

MR Book Reviews



Featured Review

A CHANCE IN HELL: The Men Who Triumphed Over Iraq's Deadliest City and Turned the Tide of the War, Jim Michaels, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2010, 259 pages, \$17.15.

The “surge” that changed the course of the war in Iraq was a complex and, in some ways, mysterious event. Its origins and evolution are likely to be a subject of fierce debate among military analysts and historians for years to come. However, what will not be debated is the central role of the “Anbar Awakening” in recasting the terms of the Iraqi conflict. Probably more than any other single factor, it made a victory against the insurgency conceivable.

In *A Chance in Hell*, Jim Michaels traces the beginning of the awakening to a place—Anbar Province's key city, Ramadi—and a partnership—the alliance of two men, an Iraqi sheikh and an American colonel. They were Abdul Sattar Bezia of the Abu Risha tribe and Colonel Sean MacFarland, commander of the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division. Sattar was a minor chieftain who had made the bulk of his fortune in oil smuggling. MacFarland was the soft-spoken, devout maverick from upstate New York who led a mechanized “legacy” force that seemed ill-suited for the mission of urban counterinsurgency. These unlikely allies cooperated to break the insurgent grip on Ramadi. In doing so, they established a model for success that later “surge” reinforcements would follow as they deployed into the battlefields of Iraq.

The author does not belabor the point, but what strikes one is Sattar's and MacFarland's courage. They made their partnership work. Defying the insurgents ultimately cost Sattar his life. For his part, MacFarland

needed all the moral courage he could muster in challenging the doubts of the Marine chain of command in Anbar province while disregarding theater guidance to let the Iraqi security forces do the bulk of the fighting. Even as he did so, MacFarland was writing letters to 85 families of the men he lost in the fight for Ramadi. One can only imagine all this made for a very long year for MacFarland, who currently serves as the deputy commandant of the Command and General Staff College.

A Chance in Hell is probably not the definitive account of the pivotal campaign for Ramadi. In telling the story, Marine officer-turned-journalist Michaels uses a breezy, highly readable style that jumps from vignette to vignette and character sketch to character sketch. At times, the reader will find the account thin on context and chronology, but for the time being, this is the best account we have of the campaign for Ramadi and well worth the attention of military professionals and those who seek a better understanding of the long, difficult war in Iraq.

LTC Scott Stephenson, Ph.D., USA, Retired, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

WAR AND MORAL DISSONANCE, Peter A. French, Cambridge University Press, New York, 342 pages, \$27.87.

Peter A. French may be the most prolific author writing in the field of applied ethics today—a field he helped pioneer almost 30 years ago with his landmark study, *Individual and Collective Responsibility: The Massacre at My Lai*. French's 19 books and scores of articles eruditely encompass a breathtakingly diverse array of topics. The titles include *Cowboy Metaphysics*, *Corporate Ethics*, *Ethics and College Sports*, and *Ethics in Government*. His work is highly regarded in

philosophical circles and written in a clear, evocative style accessible even to undergraduates.

Any of his books on military ethics promises to be an insightful, meaningful read. At first, *War and Moral Dissonance* delivers on this promise. In his opening essay, “The Two Collar Conflict,” French writes of his experiences teaching ethics classes to U.S. Navy and Marine chaplains from 2004 to 2006. The “two collar conflict” to which French refers is the chaplain's struggle between his responsibility to uphold the principles of his faith and his designated military responsibility to teach, advise, and promote a secular professional ethic. French depicts this struggle as a tragic one that too often results in moral schizophrenia. Leaders so afflicted, he claims, can have worse psychic injuries than the warriors they counsel.

French's stories of troubled chaplains are themselves troubling. He writes of chaplains who thought that military necessity compelled them to lie or to keep dark secrets despite the opposite guidance their faiths provided. He relates the torment of chaplains who did not believe in a war but felt it their professional duty to promote the war's cause as just. He records one chaplain poignantly proclaiming that the price paid for his wartime service was his “immoral immortal soul.”

French suggests that inner moral dissonance may contribute to indiscipline. A 2003 Associated Press article about the U.S. Navy's Chaplain Corps reported that, in the previous decade, “Regular officers had a discipline rate of two per 1,000, while the rate for chaplains was 45 per 1,000.” Even if such cited facts represent statistical aberrations, French's personal testimony and ideas on the subject retain power. In fact, it is hard to

imagine a more compelling argument against our current ethically incoherent community of chaplains serving as caretakers of America's secular military ethic than this essay.

However, the volume's subsequent essays are not rooted in French's personal experience and often fall victim to his strong opinions and selective research. A superb essay, "Torture," is tainted when French buys into the popular myth that all professional interrogators routinely applied enhanced interrogation techniques (torture) during the initial years of the War on Terrorism. True, to its everlasting shame, the Bush Administration did enable these techniques, but their actual use only involved a small fraction of U.S. interrogation facilities. Most commanders and interrogators knew better than to engage in such practices.

