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Book Reviews

DEFENSE STUDIES

Defense Management Reform: How to Make the Pentagon Work Better and Cost Less

By Peter Levine

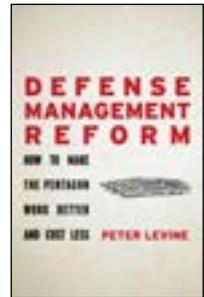
Reviewed by Robert D. Bradford III, assistant professor of defense and Joint processes, Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, US Army War College

With over three million people on the payroll and spending of almost \$700 billion each year, the US Department of Defense (DoD) is a huge bureaucracy. The Department's massive scale and vast and impenetrable processes make it a challenging organization to lead. As a public sector organization consuming taxpayer resources and spending more than half of the US discretionary budget each year, the Department of Defense necessarily comes under constant scrutiny. Examiners of such a large and diverse organization inevitably find evidence of wastefulness, and the DoD's inefficiencies draw public attention. New secretaries of defense, service secretaries, chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and service chiefs consistently include reform among their top priorities. New leaders want to reduce inefficiencies, reassure the public, and reallocate dollars, personnel, and equipment toward their strategic priorities. These leaders would do well to consider the work of Peter Levine.

In *Defense Management Reform: How to Make the Pentagon Work Better and Cost Less*, Levine provides a well-researched analysis of 40 years of DoD reform efforts. He describes successes and failures through primary source documents and personal interviews with key participants from the executive and legislative branches and senior members from both major US political parties. His case studies demonstrate the three important factors that impact the success or failure of defense reforms. Leaders must clearly frame the problem they need to solve, they need to gain approval from key stakeholders, and they must provide consistent and long-term attention to the implementation of their reforms.

Levine brings a wealth of experience and knowledge gained inside the defense enterprise. He served 28 years as a professional staff member to Senator Levin and the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee. There he reviewed and helped craft legislation for many defense reform initiatives. After leaving the congressional staff, Levine served one year as the DoD deputy chief Management Officer and one year as Acting Undersecretary of Defense for personnel and readiness in the Obama administration. More than a spectator, Levine has been a key player in many of the defense reform efforts he examines.

The book's three sections are organized around changes to civilian personnel management, defense acquisition reform, and ongoing actions



Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020

352 pages

\$35.00

to make the Pentagon budget auditable. Levine provides examples to show the value of clear problem definition. He lauds the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 as a case where a solution was developed to a clearly defined problem in Joint planning and mission execution. On the other hand, he shows how Senator McCain's 2014 acquisition reform efforts lacked a similar focus and addressed a large collection of problems within the Department of Defense. These examples also clearly demonstrate the impact of stakeholder buy-in. Levine also highlights the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009 as a case where key stakeholders agreed on the problem and the solution and the National Security Personnel System reforms of the early 2000s as a case that failed because it did not accommodate Congress or labor unions.

The case studies also point to the final factor, consistent implementation. In successful reform efforts like Secretary Perry's attempt to increase the use of commercial specifications in acquisition, DoD leadership remained focused on the issue through to successful completion. The quest for a clean Pentagon audit is an example where department leaders frequently lost attention and reforms floundered.

By describing these specific reform efforts in detail and tracking them through success and failure, Levine posits four reasons why reform within the defense enterprise is difficult. First, he notes the Department of Defense cannot go to a single budget line titled "WASTE." Inefficiencies are spread across the department in multiple budget lines and based on a multitude of processes. Quick fixes are illusory and do not deliver on their promises.

Second, most good ideas have already been tried. A wise leader will survey past actions and be cognizant of people who oversell quick and easy solutions. Third, any DoD reform will face resistance. As in any large organization, new actions will have both supporters and detractors. The department has multiple power centers, and the status quo holds strong. Unless addressed directly, resisters can stop most department change efforts.

Finally, overcoming inefficiencies requires an investment in time and resources. Leader focus is finite, and consistent focus is often hard to maintain. Additionally, to save money, the department must allocate resources upfront. Being more efficient will save funds in the longer term, but will almost always require more resources in the near term when the competition for resources is most brutal.

To address these challenges, Levine provides three guidelines related to successful reforms. First, department leaders require tailored solutions to the right problems. The department should prioritize reform efforts against the most important issues that will yield the highest rewards and then the department must develop specific solutions to address each of these problems.

Second, the initiative must be enacted or approved. Major initiatives are more successful when they are based on a shared understanding

between the executive and legislative branches of government and have support from both major US political parties.

Finally, a consistent focus on resources is required through to full implementation. Successful execution depends on strong leadership and consistent engagement with all stakeholders through completion. While these three dictums seem simple, Levine's book is full of examples where they were not followed, and he provides plenty of evidence showing the simplest ideas can be challenging to implement.

Defense reform will continue to be a priority for new Pentagon leaders who arrive with a mandate to make the department work better. *Defense Management* contains powerful examples of success and failure, and its three tenets are valuable signposts for reform practitioners.

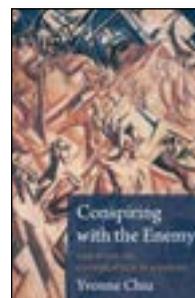
Conspiring with the Enemy: The Ethic of Cooperation in Warfare

By Yvonne Chiu

Reviewed by C. Anthony Pfaff, research professor for strategy, the military profession and ethics, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College

Writing in the 1930s, German philosopher Carl Schmitt famously opined that war's real aim is the existential negation of that enemy, a relationship which represents the "utmost degree of intensity" of separation (Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 26). It is easy to understand why Schmitt would see war that way given the experience of the First World War. The experience of the Second World War, of course, simply reinforced the view that war is a zero sum game and anything that benefits an enemy hurts a friend. In such a view, it is difficult to see how cooperation is possible, much less useful. Yvonne Chiu challenges this canon in the provocative, and sometimes surreal, *Conspiring with the Enemy*. She argues cooperation among enemies in war is often the norm rather than the exception and that cooperation, as currently manifested in the international system, often works at cross purposes to limit the destructive effects of war.

