

AMERICAN EMPIRE: THE REALITIES AND CONSEQUENCES OF U.S. DIPLOMACY

by Andrew J. Bacevich

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 301 pages, \$47.50

Reviewed by Philippe Lagassé

Since the mid-1990s, extensive debates about globalization and unparalleled American military strength have produced a wealth of new literature about the emergence of a *Pax Americana*. Notwithstanding the works of Noam Chomsky and others of his ilk, however, discussions of American supremacy (such as those offered by Charles Krauthammer, Joseph Nye and Michael Mastanduno) have avoided analyses of American policy, choosing instead to focus on the structural characteristics of the unipolar international system. In marked contrast to this trend is Andrew J. Bacevich's book, *American Empire*, which provides a provocative and critical examination of the United States' post-Cold War grand strategy. Aided by the insights of two previously discredited historians, Charles A. Beard and William Appleton Williams, Bacevich shows how the unquestioned domestic desire for greater prosperity has prompted the once disengaged republic to adopt a position of global economic and military dominance. Indeed, as explained by Bacevich, this push for empire was clearly seen in the policies of both the first Bush and the Clinton administrations, demonstrating that the United States' imperial aspirations have been deliberate, and that they are shared by ideologically diverse members of the American foreign policy elite.



The keystone of Bacevich's argument is that American imperialism is guided by the principle of 'openness'. Economically, policies of openness serve to secure the financial stability of American citizens. This has been achieved through an unwavering American dedication to open markets, capitalism and free trade in the post-Cold War era. Moreover, as presented by Bacevich, this drive to expand the global market is by no means benign. While the benefits of globalization are held by its promoters to be transnational, the country that has gained the most from the increase in world trade is the United States. Thus, it is not surprising that foreign economic policy rose to the forefront of American international affairs during the Clinton administration. Politically, openness further aims to spread American liberal democratic values abroad. Though clearly not a new American foreign policy goal, the expansion of liberal democracy in the post-Cold War era is also shown by Bacevich to be a servant to domestic economic demands. Rather than being messianic in character, increasing the number of liberal democracies in the world can be linked to a search for new trading opportunities, since liberal democracy tends to foster market capitalism. Using the concept of openness, Bacevich thus skilfully ties the Clinton administration's policy of democratic enlargement to the construction of an American economic empire.

Alongside his study of openness, Bacevich also shows the United States to be a militaristic empire. Contrasting past precedents, the United States military did not disintegrate in the aftermath of the Cold War. In fact, the United States not only kept a tremendous military force after the fall of its main adversary, the Soviet Union, American officials also dedicated themselves to the maintenance of an unequalled military machine. Moreover, like the emphasis on economic expansion, the intent to retain America's military dominance was little debated among the political elite, and was generally embraced by the citizenry. In and of itself, military might does not make an empire, however, as Bacevich indicates, American officials have made unprecedented use of the military power at their disposal since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, armed with detailed case studies of the first Gulf War, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, Bacevich persuasively argues that the United States follows a markedly militarized foreign policy.

Finally, in what reads as a rushed attempt to update his text, Bacevich outlines how American ascendancy was unshaken by the events of September 2001, and how it is being further advanced in the struggle against catastrophic terrorism. Not only has the war on terror allowed the administration of President George W. Bush to explicitly use the military power of the United States to introduce democracy and American values into rogue and failed states, but the threat posed by al Qaeda has furthered the cause of maintaining American military supremacy.

American Empire is an important contribution to contemporary studies of American foreign and defence policy. Through his examination of the strategy of openness Bacevich reminds us that empires, like all political structures,

adapt themselves to the peculiarities of the age in which they appear. Today, an empire need not be a purely military phenomenon; information-age globalization allows for more inconspicuous means of exerting pressure and influence. However, as Bacevich demonstrates, the American empire has not lost its military attributes. Despite the absence of a peer competitor, the United States has continued to enhance its military strength. And, although one may question the revolutionary nature of American defence transformation, it cannot be denied that the United States intends to possess the world's most capable, flexible and lethal military for as long as it can. Coupled with the militarization of American foreign policy outlined by Bacevich, the strength of the American military and America's global economic interests may therefore lead to new "wars for the Imperium" in the future.

Polemical in its tone, at times repetitive and unlikely to convince sceptics, *American Empire* is nonetheless a highly recommended read.

Philippe Lagassé recently graduated with an MA in War Studies from Royal Military College. He is beginning a doctorate in political science at Carleton University in the fall of 2003.

