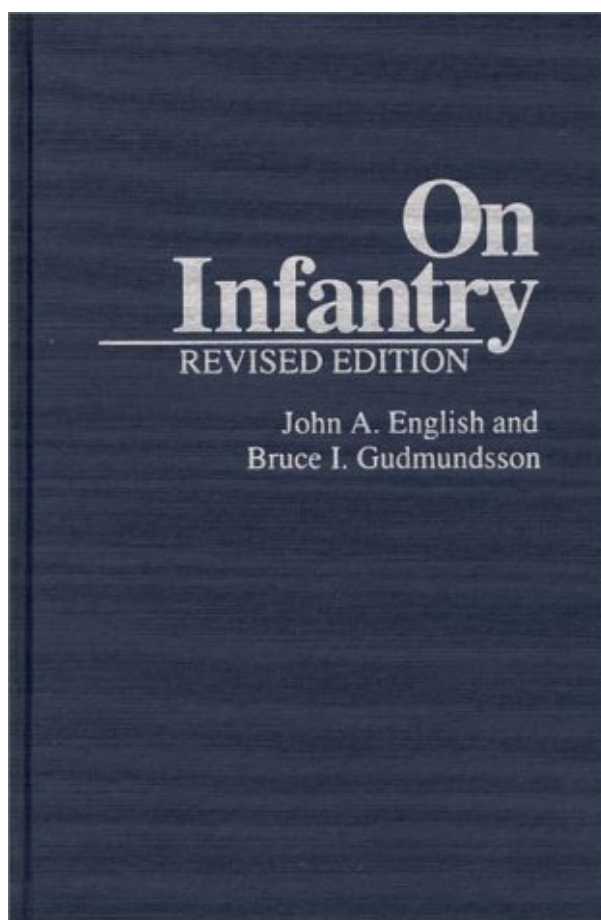
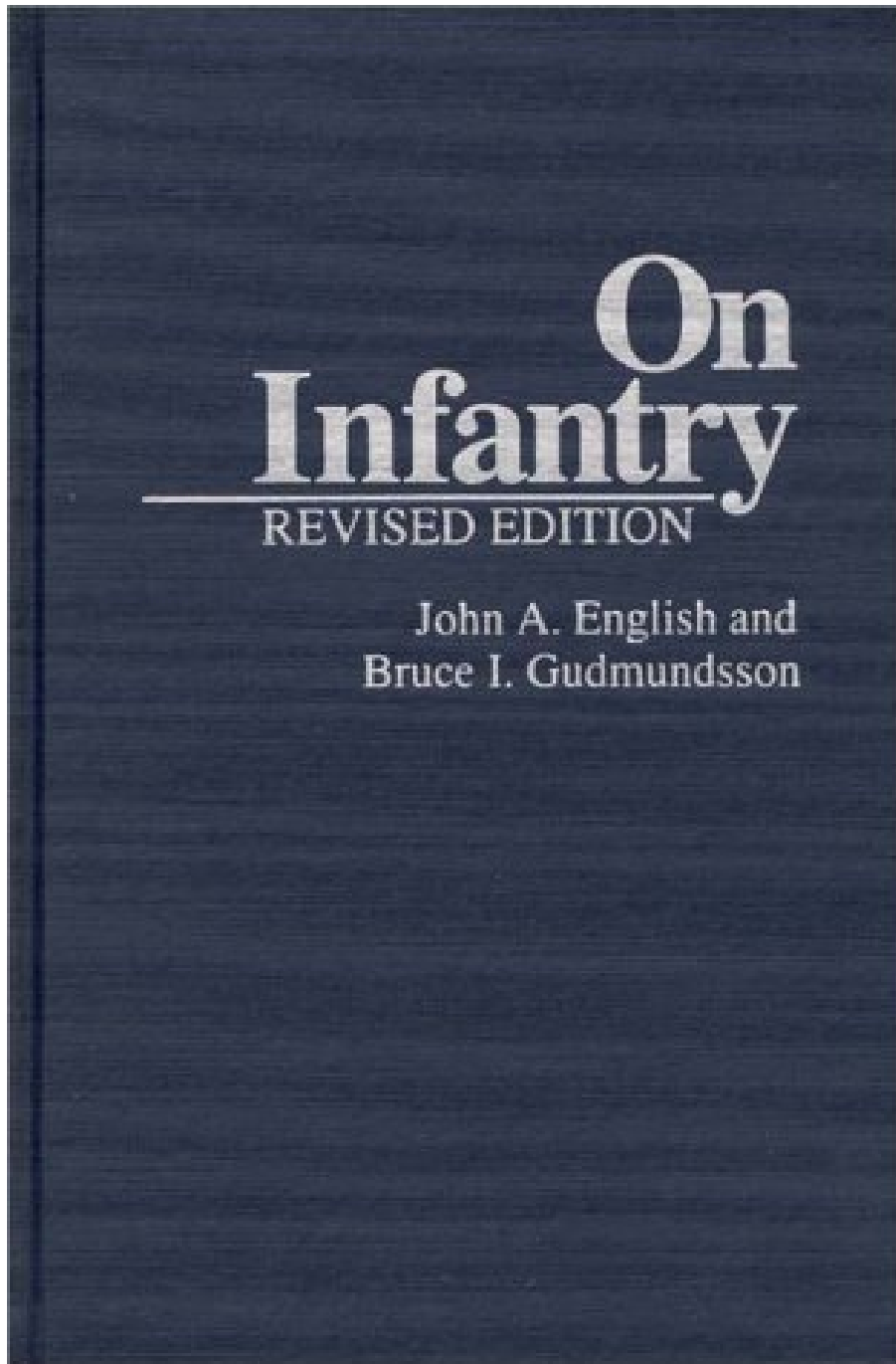


