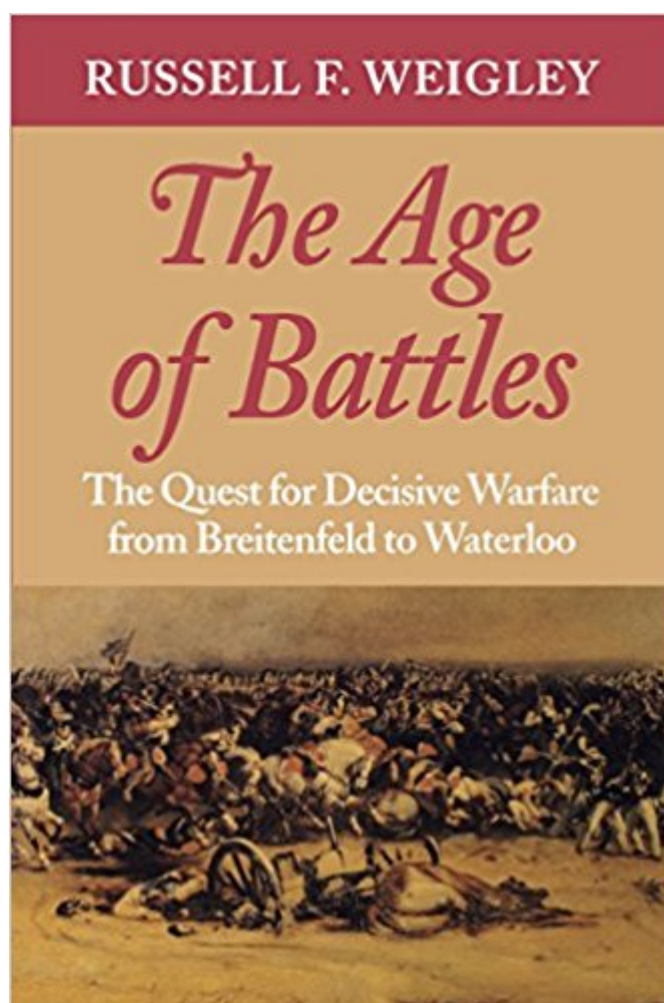


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# The Age Of Battles: The Quest For Decisive Warfare From Breitenfeld To Waterloo



## Synopsis

"One of the most interesting, important, and ambitious books about the conduct, and perhaps the ultimate futility, of war." — Gunther E. Rothenberg "[A] highly scholarly and wonderfully absorbing study." — John Bayley, *The London Review of Books* "What Russell F. Weigley writes, the rest of us read. *The Age of Battles* is a persuasive reminder that even in the age of operational warfare, one can honestly wonder why war seemed an unavoidable policy choice." — Allan R. Millett, *The Journal of American History*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

From Gustavus Adolphus's 1631 victory at Breitenfeld in the Thirty Years War to Napoleon's 1815 defeat at Waterloo, the primary instrument of military strategy was the grand-scale battle waged with the goal of winning a political as well as military decision. In this first-class study of the battles of Gustavus, Charles II, Louis XIV, Marlborough, Nelson, Napoleon and Wellington, Weigley (*The American Way of War*) brings into sharp focus the irony that warfare throughout the period was most often a matter of prolonged, indecisive struggle that expressed a bankruptcy of national policy. The book traces the development of the professional officer class during the two-century era and the evolution of command and control techniques in the field. Weigley discusses the limitation of violence in battle through the restraints of international law and custom, and analyzes the surprising fact that military tactics, technology and organization remained essentially the same from Breitenfeld to Waterloo. History Book Club main selection. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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Weigley, an authority on the U.S. military experience, has written a superb study of the age of "decisive battles"--that period between 1631 and 1815 when war's economic, social, and technological circumstances enabled concentrating large forces on a single field, and when political leaders and strategists hoped to secure quick decisions by means of battle. That hope was most often in vain. As Weigley demonstrates, the "age of battles" was also an age of increasingly indecisive wars. Even Napoleon's great victories resolved issues only in the short run. Exhaustion and attrition, not decision, were the norms of warfare in this period--a pattern sustained and enhanced by the military developments of the 19th and 20th centuries. Weigley's broad scholarship and lively style make this book indispensable for any collection dealing with the subject or the period. History Book Club main selection.- Dennis E. Showalter, Colorado Coll., Colorado Springs Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Excellent read. It provides insight to battles of the 2nd Hundred Years War. :) Arrived on time and in excellent condition.

