

BOOK REVIEWS

SUCH IS WAR'S EFFECT

Hedges, Chris. *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2002. 211pp. \$23

Chris Hedges's timely and moving reflection *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* is about how war destroys the people who experience it. He eloquently argues throughout his short book that no one who is caught up in war ever emerges unscathed or unscarred. Hedges wants the reader to see war for what it is—an evil designed by humans to empower great violence against other humans. Hedges depicts this evil graphically, many times and in many ways, throughout the book. He feels compelled to make his case in extremely stark terms because he knows that for all its wickedness, war is also a most addictive psychological and social drug. Worse, Hedges states, war is sometimes a necessary evil, a poison that civilized and humane peoples must take to defeat horribly deformed nations and peoples who have completely surrendered their humanity to it.

Hedges knows of what he writes. For over fifteen years, he covered wars for various news agencies. He was one of those reporters who, like Ernie Pyle of a generation past, travel to the front to get their stories. Hedges got something else, for which he had not bargained—

an addiction to the “jag” of combat. Michael Herr, a reporter during the Vietnam War, summarized this addiction: “[Under fire] maybe you couldn't love the war and hate it inside the same instant, but sometimes those feelings alternated so rapidly that they spun together in a strobic wheel rolling all the way up until you were literally High On War like it said on all the helmet covers. Coming off a jag like that could really make a mess out of you.”

As a “cure” for his addiction, Hedges spent a year in self-reflection and study at Harvard; the result is this book. He argues that war is so attractive because it provides meaning and purpose to our lives and fills a void in our existence. The Faustian bargain is that war also demands sacrifice—the destruction of everything and everyone who is important to the combatants, including the culture in which they live.

Hedges would have the reader believe that war really expresses the Freudian notion of Thanatos, or death wish—that humans find meaning in their lives through their self-sacrifice, through dying. One immediately thinks of the suicide bombers in

Israel or the hijackers of “9/11.” However, he argues further that if Freud is correct, the balance to Thanatos is Eros, or the love of life. While Thanatos drives humans to self-annihilation, Eros drives them to embrace each other with affection and support. The Freudian view is that both concepts are real and in eternal struggle; there can never be a lasting peace between them.

Hedges closes with a plea: “To survive as a human being is possible only through love. And when Thanatos is ascendant, the instinct must be to reach out to those we love, to see them all in their divinity, pity and pathos of the human.” Love alone, for the author, has the ability to overcome human destructiveness. One feels almost compelled to regurgitate the Beatles line, “All you need is love.” Therein lies the serious weakness of this book. Hedges is convincing in his analysis and reflection on war but superficial to the point of triviality about its necessary counterbalance, love. It is as if he remains addicted to the very thing that he recognizes will destroy him.

Nevertheless, every civilian defense executive, soldier, sailor, Marine, and airman should read *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. Those of us who have known the intimate jag of war also know its nightmares. Hedges’s work is a cautionary tale implying that nations and peoples should enter war most reluctantly. It warns that war should be a last resort, and that tragic consequences may result even so.

My father made four opposed landings with MacArthur’s army in the Southwest Pacific theater, each one with the first assault wave. He was never wounded. After the war, he worked for

an aerospace company for over forty years and never missed a day to sickness. Every night, after work, he drank himself insensate. That is my most salient memory of him. Now, after *my* war, I know that his drinking was a learned coping behavior that served him well after each landing. It also got him through the rest of his life. Such is war’s effect.

With this book Hedges has rammed the issue of morality and ethics of war in our faces. Will we take heed, or simply strike?

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Henriksen, Thomas H., ed. *Foreign Policy for America in the Twenty-first Century: Alternative Perspectives*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 2001. 152pp. \$15

A brief, clean-cutting compendium with six well known scholarly contributors, Henriksen’s volume illuminates the current cardinal directions in the debate over American foreign policy—unilateral versus multilateral interventionism along one axis, and aggressive promotion of democracy (or global markets) versus conservative harboring of national strength on the other. Behind this compass hides the more theoretical discussion of whether the United States needs or could possibly maintain a grand strategy in the absence of an immediate national security threat. Henriksen’s own contribution (introduction and chapter 5) is to lay out the dynamics of the post–Cold War world, emphasizing the rise of China, threats from rogue states, a stumbling Russia, and a series of regional crises that

mandate “measured global activism” in order to protect U.S. national interests.

John Lewis Gaddis stresses the need to develop a coherent U.S. grand strategy in the post–Cold War world—primarily as a tool for managing foreign policy in a disciplined, proactive fashion rather than simply responding to crises on a case-by-case basis. Gaddis argues, “A country without a strategy is like a missile without a guidance system. It’s likely to dissipate resources ineffectually and spread potential damage far. It can pose as many risks to those who build and maintain it as it does to those at whom it’s supposed to be aimed.” Gaddis is known as a key historian of the Cold War. Under current circumstances, he sees grand strategy as an “endangered discipline,” suffering from a shortage of generalists who understand the “ecology” of the international environment rather than narrow regional or functional specialties.

