, middle; so long as he has something to say about fighting war that makes sense, his article is printed."³

Current Torchbearers

The 15 contemporary U.S. torchbearers selected for comparison vary considerably with regard to frequency of publication, clientele, and content. Monthly magazines, for example, are better suited for hot topics than quarterlies; outlets that reach mainly parochial audiences contrast sharply with cosmopolitan competitors; while those that cast the widest nets potentially influence the most readers. Not all, for example, reach officials in the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. Department of State, national security agencies, academia, think tanks, research institutes, businesses, the news media, U.S. service schools, selected libraries, allied embassies, and military establishments abroad. The number of hard-copy subscribers is less important than in the fairly recent past because most on-line editions are free.

Air & Space Power Journal. *Air & Space Power Journal* is an official publication of the U.S. Air Force, but opinions expressed therein need not reflect prevailing policies. On the contrary, its editor seeks innovative

ideas about aerospace doctrine, strategy, tactics, force structure, readiness, and other matters of national defense. Assorted selections during 2005 reviewed Red Flag training exercises, aerial search and rescue operations, air base defense, and esoteric counterspace initiatives.

Armed Forces Journal. *Armed Forces Journal (AFJ)*, a joint service monthly magazine that targets audiences throughout the U.S. military community, has reviewed and analyzed key defense issues for over 140 years. *AFJ* offers in-depth coverage of military technology, procurement, logistics, doctrine, strategy, and tactics. It also provides special coverage of special operations, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and U.S. Army National Guard developments. Representative articles recently proceeded up the scale from smart artillery to big-ticket budget programs, occupation problems in Iraq, and space wargames.

Army. *Army* magazine, a monthly product of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), covers a spectrum of tactical, operational, strategic, and logistical landpower issues, with particular attention to U.S. Army activities and interests worldwide. Prominent displays in recent months included the new modular Army, future combat systems, disaster relief, Active and Reserve Component culture gaps, and Army recruiting crises. Presentations commonly include a block of articles that attack particular topics from different angles.

Foreign Affairs. The Council on Foreign Relations, which concentrates on U.S. foreign policy and international affairs, includes nearly all past and present presidents; secretaries of state, defense, treasury, and other senior U.S. Government officials; renowned scholars; and major leaders of business, media, human rights, and other nongovernmental groups. The Council publishes *Foreign Affairs*, a quarterly forum for new ideas, analyses, and debate. Foreign policy polls, and articles on pandemics, regime

changes, and how to win the war in Iraq have graced its pages during the last year.

Foreign Policy. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace publishes *Foreign Policy*, a quarterly that offers informative, insightful, and lively discourse on the full range of topics related to U.S. foreign policy and national security as well as in-depth analyses of important international developments. Illustrative subjects include UN control of the Internet, a profile of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, nuclear proliferation, and energy interdependence.

Joint Force Quarterly. The National Defense University Press publishes *Joint Force Quarterly* (JFQ) for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. JFQ features joint and combined education, training, and operations, plus national security policies and strategies, for use by top-flight DOD, interagency, and allied decisionmakers and their staffs. Other beneficiaries include politico-military planners and programmers at lower levels. JFQ's editor recently snapped up articles about international-interagency processes, multinational interoperability, transformation, and joint logistics.

Marine Corps Gazette. The U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) Association's cornerstone publication is the monthly *Marine Corps Gazette*, which keeps readers well informed concerning the USMC's history, policies, current operations, plans, and programs. Esprit is a perennial topic. Themes in a recent issue included individual and small-unit discipline, protecting infrastructure, measuring success in counterinsurgency, information management from the bottom, air/naval gunfire liaison companies, and recommended readings.

Military Review. *Military Review*, ensconced at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, as a subsidiary of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, is a forum for original thought on the art and science of land warfare at tactical and operational levels. Readers in more than 100 countries receive bimonthly issues in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic. Samplings during 2005 disclosed bits about brigade combat teams, Iraqi security forces, improvised explosive devises, and cultural-knowledge needs.

