

2006

## Book Reviews

The U.S Naval War College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

War College, The U.S Naval (2006) "Book Reviews," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 59 : No. 1 , Article 8.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol59/iss1/8>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## BOOK REVIEWS

---

### SINS OF OMISSION

Dallaire, Roméo. *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*. New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004. 562pp. \$16.95

Interventions by the United Nations for the purpose of establishing and maintaining peace have a mixed record. Some have been reasonably successful, such as in East Timor, while others, such as Rwanda, have not. Roméo Dallaire, the author, a retired lieutenant general in the Canadian army, suggests that efforts by the United Nations Security Council largely depend upon the location of the problem area. East Timor, just to the north of Australia and on the flank of major shipping routes, met the requirements. Rwanda, in his opinion, did not.

Under the Charter of the United Nations, interventions may be governed by Chapter 6, which stipulates that the peacekeeping contingent is not to use force but to separate the warring sides, all the while maintaining a neutral stance. However, under Chapter 7, UN troops are authorized to use force to keep the antagonists apart. Dallaire speaks of a Chapter 6½, a hybrid of the two without official UN sanction. When the decision was made to send a Chapter 6 mission to Rwanda, the Canadians, whose army had had considerable

experience in the peacekeeping field, offered to provide a commander, some of the staff, and logistic support. Dallaire, who had recently been promoted to the rank of general and whose tour in Canada had come to an end, leaped at the opportunity to go to Rwanda when the command was offered. Upon reporting to UN headquarters in New York, Dallaire was told that his resources were limited and that the mission had to be small. He was ordered to design the mission to fit those parameters and not the demands of the actual situation. A devout Catholic, he was particularly interested in protecting human life. Such commitment, not uncommon among military personnel, can turn conventional wisdom on its head.

Belgium had acquired Rwanda from Germany in the 1920 League of Nations Mandate and in 1925 united it administratively with the Belgian Congo, which lay to the west. Like most European powers with colonial dependencies, Belgium staffed much of its governing apparatus with native civil servants—the Tutsis—who for the most part were better educated than other Rwandans

and in many ways resembled Europeans. The Tutsis also captured the top jobs in commercial enterprises. The other principal tribe, the Hutus, were not happy with this development. When Rwanda achieved its independence from Belgium in 1962 and promptly installed a Hutu-dominated government, they were in a position to exact revenge on the formerly elite Tutsi population.

Many Tutsis fled to neighboring Uganda, Burundi, and Zaire. The Tutsis slowly gathered strength in those havens and developed (by African standards) a first-class army. By the early 1990s the Tutsi army was prepared to invade Rwanda and install a Tutsi government. Threatened by the imminent return of their enemies, the Hutus quietly encouraged the formation of vigilante groups to drive out or murder remaining Tutsis, as well as moderate Hutus. Matters had reached this stage when Dallaire arrived in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, in August 1993.

In addition to being the military representative of the UN, Dallaire was also temporarily assigned the position of political representative. When no one was immediately assigned to replace him in the latter post, the Canadians should have sensed the general lack of interest on the part of UN authorities. Naive in the ways of the UN bureaucracy, however, Dallaire was optimistic that he could perform his mission to the fullest extent. Eventually, in late October 1993, the United Nations sent a political representative with the somewhat improbable name Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, former Cameroonian foreign minister and a friend of the UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Interested primarily in the

“perks” of the office, Booh-Booh was to prove useless. Further, the forces provided for the mission (known as UNAMIR, for United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda) were grossly inadequate. Its troops, Ghanaian and Tunisian, were brave, well trained, and professionally led, but they arrived without equipment. Pleas by Dallaire to UN headquarters for equipment and logistic support from the major powers fell on deaf ears. The United States, Britain, and France had no interest in the mission, although France did send aircraft to evacuate Europeans caught in Rwanda by the hostilities; requests by Africans for rescue were denied.

Not long after Dallaire arrived, an informant in the Rwandan government told him of weapon caches hidden by the extremist militias. The general immediately requested permission to find and destroy them but was refused on the grounds that such action would violate the neutrality of the mission under Chapter 6; nor was Dallaire permitted to engage in intelligence operations. Instead, he was directed to identify the informer to the Rwandan government. Dallaire honored the order not to destroy the arms, but he refused to betray the informant. In any event, the source’s information soon dried up when the futility of the situation became unmistakable.

The corruption of the extremist government authorities, the elimination of the moderates, and the subsequent mass murder, amounting to genocide, is too involved to discuss adequately in this review. Suffice it to say that approximately eight hundred thousand Africans—men, women, and children, nearly all of them innocent civilians—were killed, some after severe torture.

Dallaire is especially hard on France, Britain, and the United States for their refusal to provide assistance or authorize the UN to take timely measures to block the massacre. He attributes their inaction in part to France's other interests in the region (the president's son is said to have had business interests in Rwanda) and to fear in the Clinton administration of another Somalia debacle. (Although Dallaire does not mention it, the Clinton administration's lack of response was to have severe consequences for the United States when Osama Bin Laden interpreted its unwillingness to act as American weakness.) Dallaire is not easy on Canada either. He refuses in his book to place blame on anyone within the UN leadership; however, in a later interview with a San Francisco radio talk-show host, Dallaire thoroughly castigated Boutros-Ghali as having been more responsible than anyone else for the genocide.

Command of UNAMIR had profound effects on the Canadian general, among them post-traumatic stress disorder. When he was relieved and returned to Canada, he was offered, and he accepted, the number-two post in the Canadian army. Haunted by his experience in Rwanda, he retired before his term ended.

This is an excellent example of a good and highly competent man deeply disturbed by international failures and the Machiavellian tactics of world powers. His experience with the United Nations raises the question of how far a military commander should go in honoring orders from civilian authority. The precedent of the Nuremburg trials provides military officers with sanction to refuse orders that would produce sins of commission. But what about the "sins of omission"? There are no precedents,

which arguably prevented Dallaire from taking measures to block the genocide.

In the book's preface, Dallaire recounts how a retired army chaplain asked him if he still believed in God after his African experience. His reply was "yes, because he had shaken hands with the Devil." The work has had wide success in Canada but not as yet in the United States. (The American reader should note that morning or evening "prayers" refers to staff consultations, not religious observances.) *Shake Hands with the Devil* is an important book and should be read by every military officer and senior noncommissioned officer.

ROBERT C. WHITTEN  
Commander, USNR (Retired)  
Cupertino, Calif.