Starting the directional debate, Richard A. Falk argues that American grand strategy should emphasize strengthening global economic governance via international financial institutions, support for European Union–type regionalism as a means of international security, and the transformation of the United Nations toward a global parliament. In Falk’s view, all these developments are in sync with the natural instinct of America, although thus far “the United States’ position has exemplified the democratic paradox of favoring democracy at the domestic level but resisting its application at the global level.” Those familiar with Falk’s writings over the past four decades, advocating world federalism, might find these familiar arguments repetitive; what is unique here is Falk’s lack of

stridency and the absence of the near-utopian rhetoric that marks his earlier, longer works.

Larry Diamond, Hoover Institution scholar and founding coeditor of the *Journal of Democracy*, stakes out the activist end of the other axis. He insists that building a world of liberal democracies, whether by unilateral or multilateral means, should be the primary objective of U.S. grand strategy. Not only does Diamond subscribe to the “democratic peace” theory (that real democracies do not fight each other), but he also argues that democratic institutions function as “elixirs” to all socioeconomic ills. Unlike Falk, Diamond finds the solution for abusive power and brutality through domestic democratization rather than in democratizing international institutions—the latter a process that (by implication) is at best moderately helpful and potentially distracting. At worst, “one nation, one vote” (or votes cast in international fora by rulers of people who are not free) thwarts the process of true (internal) democratization by allowing authoritarian states to subvert the evolving global trend toward greater individual freedom. Diamond identifies the Muslim world, rogue states, and China as having cultural “dilemmas” that resist much direct U.S. support for democratic change, but he maintains that they should remain the particular focus of U.S. efforts.

Sebastian Edwards, UCLA business professor, presents a scholarly defense of the beneficial aspects of economic globalization and concludes that the United States must be the driver of free trade and economic openness throughout the global system. Pointing to the evidence between openness and income

distribution, Edwards sees an international economic policy supportive of globalization as a core aspect of U.S. grand strategy. For Edwards, free capital is as important as free institutions.

Walter McDougall, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and professor at the University of Pennsylvania, simultaneously anchors both the unilateral and noninterventionist ends of the twin axes by arguing for “contra globalization and U.S. hegemony.” His is not a unilateralism of action but a conservation of American strength for vital interests, of which strenuous efforts to establish international institutions is not one. McDougall also argues against the need for an articulate and public American grand strategy, since “strategy is by its nature secretive, deceptive, and counterintuitive . . . and partly reactive” and “democracies are ill-equipped to formulate or execute *any* long-term strategy except in time of war or obvious peril.” In his view, the quest for a detailed grand strategy leads nowhere, because quite simply “the American people don’t want one.” He equally refutes both the “Clintonian vision of globalization” and “the neo-conservative crusade.” America must carefully husband its international political resources (particularly military deployments), since “the world today is in a highly *unnatural* state” that will inevitably lead to balance of power politics and spheres of influence. Continually strong U.S. economic development is the soundest policy; since “the most predictable and direct challenges to U.S. security are the invasion of illegal immigrants and drugs, and the prospect of civil collapse in Colombia, Mexico,

and lands in between,” strengthening pan-American relations should be the main focus. As for the rest of the world, “helping to prevent wars among the big powers is the most moral task the U.S. can perform,” a task that does not include humanitarian crusades, promotion of free trade, or global democracy. “I am for them, by and large,” states McDougall, “but I know America can live without their triumph abroad” and should not squander vital, limited resources in their pursuit. As in his book *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (Houghton Mifflin, 1997), McDougall compares the potential outcome of America’s moral crusades overseas with that of the ephemeral and counterproductive results of the medieval Crusades. He concludes that Americans should “cease calling for the conversion of all nations in this generation . . . and husband the *assets* they will need when and if strategic genius becomes necessary.”

As the most recent outline of America’s ongoing foreign policy/grand strategy debate, *Foreign Policy for America in the Twenty-first Century* successfully bridges the gap between one-sided media op-eds and cautious scholarly tomes. Appealing to both the interested citizen and policy specialist alike, this book indeed delivers on its promise to bring together major opposing “alternative views” in a succinct, highly readable way.

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Orenstein, Mitchell. *Out of the Red: Building Capitalism and Democracy in Postcommunist Europe*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2001. 184pp. \$60

Historically, most countries first develop a market economy, even under oppressive conditions, before developing a democracy. However, the 1989 revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe produced a counter case—the initiation of simultaneous democratic and economic reforms. Many policy makers and academics outside the region have recommended that stability lies in a coherent and rigid reform plan for all such states. The United States, for example, has suggested and still sometimes emphasizes a “cookie cutter” or “one size fits all” recommendation for economic reform, emphasizing stabilization, liberalization, and privatization. Economic reform, Washington argues, should be placed above the “whims” of politics and not fall victim to victories of the left or right.

Mitchell Orenstein is assistant professor of political science at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University, where he teaches courses on Central and Eastern Europe, as well as on transitions to democracy.

In this work, Orenstein tests these precepts for economic reform in the democratizing countries of Poland and the Czech Republic. He asks the hard question: Were the postcommunist governments definitely less than democratic reform minded, hostile to economic and market-oriented reforms? Orenstein’s persuasive findings demonstrate that the traditional model of the stick-to-it economic plan may not be the only answer. Indeed, policy learning

and fine-tuning result from the successful alternation of the political parties in power in these democracies, even when a postcommunist party returns to take control.

