

2014

Book Reviews

The U.S. Navy War College

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Recommended Citation

War College, The U.S. Navy (2014) "Book Reviews," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 67 : No. 3 , Article 11.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol67/iss3/11>

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BOOK REVIEWS

DUTY: A REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

Gates, Robert M. *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*. Newburyport, Mass.: Knopf, 2014. 640pp. \$25

The title of *Duty* could easily be *So You Want to Be the Secretary of War, Violence, and Suffering?* Gates's memoir takes the glamour out of the position and makes sure the reader grasps just how personally draining and ethically frustrating the job can be. It is a book worth reading, if only to learn more about the scope of the issues that typically face any conscientious Secretary of Defense.

To bring that point home, here are the more important challenges and issues that Gates had to deal with across two presidential administrations: scaling back the U.S. military presence in Iraq; scaling up that same presence in Afghanistan; defending two controversial war policies before an often hostile Congress; taking care of military personnel injured in Iraq and Afghanistan; explaining to families of those killed in both wars why their deaths mattered; building personal relationships with counterparts in other governments; dampening the negative effects of "turf wars" between White House staff and officials (both uniformed and civilian) in the Defense Department; sponsoring the development of antimine vehicles

that the career acquisition people in the Army did not want; tailoring the organization of U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan; fostering an organizational climate that would allow the military services to move beyond "don't ask, don't tell"; and serving as a trusted adviser to two very different presidents from opposing political parties.

I find the list daunting. Robert Gates too found it daunting, but he took on those challenges and issues with energy, patience, persistence, and loyalty to the Republic. *Duty* is just the right title for his memoir. It is what Gates swore to do, and his memoir is an effort to describe his role and the role of other actors in some very crucial events.

The comments I have already read about the book focus on Gates's critical opinions of important personalities, including Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and several senior military officers. If those criticisms are all one comes away with after reading this book, the more important stories told by Gates have been unfortunately missed. If you read the entire book, you can step back and say, "Two

presidents gambled by committing the United States to two different wars, and both presidents needed someone to come along and ‘fix things’ when those two bets didn’t play out as the presidents expected and hoped.” Gates was “the fixer”—dedicated, a hard worker, disciplined, organized, experienced, well connected, and intelligent.

Gates was not in on the planning for the war against Iraq. As he says on page 568, “Had I been secretary of defense during the winter of 2002–2003, I don’t know whether I would have recommended that President Bush invade Iraq.” However, Gates does not second-guess President Bush: “It would be disingenuous to say with ten years’ hindsight that I would have been opposed, especially since I publicly supported the decision at the time.” Moreover, after citing all the negative aspects of the war against Iraq, Gates says, “I cannot honestly claim I would have foreseen any or all of that.” In any case, when he took over from Donald Rumsfeld, he set aside his own personal concerns and embarked on a campaign to support President Bush. Gates agreed with former Secretary of Defense William Perry that “the consequences of failure in Iraq would be catastrophic—much more consequential than failure in Vietnam.” As Gates argues, “A defeat of the U.S. military and an Iraqi descent into a vicious civil war that likely would engage other countries in the region would be disastrous, destabilizing the region and dramatically boosting Iran’s power and prestige.”

As President Bush’s Secretary of Defense, Gates had three goals with regard to Iraq: defend Bush’s decision in late 2006 (even before Gates became Defense Secretary) to “surge” U.S. forces into Iraq, thereby allowing the troops

time to achieve the president’s goals; maximize “the possibility of keeping a substantial number of troops in Iraq for years to come”; and establish “a long-term security and strategic relationship with Iraq.” It was imperative to “avoid even the appearance of American failure or defeat in Iraq.”

In pursuit of these goals, Gates had to support U.S. commanders in Iraq, especially General David Petraeus, and to “buy time” in Washington for the surge to take effect. Gates puts it this way: “There was a Washington ‘clock’ and a Baghdad ‘clock,’ and the two moved at very different speeds. Our forces needed time . . . , but much of Congress, most of the media, and a growing majority of Americans had lost patience with the war in Iraq. . . . My role was to figure out how to buy time, how to slow down the Washington clock, and how to speed up the Baghdad clock.”

To buy time, Gates chose “to hold out hope of beginning to end it.” Once the surge forces were in place, by September 2007, Gates skillfully changed the debate over the war, “making the subject of the debate the pace of troop withdrawals so as to extend the surge as long as possible but also to try to defuse the Iraq debate as a major issue in the presidential election.” Gates is very clear on this: “I wanted to focus the Iraq debate on the pacing of drawdowns, a debate I thought the generals would win every time because it would be about battlefield conditions and the situation on the ground.” If he could buy time, the U.S. government would not “put at risk all we had achieved at such great cost in lives by leaving a fledgling Iraqi government at the mercy of its neighbors and its internal divisions.” Ultimately, “the critical question was how to

preserve and expand our gains in Iraq while maximizing support at home for a sustainable long-term presence there.”