I should forewarn U.S. military readers that French has a low opinion of their institution. For example, French writes that defective planning "seems to be a frequent occurrence in military operations." Of greater concern to open-minded military readers is that few of the essays aim to help them to better understand how to wage war. Some essay topics are irrelevant. (Such topics include: What is moral evil? What role does the loss of innocence play in moral responsibility?) Other topics seem hardly worth debating at all. (One such topic: Can a virtual online life provide a meaningful substitute for real life to those suffering from severe physical injuries, gained from war or elsewhere? French's answer is that an individual's life, virtual or real, is only as meaningful as the individual finds it.)

In short, some military readers may find *War and Moral Dissonance* worth buying just for its powerful opening essay. After this auspicious start, though, the volume soon loses its power and relevance for the warfighter. The book still has fine passages that deserve to be read and digested, but finding them can prove to be a chore.

**Major Douglas A. Pryer, USA,
Wales, UK**

INTO THE VIPER'S NEST: The First Pivotal Battle of the Afghan War, Stephen Grey, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2010, 352 pages, \$28.00.

Acclaimed author Stephen Grey delivers a captivating account of the battle for Musa Qala, which he deems the most significant battle in Afghanistan since the toppling of the Taliban in 2001. *Into the Viper's Nest* is Grey's first major work since winning the 2005 Amnesty International Media Award for an exclusive story exposing the CIA's rendition program.

Musa Qala, in the Helmand River Valley, has a population of approximately 30,000. In 2007, when the battle of Musa Qala took place, it was the only town in Helmand Province that the Afghan central government did not control. In fact, the town had become a Taliban stronghold. *Into the Viper's Nest* highlights the heroism, valor, and sacrifice of the paratroopers of the 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, and the soldiers of the British 2nd Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment, who fought to take back the town over the course of three days. Grey recreates the battle and the events leading up to it using his personal notes, observations, and interviews he conducted with soldiers, commanders, and senior leaders. Perhaps the book's most useful contribution comes from the author's observations about counterinsurgency and the Afghan war, the competence of Afghan security forces, and the complicated relationship between the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) commander and Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Grey notes that the key to winning the Afghan war is securing the population. In Helmand Province, the Taliban were mainly ordinary tribesmen disillusioned with the Afghan government and seeking security and stability. As the author points out, the idea behind counterinsurgency is to clear the enemy from an area, hold the area to keep the enemy from coming back, and

then build something positive for the population to win their support. Yet, in too many instances, "Afghans had seen plenty of 'clear,' precious little 'hold,' and almost no 'build.'" Lieutenant Colonel Brian Mennes, commander of the 1-508th, noted that clearance operations had resulted in too much death on both sides, which only served to alienate the population and turn them against the ISAF and the Afghan government. Mennes observed that doing little things like handing out blankets and maintaining a visible presence helped foster cooperation from the locals. For example, in one town, the locals would flash lights when a Taliban patrol approached and pointed out the paths the Taliban used, enabling Mennes to plan and conduct ambushes.

Afghans in the Helmand River Valley supported the Taliban because even though they distrusted and disliked the Afghan police, viewed as much worse than the Taliban because even though they established checkpoints to control the flow of drugs, they were frequently intoxicated from smoking hashish and heroin themselves, and shook down villagers for money. When they were not high or extorting money, they refused to work if they were not paid on time. The author also discovered that Helmand had a secret police force run by an officer who raped young boys and women, stole money from the locals he was paid to protect, and was nearly always drunk or stoned.

The Afghan army is also the target of stinging rebukes. *Into the Viper's Nest* describes its officers as conceited, lazy, and overly confident in their abilities. In fact, the author states that one of the reasons he wrote *Into the Viper's Nest* was to tell the story of the true heroes in the battle of Musa Qala—the paratroopers of the 1-508th. After the battle took place, an Afghan army battalion was "staged" to ride triumphantly into town. American paratroopers and British soldiers remained strategically out of sight. All of the press accounts detailing the battle of Musa Qala heralded it as a great victory for the Afghan National Army

(ANA). Everyone involved in the fighting knew better. The Afghan army could not handle an operation of Musa Qala's magnitude without getting slaughtered.

Another issue was the ANA's inability to adequately plan for operations to which President Karzai hastily committed them. Grey gleaned that this was a source of constant consternation for the security assistance force commander at the time, General Dan K. McNeill, who wanted to conduct a major operation in Musa Qala on at least four prior occasions but was denied by Karzai each time. Karzai had gotten word that a Taliban commander, one Mullah Salaam, who lived in Musa Qala, was interested in abandoning the Taliban in favor of supporting the central government in exchange for weapons and his personal security. With the possibility of flipping a key Taliban commander, Karzai gave the green light to take back Musa Qala despite McNeill's concern that Musa Qala would become a battle for control over valuable drug turf in the Helmand Valley. The author noted that both American and British diplomats were concerned about Karzai's links to the opium trade through some of his corrupt ministers and his brother.

