

the local states” in the region to give them a chance of survival. An American withdrawal would be “rather shameful,” Betts

says—but it could be no more disastrous than what continued temporizing may bring.

Lessons of the Purple Heart

“Half a Million Purple Hearts” by D. M. Giangreco and Kathryn Moore, in *American Heritage* (Dec. 2000–Jan. 2001), 90 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

In 1999, as the American-led bombing campaign in Kosovo was being stepped up, news broke that the Pentagon had ordered 9,000 new Purple Hearts, the decorations awarded to troops wounded or killed in action. Some observers read that as an indication that the United States planned to send in ground forces. In fact, the run of Purple Hearts—the first large-scale production of the medal in more than half a century—told a very different story, write Giangreco and Moore, the authors of *Dear Harry. . . : Truman’s Mailroom, 1945–1953* (1999).

That order for new medals, they explain, cast light not on the war in Kosovo, but on the end of World War II: So many American casualties were averted by the dropping of the atom bomb on Japan that only now, three wars and many Cold War incidents later, was the United States running out of the stockpiled Purple Hearts.

In all, some 1,506,000 Purple Hearts were produced for use in World War II, say Giangreco and Moore, “with production reaching its peak as America geared up for the invasion of Japan.” The Navy ordered 25,000 Purple Hearts in October 1944, and then

50,000 more in the spring of 1945, and “borrowed” 60,000 more from the Army when it feared that delivery would be delayed.

“And then the war ended,” the authors write. “The most wonderful of all its surplus: 495,000 unused Purple Hearts.”

That’s not the only tale the medals tell. The evolving nature of modern warfare can be glimpsed through the debates over what constitutes a wound and who deserves the medal. When a powerful laser was directed briefly at a helicopter taking part in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia in 1998, the pilot and his crew chief were temporarily blinded, suffering “mild to moderate” burns—but neither was awarded the Purple Heart.

But undoubtedly the most significant tale involves the World War II surplus. Its sheer size, say the authors, undermines critics’ continuing attacks on President Harry Truman’s decision to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima. Such critics contend that the U.S. military’s own secret estimates of the alternative, an assault on the Japanese home islands, predicted relatively light casualties for American forces. The unused Purple Hearts, say the authors, give the lie to that.

People Do Matter

“Let Us Now Praise Great Men” by Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, in *International Security* (Spring 2001), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Univ., 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Political scientists striving for a theoretical explanation of international relations are inclined these days to pooh-pooh the significance of individual leaders. Of what importance could “Cleopatra’s nose” be in shaping history, they ask dismissively, compared with the anarchic system of nation-states, the weight of domestic politics, or the dynamics of institutions? It’s impersonal forces such

as those, they insist, that determine the course of international events.

How strange, then, that makers of foreign policy in the world’s capitals expend so much time and effort trying to fathom the goals, abilities, and idiosyncrasies of leaders such as George W. Bush, Vladimir Putin, and Jiang Zemin. Are the policymakers daft? No, argue Byman, research director of RAND’s Center for



After Napoleon Bonaparte defeated the Russians in the Battle of Friedland in 1807, he held sway over Europe—but because of his personal demons he drove France to wage more wars.

Middle East Public Policy, and Pollack, a senior research professor at the National Defense University.

Why are theorists reluctant to explore the role of individuals? If pressed, most will admit that individuals do make a difference in international relations, at least on occasion, say the authors. But “their influence does not lend itself to the generalizations that political scientists seek” in their effort to explain how international relations work, some theorists contend. Byman and Pollack disagree. Plausible and testable hypotheses can indeed be set forth, they aver, and they offer a baker’s dozen (e.g., “States led by leaders with grandiose visions are more likely to destabilize the system”).

While German resentment of the harsh Treaty of Versailles, and other large, impersonal forces helped bring on World War II, Adolf Hitler still was the most important single cause. His grandiose aspirations for Germany far exceeded the ambitions of the German people, and went well beyond even the appetites of most of the mainstream nationalist parties and the army high command. Since

Britain and France were eager to compromise in order to avert war, say the authors, Germany “should have been able to achieve the moderate revisionist goals espoused by most Germans without sparking a general European war. Only Hitler’s personal ambitions made such a conflict unavoidable.”

Hitler’s influence on events was unusual but not unique. The authors also examine in detail several other cases: the contrasting impacts on European politics of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (for peace) and Kaiser Wilhelm II (for war); Napoleon Bonaparte’s role in determining not only the intentions of France, but its capabilities and the reactions of other states; the difference that the contrasting personalities of dictators Saddam Hussein (reckless) and Hafiz al-Asad (cautious) made in the behavior of Iraq and Syria, respectively, after the Cold War.

It is especially important to acknowledge the role of individuals, the authors argue, in order to dispel the dangerous illusion that events are the inevitable products of forces—nationalism, ethnic differences, economic imperatives—beyond human control.