Gates’s plan (for his “Washington campaign”) was in line with the goals of President Bush. As media reviews of *Duty* have already made clear, Gates thought President Bush had been both correct and courageous in opting for a troop surge. However, the media reviews that I have seen do not note as well that Gates also supported Bush’s intent to keep some U.S. forces in Iraq to support a post-Saddam government, train a new Iraqi army and national police, and remind the leaders of Iran that the United States would and could counter any Iranian efforts to subvert Iraq.

The key term here is “sustainable long-term presence.” Would Congress accept it? Could the volunteer Army do it without wearing out? Gates worked patiently and in a determined way to get everyone who mattered “on board” with President Bush’s long-term strategy. Yet he knew that implementing the president’s strategy would have a high cost, especially for the troops in Iraq. Gates admits that extending troop deployments in Iraq from twelve to fifteen months was the most difficult decision he would make in his entire time as secretary, but he also believes it was the right decision, and he was confident that it would be a temporary extension. Like General Petraeus and President Bush, Gates believed that the “surge” would work, but only if given enough time.

Gates has a lot to say about the conflict in Afghanistan and the decisions made in Washington regarding the conduct of the campaign there. A lot of media attention has been given to Gates’s descriptions of the disputes and discussions among key individuals,

including President Obama, Secretary of State Clinton, and Vice President Biden. This attention, however, misses a major point. Along with Admiral Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gates believed that “the war in Afghanistan had been neglected and underresourced [*sic*] in the Bush administration.” Yet Gates was very concerned that troop levels in Afghanistan be kept low enough so that Afghans would not perceive U.S. and NATO soldiers as occupiers (as against allies). Gates was aware that “embassy polling showed that in 2005 about 80 percent of Afghans saw us as allies and partners; by summer 2009, after nearly eight years of war, that number was down to 60 percent.”

President Obama had taken office committed to prosecuting a military campaign in Afghanistan against the Taliban. Gates believed that when the new president asked him to stay on as Secretary of Defense Obama agreed with him that the United States would suffer strategically if it allowed the Taliban to appear to have pushed the United States out of Afghanistan. This was the link between Iraq and Afghanistan—the need to avoid having “extremist” Muslims see the United States as having been defeated in either place. But just how many soldiers would it take to force the Taliban to agree to a settlement? That was the question that often divided the new president’s White House from Gates and the military.

President Obama had agreed to a small U.S. troop increase in Afghanistan in the spring of 2009, but how many more soldiers were needed? Was there a parallel between Iraq and Afghanistan? Could a surge of forces in Afghanistan force the Taliban to negotiate with Hamid Karzai? Would Karzai even talk to them? From

September through November 2009, Gates and other senior officials met to answer these questions and thrash out a clear strategy for the campaign in Afghanistan. There were three basic questions they had to answer. Just what was the threat? What was the optimal way to deal with that threat—counterinsurgency or some form of counterterrorism? How would the president and his advisers know whether any strategy they adopted was working? It was clear to Gates that there was no unanimity among the president's closest advisers. Leon Panetta has said that all that was achieved by the major advisers after five lengthy meetings was an agreement that "we can't leave, and we can't accept the status quo."

The sticky issue was how to deal with the problem. Early in his first term, President Obama asked Bruce Riedel (whom Gates describes as "a longtime analyst at CIA . . . [and] one of the best, most realistic Middle East analysts") to lead a sixty-day review of the situation in Afghanistan. When the review team was finished, its recommendations were as follows: "Disrupt the terrorist networks in Afghanistan and especially Pakistan; promote a more effective government in Afghanistan; develop the Afghan security forces; end Pakistan's support for terrorist and insurgent groups; enhance civilian control in Pakistan; and use U.S. diplomatic, military, and intelligence channels to reduce enmity and distrust between Pakistan and India." Gates called these recommendations "breath-taking," requiring as they did "a fully-resourced counterinsurgency campaign."

According to Gates, the new president "embraced most of the Riedel recommendations and announced the elements of his new 'AfPak' strategy in a televised speech on March 27, 2009

with his senior advisers standing behind him." Gates was struck by the fact that the president "never used the words *counterinsurgency* or *counterterrorism* in the speech, but the strategy he announced was clearly a blend of both." Though he "fully supported the president's decisions," Secretary Gates had serious doubts that the resources would be available for the sort of campaign that President Obama had described—a campaign that used lots of civilian advisers, teachers, engineers, and lawyers.

In effect, President Obama said, his approach was to strike "the Taliban in their heartland" while at the same time infusing the U.S. advisory effort with a "surge" of civilians. Gates doubted that this approach would work quickly, if at all. The key factor was Pakistan. As Gates knew, Pakistan's "continuing toleration of the Afghan Taliban . . . was a hedging strategy based on [its] lack of trust in the [United States], given our unwillingness to stay engaged in Afghanistan in the early 1990s." Just as troubling to Gates was the request of the new commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for significantly more soldiers. That commander, General Stan McChrystal, told Gates in late June 2009 "that he had found the situation in Afghanistan much worse than he expected."