Naval War College Review. The *Naval War College Review* discusses

public policy matters of interest to maritime services. Articles satisfy two essential criteria: They support academic and professional activities of the Naval War College, and they appeal to a wide readership. Topics range from strategy and operations through international law, defense economics, and regional security studies to civil-military relations, wargaming, and military ethics, with particular attention to influences on maritime security.

Orbis. In 1957, the Foreign Policy Research Institute founded *Orbis*, a quarterly journal of world affairs, which provides an outlet for policy-makers, scholars, and private citizens who seek informative, insightful, lively discourse regarding the full range of U.S. foreign policy and national security topics as well as in-depth analysis of other important international developments. The CIA's culture, the effect immigration has on national security, the United States' ability to transplant democracy and its relationships with the European Union are representative subjects.

Parameters. *Parameters*, devoted to strategically significant national defense issues, emanates from the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. It emphasizes the art and science of land warfare; joint and combined matters; military strategy; military leadership and management; and military history, ethics, and other topics of current interest to the U.S. Army, DOD, and students of such subjects everywhere. Recent topics included commentaries on the events in Afghanistan after 4 years, the treatment of illegal combatants, intelligence reform, and controversies concerning the news media.

Proceedings. *Proceedings* magazine has been the U.S. Naval Institute's flagship publication since 1874. Its editor increasingly solicits articles that highlight the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force, but it still concentrates on issues that primarily affect the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S.-flagged Merchant Marine. Each monthly issue addresses current issues and historical perspectives from strategic, operational, and tactical angles. The following four items are illustrative: USCG homeland security roles, high-speed sealift, naval special operations, and naval education.

Sea Power. The Navy League circulates *Sea Power* magazine each month to educate sea services, the American people, their elected representatives, and industry regarding the need for robust naval and maritime forces. *Sea Power* tracks naval policy and political developments and documents key developments in major ship, naval aircraft, weapons, and doctrinal programs. Short-range missile threats, the new Iraqi Navy, naval counterterrorism capabilities, and sea basing attracted recent attention.

Special Warfare. *Special Warfare* magazine, under the auspices of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, promotes the professional development of special operations forces (SOF) by critiquing established doctrine and advancing new ideas for consideration throughout the Army special operations community. All aspects of Special Forces, Rangers, civil affairs, psychological operations, and the Army's special operations aviation regiment are subject to scrutiny. Articles that publicize unclassified aspects of SOF activities in hotspots overseas are particularly popular.

The Washington Quarterly. The Center for Strategic and International Studies issues *The Washington Quarterly*, a journal of international affairs that analyzes global strategic changes and their public policy implications for subscribers in more than 50 countries. Typical topics include the U.S. role in the world, emerging great powers, missile defenses, counterterrorism, regional flashpoints, and the implications of global political change. Contributors reflect diverse political, regional, and professional perspectives.

Websites

- *Air & Space Power Journal*, published by the Airpower Research Institute, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, is on-line at <www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apje.html>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Armed Forces Journal (AFJ)*, published by Army Times Publishing Company, New York, is on-line at <www.armedforcesjournal.com/>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Army Magazine*, published by AUSA, Arlington, Virginia, is on-line at <www.ausa.org/armymagazine>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Foreign Affairs*, published by the Council on Foreign Relations, New York and Washington, D.C., is on-line at <www.foreignaffairs.org/>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Foreign Policy*, published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., is on-line at <www.foreignpolicy.com/>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Joint Forces Quarterly*, published by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, by the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C., is on-line at <www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Marine Corps Gazette*, published by the Marine Corps Association, Quantico, Virginia, is on-line at <www.mca-marines.org/Gazette/gaz.html>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Military Review*, published by the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is on-line at <<http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/index.asp>>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Naval War College Review*, published by the Naval War College Press, Newport, Rhode Island, is on-line at <[www.nwc.navy.mil/press/Review/about NWCR.htm](http://www.nwc.navy.mil/press/Review/about_NWCR.htm)>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Orbis*, published by the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is on-line at <www.fpri.org/orbis/>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Parameters*, published by the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, is on-line at <www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/parahome.htm>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Proceedings*, published by the U.S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland, is on-line at <www.usni.org/proceedings/proceedings.html>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Sea Power Magazine*, published by the Navy League of the United States, Arlington, Virginia, is on-line at <www.navyleague.org/sea_power/>, accessed 14 April 2006.