Record, Jeffrey. *Dark Victory: America's Second War against Iraq*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2005. 205pp. \$49.90

Jeffrey Record is one of the nation's most experienced and respected defense analysts. His latest critique of the 2003 Iraq war, *Dark Victory*, provides many important insights into the reasons for the war and for its successes and failures. More generally, this work is a case study of the challenges of transforming military victory into a victory with meaningful and lasting strategic impact. In many ways this book focuses on the critical difference between "war fighter" and "war winner," and on the fact that conflict termination and its aftermath are at least as critical as any phase of battle proper.

Record, however, writes as a critic of a war he does not believe in, and of a nation-building process he sees as a

nearly disastrous failure. His book is a policy argument, not a dispassionate analysis, and needs to be read as such. There are also times when his focus on the argument gets in the way of his analysis.

Chapter 1, for example, contrasts the invasion of Iraq in 2003 with the 1990–91 Gulf war. It raises a number of valid arguments about the difference between the consensus building in the first war and the somewhat unilateral nature of the second, but it also implies that the United States could have toppled Saddam’s regime by extending the war long enough to destroy the Republican Guards or by some undefined actions to support the Kurdish and Shi’ite uprisings. It does not really address the fact that the U.S. and coalition forces were even less prepared for stability operations and nation building in 1991 than was the Bush administration for the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

More importantly, chapter 1 raises problems that as yet no analyst of war and its aftermath has convincingly addressed for either Iraq wars or other modern conflicts. Like the chapters that follow, it does not discuss the practical challenges in moving from limited war to total war or the problems inherent in the unpredictable nature of stability operations and nation building.

Record’s analysis of the failures of both Bush administrations to deal with the aftermath of military victory is remarkably insightful, but it is far from clear that the postwar situation in Iraq was in fact controllable or that a successful process of conflict termination and nation building could have been put in place. As Record points out in many other areas of his discussion, the fact that the United States is a superpower does not mean that

severe limits do not exist on what it can and cannot do; the broader question that surrounds the current nation-building effort in Iraq is whether any such effort on this scale can work.

This same issue pervades Record’s criticism of neoconservative ideology, theory, and practice in chapter 2 and thereafter. It simply is not clear that “realists,” pragmatists, or “neoliberals” would ultimately be able to achieve lasting strategic success. Certainly, remembering the arrogance and failures of the Rostow brothers (Walt and Eugene), McGeorge Bundy, and Robert McNamara, this reviewer had a horrible feeling of *déjà vu* when reading through Record’s discussion of the failures of the policy makers of the George W. Bush administration. The impact was strikingly similar to that of the conclusion of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (originally published in 1945): The leaders of the Bush administration’s war on Iraq became difficult to distinguish from the leaders of the Kennedy-Johnson administrations’ war in Vietnam. It also became painfully clear that the aptness of the phrase “lions led by donkeys” has long outlived World War I.

Record’s analysis of the practical problems in how the administration has handled conflict termination, stability operations, and nation building is extremely useful. To know what needs to be done right you have to know what has been done wrong, and Record does an excellent job of addressing the weaknesses in the “Bush doctrine,” the differences between Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden, the problems with U.S. war aims, the rationale for the war, and the failure to size or shape the invasion force for nation building. Record’s critique may not be balanced or objective,

but it is all the more useful for this. Record presents a clearly defined thesis that is to be rejected or accepted, and that makes the reader focus on the major strategic issues of the war.

The last two chapters deal with the “peace” that followed Saddam’s fall and its broader implications for the future exercise of American power. Anyone interested in the transformation of the U.S. military, future grand strategy, and dealings with conflict termination should read these chapters. One way or another, the United States is going to have to deal with such issues again and again, as long as it is the world’s preeminent military power. Even if the United States can eventually meet some definition of “success” in Iraq, it will still have to deal with the lingering impact of political and strategic mistakes that Record describes so well at the end of *Dark Victory*.

In short, this is a remarkably insightful book, one that raises precisely the issues that need to be resolved when assessing the Iraq war and shaping an American strategic posture for the future.

ANTHONY H. CORDESMAN  
*Burke Chair in Strategy*  
*Center for Strategic and International Studies*



Ganor, Boaz. *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2005. 334pp. \$39.95

Among a cacophony of authors on terrorism writing since September 2001 is a small but refreshing group who offer specific, pragmatic, and tested solutions. Boaz Ganor joins this select few with a book aptly subtitled *A Guide for Decision Makers*. Ganor splendidly

captures inescapable fundamental truths. First, defining terrorism is fraught with politics, emotion, and legal quandaries; however, the world must reach a consensus in order to move toward solutions. Second, democracies are uniquely vulnerable to terrorism, and they are struggling with the question of whether to treat terrorism as a crime or as a method of war. Third, efforts to counter terrorism must be multigenerational. Finally, decision makers can and must take steps to inoculate society against the effects of terrorism, through a comprehensive education campaign.

This book is based on Ganor’s doctoral dissertation, *Israel’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, written for the Hebrew University. Israel is the only liberal democracy in the Middle East. Using the Israeli model, Ganor observes that democracies are uniquely vulnerable to terrorism where government must defend itself yet maintain principles of transparency, rule of law, and representative governance while remaining mindful of world opinion. Ganor explores ten explicit dilemmas that face democratic nations: defining the threat; defining counterterrorism; employing intelligence; deterrence policy; choosing offensive and defensive actions; public opinion and ethics; legislative and punitive policies; media coverage; damage to societal morale; and finally, dilemmas concerning international cooperation.

Ganor warns that if terrorism remains a subjective concept influenced by one’s point of view, solutions will be similarly amorphous. Without consensus on the definition of what constitutes terrorism, global efforts to defeat it will fail. Ganor begins with a well considered definition of terrorism, including a rigorous analysis of why

definitions matter. "Terrorism," he writes, "is a form of violent struggle in which violence is deliberately used against civilians in order to achieve political goals (nationalistic, socioeconomic, ideological, religious)." Ganor offers three elements upon which his definition relies. *Violence* is a key factor; it eliminates nonviolent protests, strikes, and tax revolts from discourse on terrorism. The goal is always *political* (e.g., to change the form of governance, to revise economic or social policies). Finally, if an act is to be called terrorism, its targets must be *civilians*. Terrorism does not include random injury inflicted on civilians who happen to find themselves in areas of conflict; it is, rather, violence intentionally and specifically directed at civilians.

