In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir

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Recommended Citation
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Of these, three essays in particular stand out as of interest to readers of this journal: Sir Michael Howard’s “Philip Bobbitt’s Terror and Consent: A Brief Critique,” Brian Wicker’s “Just War and State Sovereignty,” and David Fisher’s “Terror and Pre-emption: Can Military Pre-emption Ever Be Just?”

In the final chapter, the editors offer a reflection on countering terrorism justly after 9/11. In these few pages they provide an excellent summary of the weaknesses of al-Qa’ida and the likelihood of its eventual demise. They also remind readers of the necessity of maintaining ethical standards in the midst of conflict: “A common thread running through all the lessons learnt has thus been a rediscovery of the importance of morality even amidst and, indeed, particularly amidst the pressures and passions of conflict.”

As with most edited volumes, not every chapter will appeal to everyone. However, for anyone interested in contemporary just-war thought, its viability, and its relevance to twenty-first-century warfare, there is much in this volume on which to reflect.

TIMOTHY J. DEMY
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As political memoirs go, Dick Cheney’s In My Time is arguably one of the more candid, in a genre that tends to fall into two categories—the remarkably bland and the overly fulsome. Cheney avoids both these pitfalls in a book that will not change the mind of a single Cheney hater or his small legion of admirers.

Cheney was at the center of American politics for almost forty years, and long before he became the Darth Vader of American politics he had a reputation for being one of the ablest and most reform-minded members of the Republican Party. He had an “A-list” résumé, including stints as the youngest chief of staff in the history of the White House; as the nation’s seventeenth secretary of defense, presiding over Operation DESERT STORM; and as a key member of the GOP’s leadership in the House of Representatives. So it was no surprise when Texas governor George W. Bush asked Cheney to lead his vice-presidential search committee in the spring of 2000.

It was a surprise, however, when Bush selected his search committee chair to be his running mate, for Cheney brought few political benefits to the Republican ticket. Yet as In My Time makes clear, Cheney’s Washington experience and national-security credentials were seen as an asset to Governor Bush. “You know, Dick, you’re the solution to my problem” was the way Bush broached the subject to him.

In short order, Cheney became the point man for all that was seen as wanting in the Bush administration and, in the view of some, for all that was criminal. For the tiny cadre of moderate Republicans who urged the administration to move “to the center” and trim “our sails” in the wake of the divisive election of 2000, Cheney made it clear that the administration would not alter its conservative agenda. He infuriated congressional Democrats by refusing to release the lists of “everyone we met with” when he chaired the administration’s energy policy task force, and after the...
attacks of 9/11, when he observed that the nation would have to work “the dark side, if you will,” Cheney was seen by many as a champion of un-American practices, including water boarding and warrantless wiretapping. Cheney vigorously defends both programs, arguing that the wiretapping “saved lives and prevented attacks. If I had it to do all over again, I would, in a heartbeat.” The administration’s “liberation” of Iraq, which, in concert with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, dramatically eroded public support for President Bush, is also vigorously defended, although Cheney concedes that “we could have done things better” in terms of dealing with Katrina.

Cheney and his loyal lieutenants, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby and David Addington, saw themselves as restoring the American presidency to the status it had held prior to Vietnam and Watergate. Some refer to this bygone era as one dominated by an “imperial presidency,” but for Cheney it was the natural, constitutional, order of things. Presidential precedents were on their side but the quiet constitutional revolution that occurred while Cheney served as Gerald Ford’s chief of staff—a revolution that produced an adversarial media with no qualms about releasing the nation’s most closely held secrets; a judiciary willing to overrule executive and legislative war powers, while sometimes invoking elements of international law; and a Congress eager to challenge presidents on sensitive national-security issues, including intelligence matters—triumphed in the end. Bush and Cheney left office as discredited figures, and while both remain optimistic that history will vindicate them, this book makes a strong case that some of the administration’s actions deserve a sober second look. However, far too much seems to be at stake for that to occur.

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“In either case, the helicopter has significantly changed the face of modern warfare. It has done so despite restrictions placed on its performance by its inherent design features. And perhaps more than anything else, it has done so because of the brave, talented aircrews who flew the helicopter in the most intensely dangerous conditions of warfare that have ever been seen.”

So concludes the final chapter of a new and timely book by noted aviation writer and retired U.S. Air Force colonel Walter Boyne. This volume revolves around two theses. The first is stated in the title: helicopters, since their introduction, have produced dramatic changes in the conduct of warfare. The second thesis suggests that helicopters themselves have failed to keep pace with the very changes caused by their introduction. The conclusions drawn from this corollary idea are likely to prove controversial.

Boyne’s prose combines accuracy with regard to technological issues with a clarity that renders these complex ideas accessible, even to readers unfamiliar with the intricacies of rotorcraft aeronautics. The scientific and engineering challenges are interwoven with the stories of such industry pioneers as Igor