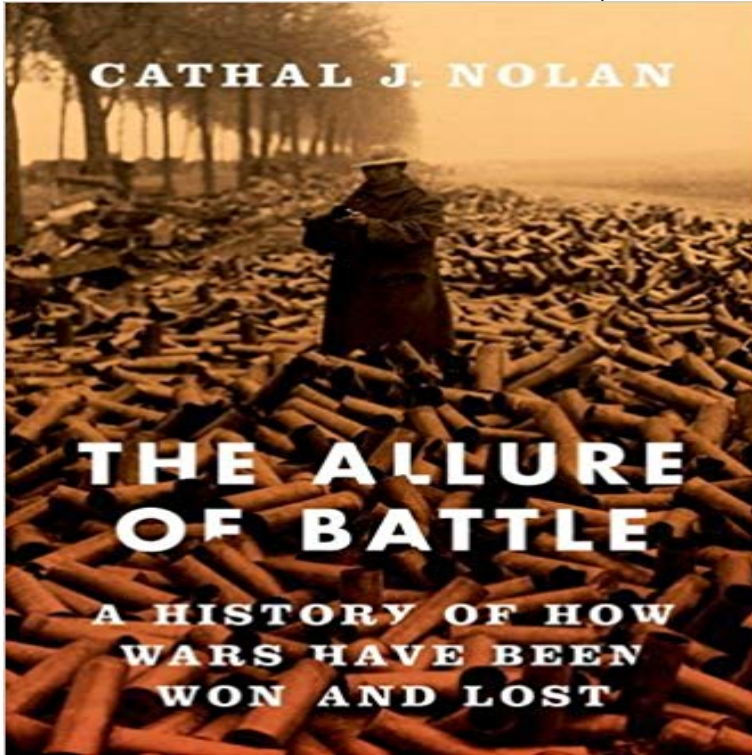


The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost



History has tended to measure wars winners and losers in terms of its major engagements, battles in which the result seemed so clear-cut that they could be considered decisive. Agincourt, Cannae, Konigsberg, Austerlitz, Midway-all resonate in the literature of war and in the popular imagination as tide-turning. But these famous battles may or may not have determined the final outcome of the wars in which they were fought. Nor has the genius of the so-called Great Captains--from Alexander to Gustavus to Frederick and even Napoleon- play a major role. Wars among the major powers have more often been decided in other ways than grand decisive battles won by generals of tactical genius. Cathal J. Nolan's *The Allure of Battle* systematically and engrossingly examines the great battles within the larger context of the major wars of which they were a part. He traces what he calls short-war thinking among aggressive powers, the hope that victory might be swift and wars brief. As he argues persuasively, even the major engagements have mainly contributed to victory or defeat by accelerating the erosion of the other sides defences and will. Massive conflicts, the so-called peoples wars, beginning with Napoleon and continuing until 1945, have been marked and determined far more by prolonged stalemate and attrition, industrial wars in which the determining factor has been not military dexterity or command superiority but materiel. Nolan's masterful book places battles squarely within the context of the wider conflict in which they took place. In the process it help corrects a distorted view of battles role in war, replacing popular images of the decisive battle and battles of annihilation with somber appreciation of the commitments and human sacrifices made throughout centuries of war, particularly among the Great Powers. Accessible, provocative, exhaustive, and

illuminating, The Allure of Battle will spark fresh debate about the history and conduct of warfare.

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