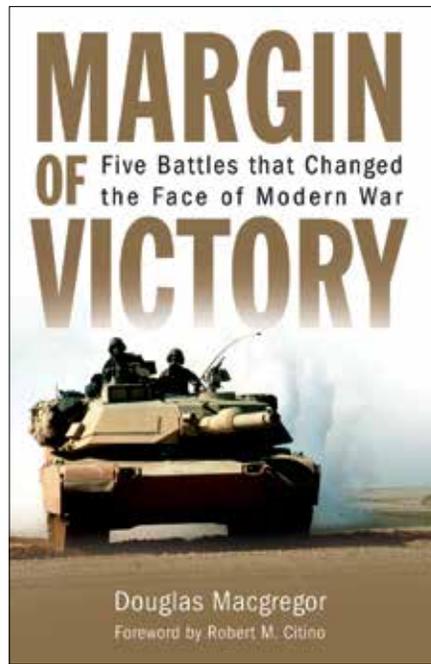


tribal-based societies, he lambasts the U.S. expectation that such a fractious country would embrace American-style democracy and freedom. The author details how the United States, in its attempts at post-invasion order, simply replaced Iraq's Sunnis with its Shia population in the ruling structure, setting the stage for a sectarian government, reprisals, and the eventual start of Iraq's brutal insurgency and civil war. Mandelbaum describes the Iraqi mission as one doomed to fail from the start—a "struggle between American will and the laws of gravity of the region." The U.S. involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is similarly described as an attempt to force dissimilar cultures to accept American concepts of negotiation, acceptance, and rule of law.

The thread that ties together *Mission Failure* is the repeating theme of disinterested, unfocused, and mismanaged foreign policy after the end of the Cold War. Describing an American public and government apparatus eager to return to domestic needs, Mandelbaum paints a picture of conflicts defined by ideology and not interests; of interventions run according to fickle domestic popularity; and, perhaps most damaging, of under-resourced and mismanaged missions, from Haiti, Somalia, and Bosnia to Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In his closing chapter, Mandelbaum describes a "restoration" of historic power politics and declares the end of the post-Cold War period of U.S. preeminence in world affairs. Ironically, Mandelbaum describes this return to form as an opening for the United States to revert to its interest-based roots—a conclusion that may assure students of history but leaves us wondering, who will fill that vacuum? JFQ

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### Margin of Victory: Five Battles that Changed the Face of Modern War

by Douglas Macgregor  
 Naval Institute Press, 2016  
 288 pp. \$34.95  
 ISBN: 978-1612519968

Reviewed by John Dethlefs

Douglas Macgregor's newest book offers a tutorial and blueprint for the strategically guided development of the U.S. military. This is timely, as the Department of Defense finds itself preparing for our future national defense strategy, which in the Barack Obama administration was often referred to as the Third Offset. Planning for it should be nested within the current and anticipated strategic environment, emerging technologies, and how we intend to fight our next war. Macgregor analyzes the preparation for, execution of, and consequences of belligerence in five significant battles. He also includes a chapter with recommendations (some of which are quite controversial) for the U.S. military's development.

In the opening chapter, the author recounts how Sir Richard Haldane, who

was appointed the British Secretary of War in December 1905, reformed the British army despite its well-established naval supremacy and significant spending restraints. After analyzing the strategic environment, Haldane concluded he did not know precisely which power or alliance Britain would face in the next war. He asked first-order questions: Whom do we fight? Where do we fight? And how do we fight? The reforms were nested under the answers to these questions. The subsequent battle of Mons in 1914 would reveal that Haldane's reforms served the British army well. The British Expeditionary Force proved to be strategically decisive in protecting France until the Allied powers, which eventually included U.S. forces, could defeat Germany.

Next, Macgregor details the Japanese rise to power and embrace of many Western ideas in the early 1900s. General Ugaki Kazushige "embodied the fight for change inside the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA)," as the Japanese struggled with reform and balancing resources between the navy and army. Much like Haldane, many of his reforms were resisted, blocked, or ignored by some military leadership. The subsequent battle of Shanghai in 1937 put these reforms to the test: "The disparity in Chinese and Japanese losses highlights the impact of Ugaki's modest modernization efforts and the high quality of Japanese troops and leadership, but the struggle for control of Shanghai was harder and bloodier than it should have been. The IJA had failed to change enough to achieve a true margin of victory." Herein lies a subtle warning to U.S. planners that they must be ruthless with our reform as we adjust to the new strategic environment and growing capabilities of possible adversaries.

