

VOLUME XVII, NUMBER 4, FALL 2017

CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship

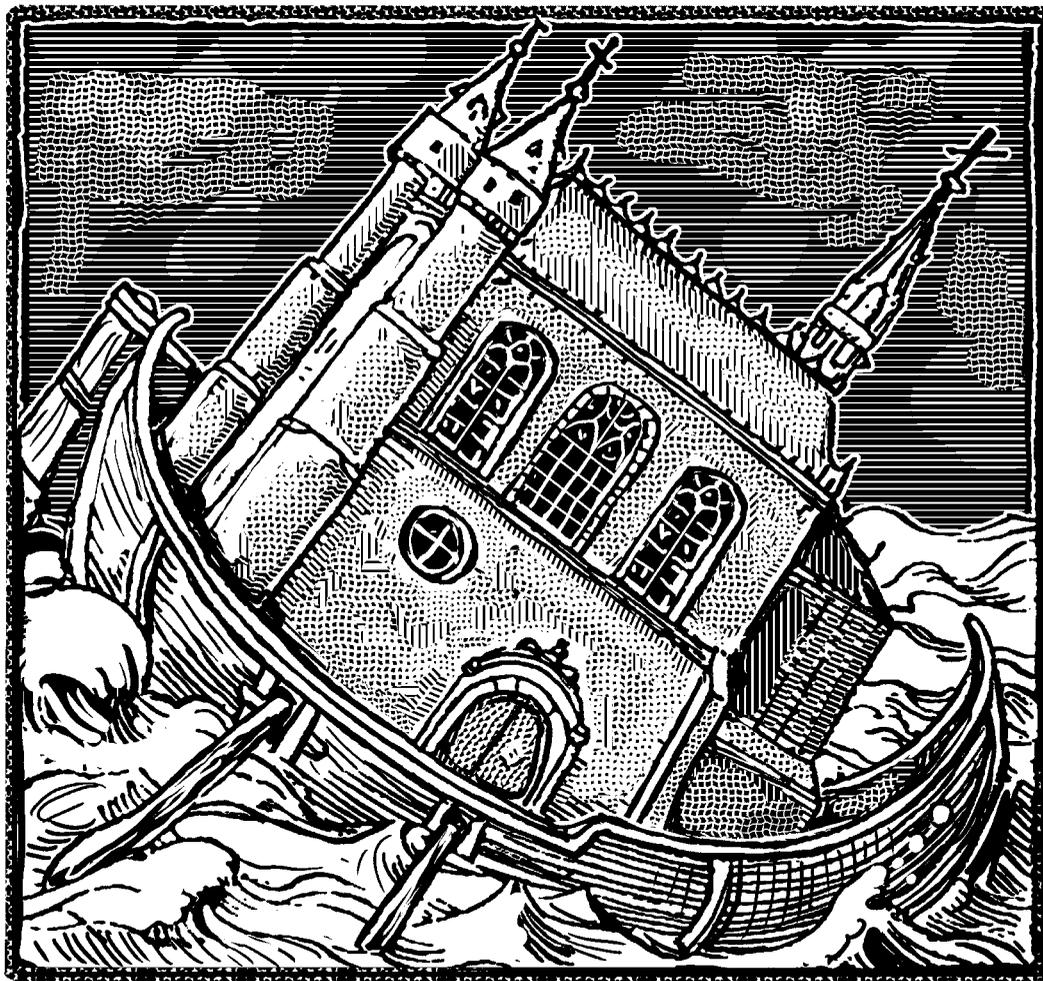
John
O'Sullivan:
**Make Europe
Great Again**

