

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### NOT JUST A BRITISH POINT OF VIEW

Rodger, N. A. M. *Essays in Naval History, from Medieval to Modern*. Variorum Collected Studies Series. Surrey, U.K., and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009. 346pp. \$135.90

N. A. M. Rodger is well known around the world as Britain's foremost naval historian and the author of the three-volume *A Naval History of Britain*, currently in progress. He is an author whose writing is always a pleasure to read, and a volume of his collected essays is a welcome addition to the literature. Like other such collections, these essays were previously published in either specialist academic journals, other volumes, or other languages. They range in date of original publication from 1988 to 2004 and provide a range of themes that expand in detail upon aspects that Rodger has also simultaneously been dealing with in his multivolume history in a more summary manner. Thus it is of particular value to have these pieces brought together where they can be easily found, even though some specialists may have already read them. However, the highly worthy object of bringing such essays together in a single volume has been largely thwarted by the publisher, whose insistence on selling the books in this series at such high prices has made it impractical for most interested

readers to buy them. The publisher's practice of maintaining the original typography and page numbering is also disputable. This reviewer certainly prefers the alternative of revised essays, newly set in a consistent typeface to create an even more cohesive and useful work. To his credit, however, Rodger has made brief additional comments on many of the pieces in light of more recent scholarship; also, this volume includes a general index.

Like the author's multivolume history, the seventeen essays collected here all reflect the laudable view that naval history is not a backwater of specialist interest but rather a central theme in general history, both British and global. The works cover a selection of interesting topics that range over ten centuries of naval history. While written from a consciously British point of view, they are founded in a much broader context. As the author writes in his preface, "I do not consider that naval history can ever be written from a narrowly national standpoint. The sea links different nations, in peace and war, and there can be no true naval history which is

not informed by international comparisons, and based on the sources from all relevant countries and languages.” True to his word, Nicholas Rodger has produced essays here that fully reflect that view, the hallmark of the effectiveness and originality of his work.

Among the several important and broad-ranging essays are “The New Atlantic: Naval Warfare in the Sixteenth Century”; “Form and Function in European Navies, 1660–1815”; and “Navies and the Enlightenment”—broad overviews of the changing nature of warfare at sea and the differing types of navies that characterized those periods. Rodger’s essays “Cnut’s Geld and the Size of Danish Ships,” “The Military Revolution at Sea,” and “The Development of Broadside Gunnery, 1450–1650” show consideration of specific general issues. “Weather, Geography and Naval Power in the Age of Sail” should be basic reading for everyone approaching the age of fighting sail for the first time.

Other selections deal with interpretations of specific aspects of British history, such as “The Naval Service of the Cinque Ports,” “Queen Elizabeth and the Myth of Sea-Power in English History,” and “Mutiny or Subversion? Spithead and the Nore.” A number of such essays neatly summarize the state of knowledge on topics that deserve much greater, in-depth research, and analysis than they have received.

Among these are two essays on naval medicine in the light of broader medical development, one on naval chaplains, and another on the broad development of naval education. To these Rodger has added his own detailed research contribution to a neglected topic—a statistical analysis of commissioned officers’ careers between

1660 and 1815. Previously published in an electronic journal, having this article readily available in print is most welcome, despite the absence of some of the original graphs.

All in all, this book is recommended to every naval historian. While the price is sadly far beyond reason for individuals, librarians should make a point of acquiring it for their permanent collections.

JOHN B. HATTENDORF  
*Naval War College*



Dietl, Wilhelm. *Schattenarmeen: Die Geheimdienste der islamischen Welt (Shadow Armies: The Secret Services of the Islamic World)*. St. Pölten: Residenz Verlag, 2010. 300pp. \$31.90

This is a timely book, given the current revolutions unfolding across the Middle East and North Africa, where local intelligence and security services have been a major focus of public anger, fear, and resentment. Across the region, in regimes of all ideological stripes, the secret police agency (the dreaded *mukhabarat*) has long served as a pillar. These services have a well deserved reputation for brutality, sometimes even effectiveness, yet their murky operations have long remained shrouded in whispered myth. The fall of the secret police services, especially in Egypt, where the pervasive *mukhabarat* had long been the stoutest defender of the Mubarak regime, has begun to open the door on what the spies have been up to.

Dietl, who promises to reveal secrets about what has really been going on, has the right credentials to do so, knowing both the region and the world of espionage; yet he himself is the subject of

much speculation and controversy. For years before his cover was blown in 2005, Wilhelm Dietl reported on events from across the Islamic world for quality European media outlets. It was then revealed that he was an operative for the German Federal Intelligence Service (the BND), which has long had a strong presence in the Middle East. Most controversially, Dietl had spied on fellow journalists for the BND, a revelation that tarred his reputation and caused a major political scandal in Germany. This book (unable to find a publisher in Germany, it was instead put out by a small Austrian firm) may be seen as an effort at redemption.

