colonial civilians. Thomas is careful and thorough in following these through the kaleidoscope of local conditions in widely-ranging and -diverse locales. Three of the chapters especially stand out. Chapter 9 ("Partitions Dissected") deepens the insights of the Arie Dubnov and Laura Robson volume *Partitions* (Stanford University Press, 2019) to tease out the Damoclean nature of this late-imperial tool, half-solving at best the ethnocultural conflicts within colonial borders and, far more often, from the Levant to South Asia, entrenching and worsening them into the present day. Chapter 11 ("Decolonization and the Civilianization of Violence") centers the experience of those imperial subjects who bore the brunt of everyday violence, whether at the hands of neighbors higher up in the local hierarchy, or by agents of colonial military and police. Chapter 14 ("Conference Cultures and Third-World Decolonization") collates the scholarship of Su Lin Lewis, Carolien Stolte, and others to trace the trans-colonial networks that fueled decolonization by facilitating its sufferers' ability to compare notes about their "political repression and cultural denigration;" as Thomas puts it, "colonialism was, in this sense, self-destructive" (p. 308).

Thomas acknowledges the scale of the challenge he seeks to meet; "decolonization was pluri-continental, supranational, and globally comparable at the same time as it was locally specific and highly contingent" (p. 5). Among the conceptual casualties of this matrix might be called the short view and the long. Regarding the former, the Cold War plays a smaller role than is perhaps justified. Thomas notes that in places like Southeast Asia, the postwar superpower clash intertwined with decolonization to well-known, disastrous effect. Yet even in lesser-known theaters, including some technically long-decolonized, such as Latin America, the global ideological conflict made its presence felt. Regarding the latter casualty, although Thomas recognizes the long history of empire in human affairs, he does not pursue this line in ways that could explain how leading avatars of decolonization could behave in "imperial" fashion, such as Nehru's India did in Goa. These minor shortcomings do not, however, impeach the broader contributions of this well-conceived and engagingly-written, masterful book.

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The Airborne Mafia: The Paratroopers who Shaped America's Cold War Army. By Robert F. Williams. Battlegrounds: Cornell Studies in Military History. Cornell University Press, 2025. ISBN 978-1-5017-7982-4. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 288. $29.95 (hardback).

World War II and the dawn of the nuclear age reshaped America's view of the world and its national security threats. Airpower and nuclear weapons became the primary focus for the international defense of American democracy, prompting lasting institutional changes within the armed forces, especially the

U.S. Army. At the heart of these changes was the airborne mafia. Historian and former airborne soldier Robert F. Williams draws on his firsthand experiences to examine this culture. Airborne members are often viewed as exceptional and rise quickly through the army ranks, a dynamic Williams explores throughout his work. Williams argues that the airborne mafia—as an organization and its institutional values—played a critical role in molding the army's military strategies and policies during the early Cold War. According to Williams, the contemporary army would be "unrecognizable" without the widespread influence of airborne cultural values throughout the institution (p. 190).

Although scholars have written about WWII paratroopers, *Airborne Mafia* offers a compelling look at how the airborne subculture influenced postwar army airpower innovations. Williams begins by tracing the development of the airborne mafia—a subgroup within the broader military culture—during World War II. He makes a strong case by highlighting the institutionalization of airborne ideals throughout the army, dissecting the impact of airborne leaders like Matthew D. Ridgway, Maxwell D. Taylor, and James M. Gavin, among others, who quickly rose to senior positions and navigated the grand strategies of different administrations. Because of the growing admiration for paratroopers within political and military spaces after World War II, "punching the airborne ticket" became necessary to ascend the military hierarchy. Using their World War II and Korean War wartime experiences, airborne mafia leaders advocated for the development of a more versatile and "flexible responsive" airmobile army.

The book's early chapters examine the development of the paratrooper culture, dissecting who the airborne command sought to attract and what the institution desired to instill in each individual during World War II. The military called upon airborne units in Sicily, Normandy, and beyond, allowing leaders of the airborne mafia to assess its efficiency. Williams contends that these missions exposed the many challenges airborne units faced, and would face, in the future. Despite unexpected obstacles during operations, these experiences highlighted the strength of the airborne mafia's subculture, embedded with "elitism, flexibility, innovation, decentralization, individuality, and robust leadership," which contributed to their standout performances in WWII (p. 34).

In the nuclear era, Williams places airborne mafia leaders' theoretical approaches to warfare within the broader context of the Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy presidential administrations' Cold War grand strategies. Throughout chapters 3 and 4, Williams shows how leaders like Gavin, Taylor, and Ridgway rose to become top brass and used their positions to endorse a "new flexible strategy better suited to meet the myriad nature of world-wide contingencies" (p. 66). As the airborne mafia advanced into senior leadership roles, they continued to advocate for the importance of the army and airborne units at a time when the utility of ground forces was being questioned in an atomic and air-power age. The airborne mafia also had to navigate a challenging political climate during the early Cold War, as the national security strategies of the Truman and Eisenhower admin-

istrations often conflicted with the strategic thinking of Gavin, Taylor, and Ridgway, who emphasized the military's ability to operate in both conventional and unconventional conflicts. Initially, the airborne mafia made small institutional changes because of political resistance. It was not until Kennedy that they were able to play a "critical role developing the theories of flexible response strategy," allowing paratroopers to be promoted to every essential sector of the army (p. 85).

During the Cold War, the army adapted to the air-atomic era. As Williams notes, the reconfiguration of the structure of army divisions into smaller, more mobile divisions, the concept of "*controlled* dispersion," the development of air cavalry and airmobile doctrine, and the emphasis on rapid-response forces, all stemmed from foundational airborne cultural tenets (p. 93). These changes aimed to prepare the army to fight in "general nuclear war to limited conventional war and 'brushfire' wars of local aggression" (p. 84).

William's twenty-first-century experiences with airborne culture, combined with sources such as military journals and magazines, army field manuals, congressional documents and newspapers, allow him to offer a fresh perspective on airborne history by exploring its ties to institutional change. While readers unfamiliar with military terminology may find parts of the book challenging, the *Airborne Mafia* remains a compelling book that effectively traces the influence of airborne culture in the postwar army. This book is highly recommended for graduate students and scholars with an interest in Cold War history and military history.

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Moshe Dayan: The Making of a Strategist. By Eitan Shamir. Cambridge Military Histories. Cambridge University Press, 2025. ISBN 978-1-0090-1173-0. Maps. Figures. Index. Pp. vi, 447. $34.99 (paperback).

At a time when Israel could be facing one of is greatest challenges, becoming a pariah state charged with the crime of genocide, it is sensible to reflect on how it came to this and what we can learn from its past. One of the Israeli leaders who has the most to teach us is Moshe Dayan. Eitan Shamir's recently translated book about Dayan thus has come at just the right time.

Dayan was enigmatic, famous, and controversial. He was one of Israel's most charismatic and influential leaders. The photo of him in military fatigues (when he was minister of defense) walking alongside Yitzhak Rabin and Uzi Narkiss as they made their way to the Western Wall after its capture (or liberation) is one of the many powerful images that cemented his legacy both in Israel and internationally. Shamir's book demonstrates how Dyan helped build Israel's military culture, as well as chronicling his many posts including head of the Southern Command, defense minister during the Six-Day War, and minister of foreign affairs during the Yom Kippur War.