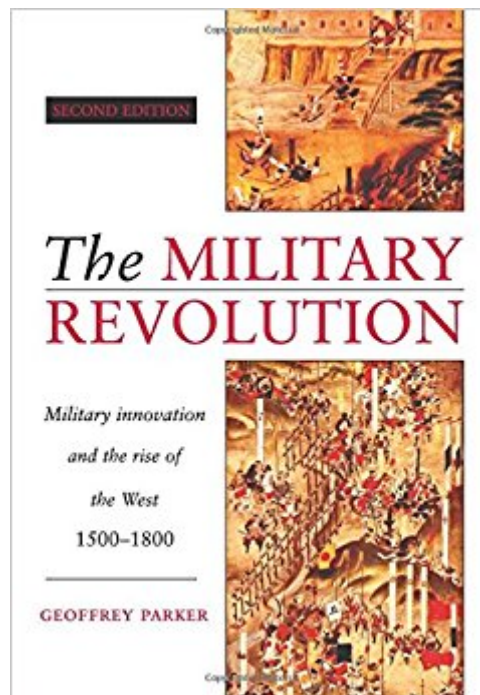




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# The Military Revolution: Military Innovation And The Rise Of The West, 1500-1800



## Synopsis

Well before the Industrial Revolution, Europe developed the superior military potential and expertise that enabled her to dominate the world for the next two centuries. In this attractively illustrated and updated edition, Geoffrey Parker discusses the major changes in the military practice of the West during this time period--establishment of bigger armies, creation of superior warships, the role of firearms--and argues that these major changes amounted to a "military revolution" that gave Westerners a decided advantage over people of other continents. A new chapter addresses the controversies engendered by the previous edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"...this is a genuinely admirable book, and every student of military history, whatever his specialization, ought to read it cover to cover....Re-reading Parker's *Military Revolution* I am again struck by its brilliance, range and craft; by ambition fulfilled....A second, updated edition of Geoffrey Parker's *The Military Revolution* deserves a warm and thoughtful welcome by all historians. An author of rare linguistic range and command of primary sources, his masterful ability to construct comparisons and unearth new data has compelled many who would not call themselves military historians to take the "Military Revolution" paradigm (and military history) seriously...a seminal work." *The Journal of Military History*"...this is a generally admirable book, and every student of military history, whatever his specialization, ought to read it cover to cover. Nobody has succeeded as well as Parker in portraying the growth of European military power in the Early Modern Epoch." Thomas M. Barker, *The Journal of Military History*"Re-reading Parker's *Military Revolution* I am

again struck by its brilliance, range and craft; by ambition fulfilled....I am more than impressed by the insights, scope and scholarship of Parker's book; it is a work that has inspired much of my interest in the subject." Jeremy Black, *The Journal of Military History*"I strongly commend this book to all historians. I can only wish others, reading *The Military Revolution* for the first time, will find it as stimulating as I found Geoffrey Parker's works when I first encountered them." Weston F. Cook, Jr., *The Journal of Military History*

Well before the Industrial Revolution, Europe developed the superior military potential and expertise that enabled her to dominate the world for the next two centuries. This text discusses the major changes in the military practice of the West during this time period.

Does a book of this caliber need a review? It is perfect and thought provoking. It opened a whole new field of study for me.

This book is useful to help its reader to understand certain aspects of the gunpowder revolution, and it is particularly useful to point out the political effect of the change in military technology. The book does not give as much tactical detail as one might wish, but it is likely that anyone who wishes to study the subject seriously (and Parker's work is obviously intended for the serious reader) will have a copy of Delbruck, and that will give access to detailed descriptions of certain of the important tactical developments leading up to the introduction of massed gunpowder weapons.

Amazing book, very informative about the military revolution that took place during the 16th century.

Perfect buy.

Geoffrey Parker work can be considered a milestone in its field. A really excellent book.

This relatively short work is an insightful description and analysis of changes in Military and Naval technology in Early Modern Europe. The fundamental idea is that a constellation of changes in military and naval technologies and tactics produced a qualitative change in the coercive powers of nascent European states. These innovations had major consequences including major expansion in the size of armed forces and increases in the fiscal and bureaucratic powers of states in order to support larger and complex armies. This toolkit of military and naval technology provided the crucial

advantages that made possible successful European imperialism and colonialism in the pre-industrial period. Parker details changes in artillery capability, the development of new fortification technology, new infantry tactics, the emergence of ships as effective weapons platforms, the organization of armies, and the life of soldiers. A particularly interesting section deals with the reception of European military technology by sophisticated non-Western states such as China and Japan. Strongly recommended for those interested in Early Modern Europe.

The purist may not appreciate the title of this excellent survey of the rise of Western European military and eventually cultural dominance. Any revolution that takes 300 years to accomplish begs the question. The subtitle is more revealing, and more accurately portrays the content of the book. The years of 1500 to 1800 indeed saw a series of military innovations that directly contributed to Western military hegemony. What the author has done, which is truly unique, is to survey the innovations and to document how they affected events in Europe and elsewhere. A good part of the book accounts for developments in sail and guns and global exploration and confrontation. Also discussed is how other societies such as the Ottomans, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, and others reacted or failed to react to these developments. In this course, Parker proves his thesis of how the West gained its "35%" toehold on the globe by 1800, which set the course for the century of rabid imperialism. There is more detail to be found in other sources, but the synthesis of analysis is what marks this contribution as one of the best in the history of early modern Europe.