The author spent most of his effort describing the events and major battles during the three-day operation to secure Musa Qala and includes detailed maps. The book's epilogue contains Grey's observations of Musa Qala after he visited almost two years later. Although security had much improved and the town bazaar was thriving, he found that the ISAF had yet to rebuild the mosque as promised after they entered the town in 2007. Mullah Salaam was alive and as gloomy as ever, blaming the Afghan government for failing to deliver on all of the promises of improvement he made to the people when he took over as the local governor.

Into the Viper's Nest is well researched and thoroughly documented. The author's vivid description of the fighting places the reader alongside American paratroopers

and British soldiers as they battle to take back Musa Qala. The book's weakness lies in the author's overreliance on this one particular battle to paint the entire Afghan National Army and police force as corrupt and incompetent. Even though the author's observations are frank and unflattering at times, *Into the Viper's Nest* does provide the reader with an appreciation for the magnitude of the difficult political decisions President Obama will have to make in deciding how to withdraw U.S. forces.

**MAJ John L. Kiel, Jr., USA,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

THE IRAQ EFFECT: The Middle East After the Iraq War, Frederic Wehrey, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Jessica Watkins, Jeffrey Martini, Robert A. Guffey, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2009, 187 pages, \$40.00.

Assessment is critical for success and an important element in the improvement of an individual, organization, or state. In the interest of executing the immediate, pressing, or next mission, we underestimate the importance of assessment. A failure to assess and take prudent action can lead to the loss of lives and a better future. *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War* provides informed, fair assessment.

The product of a U.S. Air Force-funded research effort, the book discusses the balance of power in the Middle East after Operation Iraqi Freedom and provides recommendations that the United States should consider in the near term, including an Air Force engagement strategy in the region. The authors focus on long-term regional security, a refreshing, comprehensive approach to the ongoing strategy and policy debate.

The book does not overlook the human dimension in discussions of policy. It highlights the significant impact of refugee movements across Iraq's "porous and expansive" borders. While it addresses the effect of Operation Iraqi Freedom on the region, it correctly does not describe it as the "sole driver" behind ongo-

ing shifts and trends in the region.

The authors' recommendations are relevant, clear, and straightforward. They recommend a U.S. policy that encourages dialogue and is less confrontational. They describe China, Russia, Turkey, and Iran as important to future regional security.

The Iraq Effect's most encouraging deduction demonstrates that Al-Qaeda is in decline and that its efforts in Iraq brought discredit to the organization. This observation, coupled with "forging better regional intelligence sharing" with renewed emphasis on regional partnerships, has immediate implications. To ignore this book's focused assessment and its strategy and policy recommendations risks squandering victory. Highly recommended.

**LTC Troy Busby, USA, Retired,
Fort Belvoir, Virginia**

SUPERPOWER ILLUSION: How Myths and False Ideologies Led America Astray—and How to Return to Reality, Jack F. Matlock, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2010, 344 pages, \$20.00.

Retired ambassador Jack F. Matlock begins *Superpower Illusion* with the intriguing thesis that the United States was never a superpower. A strong member of a coalition of nations united in defeating communism during the Cold War, yes, but not a superpower. In fact, Matlock makes a strong case that the administrations of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush unwisely led us to believe that the United States could operate unilaterally in the turbulent international security environment of the 1990s and early 21st century.

Matlock contends that the moniker, a "new world order," fostered an American "delusion of unipolarity that fed temptations to act alone," alienated allies, and did nothing to warm relations with former adversaries. For Matlock, the abandonment of traditional diplomatic relationships in favor of unilateral action promoted an international feeling that the

United States relished its self-identified position of preeminence. As a diplomat, Matlock maintains that estrangement from Europe damaged the Cold War international system, a useful and stable arrangement.

By casting Russia as a failed superpower and deemphasizing the concerns of the British, French, and other long-time European allies, the United States set itself on the tumultuous course of having to handle complex security crises essentially alone. According to Matlock, the election of Barack Obama was a watershed moment. The United States was realigning itself with the community of nations to work as an equal partner.

The book is about the limits of power, a primer on the unintended consequences of declaring victory, and deserves the attention of military and diplomatic officers alike. As the United States prepares to conclude military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Matlock offers keen insights on how we should present and position our nation in the future.

Sean N. Kalic, Ph.D.,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

UNGOVERNED SPACES: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty, edited by Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas, Stanford Security Studies, Stanford, CA, 2010, 310 pages, \$24.95.

In past centuries, states focused on other states as the greatest threats to peace and security. In the post-9/11 world, our worst nightmares involve terrorists, weapons traffickers, or computer hackers operating from the shadowy realms of failed states, obscure hinterlands, or cyberspace.

In the provocative book *Ungoverned Spaces*, Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas challenge the popular vision of “ungoverned spaces” as both an inaccurate and counterproductive descriptor for these physical and conceptual regions that exist under something other than firm state control.