- *Special Warfare* is published by the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Articles should be addressed to Editor, *Special Warfare*, USAJFKSWCS, Fort Bragg, NC 28307-5000.

- *Washington Quarterly*, pub-

lished by the Center for Strategy and International Studies, Washington, D.C., is on-line at <www.twq.com/>, accessed 14 April 2006.

Principles of Outstanding Professional Writing

Every professional publication prefers its own writing style, but authors who honor the following tips generally produce the most attractive drafts for consideration anywhere.

Title. Pick a title that is descriptive and short. This first step is imperative, because it essentially determines what the document is all about.

Mission. Tack the writing mission on the wall and keep it constantly in sight. Disregard all tangential topics, no matter how interesting or important they might be.

Outline. Prepare an outline even for short papers, so all relevant subjects are displayed in a logical sequence. Begin with a skeleton outline, then add subtopics, and outline each of them. Revise the outline as you progress. (Outlines are a lot like contingency plans, which seldom are implemented the way their architects originally conceived them.)

Basic subdivisions. Professional books, magazine articles, substantial reports, and other official papers most often should comprise five parts, even if informally: **background, purpose, scope, main body, and wrap-up.**

- Background information up front briefly explains why the subject is important.

- One or more sharply defined purposes identify central objectives.

- The scope tells readers what topics to expect and what not to expect.

- The main body, which discusses all pertinent points, establishes a solid foundation.

- Conclusions, culminating comments, recapitulation or whatever you care to call it leaves readers with the ultimate message. The wrap-up should never address topics not previously discussed.

Research Techniques

- Peruse a broad spectrum of opinion with an open mind. Never reach conclusions first and then prepare a paper to support them. You will often find that initial impressions were poorly founded and fallacious.

- Take nothing for granted. Challenge conventional wisdom to determine if it is sound, regardless of the source.

- Document important ideas with footnotes so readers can pursue selected topics in greater depth, if they desire.

Writing Techniques

- An introductory quotation that precedes paragraph 1 on page 1 of a relatively short document or that opens chapters of a longer one can establish themes, particularly if tied directly to the text.

- The lead sentence and paragraph should capture reader interest immediately. You might not get a second chance.

- Understatement is preferable to hyperbole. Never use a sledgehammer to drive a thumbtack.

- Precious ideas get lost if presentations are boring, so use a thesaurus to avoid undesirable repetition and use quotation books to add spice.

- Acknowledge opposing views and critique them. That way you answer questions before skeptics ask them.

- Use common terms so all readers can continue without constant reference to a dictionary. Avoid unnecessary use of foreign words. Employ acronyms sparingly.

- Mix simple with complex sentences to build paragraphs that are neither staccato nor excessively long, so the document reads smoothly.

- Keep it simple so all readers can understand complex subjects. (When my son was 6 years old he had a book that basically explained Einstein's Theory of Relativity.)

- Be clear and concise, but never sacrifice clarity for brevity. Never use 10 words when 1 or 2 say the same thing equally well or better.

- Be precise. Pick every word carefully.

- Emphasize active voice. Open each sentence with a primary thought, then follow with appropriate modifiers (although, however, but, yet) as required.

- Never open sentences with a conjunction (and, but).

- Use topic headings as "road signs" so the writer as well as readers know at all times where they have been, where they are, and where they are headed.

Review Techniques

- Few writers produce perfect first drafts, so rewrite each paragraph until it is the best you can produce.
- Be your own sharpest critic. Read out loud what you wrote to see how it sounds.
- Solicit comments from knowledgeable peer reviewers. Pay attention if they disagree or do not understand, particularly if more than one reviewer finds similar faults. Otherwise, you unnecessarily risk public embarrassment after the

document is published.

- Proof carefully.

