

***After the Wars: International Lessons From the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan***

John Gentry and William Nolte, eds. (National Intelligence University Press, 2018), 344 pages, notes, index, contributors.

***Reviewed by James H.***

Drs. Gentry and Nolte's empowering compilation of diverse perspectives in 11 chapters, each written by a different, highly reputable contributor, is a compelling read for those engaged in US foreign policy, military history, or the instruction of the implications of global war. Each chapter—written independently with no apparent attempt to find common ground—gives readers peeks into what some of our most influential foreign policy thinkers have observed when examining the consequences of the decades-long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Observations made regarding foreign ground battles, cyber operations, domestic security, and pressing diplomatic issues barely scratch the surface of how deeply these contributors go to share what they've experienced or seen. From the beginning, readers will understand that the reflections shared in the book could only have been explained so thoroughly by experts engaged in the events day after day.

Drs. Gentry and Nolte invited the contributors to think about 14 points when writing. The effort they claimed would cover subjects important in coming years of international relations. These points included lessons useful to designing attack strategies against the United States and its interests, perceptions of US friends and allies regarding the United States in general, and implications for international intelligence sharing.

As US combat operations in the region near an end after two full decades, they do so having drastically evolved following the attacks of 9/11. The sustained US military involvement in the Middle East is now regularly regarded as a topic of political discussion and debate. However, every chapter of this book reflects solely on the lessons to be learned from those actions and their impact on international relationships. The integrity of the career officials who contributed to this book means it does not serve as an outlet for political dissertation on how the contributor views the US policy toward engaging in war.

Because so many perspectives could be included in such a task, the editors agreed that "This book therefore

is not a comprehensive examination of the wars." Former NSA Director of Signals Intelligence, Maureen Baginski, wrote a glowing foreword, speaking of this book as an essential work. I was more than pleased to see a career intelligence official appreciate their work. She made clear that current US officials would benefit from this collection when evaluating strategic decisions.

Most international policy oriented publications about the wars' impact on US international relations almost exclusively cover relationships with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran. In this compilation, readers will learn of less frequently evaluated US relationships, such those with our allies and nongovernmental organizations, among others.

However, the book's chapters seem to me to be organized in a disagreeable order. The work begins with a challenging, though important, analysis of historical combat in Libya and Mali. This foundation does build on itself and successfully outlines implications for future transatlantic cooperation, an especially meaningful topic with respect to European counterparts. Yet, not until the next-to-the-last chapter of the book, chapter 11 ("Learning By Insurgents"), will readers look at modern insurgent groups such as ISIL and the Taliban. I think that for at least nonacademic professionals, a key to understanding the decades-long wars is understanding of modern insurgent forces and strategy. Addressing this subject earlier might have provided readers a stronger foundation with which to understand European involvement in historical and modern combat operations than do the chapters that now precede it

In sum, I believe, considering the experience and reputations of its contributors, this book is a gem that cannot be ignored by anyone interested in learning from our combat history and improving our understanding of the implications of engaging other partners in future military action. In short, public servants, academics, and historians will all gain valuable insights from this work.



The reviewer is a CIA Directorate of Operations officer.

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