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LeMay

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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,

Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Stonewall Jackson have already appeared—are designed to be “quick reads,” of as much interest to the general public as to the military history buff. The work under review treats an important leader who may be in particular need of some rehabilitation, and it is a great advertisement for the entire series. In a single day’s reading one can dispel many of the “Strangelovian” myths and appreciate the man, the leader, and the timeless leadership lessons his example provides. Tillman skillfully blends elements from LeMay’s personal and professional lives with the historical, providing a remarkably nuanced appreciation for this greatest of bomber generals. Any reader can profit from this comprehensive account; for instance, any reader familiar with the classic film *Twelve O’clock High* will recognize that a good bit of LeMay went into Gregory Peck’s character, Brigadier General Frank Savage. But even the most serious student of military history is likely to learn something new about LeMay’s life and times.

Tillman’s portrayal of LeMay, however, is not solely complimentary. While he obviously has great appreciation and admiration for his subject, he is also frank about LeMay’s shortcomings. He admits that LeMay was much more effective as a commander and operator in the field than in Washington, D.C., as vice chief and then chief of staff of the Air Force. Tillman also calls LeMay’s decision to run for vice president in George Wallace’s independent party bid of 1968 “disastrous for his reputation,” although he finds any conclusion that LeMay himself was a racist “demonstrably false.” In sum, *LeMay* offers a balanced description of the general and his leadership.

LeMay’s insights into leadership are still useful today. The “bedrock of his leadership was professional competence.” He was known as the premier pilot, navigator, and bombardier in all his early bomber commands. Throughout the book, LeMay’s emphasis on competence, accountability to high standards, teamwork, developing subordinates, and communication come through loud and clear. Tillman uses LeMay’s own words as his final word on leadership: “No matter how well you apply the art of leadership, no matter how strong your unit, or how high the morale of your men, if your leadership is not directed completely toward the mission, your leadership has failed . . . [in a single word, leadership is] Responsibility.”

It is one thing to describe the principles of leadership. It is quite another to understand how the great leaders in history have lived and applied those principles. Barrett Tillman’s excellent narrative salvages both LeMay and his timeless lessons for today’s leaders.

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Davis, Lance E., and Stanley L. Engerman. *Naval Blockades in Peace and War: An Economic History since 1750*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006. 325pp. \$85

As its title states, this book is an economic history examining the impact of naval blockades in general, but it really focuses on four major wars since 1750: the Napoleonic Wars (including the War of 1812), the American Civil War, World War I, and World War II (including the U.S. blockade of Japan).