For example, some feared that the resurgence of a postcommunist government in Eastern Europe could lead to a total backlash of democracy in the region or, worse, pander populist solutions to ease the pain of economic restructuring. These fears did not materialize, and the postcommunists elected in Poland did not massively change the economic agenda. There was a slowdown in some areas of reform when the SLD, the Polish postcommunist party, won in 1993, but there was no major attempt to undo economic changes or alter Poland’s Western-oriented path. In the election of 1997, political power once again changed, this time swinging to the right and to Solidarity Electoral Action. This not only further illustrated Poland’s economic success despite alternation of power but also showed how that change resulted in a more efficient and centrist economic policy. Government officials adapted and responded creatively to the wants and needs of the electorate.

Interestingly, it was in Prague that the traditional neoliberal “cookie cutter” reforms were implemented and remained unchanged for eight years, between 1989 and 1997. Orenstein argues that the Czech Republic was not as successful as Poland because of the rigidity of its reforms and its lack of ability to change or adapt. He adds the other dimension of the Czech economic problem—vouchers. In the 1990s, in an attempt at rapid privatization, the Czech Republic gave citizens vouchers to restructure nationalized industries.

The voucher program failed largely because of government corruption, which led to a loss of public support.

This book is insightful but incomplete. Orenstein's arguments are concise and persuasive, but he only examines two cases that neatly support his argument. Hungary would have been an excellent additional test, as would have the fledgling economies of the Balkans, where the process of democratization is affected even more directly by domestic and international constraints.

With possible entry into the European Union just around the corner for most of Central and Eastern Europe, the United States and Europe must look carefully at these practical experiments in democratic and economic liberalization. With democracies emerging in Southeast Asia and perhaps the Middle East, it is important to develop and test models of economic reform to see what works and how best to implement them in democratizing countries.

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Boot, Max. *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*. New York: Basic Books, 2002. 428pp. \$30

If the story of the military history of the United States could somehow be presented in a single museum, the most grand and widely visited halls would be those dedicated to the American Revolution, the Civil War, and World War II. Less visited, but still of interest, would be much smaller exhibits devoted to World War I, Korea, Vietnam, and DESERT STORM. Conflicts such as

the War of 1812 and the war with Mexico might rate a single dusty showcase in some obscure corner. Tucked out of sight, rarely seen, and all but forgotten would be cabinets, crates, and cartons packed with the jumbled stories of bush wars, expeditions, occupations, pacifications, and reprisals—the often sanguinary and surprising “small wars” of the U.S. military experience.

Reporter and *Wall Street Journal* editor Max Boot provides us with a long-overdue survey of the all too often slighted and neglected realm of these lesser conflicts. His work is of necessity an overview, but it is eminently readable and entertaining. Along the way, Boot reminds us that the conduct of these small conflicts is as much an “American way of war” as that which mobilizes and employs mass citizen-armies in protracted combat. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Boot suggests that many of the lessons learned from these small wars may be applied to the security dilemmas of today.

This work deserves praise on several levels. To begin with, Boot has rescued the history of these conflicts from a regrettable level of obscurity (as far as the general reading public is concerned). As the merits and limitations of the United States taking on the role of an imperial police force are increasingly debated, it is useful to recall that this is not the first time America has attempted to do so. The author has the courage to suggest that under certain conditions, imperial police forces may provide a much higher quality of life for indigenous people than would otherwise be possible. Boot notes that Haiti's greatest period of prosperity arguably occurred during its long occupation by the U.S. Marine Corps. He also points out that

the Dominican Republic actually benefited when forcibly placed on a fiscal diet by the United States. Although the U.S. Marines were ensuring that nearly half the Dominican Republic's revenues went to repay foreign creditors, their honesty in disbursing the remainder was so notable that the country received more funds than it had under its own rulers. Boot also points out that Veracruz reached a record standard of cleanliness and hygiene, with an attendant improvement in public health, than it had known previously. Boot reminds us that far from resulting in quagmires of despair and failure, many of these conflicts have to be seen as U.S. successes.

There are, however, several criticisms that might potentially be leveled at this work. Some may say that like so many correspondents before him, Boot excessively admires the U.S. Marines, extolling their triumphs at the expense of the other services. However, while there is no denying that Boot has high regard for leathernecks, he does provide ample examples of Navy and Army actions. It is also important to remember that the Marines were the service of choice for the great majority of these conflicts. A significant portion of the Marines' senior leadership in the 1930s felt that the future of the Corps should be bound up in mastering the challenges of these conflicts. This resulted in the Marines' *Small Wars Manual*, published in 1941. It was later shelved; Boot believes that it would have benefited the United States in Vietnam had those in charge read the dusty tome.

Another criticism that might be made by some is that Boot glosses over the darker aspects of small wars, focusing on the successes and personalities. For

example, the first charging of a serving flag officer with a war crime, the use of torture to extract information, and mutinies of such U.S. trained units as the Nicaraguan National Guard were part of the small-war experience. However, Boot discusses these events in clear and unequivocal terms, leaving the reader to come to grips with how these aspects of war played in U.S. successes.

What make this book so timely and one that should be read by almost anyone with an interest in political-military issues, are the tie-ins that Boot identifies as existing between the wars of the past and the realities of the present. Issues such as exit strategies, expected casualties, the difficulties of working with local allies, and the complexities of state building are not things the United States is facing for the first time. Indeed, as Boot demonstrates, the nation has been dealing with these dilemmas since the beginning of its existence. Well written, timely, and provocative, *Savage Wars of Peace* is well worth attention.