One of the many unique strengths of this book is its personal interviews with pivotal Israeli authorities. These include Prime Minister Ariel Sharon; former prime ministers Yitzhak Shamir, Shimon Peres, and Benjamin Netanyahu; a former adviser, Rafi Etan; former members of Mossad Meir Degan and Shabtai Shavit; a former member of Shin Bet, Yaakov Perry; and former defense minister Moshe Arens. These sources and others of equal prestige give Ganor unprecedented insights into the heart of Israeli decision making. This book is an authoritative accounting of Israel's struggle against terrorism. However, Ganor's exclusive analysis of the Israeli experience is also a weakness.

Without question, the Israeli government and citizens have endured a level of deadly terror unprecedented in modern times. Israelis are sought worldwide as experts on airline security, physical security, and intelligence. Yet often there is global criticism of Israeli methods

for dealing with terrorism. Israel swirls dizzily in a historical, emotional, and political whirlpool that shapes the opinion of those who live outside its borders. Putting politics aside, the discerning reader is offered a practical analysis of how a liberal democracy is seeking a win-win-win scenario against terrorism by maintaining a domestic moral conscience based on rule of law, response to a critical international audience, and insistence on keeping terrorism from "affecting the public's day-to-day affairs and the essence of life in Israel."

Another fascinating discussion concerns the power of education as a tool of counterterrorism. According to Ganor, Netanyahu advocated strengthening public resistance to the corrosive effects of terrorism through education designed to inoculate the population against the impulse to give in to protracted terrorist pressure. In 1997 the Herzilya-based International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism started an aggressive program of lectures and educational activities aimed at strengthening the Israeli public's ability to cope with terrorism. Ganor asserts that public education contributes to solutions by reducing the fear and paralysis that terrorism can cause. Furthermore, public information, particularly in a liberal democracy, reinforces trust and disarms terrorists, who seek to undermine society's stability.

Perhaps the most stunning revelation in the book comes in the final chapter, as Ganor says, as did most Israeli policy makers whom he interviewed, "Israel does not have—nor did it ever have—a written, structured and unambiguous counter terrorism policy." What then, were the underlying principles by which decisions were made across numerous

political administrations? Why does the Israeli experience offer solutions for a way ahead? *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle* provides the answers.

To paraphrase the author, the book is intended to serve as a guide to the perplexed, a tool for decision makers at all levels of government, industry, military, police, academics, and the public at large. Ganor succeeds in this intention. The book is highly recommended for all readers in his intended audience.

JEFFREY H. NORWITZ  
*Naval War College*



Sheehan, Michael. *International Security: An Analytical Survey*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2005. 199pp. \$49.95

National security students and practitioners commonly dive into esoteric debates on the merits of various grand strategies and foreign policies, having spent little or no time pondering the contemporary meaning of the term that drives the discussion—"security." Michael Sheehan, professor of international relations at Swansea University in the United Kingdom, and author of a number of authoritative texts on related subjects, was driven to write this book by a felt need to shed more light on this "contested concept." *International Security* does an admirable job of illustrating the myriad ways in which scholars have used the term since the advent of the discipline. More significantly, Sheehan offers thoughtful commentary on how contemporary scholars should take into account new forces in international relations that demand broader thinking on "security."

The book's main challenge is to develop some consensus as to what constitutes a security issue. If considered broadly, anything that affects the well-being of humans might be included, but so inclusive a discourse might be meaningless. Sheehan sides with those who propose to limit the debate to the human-inspired dangers of a life-threatening nature to collectives. Thus all traditional military threats are counted, along with global warming (but not earthquakes) and the Kosovo genocide of 1999 (but not the disappearance of the Gaelic tongue). This system works.

After a clear and understandable discussion of security as initially set forth by the realist school of international relations, Sheehan devotes a chapter to each of the elements of what he calls today's "broader agenda" of security: security communities, economic, societal, environmental, gender, postmodern, and critical security. In each case, he draws on the seminal articles and arguments for each element and then offers his personal critique of what each adds to the debate.

Sheehan makes it clear that all of these schools are reactions to realism and that each new element of the "broader agenda" offers its antidote to the traditional perspective of viewing states, rather than individuals, as the consumers of the benefits of security. However, he insightfully shows that each element itself has an element of realist thinking. That is, ameliorating the tensions caused by intrasocietal (tribal) rivalries not only reduces danger to the people but also advances the relative power of the state by showcasing its stability. The case is equally well made for economic and environmental policies. Sheehan is at his best, however, when he illustrates in each chapter how these new topics go

beyond this obsession with the state and military power and contribute to the development of what is now commonly called *human* security.

Unfortunately, many of his observations and conclusions are both obvious and repetitive. He chides the realist (and neorealist) school in nearly every chapter of the survey for being mesmerized by the *military*, *statist*, and *power* correlates of security. The first of his several suggestions that the world had changed markedly since the end of the Cold War should have sufficed. His thesis that individuals as well as states must be the referents of security can be found in every chapter.

While the book has an academic tone and is well footnoted, it remains readily digestible for the layman. It is particularly well suited for midcareer national security professionals embarking on the study of national security issues, since it will induce them to develop personal interpretations of the meaning of international security. Our national security establishment needs more of this.

TOM FEDYSZYN  
*Naval War College*



Moore, John Norton, and Robert F. Turner. *National Security Law, Second Edition*. Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic, 2005. 1,424pp. \$110

In 1990 John Norton Moore and Robert F. Turner, along with Frederick S. Tipson, published a *National Security Law* casebook covering a “new field in American law and legal education,” a work designed for “use in law schools, advanced degree programs in international relations and national security, and the nation’s war colleges and

service academies—as well as to serve as a handy desk reference for professionals and practitioners.”

Since the publication of that first edition the U.S. national security landscape has undergone a radical transformation. Over the last fifteen years the United States has been to war in the Persian Gulf, Europe, and Afghanistan. Moreover, the world has witnessed mass executions in the name of ethnic strife in Africa and Europe, the onset of the “information age,” the rise of China as a military and economic power, an increased proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and a tremendous surge in non-state-sponsored terrorism. Perhaps the most critical turning point relevant to U.S. national security law was 11 September 2001, when the radical Islamist terrorist group al-Qa’ida killed thousands of American civilians. The resulting U.S.-led Global War on Terrorism has redefined how Washington and Americans view national security.

Not surprisingly, the turbulent nature of the post-Cold War and post-9/11 eras led to a significant evolution in the now established field of national security law. Moore and Turner have gone to great lengths to create in the second edition of *National Security Law* an up-to-date casebook that covers not only the fundamentals of national security law but also new areas in the law that are burgeoning as we enter the twenty-first century. The authors have assembled some of the world’s leading experts in their respective fields of law and policy. Most notably, they place a clear emphasis on national security issues that have arisen in the post-Cold War era. In addition to adding several new chapters, such as “Domestic Terrorism,” “Information Warfare,” “Homeland Security,” “Outer Space Law,” “Drugs as a

National Security Issue,” and “Operational Law,” Moore and Turner have deleted material that was more relevant to the Cold War. Additionally, many other chapters have been revised and updated to reflect important advances in national security law and policy.