The very diversity of these essays—ranging from the warlord realms of Somalia to border regions under tribal Pashtun law, from Rio de Janeiro’s druglord-controlled slums to Hezbollah territory in Lebanon, and finally venturing out to cyberspace and offshore banking—offers the strongest support for the editors’ claims. The spaces described are vastly different, defying any single template for analysis or policy recommendation. Most significantly, all are “governed” by someone or something. Not all constitute threats, and when they do, imposing state authority may not be a necessary or practical solution. The book’s oft-repeated example is the poor reception Al-Qaeda encountered from Somalia’s warlords when it tried to establish a base in what they assumed to be the fertile ground of this famously failed state.

While the authors question the old, state-centric paradigm, they offer few policy recommendations. Indeed, even their implied suggestion that states will have to work with local power structures is problematic, raising a host of moral and legal problems. If we can persuade Somali or Afghan warlords to oppose Al-Qaeda, what will the United States have to tolerate from warlords in return?

Essays involving case studies—like the studies of Southern Lebanon, the Brazilian *favelas*, and the Pashtun tribes—provide vivid images to illustrate their points. Other essays are like Pentagon briefings, abstract exercises in confusing terminology. Nonetheless, *Ungoverned Spaces* is worth reading for the provocative questions it poses, even if readers will be left to search for the answers to them on their own.

COL David F. DiMeo, Ph.D.,
USA, West Point, New York

CROSSROADS OF INTERVENTION: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Lessons from Central America, Todd Greentree, Naval Institute Press, 2009, Annapolis, MD, 196 pages, \$21.95.

When do nations decide to intervene in another country? What makes them choose to do so? According to Todd Greentree, these decisions personify what he calls the “crossroads of intervention,” the point at which a decision maker decides on the intervention strategy to pursue in a country or region. The intervention comes in two forms: overt aggression against another state or involvement in internal conflict.

The actual crossroad is the point at which a decision maker decides on the intervention strategy to pursue in a country or region. Greentree argues that the decisions and outcomes of insurgencies and interventions in Central America after the Vietnam War provide insight into the strategy and policy processes of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom as well as conflicts of the future.

Greentree suggests that although the origins of insurgencies from Vietnam to Operation Iraqi Freedom are different, fundamental similarities exist in the U.S. political and military responses to them. In each case, a perceived threat to U.S. vital national security interests provided the justification for intervention, each conflict compelled prolonged participation in irregular warfare, and all were more costly than anticipated.

In addition, the insurgencies were interdependent. After the Vietnam War, the United States entered a period when the public did not support large-scale military involvement. Essentially, the U.S. government could not justify involving itself in third world countries because the insurgencies in Central America were temporally proximate to Vietnam. By not committing a military force to Central America, the United States avoided the pitfalls of Vietnam, but limited its study of Central America’s “modern insurgencies.” However, by the time of Operation Iraqi Freedom, this sensitivity to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam had passed, and George W. Bush had leeway for military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. Unfortunately, the government and public forgot the lessons of Nicaragua and El Salvador.

The major lessons learned through Greentree's studies provide policy makers with some key insights to consider. First, the United States must not ignore political situations by pursuing too strongly a military course of action. Second, America must not abandon its protégés once U.S. policymakers achieve their strategic goals. Third, U.S. policymakers must be clear in the reasoning behind their decisions for intervention. The sole argument of "spreading democracy" does not hold water any more.

**MAJ Randy P. James, Jr., USA,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

THE HISTORY OF CAMP TRACY: Japanese WWII POWs and the Future of Strategic Interrogation, Alexander D. Corbin, Ziedon Press, Virginia, 2009, 190 pages, \$21.95.

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan enter into their ninth and tenth years respectively, the United States continues to struggle with the stigma associated with interrogations. Alexander D. Corbin's *The History of Camp Tracy: Japanese WWII POWs and the Future of Strategic Interrogation* documents this fact. It also successfully demonstrates that improving interrogation strategy depends on extracting and implementing lessons learned from historical failures. In fact, the first-hand observations and experiences of the U.S. intelligence fiasco at Abu Ghraib, Iraq, in 2004 inspired Corbin, a seasoned U.S. Army Arabic-trained interrogator, to write the book. Corbin's contribution will prove invaluable in improving interrogation strategy.

In this insightful, relevant, and easily digestible book, Corbin provides a thorough account of ineffective military intelligence interrogation planning and execution in Iraq and Cuba and the successes the United States had in interrogating Japanese soldiers at Camp Tracy in California during World War II. He documents disturbing accounts of poor site selection, untrained interrogators, overcrowding, and prisoner abuse in Iraq. He then shifts to a

meticulous comparison of the cultures of World War II-era Japanese and Islamic extremists and outlines the detailed planning that went into interrogation operations at Camp Tracy, where the U.S. military recognized that prescreening interrogators and prisoners of war and creating a unified command for interrogation operations was critical for mission success: "Although the Navy interviewed approximately 450 prospective recruits, of them only 35 were selected for interrogation training," and "only 5,431 Japanese POWs out of the total population of over 38,000 Japanese POWs—roughly fourteen percent—were actually sent to the continental United States." Not surprisingly, Corbin received the 2008 Joint Chiefs of Staff History Office's Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Archival Research Award.