Chiu breaks down cooperation in war to three broad norms: "cooperation for a fair fight, cooperation to minimize damage to a particular class of people, and cooperation to end war quickly" (36, 90, 135). Examples illustrate the range from the obvious, to the interesting, to the genuinely insightful, and include observation of the international law of armed conflict, which bans certain weapons, requires wearing of uniforms, and prohibits the direct targeting of noncombatants, among other things. More interesting examples include timed artillery bombardments in the First World War, which allowed both sides to anticipate attacks and minimize casualties, and British and German units delivering newspapers to each other. A more insightful example is the arrangement between the Indian and Pakistani air forces during the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War, where both sides agreed for a time not



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to attack the other's ground forces, who were mobilizing in flat, open territory. As one Pakistani officer put it, killing soldiers out in the open seemed "none too sporting" (50).

It is easy to see how Chiu's discussion can get surreal. The last thing most soldiers will tell you they want is a fair fight, or perhaps more accurately, in choosing between a fair fight and one they are more likely to survive, soldiers will generally choose the latter over the former. This choice is as much a matter of policy as it is of individual preference. In 2016 General Joseph Dunford, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, explicitly rejected the value of a fair fight in testimony to the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee (Garamone, "US Troops Should Not," *DOD News*, April 27, 2016). Thus it can sometimes be difficult to reconcile Chiu's putative motivation for cooperation with the actual experience of not only participating in war, but in preparing for it as well.

It is equally clear, however, that Chiu makes a good point. While soldiers certainly want to surprise, overwhelm, or otherwise kill their enemy without getting killed themselves, Chiu argues persuasively that they also want to differentiate the killing they do from murder. So for this reason they sometimes refrain from killing the individual enemy who gets caught defenseless while not thinking twice about killing others by the thousands.

At the policy level, soldiers also cooperate to avoid harm to noncombatants. This cooperation requires taking risks and foregoing advantages that absent that intention—and reciprocity—would not make sense. Thus, soldiers wear uniforms to differentiate themselves from civilians, which also makes them easier to target. They do not use certain weapons, like chemical munitions, even if using these weapons would be decisive in a particular battle, in part because of the potential harms to civilians and also in part because they would prefer such weapons not be used against them.

Chiu also notes that observing norms of cooperation in war does not necessarily make war more humane. Remotely operated precision weapons, for example, undermine the idea of a fair fight since remote operators are not taking risks and ensuring the protection of civilians because the use of these weapons creates unreasonable expectations regarding the number of civilian casualties. Since the aim of war is the rapid defeat of the enemy, norms that require restraint can impede military operations and lengthen a war, which simply increases over time the number of persons killed and buildings destroyed.

Chiu's remedy is to invigorate cooperation for ending war quickly. This norm, which she argues has been a feature of war since Greek hoplites fought pitched battles to settle limited disputes, has been largely ignored in more modern wars. She attributes this fact largely to the mobilization of mass armies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to fight wars over ideologies. When wars were between monarchs who were more or less moral equals, it not only made sense to fight over

limited objectives it also did not make sense to those fighting to take a great deal of risk. Here ends and means aligned: armies simply were not going to be capable, as a general rule, to realize someone's excessive ambitions. That changed, in the West at least, when French armies under Napoleon fought for *liberte, egalite, fraternite* instead.

Chiu believes that international law has largely ceded questions of *jus ad bellum* to the relevant actors' ethical sensibilities and political demands. As a result, there is more space for aggressive wars and little space for cooperation to end them quickly. This seems an odd point to make. She is right that international law only permits defensive wars and certain kinds of humanitarian interventions; however, she does not take up the argument that the same system tried to create nonviolent alternatives to settling disputes that might otherwise lead to aggressive wars. So one could argue that rather than ceding questions of *jus ad bellum*, international law instead has answered it in the negative. By rejecting aggressive wars and providing alternatives to fighting, international law seeks to eliminate war as a practice.

Again Chiu has a point. Eliminating war, while a noble objective, is elusive if not impossible. There is a gap between what the law says and the ability of the international community to enforce it. Strong countries still resort to war to realize their interests when they see fit, even when doing so does not conform neatly to the letter or the spirit of the law. Chiu also argues that by limiting just wars to only defensive ones, international law reinforces the status quo and limits the means to address injustices associated with it, whether that be domestic oppression of a minority or boundaries drawn as a result of previous invasion.

This is an interesting concept and raises a number of questions regarding to whom war rights should be given. Over what, besides territory and sovereignty, should wars be fought, and at what point should a party to a conflict concede defeat. To the last point the current answer is "never," if one's cause is just and "immediately," if one's cause is not. A quick survey of the current geopolitical landscape provides ample evidence that this norm is inadequate. Whether the right answer is to make room for more fighting, albeit limited, is the right direction is an important question *Conspiring with the Enemy* encourages readers to take up—especially in today's globally competitive environment where technology has enabled a range of actors to threaten the vital interests of others in ways that risk escalating into war. It is a question worth addressing before it is settled by those who prefer war.

REGIONAL STUDIES

Has China Won? The Chinese Challenge to American Primacy

By Kishore Mahbubani

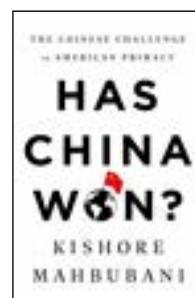
Reviewed by Colonel Gerald Krieger, Near East South Asia Center faculty,
National Defense University

Kishore Mahbubani's *Has China Won? The Chinese Challenge to American Primacy* addresses the geopolitical contest between the United States and China, highlighting key strategic mistakes while offering lessons and insights he hopes will better inform future policies in both countries. Mahbubani is a prolific writer on eastern and western geopolitics, global governance, and policy and is a distinguished fellow at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore.

This book is based on his personal experiences as a senior diplomat working with leaders in Beijing and Washington, DC. With a foot in both the occidental and oriental cultures, Mahbubani—an insightful critic of the west—is well positioned to review key policies and help America reflect on itself to find a better approach to face China's emergence as a world leader. Mahbubani's vast political experience in Asia serves as a lens, deepening an understanding of the motivations and reasoning behind the veil of Chinese politics. His sagacious insights must be kept in perspective. He does treat China gingerly, which is uncommon in the American press and academia. A more critical lens would have balanced his thorough analysis.