Certainly the expected spy stories are here in abundance, presented against the background of a “new Cold War” between the West and the Islamic world. *Schattenarmeen* begins with a long and detailed chapter on the nefarious activities of revolutionary Iran’s clandestine dirty work, going back to 1979. This is a nasty saga that includes details about assassinations by Tehran’s spies of dissidents abroad, in a long list of countries. It is fitting that Dietl devotes so many pages to Iran’s intelligence services, since they have been active in Germany for many years, including involvement in high-profile killings of dissidents.

There are similar but shorter chapters on bad behavior by Syria and Libya, both of which have employed their spies to kill and intimidate enemies abroad. The chapter on Egypt is unsatisfactorily thin, given the importance of the *mukhabarat* in the now-fallen regime, and the discussion of Saudi Arabia is equally perfunctory. Particularly unsatisfying is Dietl’s presentation of Iraqi activities before 2003; Saddam’s

secret services enjoyed an evil reputation across the region for repression at home and dirty work abroad, yet one finds only a general discussion of the role of the intelligence and security services in Saddam’s complex and sordid regime. Considering the avalanche of materials now available on the Iraqi *mukhabarat*, thanks in no small part to U.S. government efforts to declassify and release thousands of pages of captured files, this omission is troubling and perhaps revealing.

Dietl’s presentation of terrorist groups, with an analysis of secret alliances with intelligence services across the region, is an amalgam of assertions and speculation—little of it new. Asking important questions about the exact role of Islamic secret agencies behind such groups as Hizballah and Hamas (which too few Western journalists have been willing to do) is to be encouraged, but the information offered here lacks specificity and, above all, sourcing.

Throughout, it is impossible to tell from where Dietl gets his information. He talks about “insider sources” yet provides no footnotes, even to anonymous sources. Given the controversial nature of many of his assertions, this does not pass journalistic, much less academic, muster. The short bibliography of “recommended literature” is a pedestrian collection of secondary sources (none in local languages), some of dubious reliability, that would be known to any student of the topic.

The omission of any discussion of Algeria is especially curious, since that unfortunate country has experienced the worst jihad-inspired insurgency of any Islamic state in recent memory. It has been a bloody conflict, killing some 200,000 Algerians since 1992, and it is

still in progress. Considering that Algerian intelligence has been exceptionally successful at fighting terrorists, employing clandestine methods that are brutal and nefarious even by regional standards, the absence of any analysis of Algeria cannot be explained.

In the end, *Schattenarmee* is really a collection of spy stories, many of them of questionable provenance, and lacks much overarching analysis. The stories are entertaining and, based on this reviewer's experiences, essentially true; however, they are not a serious treatment of an important subject. Instead, Dietl has added to the unfortunate genre of terrorism books, marred by unattributed revelations, inadequate analysis, and overheated rhetoric. The major role played by Middle Eastern intelligence agencies in security matters and nearly all regional politics is poorly understood in the West and demands detailed analysis. This is not the book to fill that need.

JOHN R. SCHINDLER  
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Mueller, John. *Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al Qaeda*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011. 319pp. \$27.95

John Mueller has written an extensive body of work on national security issues, work that runs counter to the conventional wisdom. *Atomic Obsession*, a broad examination of the limited role nuclear weapons have played in history, examines the prospects for a terrorist's acquisition and use of a nuclear device. Mueller argues that the expense of these nuclear arsenals (perhaps as high as ten trillion dollars over the course of the

entire Cold War, by one estimate) was not worth it. He contends that the memory of World War II, great-power "contentment," and fear of conventional escalation were enough to prevent the Cold War from going hot. He cites historian Adam Ulam as stating that Stalin "had great respect for the United States' vast economic and hence military potential, quite apart from the bomb."

On the specter of proliferation, Mueller points out that decades of predictions of an imminent cascade of new members in the nuclear club have not been borne out, that warnings by Herman Kahn that Japan would "unequivocally" have an arsenal by 1980 (and similar predictions concerning a unified Germany) have not come to pass. Mueller documents what he says is a sixty-year history of nuclear alarmism, arguing that this is the light in which we should view current concern about proliferation.