Diana Schaub:
**Museum of
the American
Revolution**

Neal B.
Freeman:
**Bill Buckley
at the
White House**

Clifford
Orwin:
**Against
Empathy**

Joshua
Dunn:
**Hurricanes
and
Presidents**



Henry
Olsen
♦
William
Voegeli:
First, Class

David P.
Goldman:
**Must We War
with China?**

Joseph
Epstein:
**Talking Like
a Politician**

Vincent Phillip
Muñoz:
**The
Founders
in Full**

Edward
Feser:
Fake Science

CHRISTIANITY THEN AND NOW

Algis Valiunas: **Martin Luther**

James Hankins: **The Reformation's Legacy**

John Daniel Davidson: **Christianity in America**

Charles Horner: **Christianity in China**

A Publication of the Claremont Institute

PRICE: \$6.95

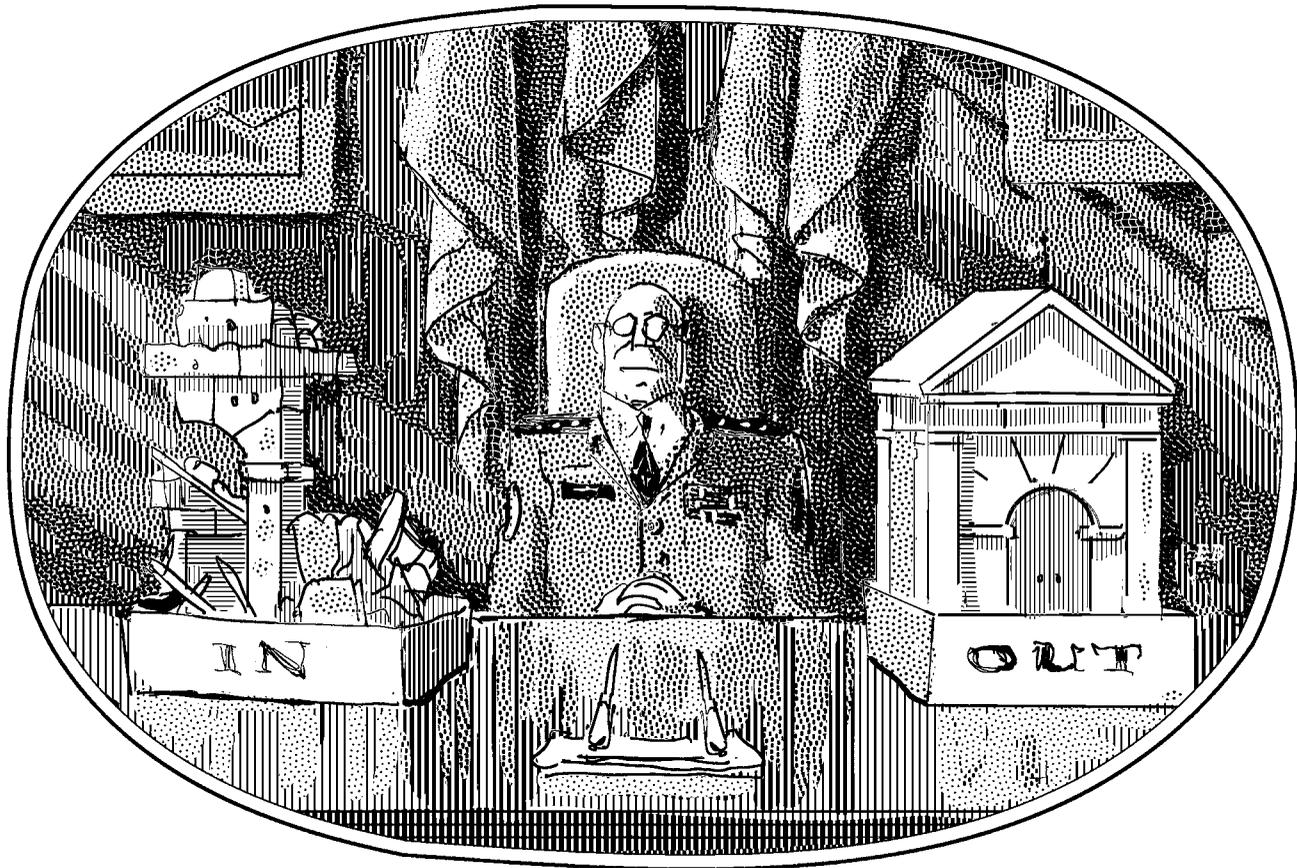
IN CANADA: \$8.95



Book Review by Carnes Lord

DIVIDE AND FAIL

War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success into Political Victory, by Nadia Schadlow.
Georgetown University Press, 344 pages, \$32.95