There are nine chapters in the book, with an overview of the current state of affairs between China and America and key strategic mistakes of each country in the chapters that follow. The fourth chapter, "Is China Expansionist?," is crucial to dispelling media manipulations and misunderstandings of Chinese policy and informs readers of the oriental perspective (79). Other chapters uncover America's bias of democracy, along with mistaken underlying American assumptions about the global order. Mahbubani adopts an advisory tone in the book, even going so far as to write a fictional letter advising Xi Jinping on the best way to deal with America. The letter is insightful capturing Chinese leader's views of America in the contest for global influence—Mahbubani's interactions with key leaders of the Communist Party of China (CCP) shapes his depiction. The letter also acknowledges areas where China will struggle to exert global influence, such as American dominance in universities, and creativity promoted through a focus on the individual which is foreign in Chinese culture.

The great power competition between China and America does suggest a comparison to the Cold War between America and the former Soviet Union, though Mahbubani persuasively argues that much thought and planning went into the latter and is remarkably absent from the

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2020

310 pages

\$30.00

former. The biggest challenge to the west is due to closed mindedness; “to most Americans, the idea that a free and open society like America, the world’s strongest democracy, could lose a contest against a closed communist society like China is inconceivable,” Mahbubani opines (9).

Contrary to what many Americans think, there is not a deep ideological divide between the United States and the CCP over communism and democracy, Mahbubani convincingly argues. Years ago, China made a conscious decision to not promote communism internationally—unlike the Soviet Union. China is different because, much like America, its goal is to promote Chinese expansionism and influence through the global economy. His book is meant to provide support for a major US course correction for America centered around improving the lives of its citizens, while returning to a strategy focused on garnering international support with its most potent weapon, the US dollar rather than the military.

Mahbubani’s perspective provides a sharp contrast to China’s critics such as Stein Ringen who highlights China’s two million Internet opinion analysts who troll the Web to remove undesirable content while shaping the stories into the CCP’s framework. Ringen labels China as a kleptocracy, and his sharp criticisms serve to balance Mahbubani’s flowery perceptions of the CCP. Contrary to Mahbubani’s suggestion, the great power competition between China and the United States will dominate the headlines for the foreseeable future. We all need to hope that both countries remain cognizant of the other 191 countries on the planet.

Perhaps Mahbubani is correct, and America views China’s rapid success on an unconscious level, to present, what he labels a great “yellow peril” that threatens western supremacy and democracy(7, 258). That another system of government might be a viable alternative to democracy and more economically efficient—despite the drawbacks of individual freedom—could be disturbing. The tug ultimately might be between occidental reason and a subconscious aversion to the oriental culture which ultimately might replace western global domination.

As mentioned earlier, Mahbubani’s participation in Singapore’s elite political system more closely mirrors China’s and shapes his perceptions, though Singapore maintains strong ties to the west. Mahbubani’s work will provide greater insight for military practitioners and should be required reading for senior leaders. His criticisms of American policy are thought provoking, while his lucid observations of Chinese motivations and perspective serve to illustrate why analysts continually misunderstand Chinese intentions. Mahbubani reminds us that for too long, the United States focused on the “M” or military element of soft power in DIME—Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economy—to influence national policy objectives. It is time to modify our approach to meet the new emerging global threat, which will not be a military threat but an economic and diplomatic influence around the world. The military needs to be America’s tool of last resort, not the first. America

needs to make decisions to encourage global cooperation, while also being mindful of the objectives of other countries and how their objectives might not mirror our own.

It is time for America to break the fetters of the Cold War and the associated commitment to build and maintain the military infrastructure which has long since taken a back seat to economic and technological growth and innovation. China's leaders certainly understand and will gladly stand by as America enters costly wars, diverting crucial resources from economic development to the military machine. *Has China Won?* provides a wake-up call. Let us hope the leaders in Washington can be open minded enough to at least consider another perspective, a redefinition of America's role in a multipolar world.

Road Warriors: Foreign Fighters in the Armies of Jihad

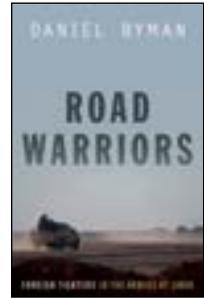
By Daniel Byman

Reviewed by Dr. José de Arimatéia da Cruz, adjunct research professor, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, and professor of comparative politics and international relations, Georgia Southern University

We live in a globalized and interconnected world. The high-tech explosion of the twenty-first century has made communications between friends and foe easier—but also harder to detect—and has allowed foreign fighters to create networks, travel with ease, and expand their technological reach. Daniel Byman's *Road Warriors: Foreign Fighters in the Armies of Jihad* provides readers with an analytical history of the contemporary foreign fighter phenomenon in light of the democratization of technology.

Byman, a professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, a senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, and a former staff member of the 9/11 Commission, argues that the potential threat posed by foreign jihadists is large and growing. In addition to conducting international terrorist attacks, they radicalize indigenous fighters in civil wars and regionalize conflicts (8). He defines a foreign fighter as an "individual who travels to a state other than their own to join an illicit group and perpetrate or assist in terrorist attacks or armed conflict" (7). He also derives three sets of observations regarding the foreign fighter based on the following questions: "(1) Why do individuals leave their homes to go fight in faraway lands? (2) What impact do foreign fighters have that makes them of such concern? and (3) How can we [the US Army and other Western nations] better fight foreign fighters" (9). These are not rhetorical questions. They guide Byman's analysis of the foreign fighters in the jihad armies.

As Byman points out, foreign fighters leave their homes to join the mujahideen to expel occupiers of Muslim lands or groups fighting against the so-called apostate governments or for the establishment of a Caliphate, even if temporarily. They also make a tremendous impact on conflicts worldwide in terms of duration and brutality. Some foreign fighters possess considerable combat and/or technical skills that enhance the conflict's lethality. Others act as logisticians, travel facilitators, passport forgers, and recruiters and contribute to the armies of jihad because they understand the culture where a conflict occurs and know how to appeal to the community, either with inducements of a better future or hostility toward citizens for noncooperation, and are often "better trained, more highly motivated and networked, and tied to skilled planners back in the war zone" (12).



New York: Oxford University Press, 2019

382 pages

\$29.95

An important contribution by Byman is his strategy on how to combat foreign fighters and his six-stage foreign fighter production process (13, 252). In stage one, “Radicalize,” a foreign fighter “learns radical ideas” and “becomes angry” (253). As Byman illustrates, no single factor explains why someone radicalizes and becomes a foreign fighter; therefore, the goal of governments during this stage is to identify and dissuade individuals before they take illegal actions. A government must cooperate and coordinate its counternarrative with local religious leaders, community businesses, and neighborhood groups that “promote their own messages of moderation” (254).