THE HALIFAX EXPLOSION AND THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

by John G. Armstrong

Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 320 pages, \$39.95

Reviewed by Captain Hugh Culliton

Every sailor in the Canadian Navy who has passed Chebucto Head knows the story of the Halifax explosion, and every ship that has navigated the Narrows into Bedford Basin has obeyed the rules of passage enacted after this horrendous event.

While the Halifax explosion of December 1917 was soon buried by events of the Great War and the next year's influenza pandemic, its effect on Canadian history still resonates. Indeed, given events since 11 September 2001, perhaps we can once again identify with this great disaster and the effect it had on the witnesses of the day.

Yet, other than a few terse lines in history texts, sandwiched between the struggle of Vimy Ridge and the Hundred Days campaign, what do we really know of this event? Thanks to the research of John Armstrong much of the drama of this moment has been captured. To whet the reader's appetite, a brief historical sketch is needed.

In 1917 the Great War had settled down to a grinding titanic struggle. Canada, after three years of bloodshed, was a senior and respected ally to Great Britain. The Canadian Corps was reaching the pinnacle of professionalism and the nation had completely mobilized industry thanks to the earlier efforts of Sir Sam Hughes. This massive effort, accompanied by the relatively new threat of U-Boat raiders, meant that convoys from Canada to Great Britain were essential to sustaining the war. Halifax had always been a strategically significant port, but for the first time, Canadians controlled it during war. The Militia garrisoned the Citadel, and the RCN swept the approaches, guarded the anti-submarine gates, and controlled movement of all allied shipping.

The RCN has been long referred to as the Cinderella service. This is an appropriate handle for a Navy stillborn in a Dominion which still revered the notion of Empire and the Royal Navy. Even then Halifax had had a love-hate relationship with the RCN. In 1917 the RCN was still what Hadley and Sarty called a "tin-pot fleet": a raw obnoxious upstart aping

the glory of the greatest navy on Earth. This, plus its growing pains in asserting control over the heavy wartime shipping in the Halifax approaches, placed it in a very difficult position in the days following the Explosion. Any accident would have great ramifications for the RCN; this dramatic event was agonizing.

Still, on the morning of 6 December 1917, when the largest single pre-atomic explosion devastated the City of Halifax and flattened Dartmouth, it seemed to provide the final proof of the incompetence of the RCN. But was the Canadian Navy culpable? Its officers and crews reacted with courage. True, entire crews were technically guilty of 'mutiny' by jumping ship and assisting with rescuing civilians, but who in Canada could punish that? Indeed, this independent attitude was a source of pride to Army commanders in France. Still, the RCN was responsible for harbour movements.

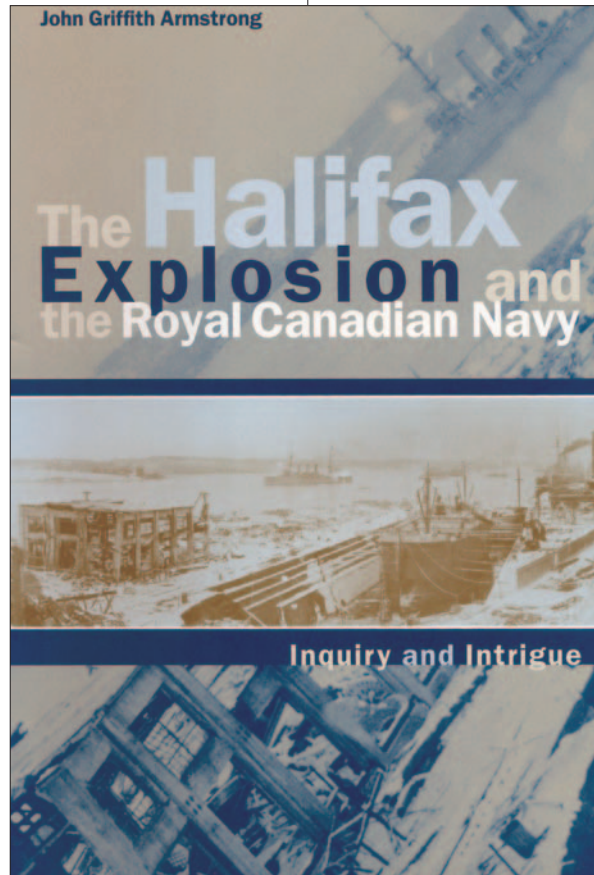
As Armstrong illustrates, the explosion, deadly as it was, was not as interesting as the reaction, particularly the opinion about RCN responsibility. Immediate damage was limited to a three nautical mile radius, but political damage was nation-wide. Given the pressure of running a nation at war, Borden was concerned. What effect does such an event have on a national war effort, when the media crucifies an entire martial service? How can any inquiry reach an impartial conclusion when the papers constantly hound it? Long before O.J. Simpson, the Halifax media showed how 'applied' journalism could lead to a preordained conclusion.

