

Book Reviews

China Rx: Exposing the Risks of America's Dependence on China for Medicine, by Rosemary Gibson and Janardan Prasad Singh, hardcover, 302 pp, \$25.00, ISBN 9781633883819, Prometheus Books, 2018.

"Without firing a missile or hacking the electric grid, China can take America down by disrupting access to essential drugs," write the authors of this important book.

This book is a fine piece of investigative journalism that educates the reader about the genesis of China's grip on our supply of medications. China is now the largest global supplier of the active ingredients and chemical building blocks needed to make many vitamins, and prescription and over-the-counter drugs. These include antibiotics, steroids, and cancer drugs.

Until the mid-1990s, the U.S., Europe, and Japan manufactured 90 percent of the global supply of key ingredients for the world's medications. Now more than half of the 4,000 active ingredients needed to make a pharmaceutical depend on China.

Our weakness for bargains has created a monster. The authors note that hospitals and retail pharmacies have become "like the big box stores, stocked with made-in-China items." China's winning formula is for a company—with the help of the government—to undercut the price of drugs or components; the artificially low price forces other companies out of the market; then the company is free to manipulate the price and supply at will.

But the authors warn that "cheaper drugs required a cheaper way to make them." A light was shined on China's poor manufacturing practices of ingestibles in 2007 with the well-publicized dog and cat-food recall. More than 4,000 pets died from renal failure due to contamination with melamine, an industrial chemical used in plastics manufacture.

The outrage over this "economically motivated contamination" of pet food dissipated while in the next year a far less-publicized drug contamination took human lives. Although "manufactured" by an American company (Baxter Healthcare Corporation), heparin was made in China

under substandard conditions and was sold to unwitting hospitals with tragic consequences. One-third of the batches of heparin from China were contaminated. The book fully explores the heparin debacle, telling how it happened and what our government has done about protecting us in the future.

From the start, the authors received robotic, scripted, unhelpful replies to the straightforward question: where was this drug made? Searching for the answer, the authors delve into the loopholes in treaties and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations that have allowed shoddily manufactured drugs for human consumption to be used in the U.S. Moreover, politics was interjected. The Transparency in Drug Labeling Act was introduced in 2008 to force drug labels to disclose where the drug was produced, not merely the location of the parent company. The law went nowhere, and it appears that the power of the drug company lobbyists prevailed over safety. Did this signal to China that the U.S. could be influenced by special interests, sometimes to the detriment of its populace?

China's latest Five-year Plan for National and Social Development includes entering (and cornering?) the market on medical devices. The centralization of global supply in China leaves the world vulnerable. Not only can they disrupt the supply chain and cause shortages but purposefully create shortages or adulterate drugs. Keep in mind, the active ingredient for ciprofloxacin to treat anthrax is in China's hands.

This meticulously researched book is disturbing, but it is required reading for anyone who takes or prescribes medications. It is a real page-turner that reads like a novel and includes real-world scenarios. The authors included a detailed index, making the information readily accessible for repeated reading.

The Chinese think ahead with their well-known "five-year plans." This book is a wake-up call for America to start planning for our future as well.

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Someone Has to Say It: The Hidden History of How America Was Lost, by Tom Kawczynski, 245 pp, Kindle \$9.99, paperback \$19.13, ISBN 978-1-98107-288-0, independently published, 2018.

Tom Kawczynski begins by explaining how he came to write this book. His thesis is: "There is a look of things which is not always the truth of things, but the truth of things changes the look of things." Although there is some stinging vitriol in recounting some of the events in the author's experience, the overarching flavor of the book is informational, educational, and confrontational.

Since the history of conflict is most often written by the victors, Kawczynski wants to debunk views of the last century in our American experiment in liberty that are commonly held by our educational system, contemporary media, and "progressive" socialist political operatives. He is mainly concerned with predominance of a gullible, disengaged, non-discerning populace that continues to sit by as our republic dissolves into tyranny.

The 27 chapters highlight events including the world wars, establishment of the Federal Reserve system, and the administrations of Presidents Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, Reagan, Clinton, Obama, and Trump.

Kawczynski's major themes are our departures from constitutional rule, and the breakdown in the moral values that have been the source of our societal strengths and success. Concerning the Bay of Pigs, the Iran-Contra affair, U.S. Supreme Court appointees, government intrusion into medical care, the World Trade Center attack, cultural Marxism, gender identity, climate change, marijuana, and Islam, Kawczynski is sarcastic and even bombastic. Still, he is readable, entertaining, and a provocative challenge to the propaganda we now call fake news.

Although Kawczynski does not use formal documentation or archived literature, the persons, places, and events are recounted in reasonable way so as not

to distract from the central focus of telling the story and applying his interpretation.

If one can overlook the author's occasional crude and brash language, and social media's caricaturization of this former city manager and his suppositions about our current political correctness, this entertaining book may add fuel to the fires of liberty. It might even provide some means of recovery to a tattered and seriously troubled republic.

