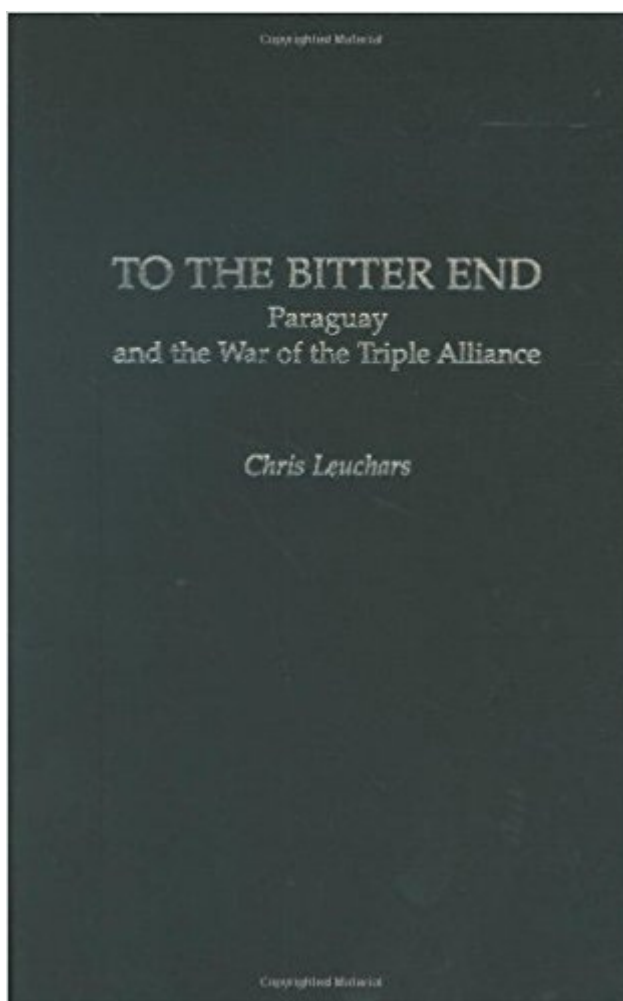


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To The Bitter End: Paraguay And The War Of The Triple Alliance (Contributions In Military Studies)



Synopsis

The War of the Triple Alliance was one of the longest, least remembered, and, for one of its participants, most catastrophic conflicts of the 19th century. The decision of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay to go to war against Paraguay in May 1865 has generally been regarded as a response to the raids by the headstrong and tyrannical dictator, Francisco Solano Lopez. While there is some truth to this view, as Lopez had attacked towns in Argentina and Brazil, the terms of the Triple Alliance signed that same month reveal that the motivation of these two nations, at least, was to redraw the map in their favor, at the expense of Paraguay. That the resulting conflict lasted five years before Lopez was defeated and his country fully at the mercy of its neighbors was a tribute to the heroic resistance of his people, as well as to the inadequacies of the allied command. The military campaigns, which took place on land and on the rivers, often in appalling conditions of both climate and terrain, are examined from a strategic perspective, as well as through the experiences of ordinary soldiers. Leuchars looks in detail at the political causes, the course of the conflict as viewed from both sides, and the tragic aftermath. He brings to light an episode that, for all its subsequent obscurity, marked a turning point in the development of South American international relations.

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Customer Reviews

"This is a military study of the bloody conflict pitting Paraguay against the allied forces of Brazil,

Argentina, and Uruguay in the 1860s. Any work in English shedding light on Paraguay's first half century of independence, the role of its first president, Dr. Francia, its distinct autochthonous culture, or the collective will that enabled this small country to defy invaders even after half of its inhabitants had perished in the effort, is welcome. The book will satisfy those interested in actual military engagements, the technology employed, military formations, and other topics neglected by social historians....Recommended. General and undergraduate collections."-Choice"[A] valuable addition....[o]ffers thoughtful, balanced interpretations, placing the struggle within the wider context of nation-building."-War in History"Chris Leuchars presents a straightforward, clearly written account of the Paraguayan War(1864-70), also known as the War of Triple Alliance.... To the Bitter End is a good introduction to the conflict."-The Journal of Military History"ÃfÂ•Ã Â" valuable addition....ÃfÂ•oÃ Â"ffers thoughtful, balanced interpretations, placing the struggle within the wider context of nation-building."-War in History?[A] valuable addition....[o]ffers thoughtful, balanced interpretations, placing the struggle within the wider context of nation-building.?-War in History?Chris Leuchars presents a straightforward, clearly written account of the Paraguayan War(1864-70), also known as the War of Triple Alliance.... To the Bitter End is a good introduction to the conflict.?-The Journal of Military History?A good profuously mapped general survey treatment of the protracted "Lopez War" (1864-1870) that pitted Paraguay against Argentina, Brazill, and Uruguay....[p]rovides a good account of military developments and is likely to be of value to anyone seeking an introduction to the subject.?-The NYMAS Review?This is a military study of the bloody conflict pitting Paraguay against the allied forces of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay in the 1860s. Any work in English shedding light on Paraguay's first half century of independence, the role of its first president, Dr. Francia, its distinct autochthonous culture, or the collective will that enabled this small country to defy invaders even after half of its inhabitants had perished in the effort, is welcome. The book will satisfy those interested in actual military engagements, the technology employed, military formations, and other topics neglected by social historians....Recommended. General and undergraduate collections.?-Choice"A good profuously mapped general survey treatment of the protracted "Lopez War" (1864-1870) that pitted Paraguay against Argentina, Brazill, and Uruguay....[p]rovides a good account of military developments and is likely to be of value to anyone seeking an introduction to the subject."-The NYMAS Review