Professor Parker has come in for a lot of criticism for this book over the years - see Jeremy Black - *A Military Revolution?: Military Change and European Society, 1550-1800* (Studies in European history) - published in 1991, for examples. I remember having some doubts about it myself when it was first published. Professor Parker noted that being unfamiliar with oriental languages, he had made use of his students to research the chapters on eastern Asian developments. I thought at the time that perhaps he had made too much use of them on the western chapters, also, as in one of them, he made use of a long passage from Jonathan Israel's *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606-61*, to support his theory on the *Tracce Italiane*. However, I had just read that book, and remembered that Israel had come to the exact opposite conclusion to Parker. Some years later, I came across an article in the *Mariner's Mirror* (volume 82, #3, August 1996) by Professor Parker, entitled "The Dreadnought Revolution of Tudor England" (pp. 269-300), which described the advent of the first 'all-big-gun battleship'. The next article was by N.A.M. Rodger, entitled "The Development of Broadside Gunnery 1450-1650" (pp. 301-324), which

to me seemed to take some of the wind out of the sails of the predeeding article. Professor Parker wasn't appearing to have much luck with his theses. It was only many years after that, that I realised that despite his theories being heavily revised or refuted, what he was succeeding in doing was getting people to do research and dig even deeper into the subject under discussion, to the benefit of research in general and us readers in particular. How many good books would not have been launched without Parker (and Roberts before him) prodding at the boundaries?

Jeremy Black - *A Military Revolution?: Military Change and European Society, 1550-1800* (Studies in European history) - Pages 10-12: "The battles of the Thirty Years War, unlike some of the famous encounters in the Italian wars, were not generally determined by different tactics and weaponry. Instead their results reflected differing experience and morale and if forces were fairly evenly matched in terms of veterans they were either inconclusive encounters or determined by other factors such as terrain, the availability and employment of reserves and the results of the cavalry encounters on the flanks which, if conclusive, could lead to the victorious cavalry attacking their opponent's infantry in flank or rear, as happened at the Spanish defeat at Rocroi (1643). Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, a German prince who served Sweden in 1630-5 before transferring with the army he had raised to French service, won a number of battles by outmanoeuvring his opponents, outflanking them and attacking them from the rear. At Jankov (1645) the Swedes under Torstensson were initially unable to defeat the Austrian force, which was also about 15,000 strong, but finally won as a result of outmanoeuvring their opponents and attacking them from the rear. The Austrians lost their army, the Swedes benefitted from tactical flexibility of their more experienced force. Indeed victory commonly went to the larger army and the more experienced force rather than to that which had adopted Dutch-style tactics. At Rocroi there were 24,000 French to 17,000 Spaniards; at the White Mountain (1620) 28,000 in the army of the Catholic League against 21,000 Bohemians and German Protestants; at Nordlingen (1634) 33,000 Catholics to 25,000 Protestants; at Breitenfeld Gustavus Adolphus outnumbered his opponents by 42,000 to 35,000. Breitenfeld was the largest battle, in terms of manpower, of the war and exceptionally so for a conflict in which field armies were rarely more than 30,000 strong and the creation of larger forces posed major logistical problems. Lutzen (1632), where the two forces were about the same, each 19,000 strong, was partly for that reason essentially inconclusive. The Saxons at Breitenfeld adopted the Dutch tactics of small units deployed in relatively narrow formations, but they broke when the Austrians attacked. Ernest, Count of Mansfeld, a leading anti-Habsburg general of the early years of the war, also adopted Dutch tactics without conspicuous success. Victory tended in general to larger armies, especially if more experienced, as the Spaniards, Swedes, Weimarians and some of the Austrian

and Bavarian units were. Saxe-Weimar rejected the Dutch tactics and in the late 1630s used his heavily cavalry-based army, which was essentially self-sustaining, to fight in an aggressive fashion. Thus, consideration of the battles of the period suggests that Roberts' stress on new infantry tactics is misleading." James Raymond was a student of professor Black, and as I have noted in my review of his book *Henry VIII's Military Revolution: The Armies of Sixteenth-century Britain and Europe* (International Library of Historical Studies), he is acquainted with many people who have published on the subject since this book was written. In his Conclusion, Mr Raymond writes "One cannot escape the relative merits of what one might term the 'evolutionary model' of military development. Throughout the early modern, and indeed medieval, period, continuity appears to be the dominant theme - as opposed to any sudden revolutionary change - in continental military practice. Such a view for the period 1494-1559, was recently endorsed by J. Black who concluded that a "consideration of the warfare of the period suggests that 'military adaption' is a more appropriate term than revolution" (*European Warfare, 1494-1660 (Warfare and History)*") And Mr Raymond concludes "The military revolution debate, like any other form of historical classification has provided a necessary and thought-provoking framework. However the profusion of alternative interpretations has ensured the concept now bears little resemblance to any reasonable definition of a revolution. It seems fair to conclude that the original notion of an early modern European 'military revolution' is now defunct. This book is still worth reading today, albeit with caution in places, but the revolution of yesterday has now become evolution in action.

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