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The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won, by Victor Davis Hanson, Ph.D., hardcover, 721 pp, \$23.98, ISBN 9780465066988, New York, N.Y., Basic Books, 2017.

Victor Davis Hanson is an icon of historical, military, and agrarian classical studies, and founder of the Classical Studies Department at the University of California at Fresno. He is Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, is a regular *National Review* essayist, and teaches at various universities. Hanson has written or edited 24 books. In my opinion, *The Second World Wars* is his best.

Hanson explains why the Axis Powers were doomed by their inadequacies, but their defeat depended on British resolve, upheld by the determination of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, with assistance from the U.S. and its eventual entry into the war.

The Russian resistance depleted and destroyed the German Eastern campaign, but this was only possible because of German mistakes, weather, American supply lines, and the ability of a totalitarian regime to sacrifice millions of soldiers without hesitation. Hanson explains that the Wehrmacht's fate was militarily decided by the Allies' European invasion and at Stalingrad, but that it was actually determined before America entered the war.

At the onset of the war, the Japanese navy and air force were as strong as possible for an island nation with limited natural resources, but once the U.S. was mobilized, Japan could not replace ships, sailors, pilots, planes, and carriers fast enough to hold on.

Hanson focuses on the national resources and industrial capabilities that are essential to a successful war effort. He

points out that the Germans' Operation Barbarossa was a strikingly ragtag effort dependent on horses. The German navy was no match for the British or the nascent American navy, which ultimately became extraordinary. Germany had no access to petroleum and had to convert coal to fuel oil until Romania was annexed, but even then the resource was inadequate. Japan too was always fuel-starved, while the Allies had an ocean of Texas oil.

Germany made superior technological advances including its V1 and V2 rockets, but its dictatorship lacked the competent direction to use them well enough. The Japanese had good carriers, and a superior fighter plane in the Mitsubishi A6M—which Allies called Zero probably because of its red circular Hinomaru national emblem. Germany's "monster tanks" were lethal but few, so Russian T34s and inferior American Shermans were effective in numbers, mobility, and air support. Both Germany and Japan lacked the resources and industrial capacity to resist the Allies' superior forces and warfare competence, Hanson notes. Germany lacked the ability to invade England or to project enough power from its base without a navy or long-range bombers like the British Lancaster or the American B-17, B-24, B-25, B-26, or later the mighty B-29. Key to British defenses were newly invented RADAR and the Spitfire fighter. Hellcat and Corsair planes matched the Zero when they became available.

Hanson notes that American aircraft carrier production was astounding, and emblematic of massive American production of all war materiel including rifles, artillery, vehicles, tanks, planes, transports, and land and ocean cargo and fuel carriers. Late in the war, the Japanese saw hundreds of big bombers in the skies.

Until reading Hanson, it had not occurred to me how uniquely horrifying it was for the Axis powers to have killed so many more innocent people than the Allies did, despite their losing the war. Typically, Hanson observes, most people think it is the other way around. The Axis powers first took adjacent, powerless, or weak nations, and were able to target and destroy civilian populations through strategic bombing and rocket and explosive attacks, in addition to genocidal pogroms.

Hanson argues that World War II was not a single conflict but several, with arrival and departure of advanced technologies, sophisticated ideologies, national

armies, and legendary statesmen. What started as an effort by Germany to bully its way to more territory transformed to a massive war that was created by the crazy German invasion of Russia (Hitler admired Napoleon but seemed not to have learned from him) and the irrational Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that awoke the giant economy and people of the planet's dominant nation. Then Germany decided to declare war on the U.S.!

As Hanson points out, Germany in 1939 "was not stronger than the combined French and British militaries—or at least not so strong as to be able to defeat and occupy both powers. The Japanese were a regional factor, and had been able to attack and annex part of China, but Japan still was not as capable as a fully alert and motivated United States. Yet the Axis got ahead of more civilized elements, causing the destruction of civility and the massive loss of innocent lives. How could this have happened?

The fecklessness of both the British and the French, and the inactivity and lack of concern by the United States, clearly encouraged the adventurous military culture of the Axis powers, Hanson writes. World War II, just after the trauma of World War I, is not only a story of accidents, miscalculations, and overreactions (although there were plenty of those, to be sure), but also of the carefully considered decision to ignore, appease, or collaborate with Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany by nations that had the resources and knowledge, but not yet the willpower to do otherwise. Tens of millions of innocents died at the hands of the Axis because evil was not recognized and fought soon enough.

Hanson's book is timely because today we face fanatical enemies, two of whom are close to nuclear weapon delivery capability, and also Pakistan, which is presumed not to be an enemy but has nuclear weapons and will trade in them. Hanson espouses a moral clarity too often lacking in modern political and foreign policy salons, infected as they are with Marxist and Progressive magical thinking. Facing aggressive socialism and bellicose Wahhabi jihadism, we might repeat the foreign policy judgment errors made before Hitler invaded Poland. Hanson's heavyweight book provides a vivid reminder of what can happen.

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