

Pichichero, Christy: *The Military Enlightenment. War and Culture in the French Empire from Louis XIV to Napoleon*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2017. ISBN: 978-1-5017-0929-6; XVI, 302 S.

Rezensiert von: Adam L. Storrington, St. John's College, University of Cambridge

Christy Pichichero's work significantly changes our understanding of the French Enlightenment's relationship with war. Azar Gat's 1989 work *The Origins of Military Thought from the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* argued that the Enlightenment's approach to war was based on calculation, attempting to reduce war to an exact science. This was supposedly overturned by the Romantic Movement, which stressed passion and chance rather than calculation. Pichichero recognises that the Enlightenment spirit of rational enquiry did indeed stimulate military ideas. She demonstrates, however, that the Enlightenment introduced not only ideas of scientific war but also a much greater awareness of human psychology in war. Numerous eighteenth-century French thinkers actually saw the humanitarian principles of the Enlightenment as key to military efficiency.

Pichichero explains that, alongside its general spirit of enquiry, the Military Enlightenment in France emphasised three main themes: sociability (comradeship between soldiers), humanity (treating soldiers well so they would fight better), and a much broader definition of heroism, encompassing common soldiers (and supposedly the whole nation) rather than just nobles. Enlightenment ideas of sociability (seen in salons and the development of freemasonry) fostered ideas of comradeship among soldiers, and between soldiers and officers. Pichichero shows that sociability was particularly crucial in France's overseas empire, where the failure of Louis-Joseph de Montcalm and Thomas Arthur de Lally de Tollendal to understand and respect France's local allies led directly to defeat in Canada and India during the Seven Years' War.

Countering claims that eighteenth century soldiers were viewed as machines, Pichichero

shows that Enlightenment thinkers emphasised human sensitivity. Maurice de Saxe has long been recognised as a founder of military psychology, and Pichichero places de Saxe as part of a wider movement stressing the emotional and physical wellbeing of soldiers as key to battlefield effectiveness. De Saxe for instance employed a theatrical troupe to entertain his troops, and the eighteenth century saw substantial expansion of military medicine. The second half of the eighteenth century also saw ordinary soldiers, not just kings and nobles, recognised for the first time as capable of heroism. While the Enlightenment criticised aggressive war, it extolled heroism to defend the family and nation, and considered military service central to citizenship. All these developments reached their climax in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, where Napoleon's close relationship with his troops, his care to ensure their wellbeing, and his lavish rewards for meritorious service by ordinary soldiers were important in his military successes. Pichichero thus shows that humane considerations by no means necessarily run counter to military efficiency.

Pichichero demonstrates that eighteenth-century prisoner cartels greatly influenced the later Geneva Conventions, while Enlightenment campaigns against brutal military discipline represented the beginnings of modern ideas of human rights. She emphasises, however, that Enlightenment concepts of fraternity, humanity and equality had limits. The heroic image of French soldiers fostered by both de Saxe and Napoleon also celebrated sexual triumphs over women, and Napoleonic armies were notorious for rape. Most thinkers of the Military Enlightenment saw women as incapable of military service and hence citizenship. The extension of sociability, humanitarianism, and a place within the nation to Amerindians, blacks, and France's allies in India also varied greatly, despite the idealism of a few individuals.

The only regret is that, in expounding the views of French Enlightenment writers, Pichichero does not always recognise other contemporary perspectives. Ilya Berkovich showed, for instance, that military discipline was more negotiated than Pichichero – quot-

ing contemporary *philosophes* – describes it.¹ Sometimes, Pichichero appears to characterise any military reform in this period as enlightened, criticising alternative methods as ‘traditional’ (pp. 28-35, 190). Warfare, however, evolved steadily throughout the long eighteenth century, starting well before the first stirrings of the Enlightenment. Pichichero has shown beyond doubt that there was a ‘Military Enlightenment’. Historians must now examine the broader contemporary debate, in which a variety of very different intellectual traditions interacted to shape the steady evolution of eighteenth-century warfare.

HistLit 2018-4-079 / Adam L. Storrington über Pichichero, Christy: *The Military Enlightenment. War and Culture in the French Empire from Louis XIV to Napoleon*. Ithaca 2017, in: H-Soz-Kult 30.10.2018.

¹ Ilya Berkovich, *Motivation in War: The Experience of Common Soldiers in Old-Regime Europe*, Cambridge 2017.