The most engaging aspect of this important book is its section on nuclear terrorism. Mueller, to my mind, demolishes the casually constructed conventional fears on the subject. Even rogue regimes are highly unlikely to transfer one of these expensive (and laboriously acquired) weapons even to a trusted independent group, because of the potential for extreme danger to the state. Al-Qa'ida, the "chief demon group" in this regard, is trusted by no one; its "explicit enemies group includes not only Christians and Jews, but all Middle Eastern regimes."

Mueller documents how remarkably difficult nuclear weapons are to steal and use. Not even all weapons designers are familiar with modern security safeguards, such as conventional explosives within a nuclear weapon that render the

weapon useless if precise operating procedures are not followed. Regarding concern over terrorists building their own bombs, it is very hard to steal fissile material, and the work of constructing a bomb is “difficult, dangerous, and extremely exacting.” A great deal of complex experimentation, experimentation beyond the capabilities of substate groups, would be required.

Mueller points to a raft of alarming but mistaken predictions about the likelihood of a terrorist group using a nuclear weapon. For example, John Negroponte, as UN ambassador (2001–2004), suggested that there was a “high probability” that al-Qa’ida would attempt to use a nuclear weapon on the United States within two years—an ominous warning offered in 2003.

Those concerned by the threat of nuclear terrorism against the United States are likely to find *Atomic Obsession* a well argued, engagingly written, thought-provoking, and ultimately reassuring work.

ANDREW L. STIGLER  
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West, Bing. *The Wrong War: Grit, Strategy, and the Way Out of Afghanistan*. New York: Random House, 2011. 336pp. \$28

“We have fought the wrong war with the wrong strategy”—so ends Bing West’s *The Wrong War*. West, a former assistant secretary of defense and Marine officer with combat experience in Vietnam, is an award-winning author whose books have appeared on the *New York Times* best-seller list and the Commandant of the Marine Corps’s reading list. His latest work is an engrossing

compilation of tactical vignettes, cataloging changes to the strategic and operational-level approaches of two administrations and six theater-level commanders, over the ten-year history of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. West’s concluding view on the key to exiting Afghanistan, though perhaps an oversimplification of the challenge, is nonetheless a valid consideration for a potentially long-term military commitment in Afghanistan.

The strength of West’s work is in his vivid descriptions of operations undertaken by coalition and special operations forces (SOF) in Kunar and Helmand Provinces. The author’s credibility and ability to connect with war fighters provide him intimate access to small-unit leaders, resulting in narratives of tactical-level successes that ultimately evolved into strategic-level failures. West also describes the complexities of the regional, tribal, and national-level political influences in Afghanistan, the latter best illustrated by operations in Nuristan Province forced upon the coalition by President Hamid Karzai. There are also numerous examples of what West describes as the “culture of entitlement,” whereby Afghan leaders gain the benefits of coalition-provided security and development projects while seemingly providing—at best—only neutrality in return. West’s portrayals of the war fighters’ courage and heartbreak are well supported by a number of revealing photographs. His method of numbering the photos for specific reference in the text is particularly effective. Aside from some minor editorial errors, this work is remarkably detailed yet still easy to follow, despite the change over time in local leadership, unit rotation, and the periodic

renaming of forward operating bases and combat outposts.

The proposed way out of Afghanistan is offered in rather abrupt fashion in the final chapter of the book. West's examples and repeated references to Vietnam-era Combined Action Platoons and his comparisons of them to effective SOF-led forces in Helmand are indeed well founded. However, as painstakingly as he describes the regionally compartmentalized long-term failure of small units in one region, caution is warranted in prescribing one district's successful approach as a theater-wide solution. Furthermore, while West identifies the challenges, his solution does not address the broader problems of the narcotics trade, district-level corruption, and the synchronization of incentives-based development programs—all of which must be addressed while simultaneously balancing an "exit" strategy with mid to long-term advisory force structures. Also noticeably absent is the inclusion of a chapter on the P2K (Paktia/Paktika/Khowst) region and the Haqqani network insurgent group.

*The Wrong War* will undoubtedly be a popular read among junior leaders and war fighters, as well as the general readership, and it should be considered for battalion-level reading lists and pre-deployment cultural-awareness training. Nevertheless, and while the lessons of Kunar and Helmand are certainly relevant and West's advisory-team structure is well considered, policy makers and strategists will find the book lacking sufficient depth in addressing the broader-based challenges for a long-term, comprehensive solution.