THE DISMAL (AND SEEMINGLY NEVER-ending) history of American military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past 15 years has understandably induced war weariness throughout most of the political class as well as the wider public. Donald Trump would probably not be President of the United States had he not denounced the Iraq intervention. Like presidents Bush and Obama before him, Trump entered office proclaiming an aversion to “nation-building.” And like both of his predecessors, he nonetheless has no easy way out of the two conflicts triggered by the events of 9/11, and may well be on the verge of expanding to Syria the American military’s involvement in the region. As General David Petraeus once remarked in a rare moment of fatigue: “Tell me how this ends.”

In some ways, the current depressing situation in the Middle East is an even greater indictment of American policy than was our failure in Vietnam. In that conflict, the United States faced a wily and tenacious en-

emy, backed by two major powers, in a very inhospitable environment, and with a much narrower technological inferiority. The U.S. lost scores of aircraft to North Vietnamese air defense systems; it has not lost a single plane to hostile fire in the Middle East. Our enemies in this theater may be tenacious, but they are ill-equipped and frequently lack elementary military skills. What’s more, they are internally divided and for the most part indifferently organized. And yet at the end of the day, the same may have to be said of the outcomes of these conflicts as was famously pointed out by a certain North Vietnamese colonel: you may have won all the battles, but that is irrelevant—we won the war.

HOW CAN IT BE THAT THE UNITED States seems so incapable of turning victory on the battlefield into political success? And what, if anything, can be done about it? These are the central questions addressed by Nadia Schadlow in her impor-

tant new book, *War and the Art of Governance*. Schadlow’s answer—however implausible and unwelcome at first sight—is simple: war is an inescapably political phenomenon from start to finish; governance tasks are inescapably a part of warfare; and such tasks can only be effectively undertaken by military organizations under unified command.

Formerly a program officer at the Smith Richardson Foundation and now a deputy assistant to the president for national security strategy, Schadlow does not pretend to offer a blueprint for the way forward in Iraq or Afghanistan, and still less does she applaud those interventions or endorse the use of the United States military to spread democracy around the world. There may well be no such way forward, given the peculiar history, politics, and culture of these two countries. Her focus is rather on a way not taken, or not consistently taken, by the American political and military leadership from the beginning of these conflicts, one that is not without precedent in our

own history and that could at the very least have substantially improved our current position in the region.

MILITARY GOVERNANCE IS A TOPIC that is today rarely studied, but it has a long history in the annals of the U.S. Army. Schadlow offers densely documented case studies of the most important such episodes, including barely remembered ones such as the Mexican-American War, the Spanish-American War, the occupation of the Rhineland after World War I, the Dominican intervention of 1965, and the occupation of Panama in 1989. (Included as well is a fascinating account of the army's role in the South during Reconstruction.) Of particular interest are the better known World War II cases, especially Germany and Japan. These by far surpass the other instances of army involvement not only in scale and scope but above all in strategic effect. And they also demonstrate the vital importance not only of competent leadership on the spot (by Generals Lucius Clay and Douglas MacArthur, respectively), but of unity of command. In both cases (though somewhat later with Clay), the American proconsul controlled both the military occupation forces and the combat elements remaining in theater. It is not too much to say that without the unqualified success of the American military occupation regimes in Germany and Japan (and also in Italy) in the late 1940s, the entire Cold War would have played out in a very different and less happy fashion for America and the West.

To speak of American "proconsuls," however, is indicative of a broader problem that is at the core of Schadlow's analysis. Virtually from the beginning, military government has been controversial in the United States, in the eyes not only of civilians but of the soldiers who serve them. Precisely because the mantra of civilian control has been, and remains, so powerful in the American mind, the idea of military officers wielding political power has seemed broadly unpalatable. At the same time, the military (and here we are for all practical purposes discussing the army) has been reluctant to embrace military government as a core mission. Typically, the military has tended to define its "civil affairs" mission in a very narrow sense as activities that directly support the fighting forces by, for example, ensuring that enemy noncombatants do not interfere

with ongoing operations. And to the extent that such a mission is accepted, the units assigned to it tend to be organizationally marginalized and lightly regarded. At the present, it is revealing that most civil affairs units are in the reserves, while organizationally they form part of the Special Operations community rather than the regular army.

AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF SCHADLOW'S argument, however, is that military government has been most effective when carried out not by specialized forces but by regular army units with no special training. This was as true of the Mexican- or Spanish-American wars as of the post-World War II occupations. It is true that many officers involved in civil affairs missions brought important skills with them from civilian life, such as legal, financial, or agricultural expertise (a major argument for relying on reservists for this function). In fact, many were essentially civilians who had only recently put on a uniform. All of this, it may be added (though Schadlow doesn't mention it), has important implications for the recruitment and retention of specialized personnel in today's military.

And all of this has tended to create what Schadlow terms an "American denial syndrome" concerning governance activities in conflict situations. Briefly, this is a conviction that such activities do not properly belong in the military sphere, and must be off-loaded as soon as possible to civilian leadership and organizations. Even during World War II, such a view was widely shared, including for a time by President Franklin Roosevelt himself. After the Iraq War, it was also prominent within the higher reaches of the Bush Administration as well as within the senior army leadership, with results whose calamitous impact is still being felt today.

Ambassador L. Paul Bremer was America's "proconsul" in Iraq. Bremer fancied himself a latter-day Douglas MacArthur, and studied the American experience in postwar Germany. Unfortunately, Bremer had neither the leadership qualities nor the organizational resources of the general. He made several spectacularly poor policy decisions without taking due account of their military implications, and his Coalition Provisional Authority was never organizationally aligned with the military command in country. At the same time, the military (and the Pentagon under

then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld) declined ownership of the occupation, for reasons that are unclear but probably not very commendable. The result was a growing insurgency and a gross failure to manage the Iraqi political process.

SCHADLOW'S STUDY CONCLUDES WITH five recommendations. First, American policymakers must appreciate the complex political dimension of all wars and recognize that governance cannot be separated from warfighting. Second, unity of command is essential: because policymakers did not consider "the consolidation of political gains" as an integral part of war, they created dual and often competing chains of command—a "divide and fail" model. Third, because civilian organizations are simply not capable of operating effectively or on a significant scale in a dangerous environment, civilians need to understand the enormous advantages possessed by the military in terms of scale, logistics, communications, and experience managing large institutions and must give the army operational control over governance operations in war. Fourth, our leaders must not be seduced by the idea that they can achieve policy objectives through "kinetic means" alone, particularly by the unmanned drones and raids so favored recently by the White House and the special operators. Finally, the U.S. military must recreate standing capabilities prepared to conduct key governance tasks. Although army doctrine over the last few years has moved in the right direction by recognizing "stability and reconstruction operations" as equal in importance to offense and defense in war, this has yet to translate into significant organizational change, operational concepts, or funding commitments. Nadia Schadlow's *War and the Art of Governance* does not offer a roadmap to such a transformation, but presumably it would include a reintegration of civil affairs units and the civil affairs function into the regular army.

These recommendations are bold, and probably unlikely to be widely embraced given the current mood of the nation. Yet they are serious, sober, and relentlessly argued. Perhaps the author's new boss, General H.R. McMaster, will give them a fair hearing.

Carnes Lord is a professor of naval and military strategy at the U.S. Naval War College.

The CLAREMONT REVIEW OF BOOKS is a publication of the CLAREMONT INSTITUTE
FOR THE STUDY OF STATESMANSHIP AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

Subscribe to
the *Claremont Review of Books*

“The foremost journal of letters
in the conservative world, the
Claremont Review of Books is a
fantastic read for anyone interested
in books and the life of the mind.”

—Jonathan V. Last

Subscribe to the *CRB* today and save 25%
off the newsstand price. A one-year
subscription is only \$19.95.

To begin receiving America's premier
conservative book review, visit
www.claremont.org/crb
or call (909) 981-2200.

CLAREMONT
REVIEW OF BOOKS
1317 W. FOOTHILL
BLVD, SUITE 120,
UPLAND, CA
91786

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 504
UPLAND, CA