In stage two, “Decision,” a foreign fighter becomes motivated to fight and the individual undergoes change such as growing a beard in solidarity to the other mujahideen (253). “As terrorism expert Clinton Watts points out, “The call for jihad may be global, but recruitment is extremely *local*”; therefore, developing peaceful alternatives while also integrating the mujahideen back into the community is the objective (256, emphasis in original).

In stage three “Traveling,” a foreign fighter “travels to foreign countries to participate in jihad” (253). Byman believes this is an important stage since there must be cooperation with a foreign country in order to obtain passports, money, and travel access. Foreign fighters will usually bribe border control agents to facilitate their comings and goings through a region or country. Border control agents, usually underpaid, see the bribe as an important supplement to their incomes. For example, Venezuelans have been able to travel to Iran without having to stamp their passports. Another example, illustrated by Byman, is the Mauritanian government. According to Byman, “the Mauritanian government paid Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb ten to twenty million Euros a year and promised that it would not interfere with jihadist travel if, in exchange, the group agreed not to kidnap tourists or otherwise attack in Mauritania” (257).

Stage four “Training and Fighting in the War Zone,” is, perhaps, the most important stage (253). Here the foreign fighter “gains skills and experience, connects to global jihadi networks, and adopts more extreme views” (253).

In stage five “Return,” the foreign fighter returns home by means that “avoid law enforcement and security services” (253). Byman contends “the return stage entails the greatest number of competing agendas, requiring a state to adopt an array of policy options” (265). While some governments have taken a *mano dura* (firm hand) approach when dealing with foreign fighters who return home, the overall evidence indicates it does not prevent or dissuade an individual from continuing nefarious activities. Byman discusses the examples of France and Denmark and their approach to returnees. France systematically prosecutes its returnees on terrorism charges while Denmark has carefully reevaluated its approach to reintegrate the individual into society upon his return rather than criminalize him. As the Danish pointed out, “being more

coercive might strengthen ‘the victim’s discourse’ within the Muslim community and thereby exacerbate the social conditions that can lead some individuals to participate in jihad” (265). In stage six “Plot,” the foreign fighter plans a terrorist act and recruits potential ideological sympathizers to join the mujahideen movement (253).

In conclusion, *Road Warriors* provides a history and assessment of the modern jihadist foreign fighter movement. Furthermore, Byman’s foreign fighter’s life cycle, provides practitioners and scholars of terrorism with an approach for dealing with a topic unlikely to go away any time soon. Terrorism, a pandemic of the twenty-first century, can only be mitigated, never completely eradicated. While terrorist organizations are often fragmented and highly divided along ideology, religious beliefs, and leadership personalities, Byman’s long-term hope is that “transnational jihadism, like international anarchism and communism before it, will burn itself out or at least move from center stage to a sideshow” (267). However, terrorism and jihadists are not simple issues policymakers and law enforcement agencies can easily handle. As Byman suggests “because of this resilience, the foreign fighter problem will endure even with the Caliphate being forced underground at the end of 2018” (250). Byman further explains that “[f]or now, governments must assume the movement will endure, try to counter it, and limit the damage that can be done by foreign fighters and the terrorists they inspire” (268). I recommend *Road Warriors* to anyone interested in international studies, terrorism, and international relations. But, most importantly to future Army leaders in a “world in disarray.”

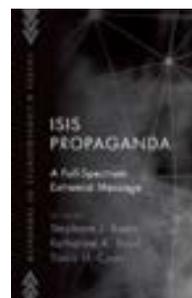
ISIS Propaganda: A Full-Spectrum Extremist Message

Edited by Stephane J. Baele, Katharine A. Boyd, and Travis G. Coan

Reviewed by Dr. Robert J. Bunker, instructor at the Safe Communities Institute at the University of Southern California

The edited volume *ISIS Propaganda*, pertaining to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (or Syria), is the second work in the Causes and Consequences of Terrorism Series, a partnership between Oxford University Press and the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland. Its editors, all at the University of Exeter, are Stephane J. Baele, senior lecturer in international relations and security; Katharine A. Boyd, senior lecturer in criminology; and Travis G. Coan, senior lecturer in quantitative politics. Inclusive of the editors, 16 contributors also participated in the volume, including well-known terrorism specialists Thomas Hegghammer, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI); Haroro J. Ingram, George Washington University; and Charlie Winter, King’s College London.

ISIS Propaganda provides the “first comprehensive overview and detailed analysis of this (ISIS) propaganda effort, which, we argue



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304 pages
\$45.00

here and throughout the book, constitutes an outstanding instance of ‘full-spectrum propaganda’” (2). This is quite a feat given no prior book has attempted to arrange the mosaic pieces related to ISIS propaganda activities in order to create a more encompassing picture that can be better understood and analyzed in its totality.

ISIS Propaganda is composed of front and back sections, an introduction, eight chapters, and an afterword. The front sections consist of the contributor listing and a glossary of frequent Arabic terms—including terms in English, their original Arabic spelling, and the ISIS translation in English—and individual and group names in English and their original Arabic spelling. The introduction provides an overview to the work and explains how ISIS is utilizing a full-spectrum propaganda approach within the context of the “IS moment of prodigious plagiarism” (8). The impact of the use of propaganda by ISIS and the “thorny question of the propagandists’ and propagandees’ respective agencies,” however, is not addressed (11).

The first chapter provides two key tables. The first table—related to the “Islamic State’s ‘Hedging’ Approach”—identifies themes prioritized during bust and boom cycles (32). The second table, “Multiple Formats Mobilized in Islamic State Propaganda,” highlights the messaging mediums analyzed in the follow-on chapters (36). This important chapter recognizes “IS seeks to synchronize the actions of its ‘competitive system of control’ with the messages at the heart of its ‘competitive system of meaning’” (44).