Secretary Gates was placed in a very difficult position. On one hand, he had defended having a relatively small number of U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan, to undercut claims by the Taliban that "outsiders" were occupying the country. Now the new ISAF commander was asking for a major increase in the number of military personnel. On the other hand, the president had embraced a strategy for Afghanistan that relied on

large numbers of American and European civilians to help the Afghans develop an effective and legitimate government, useful local schools, and health-care clinics. If the troops got to Afghanistan and the civilians did not, what then?

Gates took his concern to the White House chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel. “I told Emanuel that the president needed to ‘take ownership of the Afghan War,’ both for the troops and for our allies. . . . He needed to acknowledge that the war could take years but that he was confident we would ultimately be successful. He needed to say publicly why the troops’ sacrifices were necessary.” Gates was acting then as the “fixer” that he was—the Defense Secretary who could make the best of a situation that was not to the liking of either President Obama or the ISAF commander.

However, there was another “player” in this drama, one that bedeviled Secretary Gates—then known as the National Security Staff, or NSS. This 350-person organization had begun as staff support for the members of the National Security Council and their deputies, but it had grown into a bureaucracy of its own, with what seemed to be a will of its own. As Gates puts it, “The National Security Staff had, in effect, become an operational body with its own policy agenda, as opposed to a coordination mechanism. This, in turn, led to micromanagement far beyond what was appropriate.” Gates says that for all its exhausting meetings, the process by which strategy in Afghanistan was hammered out in the fall of 2009 worked. That is, the different points of view were considered, reviewed, and then accepted or rejected by those serving as the president’s close advisers. Yet the implementation of this strategy was

hampered again and again by micro-management from Washington’s NSS.

In the presidential election campaign of 2008, Barack Obama had chosen to take on leadership of the campaign in Afghanistan against the Taliban. But in 2009, according to Gates, he discovered that “U.S. goals in Afghanistan—a properly sized, competent Afghan national army and police, a working democracy with at least a minimally effective central government—were embarrassingly ambitious (and historically naïve) when compared to the meager human and financial resources committed to the task, especially before 2009.” In short, the problem was far more severe than Obama had thought.

Gates says that the president felt trapped. “President Obama simply wanted the ‘bad’ war in Iraq to be ended, and once in office, the U.S. role in Afghanistan—the so-called good war—to be limited in scope and duration. His fundamental problem in Afghanistan was that his political and philosophical preferences . . . conflicted with his own pro-war public rhetoric . . . , the nearly unanimous recommendations of his senior civilian and military advisers at the departments of State and Defense, and the realities on the ground in Afghanistan.” However, what Gates calls “the continuing fight over Afghan strategy in the Obama administration” had one positive outcome—that “the debate and resulting presidential decisions led to a steady narrowing of our objectives and our ambitions there.” As in Iraq, the policy of the U.S. government in Afghanistan shifted in response to events. The process that led to the shift in both cases was frustrating and exhausting, and the result in each case was not what either president had wanted.

According to Gates, each president accepted his disappointment and tried his best to find a realistic solution.

There is a lot more than Iraq and Afghanistan in *Duty*, but I have focused on these two wars for two reasons. First, the decision making in both cases illustrates the importance of our presidents and their key advisers (such as Gates). Second, a major decision made in the first term of President George W. Bush created the framework in which both Bush and his successor had to work. That decision was to engage in a “long war” with Al Qaeda and any affiliated group. That is, the threat of terrorist attacks on the United States would be dealt with by changing the character of the Muslim Middle East and Afghanistan, initially through military or quasi-military action, and then over time by involving the United States deeply in the affairs of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

When President George W. Bush authorized a preemptive attack on Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, he hoped, I am sure, that the attack would achieve multiple goals. One was to draw the fangs of Hussein’s regime. Another was to warn neighboring regimes that the United States government would and could take military action against them if they pursued policies like those of Hussein. Still another was to open possibilities for responsible, accountable, and efficient governments in the region. Yet another was to take away the Arab focus on Israel and turn it instead toward reform and modernization in the Arab states themselves.

These were very ambitious goals. The administration of George W. Bush hoped that these goals could be achieved within a reasonable human and financial cost. The Bush administration’s assumption

in this regard was wrong. However, as Gates understood, something had to be done to salvage the situation, and Gates worked hard with President Bush and others to achieve that.

The Obama administration took office with its own set of ambitious goals, including the aim of restoring stability and productivity in the U.S. economy. Like the administration before it, Obama’s found that its goals in Afghanistan (to defeat the Taliban and create a legitimate regime in Afghanistan) were likely to be far more expensive to achieve than Congress or the American people were willing to pay. What, then, to do? As Gates’s memoir shows, the administration stalled for time, in an attempt to keep the military situation in Afghanistan from growing worse while hashing out an approach that would allow President Obama to do two things that Secretary Gates did not think he could accomplish: salvage minimal but worthwhile U.S. goals in Afghanistan and simultaneously schedule the return of U.S. and NATO forces as Afghan police and army forces took up the fight against the Taliban.

Secretary Gates “bought time” for two different administrations while he dealt with serious budget issues, an often recalcitrant Defense Department bureaucracy (check out his account of his efforts to get MRAPs built and shipped to the theater), the issue of homosexuals serving in the military, the treatment of wounded military personnel, and diplomacy, especially relations with China and Russia. Is it any wonder that he felt worn out after four years and thousands of dead and wounded American military personnel?