Perhaps what sets this casebook apart from others in the genre is its extensive scope. Its thirty-two chapters cover not only “some of the central public preoccupations of our time—military force, arms control, free speech, and terrorism—but also a number of more esoteric corners of the law,” which at times have gained wide attention and scrutiny. Indeed, every conceivable aspect of national security law and policy, from “The Use of Force in International Relations: Norms Concerning the Initiation of Coercion” to “War Crimes and Tribunals” to “The Control of International Terrorism” and “Immigration Law and National Security,” is included.

The second edition of *National Security Law* sets the standard in its field and will no doubt facilitate “an interdisciplinary understanding” of what Moore and Turner “believe to be one of the most important public policy developments now facing the nation.” Without question, Moore and Turner have succeeded in producing a comprehensive, well organized, extremely well written casebook filled with seminal cases, insightful commentary, and stimulating questions for discussion. *National Security Law* is likely to rapidly become a staple at law schools and advanced degree programs across America and will no doubt be relied on by scholars, students, and practitioners for years to come.

SEAN P. HENSELER  
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy  
Naval War College



Hook, Steven W. *U.S. Foreign Policy: The Paradox of World Power*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 2005. 487pp. \$54.95

Steven Hook’s textbook of American foreign policy offers a sweeping array of issues that put contemporary American politics in clearer perspective. The preface lays out this paradox: the very sources of American strength have increasingly become sources of vulnerability, among them a sclerotic bureaucracy that cannot “effectively manage the dynamic world order that, to a considerable extent, is of its own making.” For Hook, the United States is threatened by forces such as globalization, which it so vigorously promoted and which gave it strength. This work explores the impact of this paradox on the process of making U.S. foreign policy.

The book examines the setting of U.S. foreign policy, touching on the rise of American power and on various views and theories of how decisions are made. It then explores the governmental sources of foreign policy, including the various branches of government and the bureaucracy, and nongovernmental sources of foreign policy, such as public opinion, interest groups, and intergovernmental organizations. Finally, it examines policy, including defense and economic statecraft, and transnational problems such as population growth, global warming, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The result for the reader is a good understanding of contemporary American foreign policy.

Hook offers interesting point-counterpoint debates on subjects ranging from the realist-liberal debate on war to nuclear deterrence versus just war. There

are also sections in which such figures as Fidel Castro, Ted Koppel, and Theodore Roosevelt speak in their own words, as well as many useful graphs and tables that clearly illustrate important developments in world politics. The extensive glossary should prove very helpful.

No book, alas, is without its shortfalls, and I offer two. First, Hook works with a theme; he puts forth an argument about the current state of American affairs and shapes his textbook around it. It is an interesting theme and a good tool for learning, but because textbooks are often devoid of editorial comment, in this one argument may pass as fact. Overall, the approach is effective, but teachers will need to emphasize to their students that the book is thematic.

Second, the scholarship needs updating in certain sections—for instance, in the discussion of cognitive psychology and decision making. It is true that much of the important literature in this area is dated, and that a book of this kind should not overwhelm the student. However, more could have been done to incorporate new work.

Overall, this is one of the best texts on American foreign policy. Hook, an associate professor of political science at Kent State University, has a strong record of publication on this subject and is a veteran textbook author. This work will be of interest not only to college students but also to members of the Naval War College community. While it is not yet clear that the United States is caught in a grand paradox the likes of which Hook addresses, it is certainly a vital, even defining, theme to consider, and one that he frames effectively. Certainly, it is an issue with which

students, scholars, and policy makers will be grappling in the coming years.

STEPHEN YETIV  
*Old Dominion University*  
*Norfolk, Va.*



Carpenter, William M., and David G. Wienczek, eds. *Asian Security Handbook: Terrorism and the New Security Environment*. 3rd edition. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2005. 365pp. \$84.95

In March 2005 Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld released *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*. In the foreword Rumsfeld sends a clear message about America's security concerns: "We live in a time of unconventional challenges and strategic uncertainty. We are confronting fundamentally different challenges from those faced by the American defense establishment in the Cold War and previous eras. The war on terrorism has exposed new challenges, but also unprecedented strategic opportunities to work at home and with allies and partners abroad to create conditions favorable to a secure international order." Indeed, as witnessed by the summer terrorist bombings in London and earlier attacks in Madrid and Bali, countering these deadly "unconventional challenges" requires imaginative thinking and expert geopolitical knowledge. *The Asian Security Handbook: Terrorism and the New Security Environment* aims to assist in meeting these challenges in the Asian setting.

The *Asian Security Handbook*, strongly reflecting the post-9/11 environment, presents a series of political and security assessments of twenty-three Asian countries. True to its subtitle, the editors

begin with an excellent chapter on terrorism, which includes thought-provoking photos, maps, and a figure depicting the “Southeast Asia terror network.” Noting that today’s threats come in a myriad of identities, Carpenter and Wiencek include insightful discussions on “security issues and trends independent of the events of September 11.” This section includes well crafted assessments on piracy, U.S.-Chinese strategic competition, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The detailed tables on piracy and WMD developments in Asia are also very helpful.

Our electronic media, the latest information erupting fast and furious from computers, radio, and television, create relevance and timeliness issues for any traditionally published reference material. Lengthy publication time lines and the ever-changing international situation exacerbate the problem. Here, the *Asian Security Handbook* shows both value and weakness. The chapter on terrorism addresses events well into 2004. The authors ask the right questions and present thoughtful arguments that should stand the test of time. The information in many of the country-profile chapters, written by a wide range of government, academic, and private-sector specialists, is more dated. Indeed, a quick review discloses that most of these articles are supported by sources written no later than 2003. The section on Japan has a mere two endnotes, citing publications of 2001 and 2002. Perhaps more alarming is the coverage on Singapore, which consists of only five pages of text (Brunei is allotted thirteen pages), no endnotes, and just three dated suggested readings. Surely Singapore deserves much more attention. Also, the seventeen contributing

authors, while most welcome for their diverse viewpoints, represent a wide range of writing and research abilities. The coverage on China, for example, is divided into brief, mostly unsupported statements of questionable consideration and depth. Subtitles range from “Spies” to “Farmers, Rural Areas.” (The introductory chapter’s discussion on China, although brief, is much more useful.) The style is similar to that of a U.S. Army area handbook, and there are but three endnotes; two are official U.S. government publications, the other a Chinese government website. Other country profiles, such as that on India, are more polished, scholarly, and thorough.

