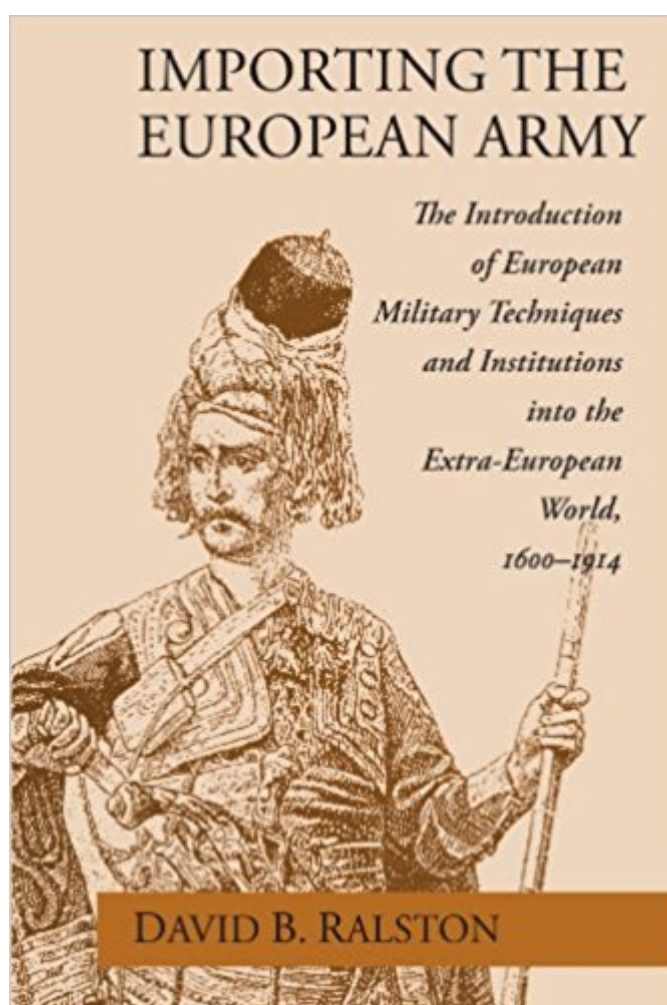


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Importing The European Army: The Introduction Of European Military Techniques And Institutions In The Extra-European World, 1600-1914



Synopsis

In a study that extends well beyond military history, David B. Ralston documents the ways in which five different countries—Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, China, and Japan—refashioned their armed forces along European lines during the three centuries after 1600. The appropriation of Western military institutions in countries outside of Europe was, Ralston argues, the major force driving these countries to adopt European administrative, economic, and cultural modes. Following the same format in his discussion of each country, Ralston makes this central theme in world history easily accessible to students while offering scholars a sophisticated understanding of the exact nature of the changes brought about by Europeanizing military reforms. David B. Ralston, associate professor of history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is the author of *The Army of the Republic*.

Book Information

Paperback: 212 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; Reprint edition (June 1, 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226703193

ISBN-13: 978-0226703190

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.1 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #428,633 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #92 in [Books > History > Military > Life & Institutions](#) #227 in [Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Military Sciences](#) #1170 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Military](#)

Customer Reviews

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Anyone interested in the concept of "military revolution" or the impact of the modernization of armies in the early modern period and its impact on the development of the modern state will enjoy this book. Anyone familiar with the impact of the development of the modern military on European society and government in the early modern period will be interested to see how it impacted these

non-European nations. Essentially what the author has done is asked whether or not the impact was the same as it had been in Europe. He does this using the case study method by examining Russia (which was NOT considered part of Europe in the early modern period), the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Japan. What he finds is that the creation of a modern military based on the European model had the same impact as it had had in the west -- the development of social and political institutions to support that military changed the character of many of these societies. What's interesting is that although the impacts were similar in manner ways, the methods used to implement the reforms and the relative success or failure of the outcome varied depending upon existing cultural, religious, political, bureaucratic, governmental, etc factors. It should not be surprising that the way Russia's institutions evolved to support their development of a Europeanized military was different than what had been done in France or in the Ottoman empire. If you're looking for a straight-forward, traditional military history this is not the book for you. If you have an interest in "new military history" (a sub-genre of military history) you'll enjoy this expansion of a Euro-centric perspective on how societies developed to support modernized military institutions.

Having just read Ralston's "Importing the European Army" I think it is a nicely done work. The discussion is entirely on the large and small scale impacts that the adoption of a modern Army effects an entire State. The author shows that in his case studies (Russia, Ottoman Empire, Egypt, China and Japan) that each State sought to modernize its army along European lines alone without consideration to modernizing any other part of itself. However, in all instances there was a cascade effect of collateral modernization of the State in order to provide and afford this new army. A continually standing army requires reforms in tax collection and government bureaucracy. In order to get educated officers there has to be an extension (or establishment) of the national school systems, both at the primary and secondary levels. The investment into the State's infrastructure and expansion of its industrial capability is necessary to keep the Army supplied. All these improvements directly impact every layer of society and there has always been an armed revolt of sorts from the conservative order which is crushed by the reformers. A very interesting work which one should consider more as a jumping off point to further reading rather than a definitive work. It certainly presents a side of military history which isn't covered very much.

This is one of the more disappointing books I've read in recent years. I was expecting to read a book about countries adapting their armies to European standards as they came into contact with the European armies themselves, and discovered how effective they were. Instead, I found myself

sunk in a quagmire of glutinous prose recounting the political and social consequences of adopting those European standards, without much mention or thought of what they were. The author seems almost uninterested in the military aspect of things, which seems curious given the title of the book. There is, however, no discussion at all of how the armies discussed in the book were organized before they were "Europeanized" or how that organization changed afterwards, and of course weapons and tactics aren't discussed at all except in the most vague terms. While the main point of the narrative --- that countries which Europeanized their armies found their societies transformed by the action also --- is worthwhile, it doesn't need to be restated for most of the book, as it is. There are a host of other, detail-oriented things which annoyed me about the book. One is that the title implies that we're going to be discussing *non-European* countries receiving European military organization, but the first country under discussion is Russia, which is usually considered to be *in Europe.* The author also includes a silly little politically correct apology for referring to the process of Europeanizing the army as "modernizing" because this might imply that other military organizations were inferior (which they were; otherwise their rulers wouldn't have replaced them with European ones) and there are various other parts of the book which are more or less annoying. William H. McNeill wrote a blurb for the back cover, which I suppose sold a few copies. I'm afraid, however, that I'd have to disagree with him. The focus here is too narrow, and the discussion too limited, to have much value. It's also really densely written: the prose would put even a Professor to sleep. I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone, unless the person was *very* interested in the subject.

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