Armstrong has done excellent work in examining this monumental moment in Canadian

history. The layout offers any student of history an easy entry into the topic. Pertinent maps are provided and photographs illustrate the personal element so often lost in the telling of great events. The telling of the aftermath has the ring of a courtroom drama. Armstrong offers us several heroes and villains with whom the reader can identify or revile.

In short, anyone interested in the history of the Canadian Navy or Halifax should read this book. It is entertaining, professional, and informative. Indeed, given the times in which we live, it is very timely.

Captain Hugh Culliton is serving with the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment in Peterborough, Ontario.



THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S HORSE GUARDS: SECOND TO NONE

by John Marteinson with Scott Duncan

Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 320 pages, \$69.95

Reviewed by Donald E. Graves

The Governor General's Horse Guards has one of the longest and most distinguished lineages in the Canadian Forces. The regiment traces its origins to a troop of cavalry raised in York (as Toronto was then called) in 1810, and it has participated, either as a unit or by detachment, in almost every military operation waged by Canadians since that time. This being the case, it is a mystery why this fine old regiment should have waited half a century to publish an updated history – its last having appeared in 1953.

The long wait, however, has certainly been worthwhile, for *The Governor General's Horse Guards: Second to None*, the Horse Guards' new history, is a splendid volume. In six lengthy chapters, John Marteinson skillfully interweaves historical record and personal account to tell the story of Canada's senior Militia regiment from its beginnings to the present day. The author's well-written text is amplified and enhanced by the book's numerous illustrations (many of which are in colour) – for this is a pictorial history which include paintings, sketches, maps, orders of battle, excellent and accurate scale drawings of vehicles, organizational charts, cartoons and many superb photographs. The design and production values are up to the standard of other regimental/corps histories from Robin Brass Studio – without a doubt Canada's foremost military publisher – and the result is a treat for the eye that is well worth the price.

The two chapters devoted to the Horse Guards' participation in the Second World War are the centrepiece of the book. The unit's wartime history is interesting because it was one of only two armoured reconnaissance regiments in the Canadian Army, the other being the South Alberta Regiment of 4th Canadian Armoured Division. The armoured reconnaissance regiment was a somewhat esoteric entity that originated in the reorganization of Commonwealth armoured divisions in late 1942. Loosely (and incorrectly) based on what the British War Office construed to be the function of the *aufklärungsbataillon* in the German panzer division, the armoured reconnaissance regiment's job was to provide "close reconnaissance" for the divisional commander and to be prepared, if necessary, to fight for information.

In fact, nobody really knew what to do with this new entity as there was no role for it in the prevalent tactical doctrine and, in any case, its tasks in action were largely taken over by

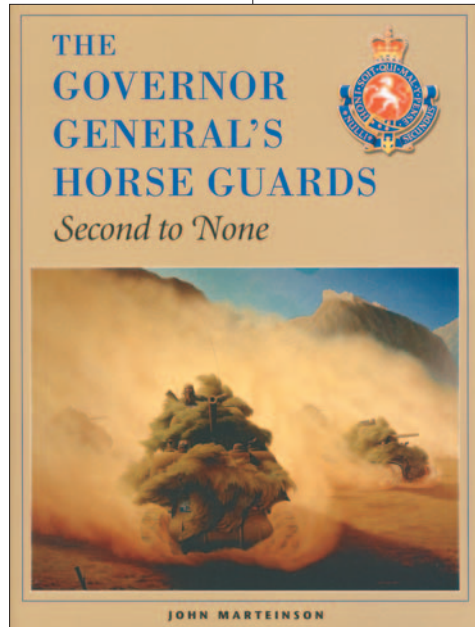
the corps reconnaissance units. This uncertainty is reflected by the fact that the organization of armoured reconnaissance regiments (which was based on a mix of tanks and light armoured vehicles) changed approximately every four months between January 1943 and January 1944. In February 1944, Montgomery ended the confusion – in 21st Army Group at least – by ordering that all armoured reconnaissance regiments under his command were to be reorganized as armoured regiments, although they would keep their distinctive titles. For this reason, the South Alberta Regiment fought primarily as the armour component of 10 Canadian Infantry Brigade in 1944–1945.