Is the *Asian Security Handbook* a useful reference? The U.S. national defense strategy sets forth a plan to defeat America’s adversaries by “countering ideological support for terrorism,” or CIST. CIST—and how it can be used—has quickly become a hot topic within Department of Defense professional military education circles. Clearly, academic courses that provide students with a greater knowledge of our incredibly diverse world, including relevant languages, culture, economic, and political factors, are key components in the building of sorely needed understanding and expertise. Unquestionably, Asia is a critical area for study and assessment, and the *Asian Security Handbook* provides the nonspecialist with a single reference for most of it. While the writing and timeliness are uneven, the *Asian Security Handbook* presents a starting point for those interested in studying this critically important region.

TIMOTHY N. CASTLE  
*Naval War College*



Hersh, Seymour. *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*. New York: Harper-Collins, 2004. 394pp. \$36.95

Seymour Hersh continues with his latest work his journey as a man with an agenda. Released in September 2004, it is a compilation of articles published in *The New Yorker*, with additional information intended to present a congruent, as well as compelling, story about the Bush administration's efforts to wage a worldwide war on terrorism. That Hersh is a fan neither of the president and his closest aides nor of the Iraq war is made abundantly clear from the opening pages. As a consequence, *Chain of Command* has drawn heavy criticism from those who are either administration loyalists or ideologically supportive of the Global War on Terror despite its unconventional and violent nature. Conversely, the president's political opponents and others who oppose war on any number of grounds have heralded Hersh's book as the latest efforts of a quixotic protagonist sworn to bring truth into the light. The former have assailed the book for its perceived inaccuracies and lack of credible sources, while the latter have lauded it for exposing programs and decisions that appear inimical to deep-seated American beliefs about decency and honesty.

This book is clearly a polemic, intended to draw attention to Hersh's concerns over what he sees as an abuse of power at the highest levels of a government seemingly obsessed with a vision for Iraq and its Muslim neighbors that may be out of step with traditional American ideals. Whether you agree or disagree with Hersh's assessments and

conclusions, *Chain of Command* is a work every serious student of U.S. national security should read, because he raises important fundamental and somewhat disquieting questions: Who is ultimately accountable for the prisoner abuses that occurred at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay? What are the moral and ethical obligations of those in uniform to adhere to international norms of behavior when national guidance appears at odds with, if not in complete contradiction to, accepted global standards?

Hersh also challenges his readers to contemplate the effects of the secretary of defense's domination over the military conduct of the war on terror and its ramifications on the future of civil-military relations. Secretary Rumsfeld bent the military to his will in almost every phase of the war on Iraq, with what Hersh describes as disastrous results both in Iraq (where an insurgency rages on) and in the greater war on terror (in which the architect of 9/11 remains free). The reader is left to contemplate what the obligations of senior military leaders were and why they were not more effective in making their voices heard on strictly military matters. Further, what salient ethical issues arise from *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* considerations of the Iraq war?

Hersh reserves much of his vitriol for the Bush administration's handling of the intelligence used to justify war on Iraq. In a chapter titled "Who Lied to Whom?" he recounts much of what has come to light about the way intelligence was "manipulated" to build a case. For Hersh, the inability of U.S. intelligence organizations to collect accurate intelligence about Iraq and al-Qa'ida is nearly as egregious as the manner in which

that intelligence was analyzed and interpreted. He is clearly disturbed by the apparent usurpation of national intelligence activities by the Department of Defense. The reader is left with the nagging suspicion that further such consolidation may not be in the best interests of the country's leadership, since opposing opinions already appear to have no voice.

Hersh concludes *Chain of Command* by posing a troubling set of questions. "How did eight or nine neo-conservatives who believed that a war in Iraq was the answer to international terrorism get their way? How did they redirect the government and rearrange long-standing American priorities and policies with so much ease?" Discerning readers must look past the author's bias and answer for themselves. While it is arguable whether this book will earn the stature of *My Lai 4*, Hersh succeeds in confronting us with important questions that force us to look harder at ourselves and our country.

RON RATCLIFF  
*Captain, U.S. Navy (Retired)*  
*Naval War College*



Pierce, Terry C. *Warfighting and Disruptive Technologies: Disguising Innovation*. New York: Frank Cass, 2004. 265pp. \$115

Captain Terry Pierce is a serving naval officer who has studied innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, under the supervision of Stephen Rosen. This book appears to be the author's dissertation, written as part of a series on strategy and history edited by Colin Gray and Williamson Murray.

Beyond that, nothing about this book is clear or straightforward, including the title. The title leads one to think that the book will examine how revolutionary technologies have transformed warfare, but the subtitle, "Disguising Innovation," should serve as a warning—nothing is as it first seems. This work is a sociological study of how the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps have achieved what the author terms "disruptive innovations" (new ways of combining technologies that create new forms of warfighting) and sustaining innovations (those that improve existing forms). Technology plays a distant second fiddle to doctrine. Pierce's major thesis is that the catalysts for disruptive innovation are senior military officers. How these officers manage the disruptive innovation process is key. He shows that they establish small groups to define the tasks that must be carried out to conduct a new form of warfare, ensure that like-minded officers are promoted, and most intriguingly, disguise the disruptive innovation as merely improvements to existing modes, in order to avert ruinous opposition from entrenched interests. In support of his thesis Pierce offers a number of case studies, including amphibious warfare, Japanese and American carrier warfare in World War II, and Marine maneuver warfare. A nice twist is the inclusion of more recent case studies like surface-land-attack warfare and the Tactical Collaboration Network.

After a promising first chapter in which the author generally defines his terms and surveys the existing literature on disruptive innovation, however, comes a nearly disastrous attempt to establish a theoretical framework to support the

analysis of the following case studies. Chapter 2 is almost unreadable, apparently due to the failure of anyone actually to read or edit it. Apart from turgid and sloppy language, the chapter's most egregious defect is the author's nonsensical adaptation of charts from Clay Christensen's *The Innovator's Dilemma*, a standard in the innovation literature. Pierce employs his own versions of Christensen's charts but leaves out certain key elements, with the result that the reader has no hope of making sense of them. This will give the knowledgeable reader serious doubt regarding the validity of the book.