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Evans, Thomas W. *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of His Conversion to Conservatism*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2006. 302pp. \$20

Thomas Evans is the first author to examine comprehensively Ronald Reagan's eight years (1954–62) as host of the television show *General Electric Theater* and then as a traveling spokesman for General Electric. Evans has deepened our understanding of how a devoted "New Dealer" became not only a champion of Barry Goldwater but then displaced him as the patron saint of American conservatism. Evans's fine book examines a critical period in Reagan's life during which his skills as a public figure blossomed. Reagan was one of our most ideological presidents, yet at the same time he considered himself a master of the art of negotiation and frequently compromised with political opponents in Sacramento and Washington. As Reagan developed his negotiating skills as president of the Screen Actors Guild (1947–52), he saw the other side of midcentury American labor strife, from the perspective of management, during his time with GE. General Electric was a formidable and respected union adversary in terms of countering big labor's demands; the company poured considerable resources into "educating" its workers to reject union radicalism. GE's management was also ahead of its time in communicating directly with its labor force, over the heads of the union leadership—a tactic Reagan employed to great effect in the White House when Congress stood in his way.

At the same time, Reagan also learned to "work a room"—meeting GE

employees and hearing their complaints about intrusive government and high taxes. Though he had spent years in the film industry, this contact with lower- and middle-class Americans rubbed off some of the Hollywood veneer and had the added benefit of teaching him what worked and what didn't in trying to appeal to the "common man." By 1980, millions of these "common men" would become known as "Reagan Democrats." Yet perhaps most importantly, it was during his employment with GE that Reagan robustly embraced a political ideology of free markets, limited government, and anticommunism. Evans believes that Reagan's GE experience was his "apprenticeship for public life" and his "postgraduate education in political science." The author argues that GE's vice president, Lemuel Boulware (who directed the aforementioned campaign against the union bosses of the era), was Reagan's mentor in his conservative apprenticeship. By 1964 Ronald Reagan had publicly come out of his New Deal closet (he voted in 1960 as a "Democrat for Nixon"), but neither he nor the company was anxious to publicize the impact of his GE years on his conversion.

This work has all the flair of a government report on agriculture subsidies, and the author occasionally overstates the impact of Reagan's GE experience (according to Evans, it was when the seeds for the Iran-Contra scandal and Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative were planted). Nonetheless, Thomas Evans's book is the best kind of history and biography, in that it explores a facet of a statesman's life that tends to be overlooked, especially, in this instance, by historians and political

scientists with tin ears for the world of business.

STEPHEN F. KNOTT  
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Beevor, Antony. *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2009. 591pp. \$32.95

The 6 June 1944 Normandy invasion has received ample research over the years, with works by such noted historians as Cornelius Ryan, Stephen E. Ambrose, and Max Hastings. Known as Operation OVERLORD, it was by all accounts a pivotal event of the war in Europe. Hindsight clearly shows that ending Hitler's control of Europe required the Allies to meet the Wehrmacht in the field in mainland Europe.

So what can another book add to the canon on Normandy? Antony Beevor's meticulously written and researched *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* might at first blush appear to be simply another treatise on the famed battle. Yet anyone who believes this to be so without reading it will miss out on sweeping narrative and credible research.

Beevor minces no words in telling the story of this grand operation, the epitome of Allied wartime cooperation and a daunting plan to develop and execute. There is no shortage of controversies and points of debate, which Beevor meticulously brings out again and again. A fellow countryman, General Sir Bernard Montgomery, his famous ego well documented, comes in for pointed criticism for decisions and actions he made throughout the battle. In fact, both Allied and German military leaders face

Beevor's scrutiny. The Americans, fixated on securing a port facility for logistical support, learned the hard way that the entrenched German garrison in Brest could hold out for a very long time. Despite a highly sophisticated air-ground coordination and the commitment of VIII Corps, the Americans had to pay dearly to pry Brest from resolute and determined German defenders—blood spilled for a port that in the end was never used.

Beevor is a well known historian of twentieth-century combat, one who knows his topic, capably weaves the broad sweep of the Normandy campaign into a compelling account, and provides the broader context, bringing in aspects of the battle that until recently have received short shrift. For example, he presents an excellent account of the battles fought by the Polish 1st Armored Division. Also, he shows the critical role of the 20 July assassination attempt against Hitler in how the German leadership responded to the relentless Allied onslaught. The subsequent hunt for conspirators wreaked havoc with the German military's ability to wage a cohesive and effective defense and helped set up the eventual Allied breakout and defeat of the Wehrmacht in France by the end of the summer.

Without a doubt, the battle for France in 1944 saw some of the most ferocious and savage fighting to take place in the European theater. There was the unrelenting fight by Montgomery to take Caen, which was won at great cost—Allied bombing during Operation GOODWOOD ultimately reduced the town to rubble. Seeing Caen as pivotal to the security of the beachhead, D-Day planners expected to have it in Allied

hands by the end of 6 June, but it did not fall until mid-July. Beevor makes the case that British sluggishness allowed a vast portion of the German army to escape the Falaise Pocket—German soldiers who would live to fight the Allies another day.