Corbin accessed recently released official World War II declassified military records, including original plans, interrogators notes, and prisoner statements. He also documents professional literature authored by various Japanese and American soldiers, and he has interviewed seven former interrogators who served at Camp Tracy. According to the author, "Camp Tracy was a top secret mission; the veterans, who are now in their 80s and 90s, did not take notes or write about their experiences in diaries, and in some cases had not spoken of their involvement at Camp Tracy . . ."

The History of Camp Tracy is the finest compendium of knowledge on interrogation strategy in existence. The author's findings are enlightening and clearly illustrate that interrogation planning, techniques, and procedures performed at Camp Tracy in the 1940s may be considered suitable strategy today. As an indication of the book's relevance and importance, a senior military representative at the Pentagon has been quoted as saying "I will be testifying on detainee and interrogation policies before Congressional committees . . . and will also be participating in a senior panel convened to design a way ahead on interrogation for the next

administration. I cannot think of a higher compliment to pay you than to assure you that I will refer to your thesis in making my arguments."

**MAJ Richard H. Hetherington,
USA, Iraq**

THIS TIME WE WIN: Revisiting the Tet Offensive, James S. Robbins, Encounter Books, New York, 2010, 364 pages, \$25.95.

This Time We Win: Revisiting the Tet Offensive is a direct, honest, and strong book about the Vietnam War. James S. Robbins, the senior editorial foreign affairs writer for *The Washington Times*, presents a clear analysis of executive branch decision making during Lyndon Johnson's administration. Robbins also explains why U.S. media hurt our war effort and helped to turn our decisive victory during the 1968 Tet Offensive into a defeat with short- and long-term consequences.

To set the stage, he begins his book with an overview of what was happening in Washington. Robbins points out why Johnson's administration was at best incompetent and at worst dangerously arrogant.

Questions: Where in the Constitution is the power of policy formation given exclusively to the president? In fact, can we successfully fight any war without the active involvement of Congress and the people? Johnson was foolish enough to follow the advice of such people as Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, whose strategy of "gradual escalation" sent a clear message to Ho Chi Minh. Unfortunately, the message was that the United States would never be totally committed to the war. In contrast to Johnson, Ho Chi Minh had only one goal: to win the war. He had defeated the French, and now he wanted do the same to the Americans. Toughness is what Ho Chi Minh understood, nothing else. Robbins puts it this way: "In the long run it meant that the United States lost in Vietnam by choice; we chose not to do the things we needed to do in order to win." Johnson and McNamara simply did

not know what they were doing. Ho Chi Minh did.

Robbins writes that according to captured Viet Cong papers, Tet was “a campaign designed to bring about a decisive victory and end the war.” The president did not fully understand how big the Tet Offensive was, and as a result, America was not in a position to take advantage of the decisive defeat it inflicted on the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese at Tet. A big factor was that the American press got Tet so wrong that the result was that all of the South Vietnamese and American troops who fought so valiantly on the battlefield and “won” had their efforts turned to defeat.

North Vietnamese General Giap, who led the Tet Offensive, thought the result of Tet was “tremendous losses in terms of the revolution’s position and strength.” In other words, the Viet Cong were defeated, and the North Vietnamese Army was not much better off. For example, consider the embassy attack on 31 January 1968. The press made it sound like a big victory for the Viet Cong. In fact, 19 Viet Cong attacked the embassy and were killed.

Robbins’ account of AP photographer Eddie Adams’ famous photograph of General Nguyen Ngoc Loan shooting a notorious Viet Cong assassin, Bay Lop, in the head is sad to read. The press turned General Loan, a hero, into a monster. Robbins brings back the truth.

The author’s narrative about the brutal, 26-day fight for Hue is first-rate. Again, because of the biased U.S. press, the American people never understood what happened there. Robbins corrects this mistake. He gives the reader vivid insight into how brutal the Communists were. Robbins’ account of the U.S. Marines 77-day fight for Khe Sanh is also superb.

Unless you are already an expert on Vietnam, *This Time We Win* will give you many insights into this tragic war.

Robert Previdi, Manhasset, New York

YALTA: The Price of Peace, S.M. Plokhy, Viking, New York, 2010, 451 pages, \$29.95.

The first major work on Yalta produced after the end of the Cold War, S.M. Plokhy’s *Yalta: The Price of Peace* reappraises the Yalta peace conference by benefiting from open Russian archives. Plokhy approaches the conference mostly from Roosevelt’s perspective, but gives ample time to Churchill and Stalin. Stalin’s actions are particularly well explained and examined compared to previous works. Plokhy’s overriding theme is the incompatibility of the United States, the British Empire, and the Soviet Union. There was little to bring the Big Three together other than the defeat of Nazi Germany. As Plokhy writes, and as post-war history shows, we should remember that “in the absence of common values binding allies together, the difference between friend and foe can simply be a matter of time.”