**ON INFANTRY (MILITARY PROFESSION)
BY JOHN A. ENGLISH, BRUCE I.
GUDMUNDSSON**



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..."this substantially revised book conveys to a lay audience the fundamental trends and problems in the development of this vital component of military power....an indispensable introduction."-Foreign Affairs

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Another volume in Praeger's The Military Profession series, this revised edition of the 1984 Praeger classic tells the story of infantry in the 20th century and its impact on the major conflicts of our time. Its purpose is to provide the reader--whether infantryman or not--with hitherto unavailable insights on the role that infantry plays in the larger battle and how that has helped shape the world that we live in today. Unique aspects of the book include the treatment of technical issues in non-technical language, the extensive use of German and French sources generally unavailable to the English-speaking reader, and the shattering of some long-cherished myths. Combat motivation and combat refusal, the role played by small units (such as the squad and fire team), the role of infantry in the Blitzkrieg, and many other issues often papered over in the literature of infantry are discussed and analyzed in detail in this revised edition.

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Most helpful customer reviews

49 of 53 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent, but a bit extreme

By S. M Stirling

This is an excellent discussion (historical and schematic) of what goes on at the nitty-gritty level of infantry combat; the squads, platoons, companies, and battalions. It shows how various systems succeed or fail at tasks such as flexibility, maneuver, combat cohesion and morale, and why the German army was generally qualitatively superior to both Western and Eastern rivals in both world wars.

That being said, the authors tend to overemphasize the capabilities of infantry on its own -- particularly unsupported light infantry, and particularly in the theoretical section which concludes the book.

While rightly critical of the excessive logistical tail some modern "armies of drivers" drag around, they lose sight of the fact that foot infantry by itself totally lacks operational mobility -- 20 miles a day vs. over 200 for forces with their own organic transport. And they neglect the degree to which infantry alone lacks even tactical mobility on a battlefield saturated with automatic weapons.

It's no accident that the armies which actually do a lot of fighting -- the Israelis, for instance -- structure combined-arms teams around honking great monster tanks like the Merkava III or the M1A2 Abrahms, 70 tons or so of massively protected lethality.

Mobility means the ability to move, but tactical mobility means the ability to move under fire.

This poses a genuine strategic dilemma; forces light enough to move rapidly strategically are often too heavy to be mobile in the tactical and operational sense -- you can fly light infantry quickly to the other side of the world, but they can't move when they're actually fighting.

Still, an excellent book on the whole.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting survey of modern infantry's evolution

By George Coppedge

This is one of a series of surveys by Bruce Gudmundsson on different combat arms. (This book also has John English as a co-author.) As always, Gudmundsson's books are informative and delightfully easy to read. In this book the authors examine the evolution of infantry tactics resulting from the massive increase in firepower as muskets gave way to rifles and then to automatic weapons, in addition to the vast array of supplementary infantry weapons (i.e. grenades, anti-tank weapons, mortars, etc.).