Duty is not an easy read. It explains a lot about what a Secretary of Defense can and cannot do and how national

security decisions are made and then undone. Gates puts it very well: “While the national security apparatus to deal with . . . problems is gigantic, ultimately they all had to be addressed by just eight people: the president, the vice president, the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the director of national intelligence, the director of the CIA, and the national security advisor.” *Duty* is an interesting window into the thoughts and actions of one of those eight.

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Porch, Douglas. *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013. 434pp. \$23.88

Douglas Porch, military historian and academic, currently a distinguished professor of national security affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School, has written a highly polemical and critical intellectual history of counterinsurgency, aka COIN. It has been selected by the Army chief of staff for his professional reading list, so it is a must-read, at least for Army officers, and more generally for those who follow a debate in which sobriety and balance are rare virtues.

According to Porch, COIN’s intellectual roots lie in nineteenth-century imperialism, which was often justified in paternalistic ways. Even today, COIN’s mission is to “civilize” indigenous societies by importing Western norms and practices that are often severely at odds with local custom or resented because they are imported at the muzzle of an

M16. Whether one considers the French in Vietnam and Algeria or the British in South Africa, Malaya, Palestine, Kenya, Ireland, and Northern Ireland (and elsewhere), the most common root of insurgency, according to Porch, is that other peoples do not wish to be ruled by foreigners. Population-centric operations (Porch does not call them strategies) designed to win hearts and minds have frequently failed, because insurgency is less about grievance resolution for a “biddable population,” as COIN proponents assume, than about ideology or political goals. War among the people thus often becomes war *against* the people, for a variety of reasons, beginning with the fact that Western counterinsurgents often assume, with good reason, that “the people” are in cahoots with the insurgents, who otherwise would be unable to operate. Therefore, counterinsurgents seek to divide indigenous societies in the colonial manner so as better to control them, which only undermines the modern state building that COIN advocates seek to achieve. Furthermore, a Western tradition that sees guerrillas and insurgents as terrorists and criminal assassins and not as lawful combatants has often led to illegal detention, torture, denial of food, extrajudicial execution, disappearances, concentration camps, and other counterproductive efforts to isolate the people from insurgents, gain intelligence, and break the will of the insurgents. In this way, Porch argues that even in victory COIN usually comes at a heavy moral price.

Porch also objects to COIN proponents’ seeing themselves as technicians, applying the “lessons” derived from historical cases, especially Malaya. By focusing on grievance alleviation as their central concern, these military officers engage

in “armed social work,” usually creating more problems than they solve. Often well-meaning reforms, like land reform, infrastructure improvement, power sharing, self-government, demands for less corruption, and so on, that form the staples of the COIN approach end up foundering because of the resentment of a foreign military presence. Many create dependence relationships with host nationals, undermine the sovereignty and legitimacy of local authorities, have negative economic impacts, or are wasteful. Porch considers one of the most dangerous problems with an “armed social work” approach to intervention to be the politicizing of officers, by taking them out of their military roles and giving them civic and political responsibilities, in a process referred to as “civil-military fusion.” COIN proponents have often argued that the challenges of insurgency are so complex that military and political authority have to be fused. Officers, proconsuls really, have thus acquired forms of political power abroad that they would never be allowed at home. As they grew accustomed to wielding political power abroad, they sometimes grew contemptuous of political authorities at home, hijacking policy and thus damaging civil-military relations. Counter-insurgents in Algeria in the 1950s, for example, came to think that the French republic was a liability to the empire. To save the empire and the military’s reputation, they believed, they had to overthrow the republic—arguably the worst possible kind of breakdown of civil-military relations and a complete inversion of the Clausewitzian approach, which subordinates strategy and those who make it to policy and political leaders. So the greatest danger is what Porch, directly following the

philosopher Hannah Arendt and indirectly such thinkers as Edmund Burke and Thucydides, calls the “boomerang effect,” or the “revenge of the periphery”—that coercive COIN practices and methods worked out on distant battlefields often return home, in greater or lesser degrees, in the form of repressive measures inimical to free government.

This gets to the heart of Porch’s critique of COIN on strategic grounds. First, he argues that COIN is not a strategy but a collection of “lessons learned” and successful minor tactics that appear to be transferable across theaters, years, and cultures. This is especially true if special operations come to be seen as synonymous with COIN, so that it degenerates into a sort of decapitation strategy. Second, Porch holds, the case for making COIN a branch of special operations is weak. It assumes that the special operators are more adaptable than conventional forces, but Porch demonstrates that while adaptation is necessary in COIN, conventional forces are no worse (and sometimes better) at adapting than the special operators. Third, there is a serious danger in adapting too much in the direction of COIN. Had the United States gone whole hog on COIN in Vietnam, Porch suggests, it might have left itself even more unprepared than it was for Cold War conflict on the Central Front in Germany. Fourth, losers do not always give the best advice, and much of COIN theory is based on the prescriptions of losers—like David Galula, a veteran of the French war in Algeria, whose shadow looms large in the Army COIN doctrinal document, Field Manual (FM) 3-24. Porch shows that the French in Algeria actually followed Galula’s principles but ultimately lost. Why? Some of those principles proved

counterproductive in practice. Isolating the people from insurgents sounds great in theory, but if it requires putting significant numbers of the people in concentration camps or driving them into exile, it is likely to produce more enemies than friends. Moreover, the strategic context, the international, social, institutional, and economic environment, was stacked against the French, as it was for them before and for the United States later in Vietnam, and then again, some might say, in Iraq. In other words, COIN is not a magic bullet. When policy makers blunder into wars involving unpredicted insurgencies with unexpected strength and resilience, to think that COIN by itself can save them from the consequences of their policies is magical thinking at best. It would be far better to rethink the policies that caused the mess in the first place.

