chapters, again, key information about all the key players is listed in several clear, informative tables.

In chapter 7, the author turns to the "Vision" plans of the GCC states, where he claims support for his underlying thesis by pointing to the prevalence of public–private partnerships (PPPs) as a tool in these plans. Although noting the combination of promised cuts in public spending and public sector employment, and the effects these cuts are bound to have on the private sector, Hanieh argues that by and large the largest capitalist actors are generally relatively isolated from the worst of this impact, and it is the smaller ones that suffer. With respect to his overall argument, the author makes the case that rather than simply "coping" with these pressures, the state capitalist elite is using the occasion to "make new markets" (p. 227).

The final chapter uses the Qatar crisis (2017–) as an example of how the Gulf's intertwining with the wider MENA region plays out in the sort of competition we have witnessed. Although the crisis has indeed obviously demonstrated an interconnection between Gulf politics and those of the wider region, this reviewer at least was not persuaded that one would glean a great deal from the book's theoretical apparatus to help one understand the dynamics of this particular crisis.

Yet, overall, this book is unquestionably a major, important, and impressively researched contribution to our understanding both of the Gulf's political economy and its intertwining with that of the wider region and the globe. Anyone henceforth working in this field will need to engage with it.

Planning to Fail: The US Wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. By James H. Lebovic. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 256p. $34.95 cloth.

— Dominic Tierney, *Swarthmore College*
dtierne1@swarthmore.edu

On the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese prime minister Tojo Hideki said, "There are times when we must have the courage to do extraordinary things, like jumping, with eyes closed, off the veranda of the Kiyomizu Temple"—a Buddhist shrine in Kyoto that sits on the edge of a steep cliff. In recent decades, the United States has leapt into complex conflicts like Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan without thinking through the consequences. As a result, the most powerful state in the global system has endured an era of military failure.

James Lebovic's book *Planning to Fail* aims to comprehend not just *why* this happened but also *how*—the processes by which the United States waded into the quagmire, thought through war aims, and then redefined its goals. It is a follow-up to his earlier and valuable work, *The Limits of U.S. Military Capability* (2010). Lebovic

argues that poor strategic thinking is caused by "myopic bias" in which leaders fail to critique war aims or systematically weigh alternative and less costly options. These pathologies are outlined in a four-stage chronological model, which is explored through case studies of Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

First, when leaders decide to engage in war, they focus on immediate goals rather than considering how these goals will affect broader national purposes. For example, Washington began a bombing campaign in Vietnam without thinking through how the use of force would achieve ultimate policy ends or what the next move would be if Hanoi refused to quit. Second, after the initial military actions, US leaders revise the scope of the mission and focus unduly on wartime tasks (like bombing) rather than the achievement of overarching goals. For example, in Iraq, George W. Bush pursued a plan to transform the nation and purge Baathists from power without the requisite capabilities to achieve this task. Third, the United States reaches the limits of its resources and looks to narrow the scope of mission. For example, in Afghanistan in 2009, Barack Obama rejected a full-blown counterinsurgency plan and instead pursued a time-limited surge. Fourth, leaders seek to disengage from the war, and the exit becomes an end in itself. For example, by 2011, Obama wanted to get out of Afghanistan.

The book is published as part of the Bridging the Gap series, which seeks to produce work that is theoretically innovative, accessible, and policy relevant. The three case studies are crisply written and based on a solid grasp of the secondary sources, as well as US government documents available online. (There are occasional odd claims, for example, that Vietnam was not a major election issue in 1968 [p. 12], which might surprise anyone who was present at the Democratic Party Convention in Chicago.) A particular value of the book is its focus on the arc of conflict. Far more is written about how wars begin than how they evolve and, especially, how they end. Lebovic is also convincing when arguing that the United States must prepare for postconflict operations and, if necessary, the much maligned "nation-building." After all, failing to train the US military for stabilization operations will not diminish the odds of nation-building: it will increase the chances of a quagmire.

The framework is presented quite briefly: the introduction, theory, literature review, and assessment of rival approaches are completed within 17 pages (although the footnotes do help flesh things out). This has the advantage of helping the book reach a broader audience, but it has the disadvantage that the argument is sometimes a little underdeveloped.

The scope of Lebovic's theory is unclear. Is the book designed to draw lessons from three specific cases, with potential but unspecified broader applicability? Or is it

making more ambitious claims about US behavior in large-scale counterinsurgency missions generally, or even all US wars, as seems to be the case in the introduction, which describes problems that are "pervasive in decision-making" (p. 2), and where the model is presented as "The Stages of Wartime Decision-Making."