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Vidal, Gore. *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: How We Got to Be So Hated*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2002. 160pp. \$10

It would be difficult to find a book on world affairs more contrary to the opinions of most readers of the *Naval War College Review* or other members of the American national security community than Gore Vidal's *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*.

As a military officer myself, I disagree with many of Vidal's assumptions and

propositions, but the book is worthwhile because it challenges one to think about inconsistencies and issues in American foreign policy as well as domestic security. The book is extremely well written, as one would expect from a writer of Vidal's caliber. It is highly engaging, and most military professionals interested in American national security will probably find it easy to read (although fewer may find it easy to agree with).

Gore Vidal is a noted novelist, perhaps one of the most prominent living American authors. In 1943 he enlisted in the Navy and served in World War II, so his background lends relevant experience in military affairs. He wrote his commentary shortly after the 11 September attack, but after both *Vanity Fair* and *The Nation* declined it, a version of this book was printed in Italy, where it became a best-seller. After subsequent publication in Europe, Vidal was finally able to get the book published in its present form.

Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace contains seven chapters and an introduction, but much of the material predates "9/11," which is one of the book's chief weaknesses. Three chapters were reprinted from his *The Last Empire* (Doubleday, 2001), and these were recycled from earlier articles. Another chapter, "The Meaning of Timothy McVeigh," appeared in the September 2001 issue of *Vanity Fair*. There are sparse updates throughout the older chapters, including asterisked footnotes and comments, such as one briefly comparing the Oklahoma City bombing to "Dark Tuesday" ("9/11"). However, the meat of the new work appears in the first chapter, "September 11, 2001 (A Tuesday)."

Vidal's sharp mind and readable writing style make his arguments on the World Trade Center attacks and the aftermath compelling. For instance, the declaration of an ambiguous "war" on terror has been the subject of much discussion in the pages of foreign affairs journals and newspaper editorials. Vidal notes that insurance companies benefit from a state of war due to exception clauses in insurance agreements, although previous U.S. case law has established that "acts of war" can originate only from "a sovereign nation, not a bunch of radicals."

Some of his other comments lean more toward "Swiftian literary exaggeration," of which he accuses H. L. Mencken in a letter to Timothy McVeigh. His portrayal of Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney as eager for a police state seems excessive. Also, he compares the terrorist attacks in the United States to such state-sponsored atrocities as the burning of the Reichstag (secretly perpetrated by the Nazi government in order to consolidate Hitler's police power) and rapes by bogus Vietcong squads to discredit the communist insurgency. This paranoid proclivity toward conspiracy theory is revealed in his assertion that Opus Dei is a conservative Catholic conspiracy in the United States. He makes a point about Thomas Jefferson's and John Adams's opposition to Jesuit activity in America, which is probably more an indicator of American anti-Catholic bigotry several hundred years ago than any prescient warning of the dangers of religious incursion into state affairs.

There are, however, several arguments that are more convincing. Vidal contends that terror attacks caused more

damage to civil liberties than to the nation's physical well-being. "Once alienated, an 'unalienable right' is apt to be forever lost." He documents this assertion with a list of police killings of innocent people in their homes and of indefensible searches and seizures. While a reasonable reader may dismiss these discomfiting examples as well researched exceptions to normal law enforcement activity in the United States, Vidal also brings up the changing nature of the law. He refers to *U.S. v. Sandini* (1987), which established that police were able to seize property permanently from an individual if the property has been used for criminal purposes, even if the individual has had no involvement with any crime. This ruling has highly negative implications, considering that 90 percent of American paper currency has traces of narcotics on it from use in the drug trade. Vidal also points out a common problem that is not commonly pondered—the incidence of homosexual rape in the U.S. prison system, a violation of the cruel-and-unusual-punishment clause of the Bill of Rights. For anyone who doubts that such punishment is state sanctioned, Vidal quotes a state attorney general who refers to this practice in a public statement made in the course of his official duties. He is reminiscent of the military author Colonel Charles Dunlap, U.S. Army, in his references to blatant disrespect to President Bill Clinton on a naval vessel by seamen, who called Clinton "the Praetorian Guard of the Pentagon," and our "ruling junta."

There is one other weakness: the book fails to address properly the meat of the issue that its title promises—"how we got to be so hated." The Federation of

American Scientists has published a twenty-page listing of American military operations dating from 1948 to 1999, documenting how the United States (like the nations of Orwell's *1984*) has an "enemy of the month club" and thus engages in a "perpetual war" hoping for "perpetual peace." This theme is underdeveloped, however, and Vidal's discussion of the United States emphasizes domestic repression, while his reprinted chapters focus too exclusively on an apology (in the Platonic sense of an explanation) of Timothy McVeigh.

Altogether, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* presents a provocative argument that will be of intellectual appeal to professional military officers. It is admittedly an alternative perspective, but it may give members of the American national security community insight into how our European allies think, as well as our Third World adversaries, who often share Vidal's perspective. Vidal's arguments are intriguing, but the brevity of the new parts of this work ultimately leaves his thoughts incomplete.

