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Book Reviews

Takedown: Inside the Hunt for Al Qaeda

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In chapter 9, 'Generations', the author advances the view that the heated dispute between the White House and the Kremlin over Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba seemed to suggest that a third world war seemed in prospect. He focuses on Cuba and the Vietnam War which, he argues cogently, dominated the foreign policy of the USA during the 1960s. The next fascinating chapter entitled 'Tommies' takes as its theme the array of literature published from the 1960s onwards devoted to some aspect of the First World War over which the author clearly has an impressive mastery. Some of the works discussed were published in Australia. The final chapter entitled 'Remembrance' engagingly reviews attitudes to the 1914–18 conflict in the light of post-1989 events and trends, the ending of the Cold War – the fall of the Berlin wall, the demise of the Soviet Union, far-reaching changes in the foreign policy of the USA. 'In the West', argues David Reynolds, 'especially America, it seemed that the thawing of communist repression had simply revived historic nationalisms frozen during the Cold War – confirming a rather Wilsonian sense of the perpetually feuding Old World' (p.394). Again relevant literature is analysed as is media coverage and the convention of various commemorative events. The author's conclusions are well brought together in a succinct section entitled 'Long shadow'.

This is a well-written book, well-illustrated, and an excellent purchase for the general reader, although someone with a wider knowledge of history will find the second part more generally engaging and challenging than the first. The volume is not based on original, archival research, but rather on compendious reading of current and recent research in this most popular academic area. Reynolds has constructed a series of arguments about both the short-term and long-term consequences of the 1914–18 war that is refreshing in the variety of viewpoints which it discusses and especially the way in which a thoughtful historian views the changing perspectives over time as well as different national perceptions of the apparently 'same' events. Overall, this is an excellent book, well written and researched, adding a very interesting dimension to the long term effect World War 1 had on Europe and the wider world. No doubt a spate of both academic and more popular works on the Great War awaits us. A century on from 1914, there is no end to the fighting and the writing. The remembering is over – they are all dead – but the remembrance has hardly yet begun.

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Philip Mudd, *Takedown: Inside the Hunt for Al Qaeda* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). Pp.216. US$36.19. Hb. ISBN 978-0812244960.

In *Takedown: Inside the Hunt for Al Qaeda*, Philip Mudd calls the battle against Al Qaeda 'the campaign of my generation' (p.xv). He takes great pride in having

Notes

[1] Vice President Cheney also received a personal daily briefing, and 'was among the most forceful questioners of intelligence analysts'. Cheney's personal briefing package specifically included a second section with responses to his previous questions. John L. Helgerson. Getting to Know the President: Intelligence Briefings of Presidential Candidates, 1952–2004. (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency 2012) p.160.

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