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## To Risk It All: Nine Conflicts and the Crucible of Decision

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eventually replace the United States as leader of a new international order. Through successive leaders and several decades now, China's goals and actions have remained incredibly consistent. Friedberg maintains that Xi Jinping's rhetoric and actions do not represent a departure from the past; rather, Xi hopes to attain the same objectives as those leaders who came before him.

The book's final chapter and conclusion lay out a framework to meet the China challenge. While some of Friedberg's prescriptions may seem hawkish or overly antagonistic, he makes clear that a change of approach is necessary to avert direct confrontation and to preserve an international, rules-based order. Friedberg recommends a four-pronged approach to deal with China. First, liberal democracies must mobilize their soft-power resources and popular will to compete head-on with China. Second, he urges partial disengagement, arguing that previous engagement has been of asymmetric benefit to China. Third, the United States must work globally with partners to maintain a military balance sufficient to discourage and challenge Chinese aggression. Finally, liberal democracies must realize that this is an ideological struggle. As during the Cold War, the "free world" must contend for the superiority of its system in words and deeds.

*Getting China Wrong* is a must-read for anyone who wishes to understand the relationship between the United States and China, with something to offer everyone. It is important that all citizens, not only those at the Naval War College or within the defense establishment, understand the threats and opportunities that arise from an ascendant China. An informed

citizenry goes a long way to prevent a war that will serve the interests of neither China nor the United States.

DAVID ADAMIC



*To Risk It All: Nine Conflicts and the Crucible of Decision*, by James Stavridis [Adm., USN (Ret.)]. New York: Penguin, 2022. 323 pages. \$28.

Among the qualities of a military leader, the ability to make decisions is perhaps the most important. On the battlefield, as in life, making the right decisions is essential if one wishes to survive. As Admiral James Stavridis, USN (Ret.), shows in his new volume *To Risk It All*, making decisions requires understanding. In an extraordinary collection of stories, Stavridis manages to produce what few others have: a manual of practical leadership.

As Stavridis asserts in the introduction, decision-making is at the heart of naval leaders' duty at every level. Whether in combat or highly stressful peacetime conditions, what goes on in the mind of a naval leader in the moment of the decision is the secret Stavridis aims to discover. The volume follows a simple structure of one example per chapter, totaling nine case studies spanning the entire history of the U.S. Navy and highlighting the intricate thought process that has guided these pillars of the American naval community. From the legendary captain John Paul Jones to the recent case of Captain Brett E. Crozier at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Stavridis offers an insightful look into the mind of a naval leader when his or her decision well could mean the difference between life and death of the leader and the crew.

Several lessons are associated with each chapter, but some overarching suggestions should reach the top of a leader's list. The first is the need to strike a balance between emotion and calculation. Far from portraying the leaders in his book as static machines of military discipline, Stavridis allows their humanity—both flaws and strengths—to shine through their decision-making processes, and thus to provide a vivid and living example of leadership. The introduction of the psychological component to the decision-making process and the characterization of it through specific personalities are one of the strongest points of Stavridis's volume. By delving into the psyches of these great sailors and leaders, Stavridis guides the reader down the reasoning avenues and the decision maze that turned the stories into timeless examples of how stressful situations shape the decision-making process in unique ways.

The second crucial consideration that Stavridis highlights throughout the book is the importance of time in the moment of the decision. All these leaders were short on time. The raging battle, the highest stakes, and the dramatic difference between failure and success, defeat or victory, all contributed to landing these leaders in the worst-case scenario. Few leaders ever receive sufficient instruction about such scenarios, because no one wants to think them possible, yet all nine leaders rose to the challenge. Stavridis's heroes took the few minutes—sometimes mere seconds—that they had and turned them into their most precious assets. They worked through their initial surprise, faced the unexpected storm and turned it back on their enemy, and diverted the tide of time to their favor. By doing so they also, in some instances, changed the course of history.

