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# A Handful of Bullets: How the Murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand Still Menaces the Peace

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Milevski, the state of grand strategic thinking is “unhelpful” and requires “rehabilitation” before that state can change. To say that this conclusion is surprising is something of an understatement, and it will be interesting to see how many scholars of grand strategy agree with Milevski in this regard.

RICHARD J. NORTON



*A Handful of Bullets: How the Murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand Still Menaces the Peace*, by Harlan K. Ullman. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014. 214 pages. \$34.95.

The legacies of the First World War are many, and Harlan K. Ullman, a respected national security practitioner and academic, offers a thought-provoking snapshot of some of the current challenges facing the United States that can be linked back to the war. The book focuses on current policy debates, but simultaneously attempts to relate back to historical events. Ullman argues that the current threat environment began revealing itself when Gavrilo Princip assassinated the archduke of Austria, thus launching the First World War with only a handful of bullets. Today, Ullman contends that there are all kinds of Gavrilo Principis in the world who can throw international order into a tailspin. More significantly, the author argues that the means and methods of doing so have multiplied.

Ullman's foundational argument is that individuals and groups now can have increased impact vis-à-vis the state. This change occurred because of the gradual unraveling of the Westphalian system and the erosion of state sovereignty over the last decades. Power is now

diffused among so many people and devices that they cannot be quantified. The consequence is a world with “four new horsemen of the apocalypse”: failed governments; economic despair, disparity, and dislocation; radical ideologies; and environmental calamity. These represent the main threats on which the United States should focus, but unfortunately our policy is grounded in the past, and our present strategies address the symptoms instead of the causes of these threats. This new environment is difficult for governments to manage; the United States in particular does not have a system in place that enables it to cope. Ullman argues that our political-military system merely hops back and forth from one crisis to the next without any real strategy.

The author argues that the United States desperately needs sounder strategic thinking. The extent of the national debt means that resources for projecting military power will be more and more limited. When a state's chief enemies possess no organized military or economic base, traditional military power exerts less influence. The United States must become smarter in spending for national defense and must formulate strategies that take into account not just Iran, China, and Al Qaeda but all the overarching challenges it faces, as well as the wild card scenarios that can emanate from them. However, the author keenly observes that this strategic change is unlikely to occur, given the dysfunction and vitriol in our political system. Our elected leaders have a short-term obsession with winning elections and with the continuous pursuit of dollars for campaign financing. As many others surely would agree, Ullman worries that only major crises can create the impetus for real change.

Ullman's main points are sound, even difficult to disagree with. But most of the points are not new. Furthermore, the book at times reads like a laundry list of things and people with which the author does not agree; he often voices this disagreement but provides little depth or analysis. He bounces around among multiple topics somewhat chaotically, from Vladimir Putin to presidential inexperience to Iran's nuclear ambitions to universal voting, and so forth. He wades into cyber. Climate change gets its own chapter. Infrastructure investment holds critical importance to him. And then the author tries to relate most of this back to the First World War. Sometimes the historical comparison has coherence, but at other times it does not work as well.

Nevertheless, the book structures itself in a unique way and provides a powerful argument for critical reform in the national security arena—even as the author himself notes it is unlikely his reforms will be implemented. Particularly penetrating are the reasons given for why the current national security apparatus is unsuitable to the task. The rate of government development has not kept up with the pace at which challenges are arising and the complexity of the world is increasing. Ullman argues that this has been demonstrated by the derelict mismanagement of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the haphazard drone policy, and the government's present vulnerability to cyber attacks. To meet these challenges, our government's new course of strategic thinking must effectuate a restructuring on par with the 1947 National Security Act. We must reform NATO into a multilateral institution capable of countering modern threats. Ullman argues for creating new metrics for measuring and understanding state

power. The author also offers a variety of other, less controversial, unsystematic proposals. Depending on one's perspective, the reader may find the book's arguments to be somber and discouraging, to constitute a passionate call for action, or perhaps simply to represent a realistic paradigm for the present day. Whichever way, Ullman's book is a worthwhile read, and national security experts should consider his conceptual arguments.

JEREMY SNELLEN



*Hannibal*, by Patrick N. Hunt. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017. 362 pages. \$28.

The ancient historian Polybius cautioned against writing about a place to which one had not been, and Hannibal biographer and author Patrick N. Hunt has heeded this warning. An archaeologist and historian who has taught at Stanford University since 1993, Hunt has walked and studied every major Hannibal battlefield and tracked the military leader's routes from Carthage through Spain, France, Italy, and Turkey. The National Geographic Society's Expedition Council sponsored Hunt's 2007 and 2008 Hannibal expeditions. His archaeological fieldwork has concentrated on Hannibal for decades, and from 1994 to 2012 he was director of the Stanford Alpine Archaeology Project, leading expeditions in the Alps to explore routes Hannibal might have taken on his march on Rome. Hunt thus comes to the topic with decades of research, and this new biography is a welcome addition to the study of Hannibal and his methods of warfare. The result is a well-written study delivered via an engaging narrative.