A very solid read. A bit anglophilic, but not too much so. Highly recommended!

It's a good'n

Excellent book.

Great read

Weigley's *The Age of Battles* covers the era of European warfare starting with the emergence of Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years War and ending with Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815. The author's main theme is that although this age of battles offered more hope for decisive outcomes as a result of a single battle, with expenditures in lives and resources commensurate with the intended goals, than any other era, the battles of this era nevertheless failed to deliver this decisiveness. Weigley also states these lesser themes: 1) The rise of military professionalism: talent vs. birth 2) The limitation that technology of the time placed on command and control 3) The necessity of a mobile arm (cavalry) for any hope of decision, and 4) Growing restrictions during the

age of battles upon making war against non-combatants. As another reviewer has stated, the reader should judge for himself to what extent Weigley demonstrates his various themes. For my own purposes, as a military history enthusiast without military training or academic credentials, I found *Age of Battles* most valuable simply because it is a concise but elucidating history of this most colorful era of warfare. This period of gunpowder weapons, with combined cavalry and infantry, but before the appearance of rifled weapons, brought the art of war to its zenith after its rebirth in the seventeenth century. Although lagging the official renaissance by a couple of centuries, this renaissance had its own set of masters starting with Adolphus, then the Sun King's generals, Marlborough, Eugen, Frederick the Great, and finally culminating with Napoleon. Although clearly writing for academics and professionals, Weigley's engaging writing style nevertheless makes accessible to the general reader this most creative epoch of warfare in Europe.

This book explores several themes. First, it speaks in generalities to the rise of the Profession of Arms and talks about the development of professional officers. The second major theme is that it discusses command and control and the execution and management of violence. The thesis is that decision making, technology and professionalism are essential tools that now become part of the overall thought, deliberate strategy planning and development process of the military. Thirdly, it speaks to and explores tactical decisiveness and lastly, it speaks to international law and custom. All in all this is a great book, but don't expect that the conclusions or answers to these themes will always jump out at you. You will need to read with intention to discern these 4 themes, and some others, and how they may or may not apply to your contemporary comparisons of Modern war, that is from roughly WW II to the Gulf War of 90-91 and Post-Modern War, that is, current warfare post 9-11. This two hundred year work of analysis ends where it begins. With the analysis of a decisive battle. The last 8 pages sum up a few of the author's conclusions; one that comes to mind is the political-military-business training and role that officers must have in order to perform their military roles effectively. The greatest benefit of this book will be derived when one compares post modern war with the tactical lessons of the battlefield. The academic debate rages, and will continue to rage over whether or not there is such a thing as the decisive battle. You will need to discern for yourself if the principles of war have changed and if the tactical execution of the battle has a direct correlation to the operational, strategic and or political aspects of war. ps. read this book slowly and with intention, there is much to absorb here. Terry Tucker, Prof Military Studies/History Senior Doctrine Developer SANGMP

Russell Weigley, long established as the premier American military historian, has written a work that illustrates the necessity for the field commander to pursue complete victory over an adversary. This has long been a dream of military commanders, yet not until Gustavus Adolphus and his attempt to destroy his opponents at Breitenfeld, and his failure to move forward to Vienna, has the proverbial defeat been snatched from the jaws of victory. Weigley analyzes the failures, successes, and overall planning that became an essential part of post medieval warfare. His choice of particular battles and campaigns were carefully chosen to offer the greatest examples of military leaders opting for total, in lieu of negotiated partial victory. It is a necessary book for any student of military or political history, and it offers insights which may be compared to recent conflicts such as the Gulf War.

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