However, things get better as Pierce swings into the case studies. He contrasts successful attempts to institutionalize disruptive innovations, like the Marine Corps shift to offensive amphibious warfare doctrine in the 1930s, with such failed efforts as Admiral Elmo Zumwalt's Project 60, an attempt to refocus the Navy on sea control. Pierce also compares the management methods used to promote sustaining innovations, such as continuous-aim gunfire, with those successful in promoting disruptive innovations, and he finds significant differences. In the end, a degree of clarity is attained, and by the final chapter the reader can with some effort understand and even agree with the author's main arguments. In fact, people engaged in military innovation efforts will likely find some practical insights.

If, then, this book, despite its flaws, can be useful for the knowledgeable military officer, academic, or defense industry manager, it is most definitely not for the uninitiated or casual reader. Ultimately, it is too hard to follow and contains too many editing errors to be

recommended as a worthwhile investment for the general reader. It is too bad that neither Pierce's advisers nor his publisher extended the effort to review and edit his dissertation properly; it could have had far wider appeal and value.

ROBERT C. RUBEL  
*Naval War College*



Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*. New York: Little, Brown, 2005. 277pp. \$15.57

Among the many attributes desired in professional military officers is the ability to make extremely rapid decisions under conditions of extreme stress and peril, and for the highest imaginable stakes. Decisions may even have to be made in less time than is available consciously to weigh the alternatives and select a course of action. Although not unique—others, including doctors, law enforcement officials, and firefighters, face similar situations and under equivalent expectations—such demands are not a common part of most people's work experience.

In *Blink* Gladwell examines rapid, almost instantaneous, decision making—decisions made in the “blink of an eye.” The book advances an intriguing and seductive proposition, that people can be trained to make nearly instantaneous decisions using minimal amounts of data and yet achieve remarkable percentages of successful outcomes. If reading *Blink* could produce such a result, the book would represent one of the most significant advances in the field of decision making in decades. Unfortunately, such is not the case.

*Blink* is not going to transform its readers into paragons of successful, instant decision makers, however much the dust-jacket hype might imply it will. However, this does not mean *Blink* should be completely written off. There are insights worth thinking about and lessons to be gleaned from Gladwell's work.

For the most part, *Blink* is an extremely reader-friendly volume. Gladwell introduces concepts and follows up with deeper illumination and understanding through a variety of well documented anecdotes. During the first half of the book, the author seems about to deliver on the implied promise of better decision making as he explains how some people seem to master what might be called the "art of snap decisions." He does this in graduated steps, providing convincing evidence for each component of his argument.

Drawing on data from a study of gambling, Gladstone demonstrates that decision making occurs in both the human conscious and the subconscious mind. The gambling study found that at least in some people subconscious decision making occurs more rapidly than conscious decision making. *Blink* also provides convincing evidence that distilling, rather than increasing, information may result in not only faster but better decision making. The combination of subconscious data processing and the use of very limited data is known as "thin-slicing," defined as "the ability of the unconscious to find patterns in situations based on very narrow slices of experience." A related illustrative anecdote comes from the medical community. Doctors have determined that confining an examination to four key observations results in significantly higher percentages of correct diagnosis

of heart attack in the emergency room than do more comprehensive diagnostic protocols.

*Blink* identifies experience as another key component in the ability to make rapid and accurate decisions. Deep familiarity with one's subject, be it ancient Greek statues, professional tennis, marriage counseling, or, one may assume, battle displays, is an essential component to making correct fast decisions. To demonstrate this point Gladwell offers the example of Vic Braden, a noted tennis coach who apparently has a supernatural ability to predict when a professional tennis player is going to double-fault. Yet Braden cannot explain how he knows the double fault will occur. Clearly decades of coaching tennis have left him with a predictive ability that functions either so rapidly or so subconsciously that he himself does not understand it.

Gladwell also explores the negative aspects of thin-slice decision making. Everybody makes lightning decisions, all of us work off hunches and feelings, but all too often the decisions are influenced by images and stereotypes that have bombarded us from birth. One of the most powerful questions raised in *Blink* concerns the degree to which our attitudes on such fundamental questions as racial equality are answered through snap decision making. According to Gladwell the answer is "to a very large extent," so much so that people who sincerely believe they are not biased carry embedded subconscious attitudes that affect their perceptions of others. Interestingly, *Blink* suggests such attitudes do not have to be permanent, that exposure to positive images can result in measurable changes to subconscious perceptions. If true, these

findings would seem not only to give significant ammunition to those who claim the nation's children are excessively influenced by what they see on television but to have importance in efforts to counter terrorist attempts to popularize their ideologies.

Another reported pitfall to good snap decision making is the power of the first impression. Gladwell tells the story of Warren Harding, a man whose bearing and voice so impressed all who met him with their presidential quality that it seemed only right he should attain the Oval Office. Unfortunately, Harding's capabilities did not match his image, and his time in the White House was thoroughly undistinguished. In one of the book's more interesting anecdotes Gladwell explains the success behind the so-called "Pepsi Challenge," a blind taste-test designed to help the Pepsi Cola Company achieve a victory over its primary competitor, Coca-Cola. Being sweeter tasting than Coke, Pepsi was overwhelmingly favored when individuals sampled small amounts of each soda. The results were reversed, however, when the sample size was increased to an entire can. The Coca-Cola Company failed to realize this fact and diverted significant resources into a variety of failed attempts to meet the "challenge."

Much of *Blink* is devoted to the performance of retired Marine general Paul Van Riper as the commander of opposition forces in the MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE war game of 2002. This game simulated a massive U.S. military response to a rogue military leader in the Persian Gulf. General Van Riper reportedly scored an impressive victory against U.S. forces early in the game by a variety of innovative and unexpected tactics. Gladwell argues Van Riper was

victorious because his team, unencumbered by excessive information and overanalysis, retained the power of rapid cognition. In other words, rather than relying on technology and analysis to eliminate the fog of war, General Van Riper's team had been trained to work in the fog; his unexpected tactics plunged the U.S. military and political analysts into the very fog they had intended to dispel. Once both sides were operating in conditions of reduced clarity, Van Riper's team was able to triumph.

The remainder of the book examines in some detail the death of Amadou Diallo, a Guinean immigrant who was shot to death by members of a New York Police Department street-crime unit in 1999. Gladwell walks the reader through the shooting, presenting the police officers not as slaving racists or sociopaths but as victims of their own physiological responses to stress and a lack of training under high-stress conditions. According to Gladwell's research, as stress reaches extreme levels, such as in "shoot/don't shoot" situations, the human body changes the way it processes and perceives data. Under these conditions, signals, perhaps especially facial expressions, no longer carry the impact they would otherwise; humans enter a state the book identifies as "mind-blind," a condition that might also be described as temporary autism. The odds skyrocket that the affected individual, robbed of the ability to process key data rapidly, will opt to shoot a perceived threat. However, Gladwell explains, with training these automatic responses become less severe, allowing individuals to make accurate and appropriate decisions. *Blink* argues that an even more desirable outcome of proper training is to prevent such high-stress situations from developing in the first place.