They start off by looking at the effects of dispersing troops in open order to mitigate casualties and different armies' responses to this organizational and mental requirement. As the machine gun speedily became ubiquitous early on in World War I, some armies adjusted rapidly and easily, such as the Germans, while others lagged behind, e.g. British, Americans. English and Gudmundsson examine and compare the tactical infantry doctrines and small-unit organizations of the French, German, Russian, British, Japanese and American armies of World War II. Also examined are the Chinese Army from the Korean War and the Vietnam-era American army. In each case, they utilize real battlefield examples to demonstrate how this doctrine was actually put into practice, how effective the chosen tactics were, and their strengths and weaknesses (e.g. the American army's reliance on firepower instead of expert technique). They also examine the importance of psychological conditioning in preparing infantry soldiers for 'the emptiness of the battlefield'. The concluding chapter then briefly examines how different modern armies have organized their infantry arms, e.g. by reducing mechanization & heavy equipment.

This was a great survey on infantry organization and tactical doctrine. I highly recommend it as a brief introduction to the infantry arm. A more detailed study by Gudmundsson of the evolution of small-unit tactics can be found in 'Stormtroop Tactics'.

31 of 38 people found the following review helpful.

Infantry won WWII, English explains why

By Sam Damon Jr.

John English is a brilliant tactician and historian who has written THE masterpiece on the origins of Infantry. I would have English describe infantry to about the Vietnam era and have Col Dan Bolger take the coverage from there to the future in his own book Death Ground: American infantry in battle. Bruce Gudmundsson was attached to the updated English book to attempt to bring the work up to date.

Taking the masterpiece for what it is, it delivers an important lesson mechanized maneuverists do not want to realize---that the German "blitzkrieg" died in the forests and cities of Russia when it met infantry that would not crumble if surrounded or cut-off from comfortable supply lines. Using a defense-in-depth, a nation on a total war footing can absorb and defeat another less committed nation that hopes to use a smaller force to penetrate and collapse. Many, maybe even most people mistake the German defeat in Russia--and hence WWII---with the cold Russian winter, and this is incorrect. The next critical--perhaps most important lesson and contribution English makes to the defense of freedom is---that a mechanized "combined arms" unit is ONLY AS GOOD AS ITS INFANTRY. When terrain and weather go sour, artillery and tanks will reach a point where they cannot contribute--and the entire battle then falls on the infantry. When this took place in Russia--the German infantry was NOT up to the task with inadequate numbers, clothing and bolt-action rifles. English points out and lesser historians should take note--that the German war machine was good together but not really that good because its PARTS were weak. When combined-arms technotactics could not be employed in the forests of Russia, the battle rested on the German infantry and it failed.

The cryptic lesson here is that we need GOOD infantry in large numbers and we don't get it by placing them into the back of armored vehicles in less than squad sizes, shut off from what's going on because they can't open a hatch out and see because we put a turret on the vehicle and we are afraid it will rotate into them. The Army made this mistake with the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, is trying to correct it with its vehicle for the new Brigade Combat Teams while the marines are about to repeat the error with a huge autocannon turret on their next generation amphibious assault vehicle. The second lesson of English is still being ignored---those that do mechanized combined arms don't value infantry action---they ride too long in their vehicles and get ambushed by missiles and RPGs fired from enemies hiding in key terrain that should have been taken first by the infantry. To do this you need a large amount of aggressive, not complacent infantry. As the Russians found out in Grozny, when their armored vehicles became flaming coffins, the battle then falls on the infantry to clear out enemies hiding in urban terrain.

This is not to say English believes in a "Super Infantry" since we saw in Mogadishu the best light infantry in the world get shot up because it was without armored fighting vehicles to shield it from enemy fire. What English is saying is that we should start with quality infantry when building forces and not in the process of creating combined-arms organizations ruin the infantry capability by reducing numbers, battle awareness and use as a separate maneuver element.

On Infantry should be required reading for ALL U.S. military personnel coupled with Bolger's Death Ground. I'd like to see the book updated to the present with a fresh perspective for the 21st Century where we apply English's lessons to the future battlefield.

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