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Jalali, Ali Ahmad, and Lester W. Grau, eds. *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War*. Quantico, Va.: U.S. Marine Corps Studies and Analysis Division. 416pp. (no price given)

What could be both more poignant and ludicrous than Commander Abdul Baqi Balots's account of his survival of a firefight in which his closest friend was killed? "I saw a lot of Soviets coming at

me and they were all firing (they put ten bullet holes through my baggy trousers). . . . Habib Noor told me that, unless we crossed the stream to the north, we would not be able to engage the Soviets. . . . I ran across and jumped but landed directly into the stream. ‘Oh, Allah,’ I cried, ‘you have killed me without dignity.’ Then I made a big jump, I don’t know how since even a tank can’t clear it, but I did and got out of the stream.”

This episode is recounted in Ali Jalali and Lester Grau’s book *The Other Side of the Mountain*. The two editors are well known for a sequence of publications on unconventional warfare going back to the early 1990s. For those who follow this field, it is no surprise that they are employed at the U.S. Army’s distinguished Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Their highly readable compilation is a significant contribution to the literature on guerrilla warfare, and it has immense implications for the contemporary (at this writing) U.S. intervention in Afghanistan.

The work consists of ninety-two “vignettes” of tactical action, with a few longer accounts of more protracted operations, all based on interviews with mujahideen participants. The book was inspired by a Russian text used at the Frunze Combined Arms Academy, detailing Soviet tactical action in Afghanistan. Jalali and Grau earlier produced an English translation of that book under the title *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (National Defense Univ. Press, 1996). *The Other Side of the Mountain* points out when one of its short stories covers the same actions or

operations as in *Bear*, but the works are not parallel texts.

The present work consists of fourteen chapters and a conclusion, composed of two to sixteen stories apiece. Each chapter illustrates a different type of tactical combat. There is a short discussion of the tactic before each chapter and a commentary at the end. This format has been used in military writing for many years (such as in the study *Infantry in Battle*, edited by George Marshall, Military History and Publications section of The Infantry School, 1934). However, in recent decades the implicit analysis this approach provides has been greatly strengthened by the more explicit case-study method. If these stories had been written and presented as formal case studies, some existing weaknesses could have been avoided—the chief one being burying the chapter “Blocking Enemy Lines of Communication” halfway through the book, despite the editors’ and contributors’ amply demonstrated contention that logistics dominated the Soviet war in Afghanistan and was its chief strategic (not tactical) factor.

The thematic organization of the chapters is a powerful approach, but it means sacrificing any sense of chronological development. As a result, there is little sense of the evolution of mujahideen tactics during the war or of their interaction over time with Soviet tactics, despite occasional references to such evolution in the chapter commentaries. In fact, the work places unreasonable expectations on the background knowledge of the reader. A summary of the war’s origins, conduct, and outcome is badly needed. A table listing each major mujahideen faction, with its leader, ideology, and sponsors,

would also be helpful, as these factions are referred to throughout the narrative. The book might also have addressed popular myths or conceptions about the war—for example, the U.S. view that distribution of Stinger antiaircraft missiles to the mujahideen broke the back of Soviet air support and hence was the decisive point of the struggle. The editors at a number of points indicate their disagreement with this view but never provide a formal rebuttal. On the other hand, the book capriciously provides detailed background information on such relatively trivial points as the official U.S. Army load weights for mules, Central Asian horses, and camels.

The book has a strong geographic bias—most of the actions it describes are in the vicinity of Kabul or on the route connecting Kabul and Jalalabad. Most of the remaining actions are in the Kandahar area. There is nothing from the Herat region, or the area around Mazār-e Sharīf, or the Panjshir Valley. This bias may be explained by a point the editors make in their introduction, that a number of interviews could not be completed because of the 1996 Taliban advance on Kabul and the north. Still, they need to explain how they have compensated for this imbalance in their material, especially in view of their own contention that the conduct of the war varied by region and by the ethnicities involved.

There may be an issue in this book with language as well. Good interpreters are well aware of the temptation to tidy up the haphazard use of specialized terminology by speakers of a foreign language, by rendering it in precise, professional English usage. The editors remark in the introduction that

although their contributors always referred to “Russians,” they have changed this throughout to “Soviets.” Did the same process occur in transcribing the interviewees’ descriptions of guerrilla operations? In this book even the most irregular of mujahideen commanders seems to have a perfect grasp of U.S. military terms and phrasing, implying an equal grasp of the concepts behind the words.

Unfortunately, the book’s proofing and editing is distractingly bad, which is a serious handicap in a work containing so many foreign words and names. An end sheet includes production credits for the book—it seems only appropriate that one is listed for “Book Editing and Design.” A particularly unfortunate result of this hasty editing is found in the commentary following a chapter on urban combat. On first reading, this evaluation of a mujahideen bombing of a city market appears actually to be a defense of terrorist attacks on civilian noncombatants. Closer attention, however, shows that the editors were attempting to contrast this particular incident with the Soviet aerial bombardment campaign aimed at driving the population from the Afghan countryside, but the text certainly reads as though it is equating *any* air strike with terrorism.