Surprisingly, Gladwell concludes his book with a story that showcases the negative side of first impressions, thin-slicing, and stereotypes—the impressive increase in the number of women in professional orchestras. This growth, especially in sections of the orchestra traditionally thought of as masculine, is attributed less to a growing awareness of women’s rights than to the introduction of “blind auditions,” in which the applicants perform out of the judges’ sight. Deprived of immediate decision cues, the judges are forced to base their decisions solely on musical merit. Artificial or nonmusical impediments are removed, and women musicians are free to rise to their level of competence. As examples go, this is compelling in the extreme.

The merits of *Blink* are many. It is well written, lively, and engaging. Gladwell both explains the power of first impressions and demonstrates that there are indeed people who can make very successful decisions based on minimal data in next to no time. He also convinces that such talents can be acquired, or at least improved. Yet it is here that the book loses cohesion and momentum.

Having recognized that “blink” decision making can be both positive and negative, Gladwell offers no clear way by which the former can be improved and the latter minimized. Furthermore, the people he identifies as good “blink” decision makers are all *experts*. In many cases they have been mastering their fields for decades. For example, General Van Riper’s success was due at least as much to his expert knowledge of U.S. military procedures, strategy, and tactics as it was to his ability to make snap decisions. It is a pity Gladwell did not pursue the question of experience

a little deeper as, at least upon the surface, his findings would seem to have applicability to such issues as officer-training pipelines and criteria for command.

The fact that training can reduce the negative impacts of stress in snap decision making is nothing new, especially for those in the military. Whether it is the Marines reacting to a convoy ambush or a warship’s combat systems team responding to an air attack, realistic training is a critical component of success. Gladwell’s work simply reinforces what soldiers and sailors have long known: You fight the way you train.

While *Blink* will not make its readers experts at snap decisions, it remains a work of interest. For one thing Gladwell rather conclusively demonstrates that our individual personalities, our unique experiences, and beliefs and values, form an integral part of human decision making. Models that fail to take this aspect of decision making into consideration are almost certain to be flawed, and leaders who fail to understand the power of these attributes are almost certain to be disappointed. *Blink* may not provide all the answers, but the questions it raises are most definitely worthy of consideration.

RICHARD NORTON  
*Naval War College*



Miller, Steven E., and Dimitri V. Trenin, eds. *The Russian Military: Power and Purpose*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004. 241pp. \$25

The study of the Russian armed forces has, like those armed forces themselves, fallen upon hard times in the contemporary world. Therefore, this study is most welcome. The editors and authors—

Americans, Europeans, and Russians—are all acknowledged experts, so it is not surprising that all the essays are of uniformly high quality. The editors also deserve praise for including a chapter on the defense economy; its evolution is a telling indicator of Russia's defense policy and overall political economy. The editors' purpose is to illuminate the conditions under which Russia's rulers have responded to the challenges for reforming their armed forces.

Thus the chapters on defense reform (by Pavel Baev and Alexei Arbatov) and on the military's sociopolitical conditions (by Alexander Golts) paint a devastating picture of an unreformed military that instead of providing security has itself become a source of insecurity for Russia. That outcome stems from underinvestment, politicization, corruption, official neglect, and refusal to attack the perquisites of the military establishment's leadership. Vitaly Shlykov's chapter on the defense economy rightly points out that the regime has failed to break free of either the Soviet Union's "structural militarization" or the heavy hand of state control. Roy Allison's overview of Russian military involvement in regional conflicts suggests that even after painful lessons that military has only begun to learn what contemporary warfare is all about. Rose Gottemoeller ably traces both the debate over the role of nuclear forces in Russia's military structure and policy through 2003 and the implications of that debate as they had been revealed at that point. Dmitri Trenin's conclusion reassesses the reasons why defense reform had failed through 2003 and addresses the paradox that though many are calling for reforms, many others

correctly observe that the system itself is unreformable.

No one interested in tracing the evolution of Russian forces and defense policy through 2003 can go wrong with this book. It is too bad that it was published when it was. Because this work is part of a distinguished multivolume series on Eurasian security issues, its publication was part of a larger program and could not be delayed, but beginning in 2003 and conclusively in 2004, the logjam that had blocked reform began to give way. Defense spending and training, including exercises, increased substantially, and by 2004 the effects were visible. Likewise, new operational and doctrinal principles were introduced and accepted in 2003–2004. The General Staff, which had frustrated many reforms, was now firmly subordinated to the Ministry of Defense, and the chief of the General Staff, General Anatoly Kvashnin, a tenacious bureaucratic operator but disastrous military leader, was finally sacked. Major force-structure reforms began and are still continuing today. Had the authors known of these trends, they could have provided first-class assessments of their significance.

However, some things are already clear. Current reforms are occurring under the rubric of the Russian term "reform of the armed forces"—that is, changes in force structure. These reforms, while extremely consequential, do not constitute a total transformation. Indeed, the defense economy remains too much of a Soviet-like character and is subject to excessive state control. All the armed forces, including those of the Ministry of Interior and intelligence agencies, are unaccountable democratically, representing instead indispensable pillars of

Putin's neo-tsarist, authoritarian system. In addition, the Ministry of Defense, rather than embracing a professional army, insists upon expanding conscription and enserfing thousands of men as their ancestors were enserfed over a century ago. Thus, until and unless defense reforms are carried out beyond mere reorganizations of the force structure, Russia cannot have effective armed forces, security, or democracy. Until then it will remain tempted by imperialism and military adventurism, as in Chechnya, and fail to retrieve its European vocation or achieve true integration into Europe. Under the circumstances, then, it would be a good idea if the authors could be prevailed upon to write a second edition that incorporates the most recent trends. Then we could derive maximum benefit from this splendid book that was published too soon.

STEPHEN BLANK  
*Strategic Studies Institute*  
*U.S. Army War College*  
*Carlisle Barracks, Penna.*



Mallmann Showell, Jak P. *German Naval Codebreakers*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2003. 160pp. \$29.95

In the almost thirty years since the public revelation that the Allies in World War II broke substantial portions of the German ENIGMA cipher system, Allied codebreaking has become a staple of our understanding of the Battle of the Atlantic. Less understood are the parallel efforts of the German navy to break Allied naval codes. The historical record of German codebreaking is comparatively fragmentary, many records having been destroyed during or immediately after the war. German naval

intelligence was smaller than its Allied counterparts and left a smaller trace. Still, the influence of these German efforts on the pivotal convoy battles of the war has remained an important unanswered question. In *German Naval Codebreakers*, Jak Showell, author of more than a dozen books on German U-boats, has attempted to provide an account of signals intelligence in the German navy in World War II.

