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The Paraguayan War, Volume One, Causes and Early Conflict
(review)

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war? Another myth, the *Dolchstoß*, came to the fore; it asserted that the “victorious” German army had been “stabbed in the back” by revolutionaries—like the legendary Siegfried who had been killed from behind by his friends.

All three societies drafted older legends into service. The *Dolchstoß* resonated with the *Nibelungenlied*; *La Revanche* was filled with images reminiscent of the *Chanson de Roland* and the story of Joan of Arc; and “The Lost Cause” drew on Sir Walter Scott’s novels. In the new age of industrialized warfare, the archaic and the modern apparently went hand in hand. Preindustrial imagery, Schivelbusch suggests, was not a form of antimodernism or escapism; it sweetened the pill of unavoidable socio-economic modernization. The author argues that, ultimately, defeat proved a salutary lesson; in peacetime, the losers learned from and, in fact, outdid the one-time victors. The former Confederates envisaged an industrially thriving “New South”; the Third Republic engaged in educational reform, physical exercise, and colonial expansion to compensate for both a humiliating defeat and territorial losses; and Weimar Germany indulged among other things in jazz dancing and Fordism.

The cultural history of war is a booming field, and Schivelbusch relies heavily on secondary works. However, the idea of uniting this vast body of scholarly literature in a comparative study aimed at the general reader is ambitious and original. Unfortunately, the author fails to explore the comparative method fully. The book is divided, rather conventionally, into three parts, one on each country, interspersed with occasional comparisons and cross-references. The long introduction highlights some cultural convergences and national contrasts, and yet throughout the book the author touches on many points without pursuing them systematically. Full of interesting theses but few conclusions, this book is rather an essay or a fragment. Characteristically, it ends with a puzzling question: perhaps, Schivelbusch wonders, the essence of the “culture of defeat” and its various components (sports and *levée en masse* in France; dance and assembly lines in Germany—Schivelbusch omits American examples) was a longing for “movement” to help overcome the trauma of defeat.

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The Paraguayan War, Volume One, Causes and Early Conflict. By Thomas L. Whigham. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8032-4786-9. Maps. Illustrations. Notes. Index. Pp. xvii, 520. \$75.00.

The Paraguayan War (1865–70) pitted Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil against Francisco Solano López’s Paraguay. The book jacket accurately calls it the “deadliest and most extensive interstate war ever fought in Latin America.” In this volume, Thomas Whigham, professor of history at the Uni-

versity of Georgia, focuses on the war's causes and the Paraguayan offensive of 1864–66, leaving the allied offensive, the stalemate, and the war's effects for the second volume.

Whigham locates the geopolitical roots of the conflict in the contest for control of access to the Plata River system. At independence in the 1820s, Uruguay and Paraguay became independent buffer states between Portuguese Brazil and Spanish Argentina. Yet the issue remained alive because of Brazilian national pride and their desire to guarantee river passage to their western Mato Grosso territory. When Brazil intervened in Uruguayan politics in 1864, the small mestizo nation of Paraguay responded to the Brazilian challenge.

Paraguayan president Francisco Solano López had inherited the presidency from his father. He combined a large ego, a patriarchal attitude toward his subjects, and a pride in his modern military organization. He feared that Brazil and Argentina would easily absorb his nation and Uruguay if war came, so he attacked the Brazilian Mato Grosso in December 1864. López planned then to drive to the southeast to reinforce Brazilian enemies in Uruguay. The Uruguayan campaign depended upon securing the allegiance of Argentine caudillos in the neighboring provinces of Entre Ríos and Corrientes, but López muffed the effort to win them over in time. His invasion of Corrientes in April 1865 spurred the formation of the Triple Alliance, pledged not just to defeat Paraguay, but to remove López from power.

López lost most of his navy in June 1865 and by November had fumbled away his chance at victory. His insistence on directing all aspects of the war and on leaving his officers in the dark as to his intentions undercut their confidence and capabilities. By mid-1866, the Paraguayan offensive had been checked, but the poorly coordinated allies foolishly did not press their advantage, thus contributing to a stalemate that would last for four more years.

Previously, historians have often portrayed López either as insane or as a nationalist hero. Whigham's contribution is a detailed narrative that reveals a López whose strategic and geopolitical instincts were sound but whose arrogance undercut his ability to lead. The description of the geographic setting and the vivid thumbnail sketches of many of the officers further elevate the account beyond that of one man's blindness. The reader understands the full history of a tragic war, lengthened because of incompetence and errors on all sides. If López's hubris was great, so too was that of the Argentines and Brazilians. They dismissed the Paraguayan as a madman or a "monkey," but their presumably superior nations and armies could not defeat him without great cost to themselves.

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Perilous Pursuit: The U. S. Cavalry and the Northern Cheyennes. By Stan Hoig. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002. ISBN 0-87081-660-8. Maps. Photographs. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. ix, 292. \$34.95.