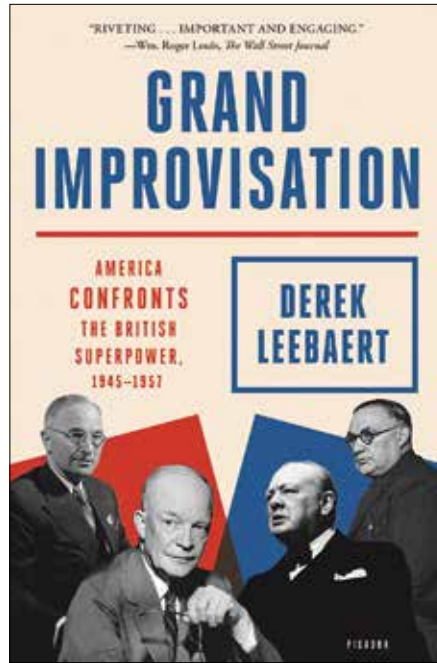


the U.S.-Pakistani support of the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan against the occupation by the former Soviet Union (1978–1989) is a notable example. A failure to recall and understand this history often results in short-sighted policy. This situation is exacerbated by the average ISAF command tenure in Afghanistan, with 18 general officers over 17 years. This frequent turnover makes nuanced policy creation difficult while perpetuating a relationship that is always unfamiliar. U.S. aid tied to expectations of immediate results in Pakistan, for example, is unrealistic and imprudent.

The Battle for Pakistan is required reading for joint force planners and students of the region who seek lessons on mistaken assumptions and skewed perceptions. As U.S. domestic policy takes priority, Chinese investments in Pakistan ramp up, and the U.S. military footprint in the region is minimized, the time has never been more critical for a revision of the U.S. approach to Pakistan as a key regional partner. U.S. policymakers and military practitioners must find a way to learn from a turbulent past to forge a new cooperative relationship. In Pakistan, history has rhymed enough. America needs to find a new note when it comes to foreign policy there. JFQ

Colonel Gerald J. Krieger, USA, is a Professor and Advisor of Senior Leader Development and Strategic Studies for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies.



Grand Improvisation: America Confronts the British Superpower, 1945–1957

By Derek Leebaert
 Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2018
 612 pp. \$35.00
 ISBN: 978-0374250720

Reviewed by Daniel Marston

Grand *Improvisation* is an engaging and well-researched dive into U.S. and British statecraft during the often overlooked power transition between the two nations following World War II. Derek Leebaert immediately sets out to challenge the common historical narrative that “the British Empire was too weak and too dispirited to continue as a global imperial power; thus, a confidently prosperous, well-armed America assumed leadership of the West.” Furthermore, he makes the case that “America’s biggest postwar difficulty—perhaps more than the Soviet threat—was the inability to say no to the British Empire. In effect, serious people in Washington believed that ‘no acceptable foreign policy’ was available to the United States if it was not aligned with its sprawling, problematic ally.” He continues, “History’s

largest empire [British] was battling to maintain its standing.”

It is immediately apparent, in challenging the myths surrounding the birth of the modern global order, that the book’s greatest strength is the interweaving of diplomatic, economic, intelligence, and strategic history; the arguments are superbly organized and integrated throughout each chapter, and the thoroughness of the research is apparent. The discussion around NSC (National Security Council) 75 in particular highlights the close integration of the various themes running through the book in a clear and concise historical narrative.

Another strong aspect of Leebaert’s work was the presentation of instrumental characters of the era. While some readers of *JFQ* may be aware of the U.S. personalities, the author also introduces several key British figures, including Ernest Bevin and Malcolm MacDonald, who may not be as well known. He also introduces some overlooked Americans, such as John Snyder, President Harry Truman’s Secretary of the Treasury, who worked closely with the British but has been overshadowed by larger personalities in popular history. In the heavily “militarized” climate of contemporary strategic debate, *JFQ* readers will find value in the examination of the many civilian personalities on both sides of the Atlantic who worked closely with their military counterparts to make difficult decisions about crisis situations and policy debates.