To be clear, Porch is not arguing that COIN is bound to fail strategically. Sometimes the context is favorable. Sometimes the insurgents have no allies or sanctuaries. Sometimes their cause has no popular appeal. Sometimes their leaders are inept or so brutal that they drive the people away from them. Sometimes the incumbents are competent, willing to adapt politically and militarily to meet the challenge. More often than Porch admits, counterinsurgents do win, but not because COIN is a form of warfare only special operators can understand. "War is war!" says Porch. A strategy appropriate to the context is the most important element in victory for both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent.

These concessions on Porch's part invite readers to take some critical distance from him. When counterinsurgencies go south, maybe the problem is less with COIN as such than with failure to assess

the strategic environment and adapt COIN doctrine to it. Some might object that this book is written in an angry spirit, highly polemical, and deeply one-sided. They might say that Porch has written two books, not one. The first is an intellectual history of COIN, in which the pattern of making the same mistakes occurs again and again; the second is a critique of special operations in general, one that seems unnecessary to Porch's argument and sometimes distracts from it. Plenty of insurgencies occur without the presence of foreign occupiers, so one cannot blame them or the problems of counterinsurgency on imperialism or paternalism alone. Porch is right that General Petraeus was lucky that the surge in Iraq coincided with the so-called Sunni Awakening against Al Qaeda and with other developments in Iraq, but strategic wisdom often involves taking advantage of good luck. If Petraeus's relative success in Iraq did not result directly from his personal role in redrafting American COIN doctrine and applying it intelligently to Iraq, it was nonetheless a vast improvement over the work of his predecessors, who did not plan for a potential insurgency and were slow to confront it—even occasionally aggravated it. Arguably the war in Iraq, a war of choice, was a strategic mistake, with American service members stuck cleaning up the mess until the U.S. government could find a dignified way to leave. Yet no less arguably, there was no alternative to intervening in Afghanistan, about which Porch says very little, because to fight Al Qaeda, which was sheltered by the Taliban, the United States in 2001 found it necessary to overthrow the government, though with a high probability that it would have to deal with an insurgency from the Taliban while fighting the terrorists.

Porch suggests no alternative approach for Afghanistan, so his critique has limited usefulness for evaluating U.S. strategy in that conflict. Afghanistan, indeed, is a very tough case for Porch's critique. It invites readers to ask whether problems there resulted from trying too much or too little COIN, while domestic support in the United States for the war was high before getting distracted with Iraq. Or perhaps the strategic context was so challenging that nothing better than a weak government in Kabul could have been expected—implying, perhaps, that after scattering Al Qaeda in 2001, the best realistic option would have been to withdraw quickly and turn the struggle over to whatever government the Afghans managed to establish, even if it did not meet many Western standards of good government. Or maybe the problem was that COIN doctrine can lead to unrealistic expectations that provoke precisely the kind of critique Porch has written. Had Porch focused more on what is necessary to make such expectations more sober—how he might have rewritten Army FM 3-24, for example—his book would have been improved substantially. Instead, those who rewrite that manual will have to take both Porch's book and more than a grain of salt into account in developing an approach to COIN that is genuinely sober in its expectations.

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Shi Xiaojin. *Seapower and Sino-U.S. Relations*. Beijing: Military Science, 2013. 320pp. ¥42

Seapower and Sino-U.S. Relations is a comparative study of the quest for sea

power by nations that are considered “maritime power states” and “continental power states” and it is an attempt to apply related lessons to an understanding of current Sino-U.S. relations.

According to the author, traditionally maritime powers, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, have generally adopted a more offensive posture in their quest for sea power, mainly in terms of gaining “command of the sea” or in influencing development on the continent, as reflected in the works of American and British sea-power theorists Alfred Mahan and Sir Julian Corbett. The key to understanding Mahan, the author holds, is his emphasis on the aim of acquiring “absolute command of the sea” through decisive fleet engagement, which requires force concentration and capital ships capable of superior firepower. This central aim relegates other aims, such as sea-lane protection, commerce raiding, and naval blockade, and the building of capabilities requisite for them, to lesser priorities.