Culminating Comments

Consider the bulleted topics above to be starting points. Add, subtract, and otherwise revise as you see fit until you possess writing tips that suit your particular style, and then use them as a checklist to improve future products.

Hop to it. Geriatric John Collins, halfway through his 8th decade, will be on the sidelines cheering. **MR**

NOTES

1. For more information about *The Infantry Journal*, and its history, see on-line at <www.infantry.bookscans.com/infantry.htm>, accessed 17 April 2006.
2. Joseph I. Greene, *The Infantry Journal Reader* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1943).
3. Ibid.

Colonel John M. Collins, U.S. Army, Retired, has contributed articles to 13 of the 15 publications mentioned. He currently steers the Warlord Loop, an e-mail net whose 150 heavy hitters ventilate crucial national security issues from every quadrant of the compass.

MR Book Reviews

Featured Review

AMERICA AT THE CROSSROADS: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy, Francis Fukuyama, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2006, 226 pages, \$25.00.

Francis Fukuyama, celebrated author of *The End of History and the Last Man* (Harper Perennial, New York, 1993), has finally confessed to what the rest of us have suspected: History goes on, with a vengeance. In his latest book Fukuyama provides personal views on the role America should play in what used to be called the “New World Order,” which is now not only the post-Cold War world, but also the post-9/11 world.

Fukuyama describes the influence of neoconservative thought on President George W. Bush’s foreign policy. In doing so, he provides a short, personal history of the neoconservative movement and its ideas. Fukuyama speaks as an insider: His account is based on years of personal friendships and close professional association with leading figures of the neoconservative movement, including Paul Wolfowitz, Albert Wohlstetter, and Allan Bloom. He delivers some surprising news: Neoconservatives are not new; the movement arose in the early 1940s and provided an alternative to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and his “realists” during the latter stages of the Cold War.

Neoconservatives remain firm believers in “liberal” democracy—indeed, the founders of the movement

started their careers with decidedly leftist preferences. Neoconservatives are not truly conservative in their foreign policy designs; in stark contrast to other conservative movements that profess restraint in foreign policy in the name of strict national interest, stability, or isolationism, they are distinct activists who believe in promoting democracy and free markets.

Fukuyama wrote his book because he felt his views were no longer compatible with Bush’s neoconservative policies. Rather than reclaiming the term and returning it to what he believes is its original meaning, Fukuyama has conceded the neoconservative appellation to its current practitioners in the administration. Cynical readers might interpret Fukuyama’s change of mind as a case of sour grapes in response to the dramatic fall from grace of Bush’s foreign policy agenda and, in particular, the war in Iraq. However, Fukuyama is a serious scholar and provides a finely nuanced, articulate critique of what he perceives to be the failures of current policy and the misinterpretation of the original neoconservative foreign policy paradigm.

Fukuyama describes the neoconservative foreign policy agenda as one “involving concepts like regime change, benevolent hegemony, unipolarity, preemption, and American exceptionalism.” All of these, in his view, “came to be the hallmarks of the Bush administration’s foreign policy.” His critique of the current administration is threefold. First,

he believes the administration mischaracterized the threat to the United States from radical Islamism by wrongly conflating it with the threat from failed and rogue states (for example in the alleged Al Qaeda-Iraq connection). This belief led to the policy of “preventive war” and the Iraq War. Second, he claims that the administration grossly miscalculated, and then dismissed, the negative effect unilateral action would have on world opinion; most significantly, on the reaction of some of our closest traditional allies. The third, and perhaps the most serious criticism, is directed at the administration’s failure to plan for and consider the difficulties of the occupation and the transition of Iraq from a totalitarian dictatorship to a multiparty, multiethnic, secular democratic state.

According to Fukuyama, “Bush’s ex-post facto effort to justify a preventive war in idealistic terms has led many critics to simply desire the opposite of whatever he wants.” In other words, the President has maneuvered himself into a lame duck posture early in his second term by adopting an activist and muscular open-ended foreign policy that has moved precisely in the opposite direction of his traditional conservative stance, a stance that specifically frowned on the use of the armed forces for nation-building.

Most of these criticisms will be familiar to serving military officers and others working in foreign policy