A key focus of *Grand Improvisation* is the “role of personalities.” While both the British and Americans had various organizations dealing with economic and strategic decisionmaking, Leebaert’s research highlights how key personalities, not just of the prime minister or President, may shift decisionmaking. The book does an admirable job of analyzing the effect of various ministers and secretaries on decisionmaking, as well as the collaborations and tensions inherent to working with their opposite numbers across the Atlantic. This theme is an important one for future policymakers to consider because it illustrates not only how a given policy may be shaped more

by personalities than by mechanisms of the state but also how debate and disagreement are a natural and potentially productive form of discourse between allies.

The meshing of key factors relevant to time and geography is another strength of Leebaert's work. The core discussion of crises across the Atlantic, Middle East, Asia, and Africa is interwoven with the themes of diplomatic, strategic, and economic history. Each subchapter is organized in a fashion that truly reinforces and builds on the previous arguments and evidence, resulting in a compelling prism through which to view this moment of historical competition and transition among Great Powers.

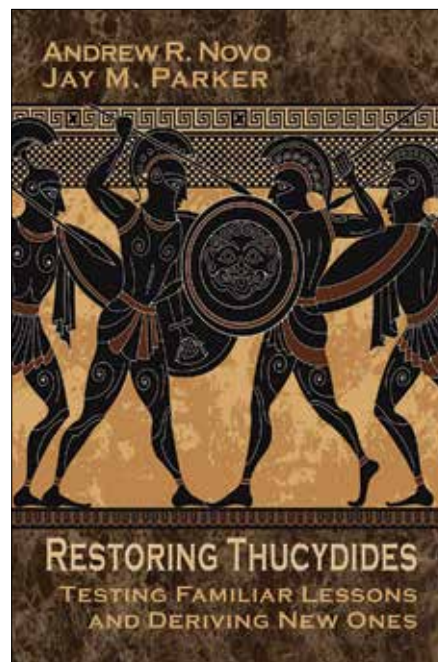
One small quibble is the lack of a formal bibliography. While the notes are detailed and add another layer of context, the author must have consulted a considerable number of sources. The fact that these works have not been identified is a drawback for any serious reader interested in learning more about this period. I would recommend *JFQ* readers seek out and read some of the works Leebaert uses as counterarguments and evaluate how they stand up to his criticisms. Doing so will allow the reader to identify the strengths and deficiencies that are inherent in any book, as well as reinforce the reality that history is "gray," rather than black and white. Excellent sources for an in-depth historical analysis include the *British Documents on the End of Empire Project*, as well as the archives of Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower in the Office of the Historian at the Department of State. In its totality, I suspect readers will walk away from *Grand Improvisation* with a much richer understanding of a complex moment in history, one fraught with immense geostrategic change that strategists on both sides of the Atlantic struggled to adapt to.

Grand Improvisation challenges the notion of an acquiescent British global power giving way to a confident United States with a clear schematic of a new global order on the drawing board. What Leebaert does so successfully is challenge this myth with solid historical research,

revealing the cogs of a relationship in transition—a transition in which U.S. strategists lacked a coherent grand strategy and British leadership fought to retain strategic independence.

Challenging our common understanding about the early days of the modern liberal international order and the personalities attempting to navigate it allows us to assess and interpret the present more clearly as the global order again shifts between Great Powers. With that in mind, joint force officers, national security strategists, and historians should take a close look at *Grand Improvisation*. JFQ

Professor Daniel Marston is the Director of the Secretary of Defense Strategic Thinkers Program in the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at The Johns Hopkins University.



Restoring Thucydides: Testing Familiar Lessons and Deriving New Ones

By Andrew R. Novo and Jay M. Parker
Cambria Press, 2020
218 pp. \$39.99 (Paperback)
ISBN: 978-1621964742

Reviewed by Robert D. Spessert

Thucydides's *The History of the Peloponnesian War* offers national security pundits a plethora of persuasive "dead man quotes." However, they and their audiences have rarely digested, and infrequently understood, the context and history surrounding the phrases they employ. Professors Andrew Novo and Jay Parker of the National Defense University provide an insightful remedy for students of history and strategy in *Restoring Thucydides*.

The authors adeptly address the use and abuse of *The History*, claiming it is "mis-read, under-read, or unread." They assert that students of Thucydides should consider the text as a whole, know the historical context, and perceive the consequences of the Peloponnesian War in the years following Thucydides's