Mahan, however, is critically questioned by Corbett, Shi Xiaojin points out. Corbett, for instance, believes “absolute command of the sea” is neither possible nor necessary, because most of the seas, most of the time, are open and contested and accessible for productive use and exploitation. As a result, flotilla operations to protect sea-lanes may be important, but building capital ships for “decisive fleet engagement” may divert resources away from them. Also, the more the strong side wants a decisive battle through force concentration, the more incentive the weak side has to avoid such an engagement, through force dispersion to reduce losses. For Corbett, according to the author, sea control should also serve more useful

objectives like influencing developments on land (the European continent, in his time). He, for instance, believes that such maritime powers as the United Kingdom are particularly advantaged in waging limited wars because of their insulated nature. Consistent with the British role as an “offshore balancer,” these wars may involve naval blockades to keep a continental opponent from entering the oceans; coordination with Britain’s land allies to bog down the opponent in a land war; selection of limited objectives against the opponent in far-away colonies, where the stakes are smaller and the enemy finds it difficult to mobilize; and expeditionary, amphibious operations against limited but critical and vulnerable targets on continental peripheries to restore the equilibrium on land. According to Shi, however, a major challenge facing Corbett’s theory of limited war is how much the United Kingdom can devote to the continental objectives. Too much may get it bogged down in a land war of attrition, but too little may result in a policy of appeasement, where continental development is not impacted.

Unlike maritime powers, according to Shi, the quest for sea power by continental powers, such as France, Germany, and the former Soviet Union, tends to be more limited. Rather than seeking command of the sea, their quests are more characterized by attempts to disrupt or deny the command of the sea by dominant sea powers, through asymmetrical strategies and capabilities. Also, these attempts do not aim to influence fundamental developments in the homelands of the dominant sea powers. Both the French and German navies of the late nineteenth century up to World War II, for instance, generally exploited technologies of torpedoes

and submarines as asymmetrical capabilities. Being the weaker sides, for instance, they gave priority to not frontal fleet engagement but raiding the maritime commerce of opponents like the United Kingdom, a vulnerability of the latter as maritime trading and colonial powers. The Soviet Union during the Cold War also prioritized submarines in its naval development, though it did develop major surface combatants. These ships served mainly to provide surface and air coordination and cover for submarine operations.

A major reason for continental powers to be rather limited in their quest for sea power is the security challenges they face from both continental and maritime fronts. France, for instance, had to deal with threats from both Germany and the United Kingdom, while Germany faced challenges from France and the United Kingdom. Similarly the Soviet Union during the Cold War had to prepare for a land war in Central Europe, while at the same time handling challenges on its maritime flanks. The continental threats have generally constrained the resources that could be used for naval development.

The author believes China’s geostrategic position today is quite similar to those of the historical continental powers. It faces challenges from an insulated maritime power, the United States, that intends to influence developments on the Asian continent and whose disadvantages of distance are reduced by modern technologies and forward basing. Also, faced with land-based challenges that may constrain resources, China’s quest for sea power is likely to remain defense dominant. To enhance its security, however, and not be pressed against its own shores, China is likely to strive to

extend its maritime strategic depth and to disrupt and deny the absolute U.S. superiority in the narrow “East Asian littoral” or turn it into a “zone of contestation.” China’s strategies and capabilities, according to Shi, are likely to be asymmetrical, and they can benefit from such modern technologies as long-range combat aircraft and missiles. China’s acquisition of major naval surface combatants mainly serves to supplement such capabilities, as well as to protect vital sea-lanes on which China’s economy depends. On the other hand, reduced U.S. military forward presence and globalization-induced nontraditional security challenges are likely to offer opportunities for Sino-U.S. cooperation. This is probably one of the few Chinese books that reflect not only an in-depth understanding of Western naval literature but also analytical ability to evaluate this literature critically to gain insight into current U.S.-China relations. Because the author serves as a research fellow and a managing editor of the journal *Strategic Studies* at the War Theory and Strategic Studies Department of China’s Academy of Military Science, the book may reflect an important perspective for understanding the extent and nature of China’s quest for sea power.

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Yahuda, Michael. *Sino-Japanese Relations after the Cold War: Two Tigers Sharing a Mountain*. New York: Routledge, 2014. 146pp. \$149.50 (paperback \$33.18)

Veteran East Asia international relations analyst Michael Yahuda explores the

traditional Chinese aphorism *yī shān bù róng èr hǔ*, or “two tigers competing for one mountain” (一山不容二虎), in analyzing the changing relationship of the two great powers of East Asia—China and Japan. The proverb is a good foil for his subject and has led to a nuanced and balanced essay on Chinese-Japanese relations during the forty-plus years since the two established diplomatic ties in 1972. His book is succinct. Each sentence pushes the narrative forward, making the book an ideal synopsis for busy policy analysts or East Asia students with extensive reading lists.