Most of the book deals with Yalta’s day-to-day negotiations. The Soviets were able to record many of the conversations that took place at the negotiating table as well as private discussions between various members of the U.S. and British delegations. Plokhy gives particular emphasis to the discussions on the creation of the UN, which was of great personal importance to Roosevelt. One of Yalta’s legacies is the British and U.S. acceptance of Soviet occupation of Poland, but Plokhy argues that Stalin’s insistence on Soviet control over Poland made Churchill’s best efforts to prevent it ultimately futile. Poland was one of the prices that Stalin insisted on for Soviet involvement against Imperial Japan. Obtaining a commitment by the Soviet Union to fight against the Japanese was one of Roosevelt’s primary objectives of the Yalta conference and he proved willing to pay for it with Chinese territory and well as Polish independence.

Plokhy demolishes one myth surrounding Yalta—that of the role of Alger Hiss. Although we now know that Hiss was a Soviet agent for

years before World War II, his role at Yalta was unclear until the opening of Russian archives. Apparently, Hiss was involved with collecting military information for the Soviets. Plokhy finds that “his military handlers showed little interest in the political information he could provide” and that he had minimal influence on the political settlements made at Yalta.

Plokhy vividly paints the personalities of the Big Three. Stalin appears genial and open, which helps to explain the Allied willingness to accept his assurances. Churchill is very aware of the grim realities of Soviet rule, and oddly, Roosevelt is reluctant to work with Churchill on the Polish question or even consult with him as to the purpose of the conference before it starts.

Plokhy concludes with a lengthy look at Yalta’s legacy, arguing that the agreement proved vague enough for all parties to accept and led to divergent interpretations at Potsdam and during the post-war period. Plokhy sees the later disillusionment with Yalta as a product of the start of the Cold War, when the radically different aims of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union became painfully clear. The problem was not necessarily the agreement itself, but its application.

John E. Fahey, Fairfax, Virginia

UNBROKEN: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption, Laura Hillenbrand, Random House, New York, 2010, 473 pages, \$27.00.

This biography takes off with a B-24 journey across the Pacific Ocean, but Lieutenant Louie Zamperini’s story of survival begins when his plane, *Green Hornet*, with a crew of 11 crashes into the ocean, killing eight. The survivors drift at sea for 47 days: dodging strafing from a Japanese plane; hand-fighting sharks; and cheating starvation by wringing the neck of an albatross, consuming its raw flesh, and crafting the bird’s bones into fishing hooks. Only two lieutenants survived

the 2,000-mile raft-journey to the Japanese-occupied Marshall Islands. After enduring their harrowing sea journey, Zamperini is moved to Japan where another, longer story of fortitude unfolds. The author describes the horrific life American POWs suffered at the hands of the Japanese captors; they lived in maggot-infested huts with stinging insects while being subjected to arbitrary torture that filled their days for the next two years, as guests of the Emperor.

Hillenbrand sets the stage for this tale by chronicling young Louie's developmental journey. We follow the Torrance Tornado's "childhood of artful dodging" and watch as he acquires the confidence of someone "clever, resourceful, and bold enough to escape any predicament," including what he thought was the humiliation of growing-up as a poor Italian-American immigrant in California, striving to speak English, and endeavoring to fit in at school. Louie seemed destined for juvenile hall, or court-ordered sterilization, but Louie's brother Pete refocused the Torrance Tornado's stubborn streak to track and field, leading him to the 1936 Berlin Olympics where his "blistering last lap" in the 5,000-meter race resulted in a handshake and praise from Adolf Hitler along with waves of speculation about the gold awaiting him in the scheduled 1940 Olympics in Japan. War changed everything, but Louie's fortitude stood him in good stead for the challenges he would endure in the prison camps.

Hillenbrand describes the terror of waiting for the next beating, the inescapable thoughts of hopelessness, and the endless pain of repeated blows from relentless torturers. A story so intense it's almost incredible, a story that challenges the reader's comprehension, this description of the life-and-death struggle of the POWs will remain with you longer than you like. Zamperini himself has praised Hillenbrand's seven-year devotion to getting every detail correct. He says her authentic storytelling and

impressive research is so penetrating that, "She knew things about me that I didn't even know myself."

As a story of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and the challenges of returning home, *Unbroken* is relevant to today's military veteran; it illustrates the long-distance race from resilience to rescue, a journey whose route includes as many valleys and peaks as the primal wartime fight for survival. Ultimately, this biography portrays the path across the finish-line to redemption through faith and optimism. An inspiring guide book for a returning veteran striving to reconcile the horrors of war with the warmth of friends and family, battling to forgive the unforgivable, and genuinely attempting to renew his foundations of self, *Unbroken* is a must read that ultimately brings the resilient warrior home.

**MAJ Jeff Bergmann, USA,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

MUNICH, 1938: Appeasement and World War II, David Faber, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2009, 512 pages, \$30.00.

David Faber's *Munich, 1938* provides a gripping, chilling account of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement with Nazi Germany prior to World War II. The result was the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia, a supposed ally, in the pursuit of peace at any price at the Munich Conference. Chamberlain's actions merely whetted Hitler's appetite for further territorial aggression and led to the start of World War II a year later.