If the scope is narrower, the three cases generally fit the model—but not always. In Stage III "constriction," for example, presidents supposedly defer to costs and begin to wind down the mission. In two out of the three cases, however, the president responded in the constriction phase with a surge. Lebovic describes the Bush surge in Iraq as a "modest strategy" (p. 117), but it was far more escalatory than, for example, the Iraq Study Group's 2006 recommendation for a phased withdrawal. Similarly, Lebovic calls the Obama surge in Afghanistan a "constriction" because the president did not follow the most extreme option of a full-fledged counterinsurgency campaign. But Obama rejected Vice President Joe Biden's preference for a narrow counterterrorism mission, nearly tripled US troop levels to their peak strength of the war, and spent $100 billion per annum—hardly the actions of someone guided mainly by costs.

If this is a broader theory of American wars, some of the claims need revision. For example, the arguments that civilian leaders "are unlikely to have a well-developed plan should they decide to extend or expand a mission" (p. 6), that rising costs cause leaders to search for the exits or that "the public's support for any given war declines sharply over time" (p. 12) do not hold in conflicts like the Civil War, the world wars, or the Gulf War.

One also wonders about the causal effect of myopia on war outcomes. This bias is rooted in deep-seated psychological and organizational dynamics that are enduring if not universal. It is striking, however, that the United States began losing big wars only after 1945. An alternate explanation for military failure would highlight the evolution of warfare from interstate war to civil war, the capacity of rebels to seize the banner of nationalism, the US military's (and US society's) aversion to nation-building and counterinsurgency, and American power tempting Washington to intervene in distant lands it does not understand.

We could likely find plenty of examples of myopia in US decision making during World War II, even though Washington ultimately won. Meanwhile, in 2009, Obama seemed to engage in an exhaustive and critical review of the Afghanistan War—getting the *how* right. Nevertheless, victory in Afghanistan remained elusive. All the smart preparation in the world might not help you if you fight Mike Tyson—who said that "everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth."

Lebovic contends that myopia is superior to the rival explanations for poor decision making because alternate approaches can either promote or reduce bias and "their explanatory impact. . .remains unclear" (p. 3). Democratic institutions, for example, can encourage free-flowing debate or trigger gridlock. But myopic bias can also push in different directions. The human brain evolved to make decisions quickly and frugally precisely because it offered advantages in humankind's ancestral environment, and these benefits may still operate in modern decision making. Planning for success by searching dutifully for policy alternatives could lead to an idealized decision-making process, or it could inflict leaders with a Hamlet-like paralysis. It is true that officials tend to simplify by seeing visible elements of the war as the whole picture; yet, given the brain's limited computing ability, what is the alternative?

Notwithstanding these issues, overall *Planning to Fail* is both thoughtful and thought provoking and reinforces the vital lesson of recent American wars: look before you leap.

Judging Justice: How Victim Witnesses Evaluate International Courts. By James David Meernik and Kimi Lynn King. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019. 216p. $75.00 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592719003037

— David Mendeloff, *Carleton University*
david.mendeloff@carleton.ca

In 2017, nearly 25 years after its founding, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) officially completed its task of prosecuting atrocity crimes committed during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. The tribunal's mandate was to provide justice to the war's victims and to help establish and maintain peace in the region. Did it achieve those objectives? The answer has important implications for international criminal accountability more broadly. Indeed, the ICTY has long been a focus of transitional justice scholars, particularly those seeking to understand the effects of international criminal prosecutions. In recent years scholars have begun applying sophisticated empirical methods to the question of impact assessment. James David Meernik's and Kimi Lynn King's *Judging Justice: How Victim Witnesses Evaluate International Courts* adds to this body of empirical transitional justice research and makes an important contribution to our understanding of the ICTY experience in particular and international criminal justice more broadly.

Judging Justice assesses the ICTY's efforts to deliver justice to victims by analyzing the opinions of witnesses who provided tribunal testimony. It extends and builds on the authors' 2017 monograph, *The Witness Experience: Testimony at the ICTY and Its Impact*, and relies on the same underlying survey dataset of more than 300 ICTY witnesses, representing a broad cross section of the nearly 4,700 individuals who participated in its proceedings. The 2017 book introduced the core question that is taken up in