

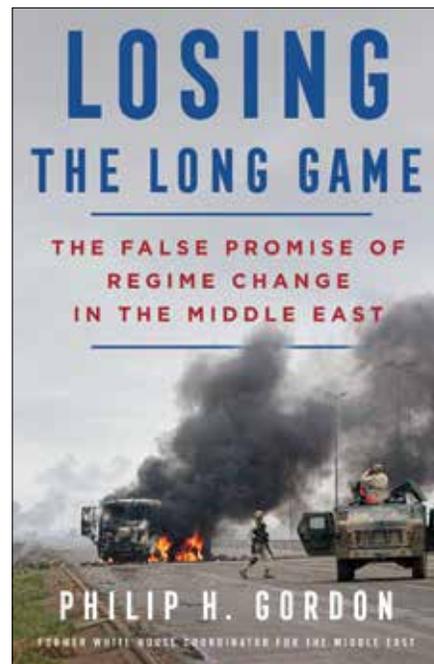
and PME administrator and instructor, quibbles slightly. *Adaptation Under Fire* tends to tar all PME with wide and indiscriminate brushstrokes. As they note, PME should be more academically rigorous, and even fail students, but in their critique the authors fail to acknowledge that some institutions, such as the Joint Advanced Warfighting School, conduct over 40 individual and collective assessments of students and routinely fail colonels out of the war college for academic (nonethical) reasons.

Barno and Bensahel argue for more civilian schooling to avoid the groupthink prevalent among uniformed faculty and students; but beyond stereotyping, they neglect to cite the increasing number of civilian faculty employed at those institutions for the express purpose of elevating academic rigor and infusing curricula with external ideas and attitudes. Like others, they also wistfully compare DOD's PME institutions to the Nation's best graduate schools, like the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), where they teach. For a host of reasons including mission, faculty, student body, political capital, and budget, this is an illogical comparison. SAIS has one of the best and most selective international relations 2-year master's degree programs in the country; its purpose is to prepare much younger students (average age 26, with 2-years of work experience) for lower level work in business and government. The mission of DOD's officer education enterprises, specifically its war colleges, is to educate and prepare almost 600 senior officers annually for positions of higher responsibility. Unlike very selective graduate programs, not every captain (O6) or colonel entering PME is an Einstein or Eisenhower. They are competent, tactically proficient leaders, but not all possess the inherent capacity to become strategic saviors. The task of PME is to improve the critical thinking and communication skills of those individuals such that they contribute to the Nation's defense at the next, if not perhaps the ultimate, level of military responsibility.

Adapting Under Fire is a solid and useful addition to the literature on

innovation, adaptation, and change in the military. Its analysis of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are its most compelling and illuminating chapters, but its recommendations should and will generate much worthy conversation and debate. JFQ

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Losing the Long Game: The False Promise of Regime Change in the Middle East

By Philip H. Gordon
St. Martin's Press, 2020
368 pp. \$26.49
ISBN: 978-1250217035

Reviewed by Thomas C. Greenwood

Few authors are more qualified to write on U.S.-sponsored regime change in the Middle East than Philip Gordon, who worked as Special Assistant to President Barack Obama for the Middle East (2013–2015) and as Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs

(2009–2013). His book, *Losing the Long Game*, is elegant, thoroughly researched, and comprehensible; it belongs on the syllabus of every war college and policymaker's desk for two reasons. First, the author shines a spotlight on the opaque (sometimes secretive) history of U.S.-sponsored regime change in the Middle East and, in so doing reveals many rich insights. Second, Gordon dispels the misguided notion that American exceptionalism endows the United States with unmatched foresight and wisdom to effectively reengineer Middle East governments in a way that advances U.S. national security interests, promotes regional stability, and strengthens the international order.

Gordon examines seven cases of regime change over the past 70 years: Iran (1953), Afghanistan (1979–1992), Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), Egypt (2011), Libya (2011), and Syria (2011). They all failed to deliver the policy outcomes desired by Washington, made the Middle East more volatile, and more recently, were a strategic distraction from other emerging threats such as China and Russia.

