

the United States. While not a member of al Qaeda, Zubaydah was an important terrorist facilitator. The CIA captured Zubaydah, disguised and wounded, in a shoot-out. Initially, the agency could not identify him and did not dispatch any interrogators. When Soufan arrived in Thailand to assist, a CIA officer remarked that “We all work for Uncle Sam” and let Soufan question Zubaydah without the agency’s support.

Soufan began not by causing Zubaydah pain, but by calling him by the nickname his mother had given him, which quickly convinced Zubaydah to cooperate. Within an hour, Zubaydah confessed to an ongoing plot. Soufan relayed that information to CIA headquarters, which thwarted the attack. Surprised at how fast Zubaydah cooperated, CIA Director George Tenet wanted to congratulate his agents. When told the CIA team was absent and that Soufan had obtained the intelligence, Tenet was furious and ordered his team to take over.

Meanwhile, after a James Bond–worthy undercover trip to get Zubaydah to a hospital for lifesaving treatment, Soufan’s rapport-building paid off as Zubaydah identified a photograph of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, verified his al Qaeda position, and credited him as the mastermind behind 9/11. When Mitchell took over, he stripped Zubaydah, exposed him to loud rock music, and kept him awake for 24 hours. Each time Zubaydah was instructed to “tell me what you know,” he was silent or asked, “What do you want to know?” After multiple failures, the CIA asked Soufan to restart the interrogation, which he did with notable success. But confirmation bias and bureaucratic zeal prevailed: Mitchell received new authorization for what were clearly experiments—not proven techniques—that included extended sleep deprivation, coffin confinement, and waterboarding. Zubaydah, who had trained to withstand worse, revealed nothing or simply lied to stop the torture.

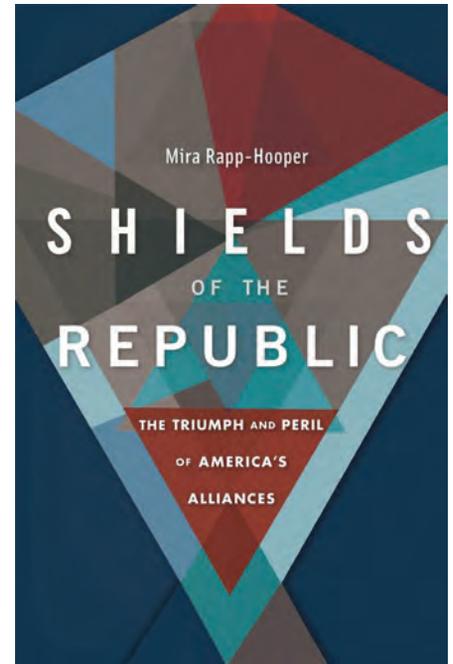
Lying also enabled the torture to continue. The CIA falsely touted its techniques, claimed credit for intelligence Soufan unearthed, and knowingly issued incorrect information. Despite

intelligence to the contrary, the CIA and the White House claimed that Zubaydah was the number 3 man in al Qaeda, but he was never a member. The CIA also maintained that after 30 to 45 seconds of waterboarding, Zubaydah gave up Jose Padilla, the supposed mastermind behind a plot to use a dirty bomb in an American city. In fact, the CIA waterboarded Zubaydah 83 times and obtained no new useful information. Zubaydah also confided that Padilla was not clever enough to mastermind anything. His supposed “plan” was to steal uranium from a hospital and swing it around his head in a bucket to enrich it. Perhaps most egregious was how the Bush administration linked Padilla, nuclear material, and Saddam Hussein together as it built a case to invade Iraq.

Some memoirists engage in self-delusion as to the value of their contributions. Soufan does not. Honestly written and corroborated by independent investigations into the torture of detainees, *Black Banners* is an extremely open, engaging history. It is essential reading for those who want to understand how al Qaeda and similar organizations operate, why torture does not work, and how ego and self-interest can cause leaders and those around them to abandon their principles. JFQ

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### **Shields of the Republic: The Triumph and Peril of America's Alliances**

By Mira Rapp-Hooper  
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Reviewed by James J. Townsend, Jr.

The timing of Dr. Mira Rapp-Hooper’s book, *Shields of the Republic*, could not be better. In my many years as a civil servant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, I would spend the first year of most new administrations explaining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to the incoming political appointees. Democrat or Republican, old Pentagon hand or neophyte, most knew something of NATO, but they arrived with some preconceived notions that were way off. That said, by the end of an administration, we usually had some real NATO pros among the appointees. Unfortunately, after a new administration took office, we would have to start all over again with the new batch.