The second chapter is organized into three parts focused on ISIS’s ideological genealogy, the context in which its message developed, and speculation concerning its futures messaging (51). The next four chapters provide the messaging case studies related to the mediums utilized for Salafi-Jihadi—that is Wahhabi derived—propaganda purposes, principally in Arabic and English but other languages are also touched upon. The third chapter addresses magazines, highlights the importance of the Arabic language magazine *al-Naba* and the better-known *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, English language magazines, and utilizes network linking and in- and out-group and quantitative analysis.

The fourth chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the propaganda videos utilized by the Caliphate, focusing on “province” (*Wilāyat*) produced content and trends, “script” content analysis related to ISIS narratives, and the “Selected 10” featured video placement found in magazines such as *Dabiq*. Chapter five reviews Islamic State online propaganda use with an emphasis on its active engagement with the target audience as opposed to more passive interactions. The successful use of social media such as Twitter and Telegram is then explored. The sixth chapter concerns the lesser propaganda media utilized by ISIS in terms of their “religious chants . . . photo galleries/reports, infographics, books, and news communiqués,” with the a cappella Islamic chants (*anashid*)—perhaps the most fascinating element (189). The seventh chapter focuses on counter-ISIS propaganda activities including shutting down their safe

online spaces, limiting legitimate media amplification and exploitation for intelligence-gathering purposes, and counter-narrative strategies. The final chapter discusses terrorist propaganda futures through its answering of specific questions to guide the analysis related to imitative and creative behavior on the part of ISIS and its successors (243). Each chapter contains a reference listing at its conclusion.

The afterword by Hegghammer credits the book for helping the field overcome a five-year struggle to better understand the “scale and nature of the IS full-spectrum propaganda machine” by fusing the talents of “propaganda specialists and ‘in-the-weeds’ jihadism observers” (266). This afterword is followed by an *anashid* appendix, excerpts from a provincial news report from Al-Bayan Radio appendix, and an index.

The book has one slight demerit. Some of the chapter content appears to have been completed in 2018 with later sporadic contributions refreshing it into 2020, giving the information a lessons-learned rather than a cutting-edge feel given how quickly the ISIS jihadi propaganda spaces evolve. This problem, unfortunately, is part and parcel of academic book publishing with its industrial-era production cycles and is not a critique of the book itself.

Ultimately, any critique would be quibbling. *ISIS Propaganda* is an extremely high-quality book with good use of tabling, figures, and imagery. It is very informative and does an excellent integrative analysis of seemingly disparate forms of ISIS propaganda material. It will be of specific interest to military officers and governmental personnel tasked with the US global response to ISIS social media use for propaganda, radicalization, and recruitment purposes. Much of this concern today ties into the current emergence of ISIS cells in new parts of the globe and the foreign fighters phenomenon—with its battlefield shifting potentials—that still has not been fully resolved.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

From Quills to Tweets: How America Communicates about War and Revolution

Edited by Andrea J. Dew, Marc A. Genest, and S. C. M. Paine

Reviewed by Ross Harrison, senior fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington, DC

Carl von Clausewitz, the famous nineteenth-century Prussian war strategist, said, “War is the continuation of politics by other means” (Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 87). Part of the politics of war for Clausewitz is the interaction between the government, the people, and the military. *From Quills to Tweets* embodies this insight to its fullest.

For the authors of this new and fresh contribution to the study of war, the successful prosecution of military campaigns often depends on adept communication strategies. Even successful military campaigns not accompanied by an adeptly waged “war of words” risk political objectives not being met, resulting in the most profound kind of strategic failure (44).

Dew, Genest, and Paine fuse an elegant, simple-to-follow conceptual framework with a sweeping historical treatment of war that yields a rich understanding of how war and revolution are inherently political enterprises. Readers come away with the insight that communication can be as important a part of military strategy as the fighting itself, even though the authors do not explicitly say this. Without effective communication strategies, political and military leaders risk rendering even successful military campaigns unsuccessful in meeting their political objectives.

The book uses the insight about the inextricable connection between warfare and communication, not as an endpoint but rather as a jumping-off point. The authors drill down deeper than previous treatments of the same subject, providing readers with a wonderfully innovative analysis of how the United States has, at times, framed the political dimensions of war to its advantage, and how at other times, political leaders have used messaging to provide a soft political landing for military failures like Vietnam.

The book grabs readers from the first page with the crisp treatment of the Revolutionary War against the British and the importance of messaging as a determinant of its success. Almost every major US military campaign is examined—from the War of 1812, the Spanish-American War, the two World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, and the more recent military campaigns in the Middle East.

The authors are as adroit in getting their message across as they are in providing readers with an understanding of the importance of

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\$36.95

messaging in war. Readers will see that while time and technology have changed the communication side of war, the fundamentals have remained largely unchanged since the American Revolution. For sure, military campaigns have become more geographically expansive and complex, and the technology of messaging has become more sophisticated. But like in earlier times, the ability for government leaders to translate military success into the political wins discussed by Clausewitz depends heavily on adept management of the message.

This book gets good stylistic grades as well. For an edited volume, it is remarkably cohesive. All contributing authors used the tight framework of the messages of war, the messengers who propagate those messages, and the media by which the messages are propagated. Readers will forget this book is a compilation of contributions by many authors—unlike many edited volumes.

From *Quills to Tweets* is an incredibly timely contribution at a time when US foreign policy seems to lack clearly stated objectives and strategies, and when effective communication to the American public, to allies, and to adversaries remains elusive and flatfooted. This tightly written volume will provide a wakeup call for a more coherent strategy that communicates both military and political objectives to the American public and the world. It will be a conversation starter for renewed discourse on how war is, in fact, a quest to achieve clear political and strategic objectives by other means.



New York: Routledge, 2020
262 pages
\$155.00

Organisational Learning and the Modern Army: A New Model for Lessons-Learned Processes

By Tom Dyson

Reviewed by Seth A. Johnston, fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University, and lieutenant colonel in the US Army

Tom Dyson's *Organisational Learning and the Modern Army* evokes the old admonition not to judge a book by its cover. This slim hardback makes good on its title proposition for army lessons learned. It also surveys British and German experiences in Afghanistan, synthesizes literature on military change, contemplates NATO, accounts for the United States among many other factors, and offers policy advice for related topics, including officer education and civil-military relations. Its density is less like a sabot round than canister: though covering a large area, each fléchette of insight still stings.