The chronological meat of the book is a detailed discussion of key periods in Chinese-Japanese relations, starting with the rapprochement between Mao Zedong and Kakuei Tanaka in the 1970s. In 1972, Mao forgave the Japanese for twentieth-century aggression, even forgoing war reparations. China’s economic reform movement began with Deng Xiaoping’s visit to Japan in 1978, setting the stage for the 1980s honeymoon period before the Cold War ended. This is instructive, because it demonstrates that tigers can more happily coexist during some periods than at other times. Yahuda then discusses Japan as the first country to reembrace China after the isolation imposed on Beijing in the wake of the Tiananmen crackdown of 1989. As the Soviet Union folded in 1991, bringing the Cold War to a close, the trajectory of Japan as number one leveled off into a two-decade period of economic stagnation. In contrast, Deng successfully transferred the helm and the reform mission to Jiang Zemin before passing away in 1997. By 2000 Chinese gross domestic product (GDP) had grown to 25 percent that of Japan’s. The relationship between Jiang and Prime

Minister Junichiro Koizumi went steadily downhill between 2000 and 2005, as Koizumi repeatedly visited the Yasukuni Shrine; Jiang played the history card at every turn, having none of Mao's forget-and-forgive approach.

The relationship improved when Shinzo Abe replaced Koizumi in 2005, but the subsequent annual turnover of Japan's prime ministers gave Hu Jintao's steady hand on the tiller time to overtake Japan economically, as well as to spend heavily on military infrastructure improvements, most notably on the People's Liberation Army Navy. By 2010, China's GDP had surpassed Japan's, and its economy was the second largest in the world, after that of the United States. Periodic conflict over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands has recently led to a series of status quo changes in China's favor, as China's leadership baton was handed to Xi Jinping in November 2012 and Japan's returned to Abe, reelected in December 2012. China and Japan both bristle over naval patrols and air-defense zones around the disputed islands, as well as, in Japan's case, at Xi's demands for twentieth-century-history apologies from Japan, while Abe for his part visited Yasukuni in late December 2013 on the anniversary of his first year in office.

The theoretical meat of the book is no less interesting. Yahuda uses a blend of sociocultural constructivist approaches, liberal economic and institutional interdependence analysis, and realist strategic analysis to discuss the complex interrelationship between China and Japan, as well as their competitive relations with the Koreans, Taiwan, and the states of Southeast Asia. In Yahuda's analysis, the United States is the key swing variable in the relationship between the Asian tigers, first as Japan's ally

and second as China's opposite on the world stage of great-power relations.

A version of the "two tigers" Chinese proverb was used recently by S. C. M. Paine in her book *The Wars for Asia, 1911-1949* (2012). She used the phrase to refer to the two protagonists of the long Chinese civil war, the Nationalists and the Communists. Her translation gloss, "Great rivals cannot co-exist," implies a zero-sum game. Yahuda's conclusion is that two tigers on a single mountain need not represent a zero-sum game. He posits that in the period ahead, the two tigers, China and Japan, must share the same mountain, East Asia. Recent events confirm that this is a tough matchup, with both tigers snarling ferociously, neither inclined to back down the mountain.

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Yetiv, Steve A. *National Security through a Cock-eyed Lens: How Cognitive Bias Impacts U.S. Foreign Policy*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2013. 168pp. \$24.95

There's an old saying, usually attributed to Mark Twain, that the Missouri River is "too thick to drink and too thin to plow." At first glance, the same might be said for this book, in that Steve Yetiv seeks to appeal to the scholar, to the practitioner, and to the lay reader, serving the lay reader best but not without utility to the practitioner and scholar.

Yetiv is the Louis L. Jaffe Professor of International Relations at Old Dominion University and University Professor. His premise in this book is simple. Cognitive biases impact human decision making and tend to reduce the impact

of attempts to use a rational decision-making process. The impact of these biases is almost always adverse and affects all decision making, even when the president deals with national security issues. The author also claims that these biases are not usually taken into account when teaching about or actually engaging in decision making. This claim may be somewhat overstated, as many decision making courses, including those at the Naval War College, do acknowledge the potential effect of cognitive biases on decision makers, but the main point—that cognitive biases affect decision making—has considerable merit.

This book has a commendably straightforward structure. Yetiv presents five case studies, each important to U.S. national security, in which cognitive biases are argued to have played a major role. The first two case studies examine the U.S. reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Reagan administration's decision to sell arms to Iran and transfer the profits to the "Contras," an armed group fighting in Nicaragua. The third case study seeks to explain how mental biases affect jihadists' view of the United States. The fourth analyzes the George W. Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq in 2003. The fifth and final case looks at the role of cognitive bias in what Yetiv describes as a failure to develop a comprehensive U.S. energy policy.

The first case examines misperceptions on the parts of both the United States and the Soviet Union. Yetiv delivers a convincing argument that cognitive biases likely played a role in each actor's decision making. Members of the Jimmy Carter administration, particularly Zbigniew Brzezinski, always saw the Soviets as planning offensive moves,

perhaps designed to gain access to the Persian Gulf. In reality, decision makers in Moscow authorized the invasion as a defensive move, to prevent the fall of a friendly socialist government in Kabul. Thus, U.S. decision leaders misinterpreted the reason behind the Soviet invasion and their Soviet counterparts misinterpreted subsequent U.S. reactions.

Yetiv argues that the Iran-Contra case represents two cognitive biases that played significant roles—"the focusing illusion" and "noncompensatory decision making." The focusing illusion led decision makers to place excessive importance on one aspect of an event—American hostages held in Lebanon—while the noncompensatory bias produced a focus on the belief that some particular factor is so important that it cannot be balanced by any other factor or combination of factors, which in this case only increased America's determination to recover the hostages. The result was a willingness to grasp at slender straws and attempt risky actions because of the artificially high value placed on the hostages.