Faber draws from a reservoir of primary sources to show the folly of seeking peace with dictators and aggressors at any cost. Faber provides a fresh, objective view of Chamberlain, exposing his naiveté and self-delusion as to Hitler's character. (Chamberlain said of Hitler: "I got the impression that here was a man who could be relied upon when he had given his word.") Supported by a coterie of sycophants, Chamberlain played upon the populace's painful memory

of World War I, while keeping his Cabinet poorly advised of his plans. Unfortunately, the outspoken voices of Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden were ignored during this disgraceful chapter of European history.

The book is a must read for all U.S. diplomats, politicians, and military officers. An important lesson is that a strong response in the early stages of trouble may deter a dictator. Chamberlain's approach achieved the opposite result, and it is a mistake to be avoided in a number of hotspots around the world today.

**Kevin D. Stringer, Ph.D.,
Zurich, Switzerland**

MARSHALL: Lessons in Leadership, H. Paul Jeffers with Alan Axelrod, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2010, 204 pages, \$22.00.

Marshall: Lessons in Leadership (part of Palgrave's series on great generals) is the last book by historian H. Paul Jeffers, who died in December 2009. Jeffers' book joins other biographies of General George C. Marshall, who is universally recognized as one of America's greatest generals.

So, what does this book have to say that others, including Forrest Pogue's four-volume biography, have not?

Little new historical information about Marshall's life has been unearthed in this new biography. Nevertheless, it is an engaging, colorful, and eminently readable story about Marshall's life, his military career, and his triumphs. The book is organized chronologically, beginning with Marshall's 1880 birth in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. It provides enough information about his childhood and youth to give the reader a sense of Marshall prior to his military career, but not so much as to detract from the part of the story the reader wants to get to—his Army career. The author gets there quickly. In Chapter 2, Jeffers recounts Marshall's early experience as a junior officer in "an army that had no enemy."

Like most military officers before World War I, Marshall progressed slowly. But Marshall made the most of these early assignments. According to Marshall himself, one of his toughest assignments was to assist in mapping 2,000 square miles in southwest Texas, near Fort Clark, in 1905. In this assignment, he met Malin Craig, who “thirty-four years later would recommend him to be his successor as army chief of staff.”

The story reaches its climax when chronicling Marshall’s service as army chief of staff during World War II. The author puts you in the room with Marshall and other colorful characters from the war—Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and George S. Patton.

Throughout the book, Jeffers concentrates on Marshall’s temperament—always controlled, mission focused, and never egotistical—and his leadership style—quickly identifying officers with talent and potential and getting them into assignments where they could develop and demonstrate their potential. Perhaps this “character study” aspect of the book is the author’s greatest contribution to the understanding of Marshall as a man, a military officer, and a leader. Recommended for all readers.

**Clark Capshaw, Ph.D.,
Alexandria, Virginia**

1864: Lincoln at the Gates of History, Charles Bracelen Flood, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2009, 521 pages, \$17.00.

1864 is an extensive, thorough, and admirable work of literature, an introspective book on human suffering, personal sacrifice, excitement, passion, and politics. The book discusses one of the U.S. Civil War’s most crucial years and deserves to be compared to David McCullough’s *1776*. Complementary books are Ronald White, Jr.’s, *Eloquent President* and Garry Wills’ *Lincoln at Gettysburg*.

Charles Flood has disassembled and dispersed the apparition that is Lincoln. Lincoln’s achievements

and strengths as well as his failures and shortcomings form an accurate portrait of a figure facing a multitude of personal and professional challenges. From expansion of executive powers during conflict, to effectively negotiating national needs through long-range political planning agendas, Lincoln articulated his position over and over again in speeches and written documents. Lincoln’s successful defense of his unpopular Emancipation Proclamation, the saving of the union, and then winning a second term speak volumes about those efforts.

Flood defines Lincoln’s daily life through stories told by Lincoln himself and his two personal secretaries. The reader feels the warmth, devotion, and humor that Lincoln used to infuse the nation, his family, his friends, and his staff alike. Even his fair treatment of those who opposed him displays a character as rare as the individual. For healing and reconstruction of a nation to take place, precisely these attributes were necessary: a conciliatory approach to the south and an incredible generosity for the vanquished.

The book is a must read and a great addition to any collection on the Civil War. *1864* is a telling reflection of one of the Civil War’s most prominent architects.

**LTC Thomas S. Bundt, Ph.D.,
USA, Fort Sam Houston, Texas**

CONSTANTINE: Roman Emperor, Christian Victor, Paul Stephenson, Overlook Press, New York, 2010, 350 pages, \$30.00.

Paul Stephenson, professor of Byzantine history at Durham University, has written a masterful biography of the controversial Roman emperor Constantine that gives refreshing new perspectives on the actions and motives of this highly controversial emperor.