These flaws detract from but do not negate the high value of this book. In addition to its major strength of first-hand accounts of the most significant guerrilla war of our time, the book has many other useful features. Its use of maps is particularly adept, and consistent references to Defense Mapping Agency map sheets give a sense of detail and nuance to the work. While it is exceptionally riddled with typographical errors, the glossary covers nearly all the

specialized and foreign terms used in the book, at exactly the right level of detail.

In sum, *The Other Side of the Mountain* is a unique and valuable contribution to the study of unconventional warfare. In view of the ongoing U.S. operations in Afghanistan, the editors would be performing a civic service were they to produce a revised and reedited version for general publication.

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Ellsberg, Daniel. *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2002. 498pp. \$29.95

For Americans who were adults during the Vietnam War, the name Daniel Ellsberg is portentous; it either suggests a whiff of treason or connotes heroic patriotism. Ellsberg is a Marine Corps veteran, Harvard Ph.D., former senior official in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, a highly regarded analyst for the RAND Corporation, and a civilian observer of platoon-level combat in Vietnam who defiantly chose to “walk point” with the troops he was observing. In March 1971, Ellsberg released to the *New York Times* a seven-thousand-page, highly classified Department of Defense history of American involvement in Vietnam. Covering the war from the Truman administration through the Tet offensive of early 1968, this study became known as “The Pentagon Papers” when the *New York Times* began publishing it on 13 June. Ellsberg’s action earned him federal felony indictments and a protracted criminal trial. On 11 May 1973 the judge

abruptly dismissed the government’s case, because in the last few weeks evidence had materialized showing that agents of the Richard M. Nixon administration had denied Ellsberg his right to a fair trial by burglarizing his psychiatrist’s office in search of material with which to blackmail him into not releasing more documents. This revelation became part of the unfolding drama of the Watergate scandal, the surreptitious forced nighttime entry into the Democratic Party headquarters by the same agents of the administration. President Nixon attempted to buy the silence of one of the burglars, E. Howard Hunt, with a seventy-five-thousand-dollar bribe. Facing impeachment for attempting to cover up the break-in, Nixon wailed about Ellsberg: “The sonofabitching thief is made a national hero. . . . And the *New York Times* gets a Pulitzer for stealing documents.”

Secrets is a book that must be read by anyone seeking to understand how the United States formulates its strategy and policy. Ellsberg demolishes the “quagmire” thesis favored by such influential liberal interpreters as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. By that interpretation, beginning with Harry S. Truman up to the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson, each president made a deeper commitment of American military power and clandestine activity, under the conviction that his actions would achieve a South Vietnamese victory over the invaders from the communist North.

From Ellsberg’s perspective, there was no quagmire, only endless presidential deception of Congress and the public, who were led to believe decade after decade that surely the next step would result in the successful establishment of a permanently independent South

Vietnam. Ellsberg served as the action officer for Vietnam, reporting personally to John McNaughton, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's principal assistant for Vietnam. Ellsberg became convinced that every president knew that his commitments would prove insufficient to accomplish the goal of preserving South Vietnam's independence. However, none of them could withdraw American support—because a communist victory in South Vietnam would create an unbearable political liability in the Cold War climate of “wars of national liberation” backed by the Soviets and China.

Ellsberg went to work as McNaughton's aide for Vietnam on 4 August 1964. On that day his office was receiving live reports of North Vietnamese patrol-boat attacks on the U.S. destroyer *Maddox*, the presence of which off North Vietnam was one of several provocations staged by the Johnson administration to elicit a military reaction from Hanoi. The administration publicly claimed that two distinct sets of attacks were made, first on the *Maddox* and a short time later on the *Maddox* and a sister ship, USS *Turner Joy*. Drawing on his direct experience in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Ellsberg demonstrates that *Maddox*'s skipper raised doubts about the second set of attacks within a few hours of announcing them. The Johnson administration nonetheless went to Congress describing both attacks as bona fide, because together they appeared to justify a long-planned escalation of the air war. Once armed by Congress with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, Johnson made a few direct retaliatory air strikes and then posed as the presidential peace candidate. He was running against

Republican Barry Goldwater, who was advocating precisely the kind of sustained air campaign that Johnson had already planned and would begin once safely reelected president.

One can applaud or condemn Daniel Ellsberg for what he did in 1971. What one cannot do is ignore the power his memoir has to inform Americans about how the executive branch conducted its foreign policy and military strategy from the 1940s until 1974. As the United States apparently heads (at this writing) toward another major war, the skeptic is entitled to wonder if things at the top have really changed.

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Rohwer, Jürgen, and Mikhail S. Monakov. *Stalin's Ocean-Going Fleet: Soviet Naval Strategy and Shipbuilding Programmes, 1935–1953*. Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 2001. 334pp. \$57.50

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of major Russian archives have provided an opportunity to add greatly to our understanding of the character of the Soviet navy. Eminent researchers Jürgen Rohwer and Mikhail S. Monakov have contributed much to this understanding with their study of Soviet naval shipbuilding and strategy when Josef Stalin controlled the development of the Soviet Navy, from 1935 until his death in 1953. They have uncovered extensive details of the massive shipbuilding program, most of which never came to fruition. Strategy, however, remains as murky as ever. This study complements but does not replace Monakov's series of articles on

Soviet naval doctrine and Stalin's fleet in *Morskoi sbornik*, 1992–98, or Robert W. Herrick's *Soviet Naval Theory and Policy: Gorshkov's Inheritance* (1989).

