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Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA

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definition of the term “victory” remains out of grasp, despite centuries of learned commentary on military affairs. Martel casts his book as a preliminary investigation of the nature of victory. This “pre-theoretical” inquiry, he declares, is the best that can be achieved, given the nature of war—a violent clash of wills pervaded by uncertainty and strong passions. Given these realities, no social-science theory can tell political and military officials how they can arrange matters to assure victory.

After surveying the works of classical and modern strategic theorists, Martel constructs a framework for analyzing past wars and informing future deliberations on when and how to use force to achieve policy objectives. Victory, says Martel, can be classified by: its level, designated (in descending order) grand strategic, political-military, or tactical; how, and how much, the war alters the prewar status quo; how fully the victorious society mobilizes itself for war; and the manner and scope of postwar obligations incurred by the victor. The author next uses this framework to classify several U.S. military actions, ranging from the 1986 Libya raid to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

Evaluating victory is an ambiguous undertaking, even using this analytical approach. The Libya raid yielded only a “quasi-political-military victory,” inducing a change of political behavior on Moammar Gadhafi’s part. The outcome of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, sure to engender the most controversy among Martel’s case studies, remains in doubt. While American policy makers are clearly thinking in terms of a thoroughgoing, grand-strategic victory that reorders Middle Eastern affairs, only a partial victory is yet in hand, and even

that result could slip away amid terrorism and communal bloodletting. *Victory in War* renders a service by improving our ability to learn from past operations and think through future operations before embarking on them.

Given the preliminary nature of Martel’s work, certain issues await elucidation. Most notably, the terms affixed to the levels of victory—grand strategic, political-military, and tactical—imply that the author wants to invert the familiar Clausewitzian relationship between policy and strategy. Placing grand-strategic victory above political-military victory in the hierarchy suggests that strategy—roughly speaking, “grand strategy” means deploying diplomatic, economic, and ideological as well as military power to realize policy aims—ranks above politics in the order of things. A taxonomy clearly affirming the supremacy of policy would enhance Martel’s analytical enterprise and its relevance to practitioners and scholars considerably.

In short, *Victory in War* marks the beginning of what promises to be a fruitful debate on matters of vital interest to political and military leaders—and the nations they serve.

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Prados, John. *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006. 696pp. \$35

In an era where overhead imagery is available to anyone with a computer and a credit card, where the twenty-four-hour cable news cycle drives government decisions and the Internet

provides global connectivity, are secret wars still possible? Not according to the author of *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*.

Veteran intelligence and policy writer John Prados provides a detailed, if somewhat disjointed, chronology of CIA covert actions since the inception of the agency. Prados describes the most recent chapters in the long history of U.S. covert actions, dividing covert actions into two types: political actions (including propaganda and psychological operations) and paramilitary operations. Covert and clandestine intelligence collections are addressed only peripherally, often when covert action and collection must be weighed against one another.

Prados focuses on several common threads. He describes the rivalries within the CIA between the proponents of political and paramilitary operations, and between covert operations and clandestine intelligence collections. He also discusses the competition between the rival “baronies” of the regional divisions within the agency’s Directorate of Operations. The author generally takes a negative view of covert actions, maintaining (for the most part) that they are antithetical to American ideals. With more justification, he points out that covert actions rarely lead to permanent solutions.

However, Prados makes several excellent points that are often overlooked. First, CIA covert actions are carried out on the orders of the president. The varying degrees of control between different administrations, and the relationship between the president and his Director of Central Intelligence, are key factors that determine both the degree of autonomy given to the agency and the amount of operational detail a

president receives. Even when given a high degree of autonomy, the CIA has operated under presidential guidance. Second, Prados points out that from the start it was impossible to keep covert actions totally secret. Many of the operations discussed (such as the Bay of Pigs, Angola, and in Southeast Asia) could not be accomplished on that scale today. Most importantly, Prados argues that covert actions are a poor substitute for policy.

At the end of this long and detailed book, the reader is left feeling that something is missing. The author’s treatment is not balanced, and one wonders if other viewpoints would tell a different story. Still, this is a valuable book for students of intelligence activities.

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Tillman, Barrett. *LeMay*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 205pp. \$21.95

Some great leaders are remembered only as a caricature, and General Curtis E. LeMay may be the epitome of this unfortunate tendency. Mention LeMay, and many see only the movie character General “Buck” Turgidson in the 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove*. Barrett Tillman’s balanced and concise depiction of LeMay puts this limited (and largely inaccurate) view into context. More importantly, he retrieves some of the enduring lessons of leadership that can be learned from one of America’s greatest airmen.

This is precisely the intent of Palgrave Macmillan’s “Great Generals” series. These books—titles on Patton, Grant,