The Horse Guards, part of 5th Canadian Armoured Division, however, actually fought in the Italian Campaign as an armoured reconnaissance unit in the important Liri Valley and Gothic Line battles, but as the author makes clear, their operational experience was somewhat mixed. From the late summer of 1944 until it left Italy in early 1945, the unit carried out a great variety of miscellaneous roles, including acting as infantry on occasion, and performed them very well. When the regiment was transferred to Holland in 1945, they were reorganized as an armoured regiment and, in a similar fashion to the South Albertas, their primary function became to provide armour support for 11 Brigade.

The chapter devoted to the Horse Guards' post-war history traces the almost continuous changes in organization, equipment and role suffered by all Canadian armoured units as policy changed – almost on a yearly basis. Marteinson, who is also the co-author of the recent history of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps, is well equipped to deal with what could be a most confusing period and stresses the main points without becoming mired in insignificant details. It is interesting to note (although not comforting to know) that Canadian armoured policy has been more or less in a state of flux since 1936, although recent events in Iraq would seem to demonstrate beyond doubt that armour does still have an important role to play in the modern battlefield.

Throughout all this – and indeed since 1810 – The Governor General's Horse Guards have, in the words of their Honorary Colonel, exhibited a tradition of "doing the best they can with what little is available" and, in this respect, their story is very similar to that of most Canadian regiments, in war and in peace. In terms of producing a pictorial record of their long, distinguished and interesting history, however, the Horse Guards have entirely lived up to their motto – "Second to None" – and the result is an excellent book that will appeal to a wide variety of readers.

Donald E. Graves is a heritage consultant who lives near Ottawa and the author of several books on military history including the well-received *South Albertas: A Canadian Regiment at War*.



**A KEEN SOLDIER:
THE EXECUTION
OF SECOND WORLD WAR
PRIVATE HAROLD PRINGLE**

by Andrew Clark

Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada. 342 pages, \$35.95

Reviewed by Dr. Steve Lukits

“**T**o the Canadian Army, as such, Rifleman Jones was no more than an expendable six-figure number. But at one point in every army, as in any human organization, there must be one person to whom the number emerges as an individual, and who will be to greater or lesser extent accept responsibility for him.” What novelist Colin McDougall wrote about the fictional Jones is also true for the man on whom the character is based, Private Harold Pringle, the only soldier executed by the Canadian Army during the Second World War. In his book, *A Keen Soldier*, journalist Andrew Clark takes responsibility for Pringle’s life, including his early years in rural Ontario, his periods of incarceration and combat duty in Italy, his desertion and black marketeering, and his trial and execution by firing squad for murder on 5 July 1945. It is a remarkable story that has waited a long time to be told.

For self-serving political reasons that included the 20 June 1945 federal election, Prime Minister Mackenzie King’s government ordered Pringle’s execution kept secret, lest it spoil the glow of the victory in Europe. Until recently, the Canadian Forces duly maintained that it executed none of its soldiers during the last world war. That official denial is contradicted by Clark’s research of almost 1,000 pages of Pringle’s service record, his interviews with veterans who knew the soldier, family members and the man who commanded the firing squad. Clark also provides an historical context for Pringle’s story based on various secondary sources, but principally Daniel G. Dancock’s *The D-Day Dodgers* and Terry Copp and Bill McAndrew’s *Battle Exhaustion*.

Many readers will be attracted by the narrative frame of Clark’s personal quest to discover Pringle’s story and his dramatization of pivotal events based on his research. More

traditional historians might object to this technique. But Clark’s style brings the story alive to general readers, many of whom will find ready sympathy with the author’s meeting aging veterans, including members of his own family, who are deeply reluctant to speak of the war and Pringle, yet want these stories told.

Central to *A Keen Soldier* are the accounts of Pringle’s army life, his trial and his execution. Clark presents him as victim of war and the system, but less so of his own character. Lying about his age, Pringle enlisted in the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment with his father, a First World War veteran aged 42. When the father was sent home, the son started getting into trouble and served a sentence in the infamous Glass House, Canada’s severe military prison at Headley Down, before being posted to combat with his regiment in Italy. He fought in the battles of the Liri Valley before deserting and becoming part of the black market gang in the summer of 1944. After the killing of a gang member, Pringle and three others were charged with murder.

