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Tarnished: Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Military

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mission. Nasser was willing to give his new war minister as close to a blank check as could be imagined. Nothing was more important than securing a victory and expunging the shame of 1967. Furthermore, the Soviet Union became a guaranteed supplier of military hardware, not only making up the quantitative Egyptian losses but substantially improving equipment quality as well. Fawzi makes the point that the Soviets were less motivated by a common ideology in this effort than by the need to prove that their equipment was at least on a par with that of the United States, and to maintain their geopolitical position in the region. Fawzi also confirms that the Soviet presence on the ground was extensive, that Soviet forces not only advised but performed certain military duties as well.

Fawzi brought new capabilities to Egypt and improved others. Surface-launched ship-to-ship missiles, modern surface-to-air missile batteries, new armor and aircraft all entered the Egyptian inventory. Fawzi understood, however, that new hardware would not be enough. Military-school attendance was increased, and the military's intellectual capabilities expanded. But beyond that, he explains, the three-year "war of attrition" that Egypt waged against Israel (1967–70) was a deliberate effort to blood the Egyptian army, test new tactics, and deploy new forces. Over this period, Fawzi argues, the Israeli forces came to embrace a defensive mind-set, while the Egyptian army became imbued with the spirit of the offensive. Although most books claim Israel won the war of attrition, Fawzi claims this was not the case. According to Fawzi, not only did Israeli jets increasingly avoid Egyptian airspace, but Egyptian

soldiers underwent quantum improvements as well—and these improvements were the real war aims of this period. It is also clear that whatever strategic deterrent the Israeli leaders thought they might have against the Egyptians did not work when it came to preventing at least a limited war. As the Egyptian army began to believe in itself, Fawzi and his officers crafted plans for what would become one of the most successful set-piece battles of the twentieth century: the 1973 crossing of the Suez Canal and the breaching of the Bar-Lev line.

Reproducing the *Infantry* articles, complete with their original and somewhat repetitive forewords, gives the book something of a choppy feel. It is also clear that this work is a synopsis of Fawzi's memoirs, not a complete translation. Some readers will be left with a desire to know more. Not surprisingly, the focus of the book tends to be at the strategic level. Readers who want more tactical details will have to find them elsewhere. Unfortunately for our understanding of Egyptian perspectives of how the war was waged, Fawzi was relieved of his duties two years before the war began and was arrested for conspiring to overthrow Sadat, so this critical element is sadly lacking. However, these shortcomings pale when compared with the value inherent in this work.

RICHARD J. NORTON



Tarnished: Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Military, by George E. Reed. Lincoln, Neb.: Potomac Books, 2015. 216 pages. \$26.50.

Although the term "toxic leadership" has recently come into vogue, the U.S. military is no stranger to the phenomenon.

Any current or former member of the armed forces can usually provide a firsthand account of a leader he or she believes was toxic. So even when a very healthy dose of skepticism regarding anecdotal reporting is applied, it is surprising that senior military leaders have not paid more specific attention to evaluating to what degree toxic leadership has affected their services' personnel and their performance, and to determining what to do about it.

George Reed, who carries very respectable credentials as both a former Army officer with twenty-seven years of experience and a civilian scholar, has at least begun to examine toxic leadership in the U.S. military seriously. For those interested in understanding this type of leadership, *Tarnished* is an excellent starting point. However, as Reed is laudably quick to point out, more work—much more work—is required.

The study of leadership is as fraught as it is vital. There is not even a universally accepted definition of the term. The field abounds with conflicting theories, mountains of individual case studies, and an ever-increasing number of blandly self-assured “how-to” books of questionable utility. *Tarnished* is a welcome change of pace.