The author next analyzes the modernization of the post-World War I Soviet and German forces and subsequent destruction of the German Army Group Center in June 1944 by Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. Macgregor argues the German defeat was decided well before any German forces entered the Soviet Union. The difference was

ultimately how the Soviets and Germans approached military reform based on desired strategy.

Before the war, “the idea of waging total war to make Germany a world power was absent from German strategic thinking.” Macgregor goes on to explain Adolf Hitler’s demand that officers obey orders without dissent and his replacement of very capable officers with obedient technocrats. Their efforts in developing mechanized forces did not go far enough, as the Wehrmacht remained too reliant on horses and light infantry. The Soviets made many mistakes (including their own purges of capable officers), but weather and distance granted them the time to recover and regenerate their officer corps. The Soviets ultimately learned from their mistakes more quickly and developed more strategic agility wherein a Soviet marshal had more joint command authority than General Dwight D. Eisenhower did or our current combatant commanders can. The subsequent warfare rewarded operational agility, mobility, protection, and firepower—attributes Macgregor contends are even more important today.

In assessing the Yom Kippur war in the Sinai in 1973, the success of Egypt’s reforms after its defeat in 1969–1970, coupled with Israeli complacency, almost led to an overwhelming victory for Anwar Sadat. However, Israeli culture, leadership, training, technology, and adaptability eventually turned the tide. Considering this battle, Macgregor contends that recent ideas to convert the Israeli army largely into a light force of riflemen that depends on airstrikes for effectiveness is perilous. He highlights the enduring Israeli principle that diversity of capability is vital to success and implies it should be copied. He correctly points out that unless Egyptian and Arab society changes in fundamental ways, they are unlikely to acquire the capabilities required for success in war against modern forces such as those of Israel.

The last battle analyzed is one that Macgregor participated in personally. The Battle of 73 Easting during Operation *Desert Storm* is regularly cited as an overwhelming success. While Macgregor

concur with that assessment at the tactical level, he makes the argument that the campaign was a lost strategic opportunity for the United States. While successful, this battle did reveal flaws in our strategic thinking and execution. Macgregor contends that “although the twentieth century closed on a note of unrivaled American superiority in military affairs, the failure of policymakers and military leaders in Washington to define the purpose, method, and end state of military operations robbed the United States and its coalition partners of a decisive strategic victory.” He argues that U.S. aversion to risk allowed most of the Republican Guard to escape, ensuring Saddam Hussein would remain in power. From this, he claims that “the myth of the bloodless victory was born, and with it, the seductive promise of silver bullet technology that encourages arrogance and fosters illusions of victory with zero casualties was made.”

Macgregor concludes by looking at America’s “margin of victory” for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He is quite critical of the current strategic direction. He correctly warns that “without effective strategic direction, battles such as 73 Easting can be won, but wars can still be lost.”

His more detailed recommendations are quite controversial. The first discusses the need for a change in U.S. national military strategy, contending that “the United States must act now to build the means of commanding its armed forces and impose unity of effort across service lines,” which he finds currently lacking. He writes expansively about ruthless reform focused on building joint integrated command structures at the operational level. This will improve American political and military leaders’ ability to comprehensively and decisively direct military power. Macgregor recommends that we have fewer command and control echelons, faster decision cycles, and more independence at lower levels, and that we become more mobile and dispersed. This is a direct challenge to the current “fighting by concept of operations,” in which four-star commands need approval for almost all actions in their own area

of responsibility and lower echelons face even greater micromanagement.

Macgregor recommends changing the way we fight, stating that “full spectrum military dominance on a global basis is both unaffordable and unnecessary,” which directly challenges our past emphasis on building global security. This makes sense in the face of decreasing budgets and changes in the strategic environment. Other recommendations include reducing the number of light infantry forces due to the increase in lethality of modern weapons and replacing them with more armored combat formations requiring fewer—but more mobile, protected, and lethal—people. Hardening or expanding intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), communications, and space-based capabilities is important, as our potential adversaries arguably see disrupting these as the best method to gain parity with us.

Macgregor makes many profound recommendations based on significant historical evidence. This is a must-read for strategic leaders seeking ideas on military reform. In what I have read about future strategy and the defense innovation (including the Third Offset), few to none of Macgregor’s proposals are being considered. The focus is on technology improvements—mostly in regard to ISR and autonomous systems—and not the fundamental changes Macgregor champions. They deserve serious consideration. JFQ

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