The trial itself hinged on the shaky testimony of one of the accused, who was granted immunity, and the contradictory evidence of the forensic experts. Clark also emphasizes the last-minute replacement of Pringle’s experienced defence counsel by an inexperienced officer who was given only seven days to prepare, and by a chain of command seemingly intent on making an example of the Canadian deserter and his British co-accused by executing them. Clark makes a strong case for the historical hindsight that Pringle was railroaded to the firing squad and that there was a reasonable doubt to acquit him of capital murder.

These claims that Pringle was a victim, and Clark’s urging to recognize him as “a young, rebellious, shell-shocked rifleman” who ought to be at least considered for a pardon, will provoke every reader. The book also asks us to consider another truth. The story of Private Pringle’s wartime struggles, his desertion and execution, should increase our peacetime wonder and respect for the many other men who stayed, fought and died.

Dr. Steve Lukits teaches in the Department of English at Royal Military College.

**OUR GLORY AND OUR GRIEF:
TORONTONIANS AND
THE GREAT WAR**

by Ian H.M. Miller

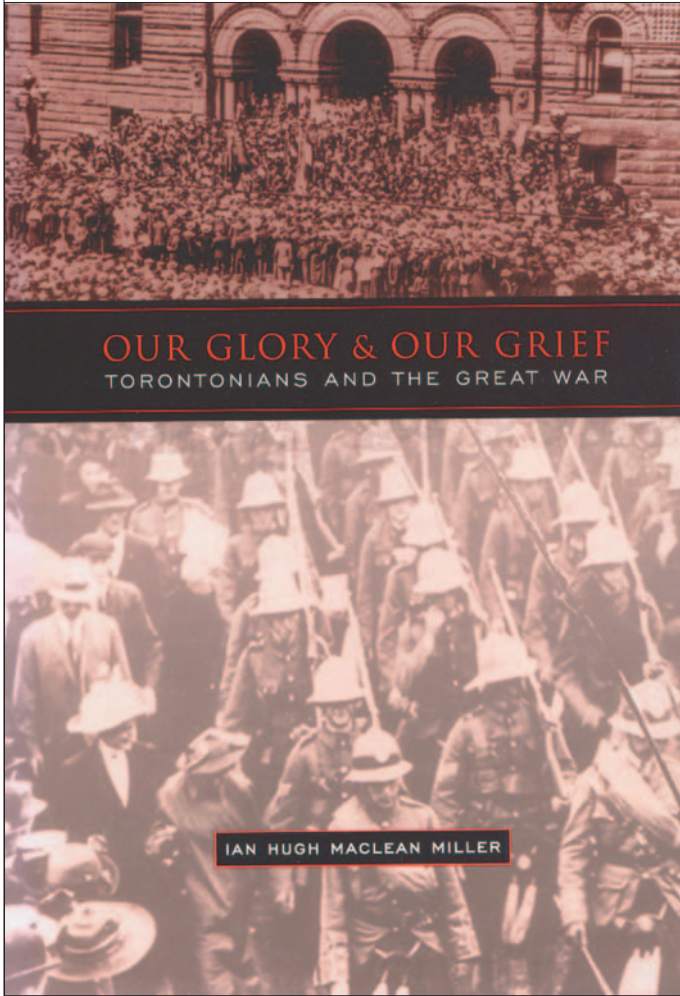
Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2002, 264 pages, \$45.00

Reviewed by Major Andrew B. Godefroy

The subject of Canada and the First World War continues to receive attention from scholars, with a modest yet steady flow of new literature available on an increasingly regular basis. More important, perhaps, is that while social and

biographical memoirs continue to dominate the field, more Canadian historians are conducting complex analyses of the war. Ian Miller’s recent book, *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War*, is an interdisciplinary examination that offers more than just a social history. Rather, it attempts to reveal the anatomy of one of Canada’s largest population centres during the first major conflict of the 20th century.

From the outset Miller is intent on reshaping conventional views about Canada and the Great War. Unsatisfied with the stereotypical descriptions often found in contemporary works, his thesis paints a dramatically opposite



impression of the war's impact on the lives of Canadians at home. While acknowledging the current body of work that analyzes the memory and meaning of the Great War, Miller quickly departs from this group, explaining that he intends to shed greater light on the "comparatively little attention [that] has been devoted to the impact of the war on the lives of citizens as it was happening." Miller takes issue with prior analyses by historians such as Jeffrey Keshen, author of *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (1996), who suggested that Canadians at home were largely

uninformed and manipulated participants. He offers the opposite view: that the home front was well attuned to the realities of the war and still, "people were willing to fight for God, King, and Country".

