Editor's Corner

by Mackubin T. Owens

In These Pages

This past October marked the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Arthur Cyr offers a retrospective on this event, detailing the way that the crisis led to changes in strategic policies on the part of the United States and the Soviet Union, critiquing earlier analyses, and discussing the lessons that bear on international relations.

Our first article cluster focuses on U.S. strategy. Kicking things off, Frank Hoffman argues on behalf of a "hybrid" U.S. grand strategy he calls "forward partnering." This strategic approach, he contends, addresses key shortfalls in strategic priorities and creates synergy among the components of American power. James Cook then examines President Obama's 2012 Strategy Review as a case study in attempting to balance strategic goals, resources, and risk. Finally, Lani Kass and "Jack" London take a close look at the strategic imperatives of surprise, deception, denial, and warning, arguing that decision superiority—the fusion of information dominance and decisive action—is a key to strategic success.

Next, June Teufel Dreyer discusses the implications of China's rapid rise in economic and military power for the United States and its closest ally in the post-World War II era— Japan. She predicts that in the absence of marked changes in the current distribution of power, Washington will have to deal with China as an equal while Japan will try to placate both sides even as it remains closer to the United States.

Turning to Europe, Leslie Lebl argues that the European Union's self-image as a successful model of "post-national" politics and

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society that others will copy has, in fact, undermined Europe and made it vulnerable to attack by Islamist organizations both within Europe—the Muslim Brotherhood—and without—the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). She contends that these organizations do not speak for all Muslims and should not be allowed to usurp that role; neither the EU nor the United States should defer to them.

Our second article cluster offers three interesting perspectives on the Middle East. Boaz Ganor examines the relationship between Israel and Hamas, concluding that Israel must prepare for the possibility of being dragged, against its will, into a ground operation against Hamas in Gaza, which in turn may lead to a regional war of some magnitude. Next, Yoel Guzansky and Benedetta Berti shed new light on the various uprisings that have been termed the "Arab Spring," arguing that an unintended outcome of these uprisings has been to unleash pre-existing sectarian identities. Despite the hopes of optimists, the release of these identities may well lead to renewed socio-political instability, especially to the extent that they are subsumed into the larger geostrategic and political struggle between Iran and its "Resistance Axis," on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia and its Sunni allies, on the other.

In the last article of the cluster, Mehran Karmrava examines the way in which Saudi Arabia has positioned itself as one of the primary mediators in some of the Middle East's most intractable conflicts. Although those efforts have seldom been successful, they have enabled the Kingdom to advance its twin objectives of ensuring and furthering state and regime security, while also playing a central coordinating role in regional affairs.

Finally, as the United States has begun discussions with the Taliban in Afghanistan, Dominic Tierney looks for lessons from the American experience of simultaneously fighting and negotiating in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

In our review essay, J. Furman Daniel, III, examines three recent books about the outbreak of World War I, which, he argues, illustrate how much there is to learn from new scholarship on that conflict and why theorists and policymakers alike would be wise to take note.

Impromptus and Asides: Why the War of 1812 Matters

Today, Korea is often called "the forgotten war." But a better candidate for that title—if not for the "ignored war"—is the War of 1812. So as we mark the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, we can expect reenactments of great battles and commemorations of such events as the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address. No doubt there will be

numerous additions to the 60,000 books and pamphlets that have been written on that great struggle. But we are not likely to see any comparable outpouring of scholarship on the War of 1812 or public commemorations as we mark that conflict's bicentennial.

There are two main reasons for this lack of interest in the War of 1812. First, it seems to have changed nothing. The end of the conflict seemed simply to return the parties to the *status quo ante bellum*. Second, American arms did not acquit themselves particularly well during the war. Only some naval successes, the performance by a force of regulars under Brevet Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott at Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, and Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson's victory at New Orleans provided bright spots for an otherwise dismal performance by American forces.

But such an assessment sells the conflict short. There are at least four reasons why the War of 1812 made a great difference for America's future.

First, it validated American independence. The new Republic was buffeted between the two great powers of the age. Great Britain had accepted the fact of American independence only grudgingly. Revolutionary and subsequently Napoleonic France was not inclined to recognize America's rights as a nation. President James Madison's war message to Congress, with its echoes of the Declaration of Independence's "long train of abuses," made it clear that the United States was willing to vindicate its rights as a state in the international system. Thus, the War of 1812 has sometimes been called the second war of American independence.

Second, it called into question the utopian approach to international relations. As president, Thomas Jefferson had explicitly renounced the fundamentals of traditional statecraft based on the principles of *raison d'état*. Jefferson rejected Federalist calls for a robust military establishment, arguing that the United States could achieve its goals by strictly peaceful means, and that if those failed, he could force the European powers to respect American rights by withholding U.S. trade.

But events during Jefferson's second term demonstrated the serious shortcomings of his thinking. His attempts to employ economic pressure against England and France destroyed U.S. commerce, antagonized the New England States, contributed mightily to the rise of factionalism, and ultimately failed to prevent a war for which the United States remained woefully unprepared. As a result of the War of 1812, American statesmen realized that to survive in a hostile world, the United States would have to adopt measures that doctrinaire republicanism abhorred.

Third, the poor performance by American arms exploded the republican myth of the superiority of

militia and thereby provided the basis for the development of a more professional military. Thus, during the three decades after the War of 1812, the Army would adopt generally recognized standards of training, discipline, and doctrine. It would create branch schools, e.g. schools of infantry, cavalry, and artillery. The U.S. Military Academy at West Point began to provide highly motivated professional officers, many of whom were trained engineers, to lead the Army. The leadership of the Army would pass from the superannuated veterans of the Revolutionary War to younger men who had served with distinction during the War of 1812. Meanwhile, the new officer corps increasingly came to see itself as a corporate body of professionals. The United States would create the position of Commanding General of the Army, which provided a line officer in the chain of command, something that had been sorely missing during the War of 1812. Much of this was the work of John C. Calhoun, who proved to be one of the most innovative and effective secretaries of war in American history.

Finally, although the war only reestablished the *status quo ante bellum*, this proved to be satisfactory, especially in light of other possible less favorable outcomes for the United States. For instance, at the beginning of peace talks in 1814, the British demanded the creation of an Indian barrier state in the American Northwest Territory and a ban on American naval forces on the Great Lakes. It was only the American victory at Plattsburg in 1814 that caused the British to drop these demands. Had the war not ended as it did, the Indian barrier states in the Old Northwest could well have foreclosed or at least complicated American expansion to the West.

An Indian buffer state was not a minor problem. The contemporary view of the American Indian unfortunately has been shaped by the popular *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* narrative that portrays them as mere "victims." But the Indian tribes of the Old Northwest pursued their own strategic interests and therefore constituted a formidable threat to the United States, especially in alliance with the British.

Likewise, much is often made of the fact that the battle of New Orleans occurred after the signing of the peace treaty at Ghent. But does anyone seriously believe that the Treaty of Ghent notwithstanding, the British would have given up what, at that time, was the most important port in North America without substantial American concessions, including territorial ones?

In short, the outcome of the War of 1812 mattered for the future of the United States. Americans should give this war its due.