The author explains that these failures did not result from impure U.S. motives (for example, take the oil and run) or even an unwillingness to double down by increasing troop levels and funding, which failed to save the day in either Iraq or Syria. Rather, once policymakers decide on regime change as their preferred option, "they overstate the threat, underestimate the costs and risks, overpromise what they can accomplish, and prematurely claim success if and when the targeted regime falls." Yet Gordon does not ignore the possibility that the costs of inaction (that is, of not intervening and undertaking regime change) could have been higher and more harmful over the long run.

Two of Gordon's most riveting ideas, however, are that regime change frequently fails because of the security vacuums it creates (filled by actors who are often more repressive than the toppled regimes), and the unanticipated consequences that escape rigorous

analysis by policymakers before they act: raising tension between armed opposition groups, disrupting the distribution of scarce resources, fostering long-term dependency on outside powers, and perpetuating the harmful optic that the United States is the self-appointed global cop.

Gordon uses the example of Libya to illustrate just how dangerous security vacuums can be. When Muammar Qadhafi's successor, Abd al-Hakim Belhaj—former head of the al Qaeda-affiliated Libyan Islamic Fighting Group—declared himself the leader of all liberation forces, other Western-oriented opposition leaders became infuriated and competing militias began killing each other. By June 2014, Libya had two competing governments backed by competing militias, and the country had descended into a multi-sided civil war with no end in sight.

Gordon is also equally damning about the ripple effect the moral hazard created in Libya had on Syria's rebel groups. The latter believed that by escalating violence, the world's most powerful militaries would intervene on their behalf. Sadly, instead of leading to Bashar al-Asad's ouster, it caused, "the greatest humanitarian catastrophe since World War II, a refugee crisis, the destabilizing of Syria's neighbors, the growth of the [so-called] Islamic State, and political spillover into Europe and beyond."

Gordon believes the following factors contribute to regime change failures: inadequate planning for what comes after regime collapse; U.S. forces being viewed as occupiers instead of liberators; not recognizing that local actors will pursue their interests first; regional neighbors seeking to destabilize new regime leadership; moral hazard created elsewhere; a general lack of U.S. knowledge about the Middle East; the difficulty of staying committed after intervening; unrealistic expectations about transplanting democratic values abroad; and a mistaken belief that throwing more money and troops at a problem will make it better. Unfortunately, these factors can become intertwined and unleash their own dynamics that neither the White House nor Pentagon can control.

The book's overall thesis would have been strengthened had Gordon discussed the limitations of regime change—a means to a higher end—within the context of U.S. grand strategy. Here, introducing G. John Ikenberry's idea of a "liberal hegemonic order" would have helped readers better understand why U.S. leaders of all stripes feel the messianic urge to spread democratic values around the globe—even if they can only be imposed by force and by violating other countries' sovereignty and right to self-determination.

After taking the reader on a journey of tears, the author recommends a policy alternative to regime change. It is a hybrid approach of practical measures including a mix of containment, deterrence, diplomatic engagement and support for partners, selective military action, arms control, and economic investment and "the restoration of the United States as a respected, prosperous, and democratic alternative [that] will produce better results than the pursuit of costly, quixotic and unrealistic campaigns to overthrow regimes."

Perhaps. But even if policymakers adopt the author's more robust menu of soft and smart power policy options, the temptation to undertake regime change will remain irresistible as long as America fails to internalize the hard lessons of the Middle East and remains wedded to a misguided sense of exceptionalism. JFQ

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STRATEGIC HUMANISM

Lessons on Leadership
from the Ancient Greeks



CLAUDIA HAUER

Strategic Humanism: Lessons on Leadership from the Ancient Greeks

By Claudia Hauer

Toronto: Political Animal Press, 2020
180 pp. \$24.99

ISBN: 978-1895131444

Reviewed by Christopher Kuennen

At some point between the legendary Greek siege of Troy and the infamous defeat of Athens at Syracuse, the philosopher Heraclitus rather astutely discerned that *Éthos anthrôpôi daimôn* (Character is fate). His assertion might be thought of as a pithy distillation of the practical wisdom of ancient Greece. In *Strategic Humanism*, Claudia Hauer urges leaders to engage with this tradition; military officers and defense policymakers stand to gain not only theoretical insights from an attentive reading of the Greek classics, but also a way of perceiving the world and its conflicts as beyond total human mastery and yet shaped by the virtues and vices of human character.

Hauer's presentation of the value of humanistic study is especially compelling in light of the evolving implications of