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America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History

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Russian space program in ten to twelve years; and perhaps it will overtake the American program as well" (p. 585).

As in previous volumes in the series, Chertok documents the toils of Soviet designers, who were remunerated poorly, subjected to difficult working conditions, and hidden from foreign sight and contact. Chertok learned of his nation's deployment of missiles to Cuba, for instance, from Kennedy's speech (p. 95)! Driven in part by heartfelt ideals tempered by knowledge of the horrors of the Stalin era, these designers achieved so much, so quickly, under such formidable constraints—truly amazing accomplishments. Theirs is not only a Soviet legacy, rooted now in a bygone era, but a part of a larger human legacy that will inspire further exploration as mankind moves farther into space.

ANDREW S. ERICKSON



America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History, by Andrew J. Bacevich. New York: Random House, 2016. 453 pages. \$30.

The most recent book by Andrew Bacevich—a retired U.S. Army colonel and now-retired professor of history and international relations at Boston University—details the history of the four-decade U.S. involvement in “the Greater Middle East,” a region Bacevich defines as encompassing areas of the Persian Gulf, North Africa, and the Balkans.

The book starts with the formulation of the Carter Doctrine: how the OPEC oil embargo, the Iranian Revolution, and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, combined with America's need for

oil and the fact that most of the world's oil at the time came from this area, led then-president Jimmy Carter to declare the security and stability of this region to be a vital national interest. Bacevich believes the doctrine created a broad, open-ended commitment that expanded with time. Early in the book he describes the decision making, strategy and policy development, and organizational changes that positioned the United States as the guarantor of regional security. This was the context for the formation of U.S. Central Command, which included in its geographic area of responsibility not only the Persian Gulf states but a total of nineteen countries, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, and Pakistan. Bacevich argues that this new combatant command created both an expectation of and the pretext for future military intervention in the Central Command region. The “Soviet threat of the 1980s served as a placeholder, providing a handy rationale for developing capabilities subsequently put to other purposes”; that “posture justified by the need to defend the Persian Gulf from outside intrusion positioned the United States itself to intrude.”

Bacevich offers a broad overview of significant events in this area of the world over the last thirty-five years. In addition to the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and America's support of the mujahideen “freedom fighters,” Bacevich discusses the Marine Corps barracks bombing in Lebanon, the U.S. attack against Mu'ammar Gadhafi in Libya, and the war between Iraq and Iran. His broad synthesis similarly includes Somalia, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing Gulf War, the conflict in the Balkans, and, of course, the attacks of

September 11 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the current fight against Al Qaeda and ISIS. One of the great strengths of this book is the way Bacevich brings all these events together in sufficient detail to enable the reader to take in “the whole picture.” It allows one to put these events into greater context and see the patterns that have developed. In short, it performs a very complete assessment of where we have been, what assumptions the leaders of the United States have made, what policy decisions were made on the basis of those assumptions, and what the outcomes have been to this time.

Toward the book’s end, Bacevich asks two very pointed questions. First, why “has the world’s mightiest military achieved so little even while itself absorbing very considerable losses and inflicting even greater damage on the subjects of America’s supposed beneficence?” Second, why, “in the face of such unsatisfactory outcomes[,] has the United States refused to chart a different course?” Bacevich goes on to offer what he believes are the answers to these questions, then ends by arguing that, in light of new technology that allows more oil reserves to become accessible in the Western Hemisphere, the United States would be better served by securing its “own neighborhood rather than vainly attempting to police the Greater Middle East.” The question that comes to mind—one with which I’m sure our national leaders wrestle—is this: What will happen to this region, and subsequently the world, if the United States stops its involvement in the Greater Middle East?

This well-researched book is a must-read for all of us who study, plan, and execute the military arm of national

power—and especially for those who make decisions about national policy.

ROGER DUCEY



Lessons Encountered: Learning from the Long War, ed. Richard D. Hooker Jr. and Joseph J. Collins. Washington, DC: National Defense Univ. Press, 2015. 486 pages. \$21.95.

Augmenting the literature of firsthand accounts by senior leaders such as General Stanley McChrystal and Ambassador Christopher Hill, National Defense University faculty members Richard Hooker and Joseph Collins assembled a strong team to make sense of the last fifteen years of war. The editors appreciate the challenges of writing current history, but offer the book as “an assessment of two unfinished campaigns, written for future senior officers, their key advisors, and other national security professionals.” With more than three million U.S. and coalition veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, few undertakings are more important. Veterans of today will shape the future of defense over the next twenty years, just as their forebears, such as Anthony Zinni, Colin Powell, and Richard Holbrooke, were shaped by their Vietnam experiences.

The chapters are at their best when they leverage insights from both senior military and civilian leaders to reach important conclusions, such as the following: “Civilian national security decisionmakers need a better understanding of the complexity of military strategy and the military’s need for planning guidance. Senior military officers for their part require a deep understanding of the interagency decisionmaking