With an engaging style and detailed descriptions, Stavridis brings the readers to the port of Tripoli with Decatur and his men, sails into the heart of Confederate territory with Farragut, and leads the reader's imagination into the dangers of Manila Bay and Leyte Gulf. To produce something that is more than a nonfiction book on decision-making and leadership, Stavridis employs a style that channels the classics of adventure literature and the stories of those heroes that inspired readers to take to the seven seas and see the world from the waterways. Far from creating just another academic work, Stavridis shows how it is possible to make potentially dry historical stories into exciting, "real-life" events that are meaningful in today's world.

There is little doubt that Stavridis's book will become classic reading for all who find U.S. naval history and its protagonists an ever-useful source of engagement and interest. However, it is crucial to underline that Stavridis set out to do more than just this. A consistent element of his writing is the connection he establishes between the naval leaders of interest to him and his personal experience in the Navy. Every chapter opens with a description of how he met these characters—albeit figuratively—at different points on his career journey. This personal touch is a positive note of this volume. Most importantly, not all these meetings coincided with remarkable turning points in Stavridis's naval experience. Still, they influenced his view and led him to realize that decision-making was a daring endeavor. Stavridis and his collection of naval leaders trace the way for more sailors to appreciate the crucible of the decision, and potentially to have the proper references available when time is tight

and the stakes are high. Every sailor should look at this book as a compass with a steady north that will guide him or her through the raging storms and hardest sails of his or her life and career.

ANNA MATILDE BASSOLI



*Just War and Ordered Liberty*, by Paul D. Miller. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2021. 266 pages. \$29.99.

A brilliant and intrepid effort, *Just War and Ordered Liberty* is one of the most current defenses of the just war tradition, and one that promises to be a classic textbook for warriors, scholars, and public servants alike. Unabashedly, Paul Miller argues that the just war tradition is the dynamic framework for conceptualizing and implementing both principled and prudential military strategy and national-security interests. As legendary just war thinkers such as Cicero, Aquinas, and Grotius etched their names into the annals of Western civilization, so Miller has contributed a stellar chapter to the legacy of *jus pax* (just peace) that reenvisions modern theories and practices of war. *Just War and Ordered Liberty* compels serious consideration for at least three important reasons: a unique perspective, a robust dialogue, and a revisionist just war paradigm.

First, Miller, as a warfighter, policy maker, and academic, offers a unique perspective with undeniable subject-matter credibility that very few can rival. Miller served with the U.S. Army, at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and as director for Afghanistan and Pakistan on the National Security Council staff in the White House for Presidents George

W. Bush and Barack Obama. Additionally, Miller is a professor of international practice at Georgetown University and the author of several noteworthy books on the relationship between just war principles and foreign policy (e.g., *Armed State Building: Confronting State Failure, 1898–2012* and *American Power & Liberal Order: A Conservative Internationalist Grand Strategy*).

Second, Miller's treatment exemplifies a robust dialogue that engages just war interlocutors of the past and the present. The Georgetown professor explores the three stages of just war development over the Augustinian, Westphalian, and liberal epochs, with their distinctive interpretations of natural law, justice, and sovereignty. As part of the rise of liberalism after World War II, the former CIA analyst underscores (1) the recovery of the just war language first espoused by Paul Ramsey in the postwar era, (2) the Westphalian inviolability of territorial integrity advocated by Michael Walzer, (3) "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response" (1983) proposed by the Roman Catholic bishops in the United States, and (4) the responsibility to protect (R2P) affirmed at the 2005 World Summit sponsored by the United Nations. Miller's analysis of the Challenge of Peace and the R2P illustrates the imprint of just war ideas in the post-World War II context and its suitability for today. Miller points out the relevancy and perspicuity of its doctrines by examining the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria and by critiquing the shortfalls of such campaigns vis-à-vis the just war notion of *jus post bellum* (justice after war). Miller highlights the renaissance of just war ethics in the remarkably massive volume of just war peer-reviewed articles published since