The book concentrates on how armies institutionalize learning. Dyson views lessons learned processes as an important “transmission belt” for moving hard-won lessons from the field into enduring changes in training, doctrine, and other aspects of the institutional army (1). Contrasted with other authors on the subject, Dyson is especially bullish on the value of formal lessons learned institutions—which he

abbreviates “LL” (3). His model identifies organizational activities—especially operational design, basic and predeployment training, and education—that support such formal lessons learned. On the question of sources for military learning, Dyson considers the full range of options but concludes factors external to the military are decisive and that civilian leadership is especially important (246).

The book features an introductory cluster of theory chapters, two case studies from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and closing reflections on military learning mainly aimed at practitioners and “Practice Turn” scholars (10). In his review of theoretical literature, Dyson pulls few punches in criticizing the “limited analysis” of Richard Downie, John Nagl, and other authors on organizational learning (5). To be sure, other authors, including Sergio Catignani and Theo Farrell, enjoy multiple complimentary citations, though perhaps as much for their shared empirical focus on the British army in Afghanistan. Dyson embraces theoretical eclecticism and draws explicitly from organization theory, process models like bureaucratic politics, and strategic and other cultural approaches, all before embracing neoclassical realism—itsself a broad tent. The result is a detailed chart of theoretical propositions on military learning, focused on the tactical and operational levels of war.

Although the book is titled and organized as a theory-proposing work supported by two case studies, it could be equally well read the other way around. An examination of the two biggest European participants in the ISAF mission—and among the most important armies in NATO generally—is empirically valuable. Military and civilian practitioners will find the summary takeaways from the British and German experiences illuminating applied reading and a superb complement to the *Parameters*’ special issues on Afghanistan lessons learned published during the last year (158–63, 232–42).

Dyson assesses that while British and German armies began their Afghanistan campaigns with decent learning potential, both failed to realize enduring lessons. The detailed reasons why reveal unexpected gems, such as a fascinating historical and generational account of the “three visions of military professionalism” in the *Bundeswehr* (221–23). Beyond the main tactical and operational focus, Dyson reflects on “unrealistic” British and German political expectations of their armies, with some good sense of civil and military recommendations to close the gap (248–49). With so much else written on the American experience, this book offers a rare perspective. It is not merely a documentation of past campaigns, but a work of forward-looking clarity. Dyson convincingly argues the relevance of these cases for an army’s modernization and readiness for newer challenges such as hybrid warfare (31, 88, 158, 247).

Organisational Learning and the Modern Army is serious reading, and a more ruthless editor might have demanded cuts. Not all theories do equal work in the analysis, for example, and there are some hints that still other conceptual approaches were indeed cut from earlier drafts—mainly

historical institutionalism and associated terms like “path-dependence” that remain sprinkled through individual sections (58). Empirically, the book offers useful information about the multinational NATO lessons learned institutions, but these are not central to the British or German cases.

Stylistically, I admit to a momentary sense of déjà vu before realizing the first paragraph of chapter two is a verbatim facsimile of the preceding paragraph. In word choice, spelling, and other conventions, the book exemplifies the old saying that the United Kingdom and the United States are two nations divided by a common language. Yet the application of so many theoretical traditions and their associated technical terms (e.g., “Potential Absorptive Capacity ‘PACAP,’” “Realized Absorptive Capacity ‘RACAP,’” “‘single-loop’ and ‘double-loop’ learning,” etc.) present a steep learning curve to anyone (2, 12). American political scientists might also quibble about the research design, including the reliance on qualitative methods and interview sources, or using only two case studies to advance such an exhaustive new model. But Dyson’s clear command of the material, the richness of the information conveyed from interviews, and the uncommonly helpful and explicit practical implications of the analysis outweigh these concerns.

Dyson’s book contributes to a renaissance in transatlantic scholarly interest in military learning, often motivated by and focused on the American and European experience in Afghanistan. It follows works “such as “*Learning the Hard Way*” (2016) by Jörg Noll and Sebastiaan Rietjens and *NATO’s Lessons in Crisis* (2018) by Heidi Hardt. Hardt and Dyson pair together exceptionally well. While both authors undertake a qualitative case study analysis of NATO in Afghanistan, Hardt emphasizes the international rather than national structures, the strategic rather than tactical and operational, and the informal methods of learning rather than formal “LL” (3). Together the books set up a great debate on the future of this subject—or perhaps the beginning of a new synthesis. Either way, Dyson makes an important addition to contemporary conflict viewed from an allied but non-US perspective, comprehensive thinking about military learning, and practical considerations for army institutional leadership and civil-military relations. I highly recommend *Organisational Learning and the Modern Army*.

MILITARY HISTORY

Phoenix Rising: From the Ashes of Desert One to the Rebirth of U.S. Special Operations

By Col Keith M. Nightingale (Ret)

Reviewed by David Fivecoat, leadership consultant and retired US Army colonel

Operation Eagle Claw, the US military operation to rescue the 52 American hostages being held at the US Embassy in Tehran, Iran, ended in failure at Desert One on the night of April 24–25, 1980, when a RH-53D helicopter collided with an EC-130 tanker during refueling operations. In 1979, Keith Nightingale—then a major working on the Department of the Army staff in the Pentagon—was assigned to the Joint Task Force Headquarters for the operation. *Phoenix Rising* is Nightingale’s fast paced, extremely well-written account of his perspective on the operation and the subsequent creation of US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).

Nightingale’s detailed perspective on the planning, rehearsals, and execution of the raid are the strongest aspect of the book. Early on he lays out the challenges of Operation Eagle Claw:

- “Fly 15,000 miles around the world, the last 850 miles in hostile airspace, and arrive undetected.
- Enter a sprawling metropolitan city of 2,000,000.
- Close with and breach the walls of a heavily guarded, 27-acre compound.
- Free, without injury, 60+ American citizens from their guards without injuring any civilians” (15).

Additional conditions included planning, rehearsing, and executing the operation in complete secrecy within 10 days of notification; no funding for the operation; and extraction of the assault force and hostages. These parameters made the hostage rescue plan extremely complex. With no standing organization trained for the mission, the Army created an ad hoc Joint Task Force with a headquarters of 32 people on the Joint Staff in the Pentagon under the command of Major General James Vaught. The task force included a Delta Force element, a US Army Rangers element, US Navy RH-53D helicopters, US Marine Corps helicopter pilots, US Air Force EC-130 and MC-130s to transport the assault force, US Navy fighter aircraft operating from the USS Nimitz and USS Coral Sea, as well as US Air Force AC-130 gunships for air support and US Air Force C-141s to extract the force.