Yetiv then attempts to explain why Al Qaeda and similar organizations so hate the United States and are quite willing to kill "millions of Americans." Yetiv's explanation centers on "distorted perceptions" and on a combination of "confirmation bias" and an additional bias known as "the clustering illusion," which basically means that the leaders of Al Qaeda have a warped view of the United States—they see what they want to see.

The fourth case advances the primary claim that President Bush and his key advisers suffered from overconfidence when they planned and executed the invasion of Iraq in 2003. They were also, according to Yetiv, overoptimistic.

These attitudes were encouraged by both the misuse of analogies and the personality and style of Bush. The final discussion, on U.S. energy policy, seeks to determine why the United States, despite the oil embargo of the early 1970s and a continually acknowledged need for a long-term, consistently applied energy policy, has been unable to put such a policy into effect.

However, national security decisions by their very nature are extraordinarily complex. To his credit Yetiv recognizes and addresses these complicating factors. In each case he presents, there is a deliberate attempt at least to identify, if not discuss, alternate explanations and influential factors not relating to cognitive biases. For example, in the case of U.S. energy policy, Yetiv makes a persuasive argument that a general unwillingness to pay more, the power of the automobile industry's lobby, and a short congressional election cycle go a long way in explaining why the United States tends to resemble Aesop's grasshopper more than it does his ant.

That said, the book still leaves questions unanswered. For example, how can the cognitive biases held by Al Qaeda's leaders become those of all their followers? In what ways are group biases different from groupthink? How can an analyst determine the relative importance of cognitive biases in explaining or, better, predicting a decision? Finally, given all the other forces acting in the decision domain and on the decision maker, how can one determine how important biases may be in the overall mix? Yetiv does attempt to offer some methods to combat the effect of cognitive biases. Surprisingly, he argues that merely knowing such biases exist is not enough to guard against their effect. Better approaches

include the use of a devil's advocate, the institution of formal decision-making processes, and expansion of the circle of advisers consulted prior to a decision.

At the end of the day, *National Security through a Cockeyed Lens* is worth a read. By not overselling his argument, Yetiv makes a stronger case for considering the presence and possible impact of cognitive biases. In doing so he also makes the case, perhaps inadvertently, that rather than being used in isolation, models of decision making should be used in conjunction with one another—and that is a very useful concept.

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Delgado, James P. *Silent Killers: Submarines and Underwater Warfare*. New York: Osprey, 2010. 264pp. \$33

Given the book's title and the cover photo of the *Los Angeles*-class fast attack submarine USS *City of Corpus Christi*, readers might reasonably assume that James P. Delgado's *Silent Killers: Submarines and Underwater Warfare* is focused on modern submarines and undersea warfare. However, this is not the case. Instead, it is a small coffee-table book on the overall history of submarines, with pronounced emphases on early (pre-World War I) development and on the archaeology of submarine wrecks. A few minutes on the Internet readily explains this. In addition to having a keen interest in submarines, Delgado is a historian, former executive director of the Vancouver Maritime Museum, and PhD in archaeology who has published nearly thirty books. He is also a cohost of National Geographic's

Sea Hunters television series. This work reflects all his credentials. It is well written, it documents its sources, it is visually compelling, and it entertains.

Despite these strengths, however, many *Review* readers will find that important aspects of underwater warfare are given short shrift. For example, submarine aspects of World Wars I and II are dealt with in nineteen and seventeen pages, respectively, with illustrations making up approximately seventeen of those pages. Consequently, the discussion and descriptions lack depth and detail, which is a shame. Similarly, ballistic-missile submarines receive only five pages of what must honestly be said is superficial coverage, which mirrors the passing discussion of modern nuclear-attack submarines. This shortfall is compounded by the author's twice relating the questionable, if not bizarre, hypothesis that the nuclear attack submarine USS *Scorpion* was sunk on 15 May 1968 by the Soviets "in the belief that an American submarine had collided and sank the Golf II boat *K-129* in the Pacific on March 8, 1968." The citation provided for that salacious theory is not one that one would expect of careful research. There are other,

much more credible and likely explanations, which this book fails to examine.

On the other hand, one of the book's strengths is a thoughtful discussion of the development, employment, and archaeological recovery and preservation of the Confederate submarine *H. L. Hunley*, lost during the Civil War. Similarly, David Bushnell's American Revolutionary War submarine *Turtle* receives worthwhile treatment, including an update on the debate concerning whether *Turtle* had enough positive buoyancy to allow boring a hole in the target ship's copper-clad wooden hull while submerged. Another strength is the book's photos, which will fascinate modern submariners.

Many will find this book worth reading, and much of it well rewards the time invested. Like a National Geographic television production, this work is entertaining, lavishly and excellently illustrated, and it reflects the producer's or author's passion, which in this case appears to be undersea archaeology. This book is broad rather than deep, however, and as such will probably interest the generalist more than the specialist.

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