

CHACR DIGEST #21



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SUMMER READING

[*Putin's Wars: From Chechnya to Ukraine*](#) by **Mark Galeotti**. The author surveys Russia's wars and military operations since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Drawing on plenty of primary research, including interviews with Russian officers and soldiers, he traces the evolution of Russia's armed forces from the Chechen wars in the early and late 1990s, through the partial invasion of Georgia in the 2000s and the intervention in Syria in the 2010s, to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The book highlights successes and failures in Russian military modernisation efforts over the decades, and ultimately predicts that the war in Ukraine is likely to go on for years.

[*The Zelensky Effect*](#) by **Olga Onuch** and **Henry E. Hale**. President Volodymyr Zelensky has embodied Ukraine's resistance and fight-back against the Russian invasion. The comedian-turned-president has become a wartime leader admired around the world. This book's two authors offer an insightful portrait of Zelensky that combines a biography of the man with a post-Soviet history of the country he is leading. They highlight Zelensky's great achievements to date without glossing over the many political problems he and Ukraine will face once the war is over.

[*Grand Delusion: The Rise and Fall of American Ambition in the Middle East*](#) by **Steven Simon**. The Middle East has been a region of intense focus for US foreign policy for half a century. Over the past decade or so, successive administrations – from Obama to Trump to Biden – have tried to reduce US engagement in the Middle East, both as a reaction to the war in Iraq and because there is a sense that the big geopolitical questions of the day will be settled elsewhere. The author, who has worked for most US governments since the Reagan era, offers a comprehensive and often unflinching account of how and why Washington got so deeply involved in the Middle East. Particularly fascinating are his accounts of partially forgotten US initiatives in the region, from the Iran-Contra scandal in the 1980s to the campaign to contain the regime of Saddam Hussein between the two Gulf wars in 1991 and 2003.

[*City on the Edge: Hong Kong Under Chinese Rule*](#) by **Ho-fung Hung**. China's takeover of Hong Kong represented the end of an era, upending the special status the former British colony had enjoyed as one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Asia. The author, a Hong Kong native, offers an illuminating portrait of Hong Kong, highlighting its special character and tracing how Beijing came to regard it as an increasingly unacceptable challenge to the supremacy of the Chinese Communist Party.

[*Command: The Politics of Military Operations From Korea to Ukraine*](#) by **Lawrence Freedman**. The Clausewitzian dictum of war as an extension of politics by other means is a much-used cliché, but it encapsulates one of the most important relationships that often determinate the outcome of wars and conflicts – that between political and military leaders. The latest book by eminent historian Freedman examines this interplay between political leadership and military command through numerous historical case studies, taking the reader on a journey from the end of World War II to the present and across Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. Besides drawing fascinating insights from history, the author sheds light on the dynamics between the Kremlin and Russian military leaders and how they have shaped – and are likely to continue to shape – the war in Ukraine.

[*The Pentagon, Climate Change, and War: Charting the Rise and Fall of U.S. Military Emissions*](#) by **Neta C Crawford**. The discussion about the link between climate change and international security tends to focus on how rising temperatures, extreme weather, droughts and other adverse climate developments contribute to conflict. However, there is also a growing debate about what climate action means for militaries around the world. This book provides a well-researched and original assessment of how armies have contributed to global emissions and the challenges defence ministries face in decarbonising militaries that have long been particularly voracious consumers of fossil fuels. The author forecasts that the defence sector will have to do much more in the coming decades to reduce emissions – all while being prepared to deal with ever more difficult operating conditions as a result of the changing climate.

[*Israel Has Already Lost*](#) by **Yair Rosenberg**. The constitutional crisis in Israel that has engulfed the country for months shows no signs of abating. Israel's institutions have become the battle ground for politicians left and right, secular and religious, Jewish and Arab, on top of which sits an ailing Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest serving Prime Minister. In the words of author Rosenberg, "such an utter collapse of shared solidarity is unparalleled in Israel's history". So what will happen, and how can Israeli society heal? Rosenberg hasn't got the answers, but this shorter read is a great summary of a complex constitutional crisis that has dragged in Israel's body politic over the past few years, and why it is so impactful for Israel – a country that had seemed impermeable in a region surrounded by hostile states.

[*New Military Strategies in the Gulf: The Mirage of Autonomy in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar*](#) by **Jean-Loup Samaan**. The author, an experienced NATO analyst, combines his understanding of modern militaries and the politics of the Persian Gulf to produce a must-read. In the last decade, rulers in Gulf regimes have aspired to greater strategic autonomy and distance from the West. Coined the "Gulf moment" by local commentators, this regional trend reflects a redistribution of power in the Arab world. This is the first book to examine the military dimensions of these shifts. Gulf military strategy has prioritised the improvement of local armed forces and the diversification of defence partnerships towards countries such as Russia, Turkey and China. However, this book shows how this has led to the militarisation of Gulf societies, the further erosion of multilateral initiatives – including the Gulf Cooperation Council – and the Gulf's perilous involvement in the war in Yemen. Samaan also highlights that the West will still play an enduring role in the Gulf for years to come.

[*Japan's Security Renaissance: New Policies and Politics for the Twenty-First Century*](#) by **Andrew L. Oros**. For decades after World War II, Japan chose to focus on soft power and economic diplomacy alongside a close alliance with the United States, eschewing a potential leadership role in regional and global security. Since the end of the Cold War, and especially since the rise of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan's military capabilities have resurged. In this analysis of Japan's changing military policy, the author shows how a gradual awakening to new security challenges has culminated in the multifaceted "security renaissance" of the past decade. As its neighbour China increases in strength, Japan has become firmly aware of its security needs and has begun to pursue them with fewer and fewer scruples as to the challenges of its historical past.

