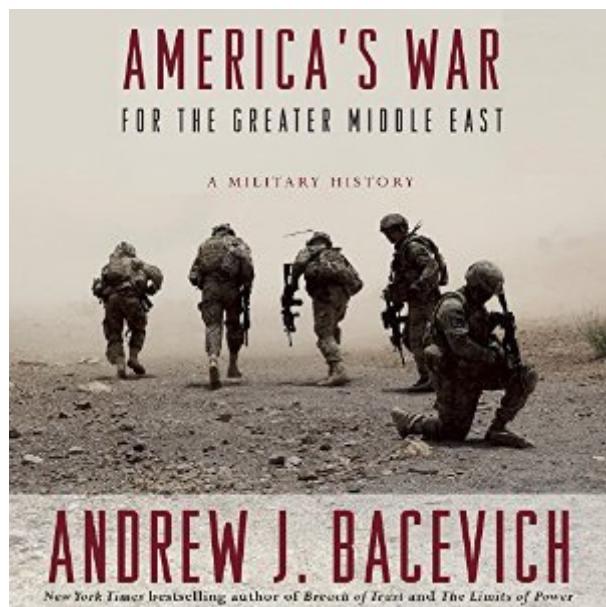


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America's War For The Greater Middle East: A Military History



Synopsis

Retired army colonel and New York Times best-selling author Andrew J. Bacevich provides a searing reassessment of US military policy in the Middle East over the past four decades. From the end of World War II until 1980, virtually no American soldiers were killed in action while serving in the Greater Middle East. Since 1990, virtually no American soldiers have been killed in action anywhere else. What caused this shift? Andrew J. Bacevich, one of the country's most respected voices on foreign affairs, offers an incisive critical history of this ongoing military enterprise - now more than 30 years old and with no end in sight. During the 1980s, Bacevich argues, a great transition occurred. As the Cold War wound down, the United States initiated a new conflict - a war for the Greater Middle East - that continues to the present day. The long twilight struggle with the Soviet Union had involved only occasional and sporadic fighting. But as this new war unfolded, hostilities became persistent. From the Balkans and East Africa to the Persian Gulf and Central Asia, US forces embarked upon a seemingly endless series of campaigns across the Islamic world. Few achieved anything remotely like conclusive success. Instead, actions undertaken with expectations of promoting peace and stability produced just the opposite. As a consequence, phrases like permanent war and open-ended war have become part of everyday discourse. Connecting the dots in a way no other historian has done before, Bacevich weaves a compelling narrative out of episodes as varied as the Beirut bombing of 1983, the Mogadishu firefight of 1993, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the rise of ISIS in the present decade. Understanding what America's costly military exertions have wrought requires seeing these seemingly discrete events as parts of a single war. It also requires identifying the errors of judgment made by political leaders in both parties and by senior military officers who share responsibility for what has become a monumental march to folly. This Bacevich unflinchingly does. A 20-year army veteran who served in Vietnam, Andrew J. Bacevich brings the full weight of his expertise to this vitally important subject. America's War for the Greater Middle East is a bracing after-action report from the front lines of history. It will fundamentally change the way we view America's engagement in the world's most volatile region.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Author Bacevich opens by contending that our military involvement in the greater Middle East began with the failure to rescue the American hostages in our Tehran embassy. Mechanical breakdowns, very limited visibility due to stirred up dust, and a chopper accidentally hitting a stationary C-130 resulted in the mission being canceled and the deaths of 8 Americans. While President Carter quickly took responsibility, Bacevich points out that the myriad errors in design and execution were attributable to the military professionals involved. Bacevich also points out that Carter's predecessors going back to WWII had done him no favors with their forging ill-advised relationships and foolhardy commitments. Nonetheless, Carter had launched America's War for the Greater Middle East, compounding those inherited errors. That war continues today, with no end in sight. America's War for the Greater Middle East was a war to preserve the American way of life, rooted in an abundance of cheap energy. In 1969, imports already accounted for 20% of American consumption, and the next year U.S. domestic oil production peaked. By 1973, in retaliation for U.S. support for Israel in the October War, Arabs suspended oil exports to the U.S. and the West. Eventually, oil imports resumed, but the availability and price of gasoline had now become a matter of national concern. The hierarchy of national security priorities was beginning to shift from nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union. President Nixon launched a plan to insure that Americans would not have to rely on any source of energy beyond our own (Project Independence), but the idea that retrenchment was needed did not sit well with some. There was a strong sense of entitlement, notwithstanding Britain's prior experiences.

This is the most incisive military analysis of America in the Middle East from Carter to Obama. An exposé of the self seeking and self promoting actions of our generals and politicians and the fatuous neoconservative militarism which presently guides the foreign policy of our country. Brilliant! There is no better exposition of the delusion associated with the self proclamation of critically strategic

areas of the world which before the end of the Cold War held absolutely no importance whatsoever to our well being. The folly of reliance on military power to cure political and cultural deficiencies, defined as an absence of neoliberal Christian democracy, and the failure to attain that objective is documented in this engrossing study of self deception and evangelization. When you finish reading this book you will understand the reasons why we cannot effectively engage middle eastern problems but also why we can't bring ourselves to disengage. When american soldiers are sent overseas and become casualties their blood becomes a symbol to shed more blood. We have seen this in every war fought since 1945. The men we elect to the presidency with the exception of Eisenhower have had no clue how to conduct foreign policy when the lives of our men and women are at risk. We seem to be caught up in some macho vendetta with the entire world. The continuation of this vendetta has proven to be very profitable for a few wealthy people far from the firing line. It has proven to be amenable to vote getting. It has proven to be amenable to the self promotion of those officers above field level command into whose hands our servicemen have been encared. It is clear that this country is in more danger today than 35 years ago when we decided to engage directly in the middle eastern quagmire.

"America's War for the Greater Middle East" is the third book I have read by Andrew Bacevich, who has unique authority to speak on the subject as the war claimed his son's life. Unfortunately, this book lacks the power of the first two books, "The Limits of Power" and "Breach of Trust." The overall indictment of American society that it delivers was more convincing in "Breach of Trust," or perhaps I am simply blinded by the very ideology that Bacevich decries in this book. I have bought into the status quo in this respect: I believe some, if not most, of the goods recognized by Americans are indeed universal. I am unwilling to concede that the millions of Afghan girls and women who got an education in the years after the Taliban's control of that country were first challenged would be better off if we had never gone in. I also believe that the number of casualties we are now sustaining in CENTCOM and AFRICOM is low enough that what we are doing is sustainable indefinitely, unless the Muslim world gets so angry at us that it unites into a new superpower to challenge us globally. This will disappoint a lot of people and isn't necessarily consistent with what I have argued at other times but the absence of even one critical review on was something I couldn't stomach anymore. Per Bacevich, the first American lives lost in America's War for the Greater Middle East were the fatalities of the aircraft collision as special operators were queuing up to leave Desert One after the mission was called off. I think it does a disservice to President Carter to imply that sending troops for a rescue mission committed the United States to perpetual war for unachievable aims, or

even to call it the Poland of this war.

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