The German Naval Radio Monitoring Service (or Funkbeobachtungsdienst, commonly abbreviated B-Dienst) worked with some success against British and American naval codes. During the early period of the war until 1943, the B-Dienst could read large parts of the Allied merchant ship and convoy codes, which provided important insights into convoy operations and routing. In addition to codebreaking, B-Dienst operated a network of direction finders that fixed the approximate locations of radio transmissions in the Atlantic.

Whatever its success at codebreaking, the German navy in World War II failed at the critical second step of intelligence analysis. Showell creates the impression that B-Dienst personnel were separated from key operational commanders and were not permitted access to information about their own forces' operations. The B-Dienst was therefore reduced to passing raw messages to senior commands, feeding the complaint that radio intelligence served only to provide a flood of useless information. This arrangement stands in marked contrast to the intimate relationship between commanders and operational intelligence centers in Britain and the United States.

From the outset, the book suffers from an unfortunate organization. Attempting to avoid a chronological history of the war at sea, the author has arranged his material in a series of short vignettes, separated by ship type and area of operations. Lost in this organization is the common thread of the B-Dienst itself. Showell, for example, touches on the question of how intelligence support was provided to German units at sea in several sections but never ties them together to address the critical question of information dissemination across the German navy. Showell attempts to circumvent this problem by a series of appendixes on organization, but these are too brief to serve the need, and the result is confusing and unclear.

Within these sections there are historical gems. For example, the author discusses a February 1943 incident in which the B-Dienst intercepted a British message containing German submarine locations—potential evidence that the German code was itself being read by the Allies. Ultimately, the German navy convinced itself that its operational information had been compromised through other means and that its codes were secure. However, this gem, like all others mentioned, suffers from the second major failing of the book—an almost complete lack of documentation. While the work contains a list of recommended reading and mentions at the outset that it is largely based on work found in private archives in Germany, there is no further reference to the evidence.

The third and perhaps most important failing of the book is a failure to explore the full implications of German successes and failures. The fundamental historical question is how the German

navy set out to provide intelligence information to its commanders, and how and why it succeeded or failed in that effort. That question is never answered, leaving the book at best titillating but unsatisfying.

DALE C. RIELAGE  
*Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy*  
*Assistant Naval Attaché, Berlin*



McCullough, David. *1776*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005. 386pp. \$32

David McCullough has written yet another enormously enjoyable and informative narrative history. Compared to his monumental Pulitzer Prize-winning biographies of Harry Truman and John Adams, *1776* is only a snapshot of a crucial moment in time, although it is every bit as engaging. It covers the events of the seventeen months between King George III's October 1775 announcement to Parliament of unrelenting war against his American colonies and the arrival in Britain of the news of George Washington's victory at Trenton in March 1777. A story of overcoming adversity, *1776* focuses on the early battles of the War of Independence, which were mainly retreats for the ragged and often exhausted Continental Army.

Based on McCullough's expert research in American and British archives, the story is packed with rich descriptions drawn from both sources. At age forty-four, Washington is at the moral center of the drama. Although he had never before led an army in battle and is (as McCullough bluntly declares) "indecisive and inept" in the early New York campaigns, Washington learns

from his mistakes and somehow keeps his frayed army intact and unbroken. He also proves to be resolute as well as resilient, living up to his later reputation as the “indispensable man” of the founding era.

McCullough vibrantly describes other indispensable characters as well. On the American side there are Henry Knox, a “town-born” Boston bookseller turned accomplished soldier at age twenty-five, and Nathaniel Greene, a “fighting Quaker” who became the youngest brigadier general in the army at age thirty-three. Both these men proved to be outstanding military leaders and steadfastly loyal to Washington. Leaders from the British side are also crisply portrayed. King George III, his primary military commanders General William Howe and Admiral Lord Richard Howe, and other diligent subjects of the Crown are sketched, in a fresh and balanced treatment.

The Howe brothers, who were directed by King George to extend the “olive branch” as well as fight (perhaps explaining some of their dawdling maneuvers), are painted as courageous and dedicated professionals. They commanded an awesome force, and the vivid descriptions of raw British power—an armada of four hundred ships anchored off Staten Island, the ferocious British bombardment at Kips Bay that began the battle for New York—are truly daunting. The fighting was vicious and large in scale, and many readers will have to be reminded that forty thousand people took part in the battle for Long Island, a fight that stretched over six miles through present-day Brooklyn.

McCullough solidly grounds his narrative at the individual level. Utilizing

firsthand accounts from diaries and letters, and writing in a graceful style, he humanizes the stories of the lesser characters of those times that did indeed “try men’s souls.” Volunteer farmers, artisans, backwoodsmen, tradesmen, boatmen, and mere boys, all accustomed to hardship and labor, make up the cast. There are patriot “shoemakers, saddlers, carpenters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, coopers, tailors and ship chandlers,” as well as their counterpart Loyalists—and the splendidly trained but equally human redcoats and Hessians. McCullough’s colorful story includes drunks, deserters, spies, prostitutes, traitors, and no-accounts, along with the accompanying bad teeth, smallpox scars, casts in the eyes, open “necessaries” (latrines), and “camp fever” (dysentery and typhus). The story also describes instances of astonishing dedication, ingenuity, energy, heroism, and self-sacrifice for the “glorious cause.”

McCullough’s story ends with Washington’s crossing of the Delaware and the victory at Trenton, the battle that gave the first great hope for the cause after the British evacuation of Boston in 1775. It was the “brilliant stroke” that Washington had sought. Fate and chance played a weighty role; a slight change in the wind, the arrival of fog, the amount of gunpowder, or in the timing of British pursuit could have doomed the rebellion. The eventual victory was even then far from inevitable and was to be indeed a near-run thing.

The British historian Sir George Trevelyan once wrote of the astounding turnaround after Trenton, “It may be doubted whether so small a number of men ever employed so short a space of time with greater and more lasting

effects upon the history of the world.”  
McCullough’s superb book will convince the reader of this view; the author himself concludes that the outcome seemed “little short of a miracle.”

Perhaps Washington said it best when he wrote, “perseverance and spirit have done wonders in all ages.”

WILLIAM CALHOUN  
*Naval War College*