At the end of 1935 Stalin personally yanked the Soviet navy from littoral defense through air, submarine, and light surface forces into a grandiose shipbuilding program centered on large battleships and battle cruisers, while retaining "Young School" craving for submarines. Stalin took naval strategy into his own hands but never divulged any strategic precepts or plans to his naval leaders, who in fear of Stalin's wrath dutifully adapted themselves to the imposed scheme, several falling to the purges anyway. The result was a massive shipbuilding program and a naval officer corps stranded in a strategic wilderness, with silent misgivings about the apparent dissonance between the projected force structure and operational commitments arising from the Soviet Union's particular geostrategic position.

By 1939 an immense program had evolved to build twenty-four powerful battleships by 1947, with fifteen for the Pacific Fleet and the rest divided among the Baltic, Black Sea, and Northern Fleets. Concurrent plans called for a submarine force intended to reach 438 units, of which 219 were earmarked for the Pacific. These fleet goals, along with a modicum of light surface forces, were impossible for Soviet shipbuilding capacity, even by halting merchant ship construction. With the onset of the Great Patriotic War, all long-term projects were suspended; only submarine and light surface projects continued, as circumstances allowed. The defeat of the Axis saw the prewar schemes reduced to three battleships and three

battle cruisers, all of which were canceled when Stalin died. The *Sverdlov*-class cruisers and a new submarine force of 284 boats became the shrunken legacy of Stalin's naval dreams.

The navy of Admiral Nikolai Kuznetsov, under army operational control but without strategic direction from the General Staff or the top, continued to orient itself before, during, and after World War II toward traditional defensive roles—defeating attacking enemy fleets and amphibious expeditions in the near seas—with only a limited submarine offensive on adjacent enemy sea lines of communications.

Stalin's motive for building a battleship fleet, according to the authors, was the vision of the Soviet Union gaining supremacy in the four near seas and then becoming an oceanic power, with the battleship or battle cruiser "a symbol of the highest grade of power, a most powerful and mobile instrument of power politics, that the world had ever known," the direct predecessor of the atomic bomb in attaining superpower status.

Stalin, however, left no direct evidence of his reasons, whereas several indicators point toward a dominant mental construct of positional strategic defense still guiding Stalin and his admirals. He and his naval leaders agreed on a defense strategy but diverged on preferred force structure. Stalin rejected the aircraft carrier, despite all the evidence from the Second World War of the importance of airpower at sea for a blue-water navy. Kuznetsov often pleaded in vain with Stalin for stronger shipboard antiaircraft defenses on ships, for aircraft carriers to cover surface forces from enemy air

attack out to three hundred miles from naval bases, and to limit Soviet land-based air support. In 1946, Kuznetsov's close associate Admiral Vladimir Alafuzov developed a positional scheme of supremacy under land-based air cover up to one hundred miles from naval bases, and conditional sea control by large surface vessels with limited air support in a "far zone" out to three hundred miles. This fell short of command of the expanses of the Barents, Baltic, and Black Seas or of most of the Sea of Japan. Only submarines with long endurance could operate in the open ocean, but Stalin preferred medium submarines, conceived for operations in near seas against an amphibious threat. The projected battleships would have had an operational radius only half that of their contemporaries in oceanic navies. Only current Italian battleships, also designed for near seas, had such limited autonomy. To operate across the open ocean was a ludicrous concept to Stalin in 1945, arguing for a defensive posture for at least ten to fifteen years to come. Stalin's projected "large sea and oceanic navy," to use the Soviet term, was likely created for a hoped-for more robust traditional strategic defensive in contiguous seas. The evidence in this book, if not its title, lends support to Herrick's judgment of a Stalinist strategy of limited command of the near seas. To suggest that it was "the first step on the road to global naval power," as does series editor Holger Herwig in the preface, would require Stalin and his navy to demonstrate a conceptual leap for which neither had shown a proclivity. Mind-sets resist change. Even in the navy of Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, who

inherited Stalin's schemes and built up Kuznetsov's fleet, extensive deployments did not replace deeply held positional and defensive assumptions. Had Stalin's "oceanic" fleet actually been built, whether a shift of orientation by him or his admirals toward "global naval power" would have occurred remains undemonstrated and problematic.

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Buker, George E. *The Penobscot Expedition: Commodore Saltonstall and the Massachusetts Conspiracy of 1779*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2002. 195pp. \$32.95

In the various history books on the American Revolution, the Penobscot expedition is rarely mentioned in any detail, being overshadowed by the more widely known and successful battles and campaigns. Perhaps this is due to the dismal outcome of this early joint amphibious operation and to the desire by some, especially Massachusetts politicians of the time, to forget what had happened.

This hastily conceived expedition was launched from Boston in July 1779. The expedition was given the task of expelling the mounting British military presence on coastal Maine, centered around Penobscot Bay, but specifically at Castine. The expedition set off with full expectation of success on the part of the Massachusetts political leadership. But from the beginning, the force assembled was hampered by inadequate leadership, divided command authority, poor training and support, and a

significant lack of understanding of the tactical situation. In this book, George Buker, a retired Navy commander, professor of history, and an accomplished author, provides a significant account of this much overlooked effort by the combined forces of the Massachusetts and Maine militia, Continental Navy and Marines, and various privateer groups. Buker also provides an interesting glimpse of the internal politics and personalities of the colonies, especially in Massachusetts during the American Revolution. He further provides a complementary argument that the Massachusetts political authorities, when confronted with the dismal failure of the expedition, set in motion an inquiry that may have been a conspiracy of political self-interest.

