The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army

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their own. They found distinction by leading the nation through crises, carefully shaping the direction of national security policy and recasting the boundaries of presidential authority. Through careful historical analysis, Yoo reminds us that the relationship between presidential greatness and the exercise of executive power is an inextricable link that has always taken advantage of the vague contours of Article II of the Constitution, which addresses executive authority. In his historical analysis, Yoo carefully traces the founders’ work at the Constitutional Convention to accommodate the executive’s energy and decisiveness within a workable constitutional framework.

In quelling the Whiskey Rebellion and addressing the Indian uprisings of 1789–90, the first U.S. president believed that Congress having created a military, he had the authority to decide when and how to use it. In the latter case, Washington sought no authority from Congress when he directed an attack on the Wabash and Illinois Indians 150 miles within their territory. Similarly, in the Prize Cases, President Lincoln concluded, and the Supreme Court agreed, that after hostile acts are directed against this nation the president is bound to accept the challenge without waiting for any legislative authority. President Roosevelt went even farther prior to the Second World War by taking action to assist Britain through the Lend-Lease program and to isolate Japan from critical resources without congressional approval or consultation, actions that clearly provoked Japan and drew the United States ever closer to war.

A later section in the book reflects the application of this lengthy historical analysis to the current administration and to the response of the Bush administration to 9/11. Yoo points out that President Bush looked to former presidents for support of his actions. He states succinctly that “Congress simply does not have the ability to make effective, long-term national security decisions because of the difficulty in organizing 535 legislators and the political incentives that drive them toward short-term, risk-averse thinking.”

In his closing thoughts, Yoo reflects on President Obama’s early determination to close the detention facility at Guantanamo, to terminate the CIA’s special authority to question terrorists, and to suspend military commissions in the middle of the trials of al-Qa’ida leaders for war crimes. Describing the new president’s law enforcement approach to terrorist violence, he asks whether this approach, although popular with his liberal supporters, can be successful. He suggests that the new president may be learning to “draw on the mainspring of Presidential power as deeply as his greatest predecessors.”

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in Iraq and Afghanistan by tracing the careers of four Army general officers. Using biographic sketches of Generals John Abizaid, George Casey, Peter Chiarelli, and David Petraeus, The Fourth Star seeks to show how the Army has changed doctrinally and developed its leaders. Cloud and Jaffe deliver a story that is engaging, although short on analysis, explaining how as an institution the Army adapted post-Vietnam. As a result of their approach, the story of the “epic struggle” for the Army’s future between fighting counterinsurgencies and conventional battles is anecdotal at best. The scholarly opinions that have shaped the debate over the future Army doctrine are missing.

Cloud and Jaffe argue that the Department of Social Sciences (“Sosh”) at West Point was instrumental in shaping the strategic thinking of these Army leaders as well as of the Army as an institution. The book attributes the unconventional thinking of Petraeus and Chiarelli to their experiences as Sosh instructors. Cloud and Jaffe explain how Petraeus collaborated with Andrew Krepinevich (author of The Army and Vietnam, 1988), to place the blame for the service’s failures in Vietnam directly on the Army. Throughout the text, the authors are careful to note Sosh alumni who serve with or under these generals. Yet the emphasis on the role of the Sosh faculty in this story is somewhat misleading—especially since both current and former Sosh faculty are the main sources for much of the narrative. One could have easily looked to West Point’s Department of History to find similar connections and influence. The roles of Dr. Fred Kagan and Brigadier General H. R. McMaster in shaping the “surge” strategy of 2007 and 2008 represent an example.

However, Cloud and Jaffe do succeed in chronicling four generals whose careers began at the end of Vietnam and have culminated in the present. Petraeus is portrayed as the overly competitive Francophile infantryman, Abizaid as the international soldier-student of Arab culture, Casey as the hard-charging armor officer, and Chiarelli as the career tanker of Cold War Europe. While Reagan’s military readied itself for tank battles with the Soviet Union, these officers were going to graduate school and thinking seriously about the next war. In the post–Cold War years, all four men gained promising reputations during crises in Kurdish Iraq, Haiti, and Bosnia.

The chapters on Iraq are the most interesting. Abizaid, as commander of U.S. Central Command, seems to understand the challenges of a post-Saddam Iraq but is powerless to stop the rush toward de-Baathification. Petraeus, for his part, appears as the imperious commander, acting as a statesman and commander in creating a post-Saddam government in Mosul. Conversely, Casey seems overwhelmed, coming to terms with his errant assumption about defeating the insurgency through elections and politics by the end of 2006. By the end of the book, Abizaid and Casey have become the older, ineffectual model of the post-Vietnam Army, while Chiarelli and Petraeus are the newer, progressive model—the Army that emphasizes protecting the people over protecting the force. The Fourth Star offers additional understanding to events already described by fellow journalists Bob Woodward, Tom Ricks, and Linda Robinson. However,
the book about this epic struggle for the future of the Army doctrine is still yet to be written.

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This interesting book aims at unraveling a significant mystery that has lain at the heart of international diplomacy for more than a generation: Why and how has America failed to bring lasting peace to the Middle East? Specifically, why, despite so much expended American money and political effort, does peace between the Jordan River valley and the Mediterranean look as far off today as in the last forty years? Answers to this question have never been lacking, yet few authors have tried to tackle it comprehensively and fairly.

There are few individuals better placed to answer this question than Aaron David Miller, a scholar-diplomat who was an eyewitness to much of the drama he recounts, having served as an adviser on the Middle East to six U.S. secretaries of state. Miller’s prose is accessible and more, as he draws the reader into behind-the-scenes vignettes that make the most of a topic that is potentially mind-numbing, given its complexities and nuances. The author is refreshingly open about his biases as an American Jew whose emotions about the plight of the Palestinians are sincere, as are his not-infrequent frustrations with the Israelis. His notion that both Israelis and Palestinians are caught in a macabre diplomatic dance that occasionally delves into comedies of the absurd would merit a smile, were it not for the countless lives—and, as Miller demonstrates, diplomatic careers—that have been wrecked while the band plays on.

Miller’s vivid, usually empathetic descriptions of the cast of characters alone are worth the price of admission. This is diplomatic history at its most accessible and enjoyable. Miller’s lively work is thoroughly researched, including interviews with almost all the dramatis personae, so this is much more than a you-are-there account. The author’s analysis of the problems that he, like so many others, failed to unravel fully is candid and detailed, and it will be a reference source for future generations of scholars.

Moreover, *The Much Too Promised Land* deserves high praise for finding paths through all the major minefields, not least the vexing issue of the Israeli lobby, the alleged den of limitless Jewish money and aggressively neocon influence on U.S. foreign and defense policy. While not all readers will accept Miller’s answers, the fair-minded will appreciate the care and tact with which he addresses them. In this sense, this work is a polite refutation of such recent academic writings as those of Professors John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, who have perhaps indulged in an overdrawn analysis of Israeli influence in Washington, D.C.

In his conclusion, Miller offers some thoughtful guideposts to thinking about this never-ending problem and what it means for regional and international security. Considering that the Arab-Israeli dispute looks as intractable as ever (and that the Jewish state is facing...