Because of Constantine’s adoption of Christianity, many previous works have interpreted him as a church figure. Stephenson reorients the discussion by focusing on Constantine’s military actions,

interpreted through the motif of the Roman “theology of victory.” While mystery religions offering personal salvation flourished, Romans still practiced a state religion that sought the support of the traditional gods for the stability of the empire. Over time, rulers sought the support of one main god, a *summus deus*. Because the aid of this god would bring victory, a ruler could maintain the loyalty of the troops, thus assuring himself of his grip on power. When Constantine battled his rivals in the collapse of the Tetrarchy, he sought the support of the god *Sol Invictus* (unconquered sun).

During this time, Christianity continued to spread rapidly. Stephenson uses the controversial “sex, health, and arithmetic” thesis to explain the religion’s exponential growth. Constantine conflated the identity of Jesus Christ with *Sol Invictus*, blending Roman and Christian beliefs and gaining Christian support. Once he had consolidated power, Constantine maintained his allegiance to this god of victory, reworking a vision of the god *Apollo-Sol* into the famous story of a vision from the Christian version of god at the Battle of Milvian Bridge. Constantine’s subsequent interest in church affairs increased as he realized that stabilizing the church would aid him in stabilizing the empire.

Ultimately, this is a story about the intersections of politics and religion, showing how Constantine used both to his advantage. Stephenson admits that the paucity of evidence on many aspects of Constantine’s life force him to make educated guesses. To supplement the sparse documentary record, he uses findings from coinage, statuary, and monumental architecture and provides pertinent illustrations for major pieces.

Several of his ideas bear further scrutiny. Stephenson’s thesis that Constantine established orthodoxy with the Trinitarian controversy at the Council of Nicaea is debatable, as even the New Testament evinces certain inviolable doctrinal

formulations early in church history. Stephenson's conclusion that the idea of Christian martyrdom formed the basis of Islamic martyrdom assumes causation and not the existence of separate but similar

phenomena. While the author's purposeful avoidance of footnotes does aid in smoothing the read, it creates frustration at not having clear direction for tracing ideas to their sources. Overall, this work will be of great

interest to students, clergy, and military leaders exploring the relationship between religion, military action, and political power.

1LT Jonathan E. Newell, USAR, Amherst, New Hampshire

MR We Recommend



HANNIBAL: The Military Biography of Rome's Greatest Enemy, Richard A. Gabriel, Potomac Books, Dulles, VA, 2011, 288 pages, \$35.95.

The Romans' destruction of Carthage after the Third Punic War erased any Carthaginian historical record of Hannibal's life. What we know of him comes exclusively from Roman historians who had every interest in minimizing his success, exaggerating his failures, and disparaging his character.

Yet there is no doubt that Hannibal was the greatest Carthaginian general of the Second Punic War. When he did not defeat them outright, he fought to a standstill the best generals Rome produced, and he sustained his army in the field for 16 long years without mutiny or desertion. Hannibal was a first-rate tactician, only a somewhat lesser strategist, and the greatest enemy Rome ever faced.

Richard A. Gabriel's brilliant new biography shows how Hannibal's genius nearly unseated the Roman Empire.

From the publisher



A WORLD ON FIRE: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War, Amanda Foreman, Random House, New York, June 2011, 1008 pages, \$35.00.

Historian Amanda Foreman's *A World on Fire* tells the fascinating story of the American Civil War and the major role played by Britain and its citizens in that epic struggle.

Even before the first rumblings of secession shook the halls of Congress, British involvement in the coming schism was inevitable. Britain was dependent on the South for cotton, and in turn the Confederacy relied almost exclusively on Britain for guns, bullets, and ships. The Union sought to block any diplomacy between the two and consistently teetered on the brink of war with Britain. For four years the complex web of relationships between the countries led to defeats and victories both minute and history-making. In *A World on Fire*, Amanda Foreman examines the fraught relations from multiple angles while she introduces characters both humble and grand, bringing them to vivid life over the course of her sweeping and brilliant narrative.

From the publisher



THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN: Five Months that Changed History: May-October 1940, James Holland, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2011, 704 pages, \$40.00

From British historian James Holland comes a groundbreaking new book, *The Battle of Britain: Five Months that Changed History, May-October 1940*, which paints a stirring picture of that extraordinary summer when the fate of the world hung by a thread. Holland has written this definitive account of those critical months based on extensive new research, and examines, for the first time, the conflict on land, sea, and at home, as well as in the air.

If Britain's defenses had collapsed, Hitler would have dominated all of Europe. With France facing defeat and British forces pressed back to the Channel, there were few who believed Britain could survive; but, thanks to a sophisticated defensive system and the combined efforts of the Royal Air Force, the Royal Navy and the defiance of a new Prime Minister, Britain refused to give in.

From the publisher



The street sounds to the soldiers' tread,
And out we troop to see:
A single redcoat turns his head,
He turns and looks at me.
My man, from sky to sky's so far,
We never crossed before;
Such leagues apart the world's ends are,
We're like to meet no more;
What thoughts at heart have you and I
We cannot stop to tell;
But dead or living, drunk or dry,
Soldier, I wish you well.

Poem XXII, *A Shropshire Lad*, 1896

A.E. Housman

ART: Grenadier, 40th Regiment of Foot, 1776, P.W. Reynolds, 1894.