The book appears well researched, with significant endnotes and bibliography. Reading almost like a novel, it tells the story of the Penobscot expedition in great detail and addresses the issues that led up to its failure and the resulting inquiry. In appropriately titled chapters Buker provides a historical overview leading up to the expedition, including the British policy, orders for military operations along coastal Maine, and, of course, the colonial response to the threat to the extended territory of Massachusetts, now the state of Maine.

As expected, the majority of the book deals with the actual operations, from outfitting and the order of battle to the assaults and resulting siege at Castine, to the hasty retreat and then rout of colonial forces when superior Royal Navy forces arrived, and finally to the sequel, in which the expedition's personnel walked back to Massachusetts from Maine after burning their ships. After the failure of the expedition and the

loss of almost forty ships, recriminations were made against various leaders, including allegations against naval force commander Captain Dudley Saltonstall of responsibility for the overall result; and against Paul Revere, an icon of the Revolutionary War who served in the expedition as a lieutenant colonel in charge of the artillery, of unsoldierly conduct. In the end, it was Captain Saltonstall who bore the brunt of the smear campaign by Massachusetts politicians to shift the blame.

In the final chapters, and through the lens of history, Buker argues that indeed a conspiracy by the Massachusetts politicians, through their committee of inquiry, manipulated the results of their investigation and attempted to influence the outcome of the court-martial of Saltonstall by Continental Navy authorities. Their efforts ensured the desired results of exonerating their native son, militia general Solomon Lovell, and provided the justification needed to assess the Continental government for a portion of the monetary cost. Buker, however, provides technical and tactical reasons that may have led to the failure of the expedition. Further, he indicates that only Captain Saltonstall fully appreciated the tactical and operational circumstances, as well as the limited capability of his resources and ships in the confined waters around Penobscot Bay. These considerations were evidently excluded or ignored by the politicians in their single-minded desire to find a scapegoat for the failure.

Overall, this is a fine historical accounting of this chapter in American history. My one large criticism is that the one simple map provided is inadequate for a full understanding of the operations. This reviewer has the benefit of having

been stationed in Castine, Maine, and is geographically aware of the area; I have walked the earthen ramparts of Fort George and the various other entrenchments around Castine. It would have been most helpful to the general reader had additional detailed military maps been included with each phase of the expedition. Well placed photographs of the area would have further added to the historical understanding of the events, as would photos of the various earthworks, trenches, the defensive canal, and Fort George, which all still exist as historical landmarks.

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West, Bing. *The Pepperdogs*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002. 365pp. \$25

The Pepperdogs ranks with *The Hunt for Red October*. It is a work of fiction constructed around reality, brimming with action and genuine insight into the emerging warfighting capabilities of the new ground soldier. West develops his story around a Marine reconnaissance team. That team, the “Pepperdogs,” is made up of six reservists of varying civilian backgrounds; all have extraordinary courage, physical and mental strength, expert tactical skills, and total team commitment.

The Pepperdogs set out on their own to rescue a team member captured by rogue Serbian guerrillas who specialize in casual atrocities. West’s story takes place in Kosovo, mostly in mountainous terrain and in the harshest of winter conditions. In pursuit of the kidnappers the team undergoes nearly constant

attack, endures brutal weather, and creates an increasingly difficult political situation for senior national security leaders who believe the Pepperdogs are risking diplomatic solutions. There is at one point the suggestion that even the murder of one Marine would not be worth upsetting diplomatic peace initiatives. The Pepperdogs make political matters worse by leaving a path of destruction while ignoring direct orders to end their chase.

Setbacks are many, but perseverance and tactical teamwork always (well, almost always) gets them out of tight spots. One remembers those great moments when the cavalry arrived and everyone cheered. But this team is different from the cavalry; the Pepperdogs take performance-enhancing drugs and rarely need to rest. One team member creates an Internet website that provides the public with real-time information on their progress and problems. The public cheers them on, reducing the policy-making flexibility of political leaders. West skillfully introduces the Internet as a source of potential direct information from individuals in the battle to the public. That information would have obvious constraining effects on future national security decision-making latitude and would yield different perspectives on progress and problems.

The suspense and many sudden turns of fortune keep the reader glued to the story. One cannot help but choose sides between the Marine team and political leaders who wish to halt the pursuit of the kidnapped Marine. Even if the team succeeds and its members become public heroes, they may be court-martialed for disobeying orders.

Bing West is well qualified to write an insider's story of modern small-unit tactics, having had experience of Oval Office-level decision making and the conflicts faced by senior military leaders between political direction and unnecessarily risky situations. West was a Marine reconnaissance leader in Vietnam and has studied small-unit action since the 1960s. He was a Naval War College professor and a former assistant

secretary of defense. West has maintained a close relationship with the Marine Corps through his design of combat decision-making simulations.

The Peppercorns is a great read—as was, by the way, West's earlier Vietnam-centered book *The Village* (Pocket Books, 2003, paperback).

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