Today, however, all my successor must do is hand *Shields of the Republic* to the new Biden appointees and walk away.

This book is not just about NATO; it covers U.S. alliance relationships globally—and crucially in the Asia-Pacific. Rapp-Hooper, an expert on Asia-Pacific security and a recently named senior advisor on China at the Department of State, provides important insight on China's rise and how the United States arrived late to understand the challenge we are facing today. According to Rapp-Hooper, alliances have never been more important as a way to address threats from Moscow and Beijing; however, with the rise of China's and Russia's turn toward aggressive, hostile behavior, the "Republic's shields are now in peril."

A highlight of *Shields of the Republic* is that it blends three key themes that readers would be wise to keep in mind as they contemplate alliances: the early U.S. experience with alliances (back to 1778) and how, but most important why, we broke with that experience to join NATO in 1949; the characteristics of alliances (how they work; how much they cost, both financially and politically; and the myths that surround them); and, finally, the relevancy of alliances today, especially after the Cold War and during this time of Great Power competition. She sounds the alarm that the West has much to do to adapt its alliance relationships in order to deter Russia and China today.

Rapp-Hooper points to an "incomplete post-Cold War transition" (a deeper dive into that transition would have been interesting) as the reason why today's alliance relationships in Europe and Asia are not up to the job of addressing new threats from Russia and China. She uses the term *competitive coercion* to describe Russia's and China's use of asymmetric, nonmilitary conflict and coercion to undermine alliances in ways that do not trigger treaty provisions. To deal with this new challenge, NATO and other alliance relationships must devise new strategies and adapt their tactics.

She also uses the 4 years of the Trump administration to test whether isolationism or transactional approaches to foreign relations is the right tactic for the United States. Her use of counterfactual analysis helps shine a light on what the world would be like for an America without

friends. Not to give her plot away, but Rapp-Hooper makes a winning case that America's alliances have been remarkably successful in protecting the Nation and that the charges of allies taking advantage of a naive United States is bunk. A point she makes throughout the book (and that I also saw countless times) is that "Washington spent more on defense than its allies but got far more out of its alliances than any one of them did."

At the same time, she urges the United States and its allies to avoid complacency when it comes to adapting to new challenges; failure to adapt will make alliances unable to withstand the stress of time and events. To help with this urgent task, her final chapter is full of meaty recommendations for NATO adaptation (some of which are already under way, such as including nonmilitary aggression as a trigger for Article 5), as well as ways to strengthen partners in Asia and to confront Chinese economic coercion.

I would take issue with some parts of this book, especially the view of Rapp-Hooper that Washington has "bifurcated the Alliance"—the United States can credibly support only the defense of Western Europe, but due to Russian local military advantages such as proximity, America "cannot be counted on to defend the Eastern European allies most in need of protection." The "unhappy choice" confronting NATO between escalation and giving in to the Russians during a quick, local Russian assault—a choice between catastrophe and shattering the Alliance—would cause the United States to hesitate. I do not believe for a moment that the United States and NATO would hesitate to defend Central and Eastern Europe, and, since Crimea, NATO and the United States have been building up forces and readiness in Europe to do so. The United States and NATO have put skin in the game by deploying what are essentially "tripwire forces" in each Baltic state (and Poland, which would also come under attack), guaranteeing a response. Rapp-Hooper's claim that "only local forces" are available to defend Baltic borders with Russia is not the case, and her use of a well-known

but outdated 2016 RAND study, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, to illustrate Baltic vulnerability should be reconsidered. Although her basic point that defending some allies from a quick Russian attack will be difficult, the cost of such an assault becomes higher for Russian forces each year and thus bolsters her case that Russia can be deterred if NATO is kept strong and credible. Rapp-Hooper's assertion that "without using force against the [A]lliance, Russia has eroded its unity and its capacity to assure members" would make for an interesting debate in the North Atlantic Council.

*Shields of the Republic* is an important and useful addition to the growing oeuvre dedicated to exploring how alliances work. This book will be especially helpful for those members of the joint force who are or will be working with allies in Europe or in Asia. Dr. Rapp-Hooper does a great job of myth-busting in a short and readable book that sets straight so many of the misconceptions held by those who come walking into the halls of government with every new administration. And she does more than just explain the problems that our alliances have today, she offers solutions that I hope find their way into practice. JFQ

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