The entire Eagle Claw team worked tirelessly to provide a viable military option to then US President Jimmy Carter. Although the lowest-ranking person in the Joint Task Force Headquarters, Nightingale



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successfully captures the personalities and series of decisions that increased the complexity and ad hoc nature of the operation. Vaught and the team overcame obstacle after obstacle to plan, rehearse, and execute the operation—especially maintaining secrecy and operating without a budget.

Although Nightingale concludes the mission failed for mechanical, organizational, and political reasons, he highlights the US Navy's failure to fly the eight RH-53Ds on flight profiles that would have replicated the distances of the raid—despite being ordered three times to do so. He also asserts that flying the rehearsal flights, as directed, would have stressed the aircraft and might have prevented the mechanical loss of three helicopters prior to Desert One. This omission by the Navy was not brought up in the post-operation inquiry.

The second-best element of *Phoenix Rising* is Nightingale's perspective on working in the Pentagon. The 1979–81 Pentagon was very similar to my experience working in the basement of the Pentagon from 2012–14. I agree with Nightingale's assessment that for the military "significant change must come from outside the bureaucracy. Bureaucracies are very good at fighting that which they don't want to do" (208). The stories of resistance from the services, briefings in the tank, bad meals in the food court, and daily crises will resonate with readers assigned to the Pentagon, especially those working in the Joint Staff.

Nightingale provides a unique perspective on the creation of USSOCOM. From the book, I learned more about programs still used today (Honey Badger, ELT, Yellow Fruit, and DARISSA) that helped develop special operations capabilities in the 1980s. Nightingale also provides a detailed play-by-play of the bureaucratic and political fight behind the creation of the four-star headquarters that would oversee all Special Operations Forces and have a line item in the budget to fund the organization. It is clear, without the failure at Desert One, USSOCOM would not exist.

While reading the book, I wished Nightingale had used his unique viewpoint and friendship with the key players to write the definitive history of Operation Eagle Claw. Charlie Beckwith, Eric Haney, James Kyle, Mark Bowden, and now Keith Nightingale have all tackled the raid from different perspectives. It has been more than 40 years since the operation and not one published book covers all facets of the mission. Maybe Sean Naylor, Seth Jones, or Eric Schmitt will take on this task.

In short, *Phoenix Rising* is superb. The book was a pleasure to read and added another piece to the Operation Eagle Claw puzzle. It should be read by personnel at all levels in the special operations community who will draw lessons on planning complex operations, grasp the challenges of creating ad hoc organizations under pressure, and develop a deeper understanding of USSOCOM history. It is also a valuable read for anyone assigned to the Pentagon who will walk away with a better comprehension of how the bureaucracy works.

Covert Regime Change: America's Secret Cold War

By Lindsey A. O'Rourke

Reviewed by Dr. Richard H. Immerman, Emeritus Marvin Wachman Director,
Center for the Study of Force and Diplomacy, Temple University

A book title that strings together the words covert and regime change is certain to attract potential readers from the academic, public, and policy-making communities. Add the subtitle “America’s Secret Cold War,” impressive research, and methodological rigor, and the book will be eagerly sought after by top-tier press acquisition editors and top-tier journal book review editors and provide a gateway to a tenure track position. Lindsay O’Rourke’s revised dissertation is evidence of that.

It is surprising, then, that O’Rourke’s contribution to the history of US foreign relations, intelligence history, and international relations theory is not just valuable but also original. After all, especially since the failed Bay of Pigs operation in 1961, US-orchestrated covert actions aimed at influencing, destabilizing, or overthrowing foreign governments often made headlines. Even before that, clandestine operations in Albania, Iran, Guatemala, Indonesia, Congo, and elsewhere were hardly well-kept secrets. O’Rourke’s dataset identifies more than 60 covert efforts to bring about regime change, some 10 times the number of overt efforts, pursued by the United States between 1947 and 1989. Scholars and journalists have been aware of each of these efforts. Yet because of the continued classification of documents and attendant impediments to research, few authors have sought to chronicle and analyze them as comprehensively and systematically as O’Rourke, and no one has succeeded as she has. We owe her a great debt.

Yet O’Rourke’s goal in *Covert Regime Change* is not so much to uncover what but to explain why and assess the results and consequences. Bolstering the salience of the questions she explores is the continued appeal of covert regime changes after the end of the Cold War when, at least until 2001, the United States appeared to have less reason to fear global antagonists. O’Rourke explains this phenomenon by formulating a typology to categorize the drivers of US policymakers’ decisions to seek regime changes. She begins with offensive operations, conventionally associated with rollback or liberation, designed to overthrow a perceived security threat and/or its allies. These operations, most which targeted Eastern Europe or Soviet nationalities during the Cold War, were the least effective. The second category is preventive operations, which aimed to stop a state from developing a weapon or weapons system or deter it from joining a hostile alliance. Iran and other Middle Eastern states are exemplars.

Finally, O’Rourke identifies hegemonic operations as those intended to establish or maintain US dominance. Caribbean and Latin American nations such as Guatemala, Brazil, or Chile fit this template.



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All told, O'Rourke classifies 23 covert operations in the first category as covert, 25 in the second category, and 18 in the third category. The sum of the overt operations that spanned the categories is six, half of which were hegemonic. She also formulates typologies for the covert actions themselves.

As a historian I am uncomfortable with typologies. Our discipline stresses contingency, dissimilarity, and change. In my judgment, the distinctions O'Rourke draws among the missions are somewhat artificial, and the boundaries that separate them are porous. One can identify the 1954 Guatemalan coup d'état—code name Operation PBSuccess—as offensive or preventive as easily as hegemonic. Nevertheless, because the United States sought to effect so many regime changes during the Cold War—revealingly the term regime change did not become popular until the post-Cold War era when applied publicly to such states as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria—there is value to establishing patterns and commonalities. Chief among these, O'Rourke argues persuasively, is the perception that regime change will advance US interests more fundamentally than any alternative (negotiations, for example), that the problem the United States confronts is intractable, and, perhaps most problematically, that the United States can replace the offending regime with one more sympathetic to American aims if not necessarily its values.