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A few weeks after the US Civil War ended in 1865, Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay formed the

"Triple Alliance" to fight against Paraguay. The war was not nearly as one-sided as it might seem on first glance, for at the time, Paraguay's army was larger than its combined enemies. Paraguay struck first, invading Brazil and Argentina, but was ultimately beaten back and ground down. By war's end in 1870, Paraguay had lost huge tracts of territory, its President and its entire army, and an astonishing 60 percent of its population. Leuchars' account of the war is well-documented and readable. The opening chapters analyze the political climate in each country. Paraguay's erratic dictator, Francisco Solano Lopez, is generally blamed for the war. He had a large army (70,000 strong), a shrewd sense of military tactics, and he enjoyed a fanatical devotion from the public, yet his strategic aims were never clear --we simply do not know what Lopez hoped to get out of the war. Argentina's President Mitre was a modernizer who presided over an unstable country still gripped by conflict over whether to be a centralized or federated state. Brazilian Emperor Pedro II, also a modernizer, similarly faced challenges from regional warlords, as well as slavery and a shockingly unequal distribution of land and income. Uruguay was in the throes of civil war between its modernizing Colorado and oligarchic Blanco parties. Against this backdrop, Paraguay's Lopez deserves most --but not all-- of the blame for the war. The conflict began when the various countries took different sides in Uruguay's civil war, but that was quickly subsumed by each country's territorial aspirations rooted in the region's still-unfixed borders. Leuchars does an excellent job of sorting out the motives of each government and reexamining established historical conclusions. The maps are frequent and excellent. The "big picture" analysis of the war's impact on the region, and particularly on Paraguay's future, is persuasive. Ultimately, Paraguay's population was reduced to 125,000, less than half of its prewar number through military losses and the extreme hardship endured by the citizens. Brazil lost an estimated 100,000 troops and civilians and Argentina another 25,000. These numbers, given the rural nature of the societies, are unimaginable in today's wars. "To The Bitter End" is timely. There is simply not much recent writing in English about the War of the Triple Alliance. And apart from Paraguay, where the consequences remain an indelible part of the national character, it is a war in danger of being forgotten even in South America. This is an excellent book.

A great introductory text into Paraguayan war. Very engaging, balanced, no cliches... I wish somebody would write like this but make several volumes, after all Paraguayan war is the most enigmatic conflict in western hemisphere. Paraguay was the only latinamerican country with a native(i.e. Guarani and not Spanish or Portuguese) official language, it was in a process of rapid modernization(in technological and industrial sense, exactly as was usually thought of

modernization in XIX century) confronted by a coalition of local superpowers with a result of a massacre (quite resembling a genocide) of its population. Paraguayan war is closer to WWII or WWI rather than to any latin-american conflict. Considering the origins of paraguayan state (the jesuits and their expulsion with a war against portugese and spanish authorities) I think there should be more books on this topic and more detailed. The basic material is very well explained in this book.

I wanted this book to help me reconcile two very different interpretations of this disastrous war, which killed more than half of Paraguay's population. Eduardo Galeano's leftist polemic history, *Open Veins of Latin America*, calls it 'a war of extermination', funded by British commerce, to rid the continent of a 'dangerous example' of 'autarchic internal development'. Meanwhile, Robert Harvey's *Liberators*, a tale of 'larger-than-life heroes' puts the blame squarely on the 'megalomaniac' Paraguayan president, Francisco Lopez, for 'declaring war on Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay almost simultaneously'. Although Leuchars' book is self-declaredly a military history, it seems to be one of the few studies of the war in print in English, and does yield some insights into the social, economic and diplomatic processes behind the war. Simmering border disputes in the River Plate region came to a head with the Brazilian invasion of Uruguay in October 1864, which removed the Blanco government allied with Paraguay. In response, Paraguay declared war on Brazil, and later sent its forces into the strip of Argentina which separates it from Uruguay. Although Lopez doubtless played some of his cards badly, his fear that his larger neighbours would, at some point, try to dismember his country seems to have been borne out by the terms of Triple Alliance treaty between Brazil, Argentina, and (nominally) Uruguay. These hardly referred to the supposed causes of the war, but concentrated on how Paraguay's land was to be divided up between its two largest neighbours. The war lasted until the Paraguayan forces were obliterated, which took over four years. Leuchars spends a lot of time wondering why Lopez was determined to fight on, but not why his compatriots, including many women and boys, continued to rally to his flag, even after the Allies had obviously won. So often does the author describe the Paraguayans' courage that he apologises to the reader for the lack of variety in his superlatives. Lopez' vicious behaviour - - he even accused his mother of betraying him and had her publicly whipped - - only highlights the need to understand why so many were willing to follow him to death. The book has only an occasional hint at any ideology motivating the Allies, such as their troops mocking Lopez as an 'old Indian', and their post-war prohibition of the Guarani language in schools. It's often easy to write off a national catastrophe by blaming it on the victims' leader. This book does demonstrate that there were other causes, but stops short of exploring them fully.

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