Delving into his case study of Toronto, Miller draws largely from the newspapers of the period. This by no means indicates poor research, but rather highlights the good use of the most plentiful primary source of information about the city during that period. Further, an examination of daily events adds to the detail presented throughout the book and the feeling of what it was like to be there at that time. The reader quickly learns that not only were Torontonians well informed about the international relations surrounding the War, they were fully prepared to support Britain in its cause right through to the end of the conflict. The papers of Toronto record a consistently high degree of volunteerism even after the horrors of Second Ypres, the Somme and Passchendaele appeared on the front pages. Almost all eligible men in Toronto had volunteered for service prior to the implementation of conscription, and after its announcement men continued to step forward prior to their forced enlistment.

While the book is an excellent study, it does fall short of what the title promises. Of the six chapters, five are devoted largely to enlistment, recruitment and conscription. The chapter that addresses a different topic – Women and War: Public and Private Spheres – is perhaps the best chapter in the book for its revelations about private and public life in wartime Toronto. There is little or no discussion of politics other than that related to recruitment, and little offered about the economy, city infrastructure, industry, urban development or other related urban studies. Essentially, one is left feeling that the opportunity to explore the many facets of the city was missed.

Though there are already books that examine Canada's enlistment and conscription issues during the Great War, they do so only at the national level. Ian Miller's case study of Toronto allows one to dig down deeper, and offers very different conclusions than one might expect. Though not all-encompassing, this book breaks new ground in the study of Canada and the Great War and deserves to be recommended.

Major Andrew Godefroy is commander of the Canadian Forces Joint Space Team. He is completing his doctorate in War Studies at Royal Military College.

WAR AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD: THE STRUGGLE FOR AFGHANISTAN AND ASIA

by Eric S. Margolis

Toronto: Key Porter Books, 250 pages, \$22.95

Reviewed by Major J.C. Stone

Margolis' *War at the Top of the World: The Struggle for Afghanistan* is an update of his earlier version of this book published in 1999. It is a very useful book for gaining a basic understanding of the complexity

of issues in Afghanistan and South East Asia. This updated edition presents an overview of the ongoing conflicts and struggle for control of the Himalayas and the importance the region to India, Pakistan and China. Margolis also discusses the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda issues with particular emphasis on linkages to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. The central argument of this work remains unchanged from the earlier edition: the centuries of religious and ethnic conflict in this region have created, and will continue to create, a threat to international peace and security. More importantly, Margolis argues that this conflict is much more significant and volatile than most nations in the Western world realize.

BOOK REVIEWS

The book begins with a discussion of Afghanistan, the history of the region, how the Taliban came to power and the significance of Osama bin Laden. Then Margolis moves to the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir. This part of the book includes a very useful discussion of some of the issues facing both sides, and the consequences if either India or Pakistan allowed the dispute to become a full scale war now that nuclear weapons have been added to the equation. Finally, the book tackles the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the challenges facing this unique part of the world. In the broader context, Margolis does a very good job of summarizing the four-way situation in this very complex region of the world.

As much as *War at the Top of The World* is enjoyable to read, it is not without its distractions. Margolis uses history, war and personal anecdotes from his own extensive travels in the region to make his arguments, and the reader may often become irritated at the self-aggrandisement of the author in his descriptions of what he has done in a region. As well, the reader should be careful when reading the book. It is apparent where Margolis' sympathies lie, and the book should be read with this bias in mind. Additionally, since the book is not

intended as an academic text, there are no footnotes or references. This is of particular concern given the context of some of the significant and unsubstantiated accusations made by Margolis. For example, on page 33 Margolis states that the "KGB staged carefully calibrated assassinations, ambushes and raids complete with faked evidence left behind, that convinced Mujahedin leaders they were being attacked by other allied Mujahedin groups." This may or may not be true, but it is a significant accusation offered without substantiation. Other reviews on this and the first edition have challenged some of the facts and geographical descriptions articulated by Margolis. In other words, readers must be aware of the author's bias and make their conclusions accordingly.

Notwithstanding these somewhat negative observations, military officers who read the book cannot help but increase their level of understanding of a very complicated region, a region that will likely occupy our interest for many years to come.

Major J.C. Stone is a PhD student at Royal Military College.

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