Reed begins by defining toxic leadership as “demotivational behavior that negatively impacts unit morale and climate.” Reed then explores how toxic leaders behave and why; in many cases, their seniors in the chain of command may fail to recognize these behaviors and even reward these leaders. This, not surprisingly, is in marked contrast to the perspectives of toxic leaders' subordinates and the deep and lasting negative impact that results from working for such a leader. Loss of productivity,

decreased communication of necessary information to senior leaders, and rampant dissatisfaction with not only the leader but the service are just some of the consequences Reed documents. But as serious and at times tragic as these results can be, they pale in comparison to the loss of combat effectiveness such units could experience and the potential cumulative impact of toxic leadership on the profession of arms.

Reed makes a convincing case that a toxic leader's behavior likely stems from feelings of inferiority, which, when combined with narcissism, creates a potentially disastrous mix. The manner in which toxic leadership often involves ethical breaches is also examined.

Among the useful ideas presented in *Tarnished* is that toxic leadership is best viewed along a spectrum. At one end are found true psychopaths, whose numbers in the military are likely to be few. At the other end of the scale are individuals with behaviors that may actually be correctable, or at least mitigated.

Part of this book's allure is Reed's healthy understanding of reality. He notes that losing control in the moment or having a bad day does not make a leader toxic. *Tarnished* does offer suggestions for those sentenced to work with toxic leaders, but Reed has the candor to admit that these suggestions may not work. This is a refreshing change from books that suggest that “speaking truth to power” will result in a happy ending, or those that, having identified a problem, offer no solution.

This is not to suggest that *Tarnished* is without flaws. In discussing specific cases, there is a tendency to identify toxic leaders as “a Navy captain,” or “a visiting field officer.” If these cases are in the public domain, then providing

actual identities would be better. Although it is ostensibly devoted to military leadership, civilian cases do at times move into the narrative. There is also a surprising lack of historical cases. Were Admiral King, General Patton, and General LeMay toxic leaders?

Does the answer matter? One of the more difficult questions involving toxic leaders is, Do results ever trump their behavior? *Tarnished* claims, quite reasonably, that how leadership is delivered can be as important as what it delivers, or even more important. But is that always true? Another question that will leave most readers wanting more is whether, and to what degree, the culture of the U.S. military and the nature of the profession of arms rewards (some would say demands) attributes from leaders that, if not toxic, may seem very similar. However, when all is said and done, *Tarnished* is a most welcome addition to the discipline of leadership. It belongs in the handful of books that should be on the shelves of both scholars and practitioners of leadership.

RICHARD J. NORTON



The China Dream: Great Power Thinking & Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era, by Liu Mingfu. New York: CN Times, 2015. 288 pages. \$24.99.

This 2015 publication of the English translation of *The China Dream*, originally published in Chinese in 2010, merits reading by a wider Western audience wishing to understand a clear exposition of a conservative, hawkish view of China's approach to international relations. The author, Liu Mingfu, is a retired People's Liberation Army colonel.

The book does not necessarily represent the mainstream view of the Chinese general public or the official Chinese government position, but it does ring more true to the spirit of Chinese president Xi Jinping's current thinking than it did to former Chinese president Hu Jintao's approach when the book was released in Chinese over five years ago. The fact that the foreword for the book was written by Liu Yazhou, a princeling political commissar of the National Defense University, gives the work gravity within the Chinese defense community.

Henry Kissinger spent four paragraphs in *On China* (2011) summarizing Liu's views regarding China's grand goal to become number one in the world, thereby restoring its historic glory. According to Liu, this is to be done through cultivating "martial spirit," not through "peaceful rise." The inherent conflict in U.S.-Chinese relations is portrayed as a "marathon contest" or "duel of the century," as if world politics is a sporting event between a champion and a major contender for the global championship. Kissinger follows his discussion of the Liu triumphalist view of the national destiny debate with a much longer analysis of State Councilor Dai Bingguo's more moderate reaffirmation of the peaceful rise strategy.

Liu begins the first chapter by paying homage, Chinese fashion, to his ancestors, laying out his interpretation of the visions of Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping for turning China into the world's leading nation. Getting to the crux of his argument in the second chapter, "The Fight for the Century," Liu clearly blocks out the results of five centuries of global political competition. Citing George Modelski's hegemonic stability theory that there is an approximate