Another pattern O'Rourke detects, and perhaps the one on which the others hinge, is that although covert operations are more likely to fail than overt ones, policymakers find them all but irresistible because they appraise the potential risks and costs as lower than overt operations. They presume a failure will remain hidden or at least the United States will be able plausibly to deny its culpability. Further, the operation is unlikely to provoke a great power response. Hence, regardless of the dismal success rate, covert operations have continued and will almost surely continue to be high on the menu of policymakers' options and instruments. The processes administrations across the board use to decide on an operation, moreover, are unlikely to serve as a deterrent.

O'Rourke thus joins the chorus of critics who argue that covert actions are ineffective instruments of US foreign policy and national security. Even when the operations succeeded in the short run, she writes, the “covert regime changes seldom worked out as intended,” and the costs to America's reputation, image, global relations, and more far exceeded the rewards (83). But she goes a step beyond by estimating that notwithstanding the validity of this assessment, policy makers will be unable to resist the temptation to approve them. This contribution to the literature is more constructive than her typology, her articulation of a theory that explains covert regime changes in terms of realism and security, or even her exhaustive catalog of operations.

Without minimizing the historiographical value of *Covert Regime Change*—O'Rourke does intervene in some debates, perhaps most notably by arguing that John F. Kennedy was “intimately involved” in

the decision to support a coup against Ngo Dinh Diem—O'Rourke's objective is primarily theoretical (179). That will affect readers' reception of, if not the book, several of its chapters. All will applaud her research, however, especially her archival research. In this regard, even though she fails occasionally to acknowledge adequately that some of her secondary sources are more reliable and authoritative than others, she has carefully reconstructed the history of the numerous case studies she presents. The takeaways from this book will differ among political scientists, historians, and practitioners, and some will lament the absence of a bibliography. They all should read it nevertheless.

Civilizing Torture: An American Tradition

By W. Fitzhugh Brundage

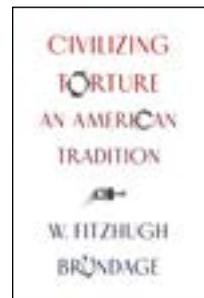
Reviewed by Dr. Larry D. Miller, professor of communicative arts, US Army War College

Author W. Fitzhugh Brundage, the William B. Umstead Distinguished Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has crafted a perceptive and rather unsettling contribution to the understanding of torture. *Civilizing Torture: An American Tradition* presents eight wide-ranging and articulate chapters that constitute an admittedly fractured yet remarkably informative history of torture.

Brundage's contribution is necessarily imperfect: torturers prefer to work in the shadows, seldom maintain detailed records, and portray their activities as favorably as possible when challenged or called to account. Victims are often reluctant to speak, and an unknown number of victims never have the opportunity to speak. In addition, what qualifies as torture in an expansive historical context is as malleable as it is disturbing. As Brundage aptly observes, "There is no unambiguous threshold that separates cruelty from torture" (5). Nevertheless, some constants apply. Invariably inflicted by the powerful on the powerless, torture involves physical, mental, and often life-threatening pain.

The basic theme throughout this volume is the torture record demonstrates that American exceptionalism is, and has always been, far more aspirational than real. By and large Americans have historically accepted and tacitly embraced brutality and torture while steadfastly posturing under a presumption of innocence. Torture, Americans believe and believe with little doubt, is something others do, not the United States. Alas, Brundage demonstrates the conflict between belief and action: despite lofty values and assurances to the contrary, Americans have historically employed torture as a viable means to an end, so much so that torture, as he argues convincingly, is something of an ongoing American tradition.

Brundage challenges readers to discern whether a fair, just, and democratic society can legitimately engage in torture while proudly



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clinging to the foundational values, principles, and perspectives of a liberal democratic republic that rejects torture as unacceptable and uncivilized. By documenting the use of torture across multiple historic contexts and issues, and detailing the ways in which torture has been enacted, Brundage directs attention to the sustained and compelling conflict between means and ends—an exceptionally important contribution, though one that leaves the text disjointed at times.

The Brundage torture tour moves in a hopscotch fashion beginning in the early 1500s in America, England, and Europe and eventually landing in the modern era. In each extended and well-developed instance, Brundage demonstrates the powerful have authority to act, although torture itself is often, but not always, hidden from view. He begins by documenting a wealth of torturous acts and brutality well understood, respected, and practiced by warring tribal groups and adopted in part by European colonists intent on securing land and establishing a new republic.

Brundage shows that, over time, torture came to be gently civilized in the public mind. Torture for the most part was relegated to and associated with savagery, unregulated frontier conduct, fading recollections of monarchical tyranny, and often simply ignored or dismissed as a distressing aberration from the societal norm. Thus, because torture is antithetical to civility in a liberal democratic republic, the developing state opted for humane approaches for formal rehabilitation of individuals whose conduct warranted incarceration and punishment.

Throughout the book, Brundage presents exemplars to demonstrate the resulting divide between the imagined civil state and the enacted brutal state characteristic of prison life, police conduct, and military engagements—all of which are regrettably relevant to contemporary audiences. Prison life in nineteenth-century America, for example, was rife with cruelties sanctioned by the state and routinely administered by institutional authority. Indeed, the shower-bath—a forerunner of waterboarding—and hooding were common practices in some northern penitentiaries in the 1800s. The emergence of the modern police force gave rise to “the third degree,” forced confessions, and an array of often brutal extralegal practices. The book also examines torture during the Cold War, the Vietnam experience, the post 9/11 War on Terror, events at Abu Ghraib, and efforts by senior government officials to authorize “enhanced interrogation” as a legal and acceptable technique for securing information from suspected terrorists and unwilling informants (309).

With the publication of *Civilizing Torture: An American Tradition*, Brundage effectively augments the literature on torture in the American experience and its relationship to justice, human rights, dignity, and democracy. Military strategists, policymakers, and historians will benefit from his insights, as will readers interested in the strained relationship between civility and security. Brundage’s unique contribution is to place, for today’s readers, the reality of torture as a practice conducted

simultaneously in support of and in direct opposition to American lives and values. He reminds us the extreme polarization so often identified as unique to this historical moment is, in fact, rooted in our founding and made visible through the structures and abuses of power represented at home and abroad by the specter of American torture.