A constant thread throughout his book is the high cost paid by French citizens for the liberation of their land. Nearly twenty thousand French civilians died during the liberation of Normandy, in addition to the estimated fifteen thousand killed and nineteen thousand injured during the preliminary bombing.

CDR. DAVID L. TESKA, U.S. COAST GUARD RESERVE  
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Fukuyama, Francis. *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2011. 585pp. \$35

Two decades ago scholars, government policy makers, and military cold warriors struggled to decipher the meaning of the sudden and drastic change happening in the Soviet bloc. Francis Fukuyama now offers a provocative approach to this puzzle, which has been widely debated and perhaps misunderstood ever since. He cautiously asked in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) “whether, at the end of the twentieth century, it makes sense for us once again to speak of a coherent and directional History of mankind that will eventually lead the greater part of humanity to liberal democracy.” Fukuyama went on to theorize that the fall of communism represented a great step forward in mankind's struggle for

“recognition” and higher standards of government legitimacy. Fingers quickly pointed to continual conflicts in Africa and the Middle East as proof that such idealistic notions had little value. Released in the midst of the Arab Spring, however, this new book, the first of two volumes analyzing the origins of political order, offers a timely presentation of Fukuyama’s ideas on political development.

It is a work of comparative political philosophy wrapped around a political-military world history, from prehistory through the eve of the French and American Revolutions. As these events marked the beginning of a rapid increase in the speed of political development, Fukuyama pauses here until the second volume. He begins with a biological and anthropological premise that humans naturally form societal relationships based on kinship. Kinship-based societal rule has, in turn, provided a barrier to three key areas of political development: the state, rule of law, and accountable government. The struggle to move from patrimonial systems of government to modern liberal democracy is the framework for Fukuyama’s history. Liberal development, as Fukuyama describes it, follows many different paths in different regions and cultures, not a single, linear progression.

Readers may be surprised by a nearly complete absence of Greek and Roman political history. Instead, the author describes paradoxes in Chinese, Indian, and Ottoman development. Each of these regions experienced bureaucratic “state building,” with the potential to escape the bonds of kinship-based rule, but each ultimately underwent

“political decay,” preventing the transition to liberal democracy. He contrasts these with European political development, which, while unique, was not predestined to occur before that of the rest of the world.

Perhaps the most interesting features of this work revolve around early achievements in state building that failed to secure lasting holds on their respective societies. He describes, for example, how though the Chinese dynasties of Qin (221–207 BC) and Han (206 BC to AD 220) embraced a centralized state, meritocratic promotion, and an effective civilian-led military, the rule of law never emerged and accountability remained subject to dynastic interpretation. In India, the Brahmans used religion to create something akin to the rule of law as well as an impartial standard of accountability for rulers, but they were unable to form lasting state institutions to enforce these trends.

As the American demand for the military to add “state building” to its list of core competencies increases, officers will find Fukuyama’s observations on political origins valuable reminders of the lasting effects of patrimonialism in current conflict areas. While we ponder the next phase of political development from Tunisia to Bahrain to Afghanistan and hope for the emergence of liberal democracy, we should heed Fukuyama’s caution, “Tribalism in its various forms remains a default form of political organization, even after a modern state has been created.” Perhaps this also explains the lasting problem of interservice rivalry as well!

MAJ. MATT VAN HOOK, U.S. AIR FORCE  
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Kurtzman, Joel. *Common Purpose: How Great Leaders Get Organizations to Achieve the Extraordinary*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010. 212pp. \$27.95

In his latest book, Joel Kurtzman draws on his experience as editor, reporter, and columnist for the *New York Times*, editor in chief of the *Harvard Business Review*, founder of the magazine *Strategy + Business*, columnist for *Fortune* and *Chief Executive Magazine*, and adviser to the World Economic Forum (Davos), the Wharton School's SEI Center, and MIT's *Sloan Management Review*. He attempts to capture the essence of what it takes to be an effective organizational leader in today's world, and the term he uses for this is the title of the book, *Common Purpose*.

Kurtzman starts out with the conundrum that leaders of organizations face today: How do you move from traditional hierarchical organizations to flatter, sensing organizations that are responsive enough to react quickly and appropriately to new information, threats, and opportunities? How do you encourage prudent risk taking while empowering people at all levels to make decisions that benefit the organization without losing focus on the vision and mission or squandering time and resources on efforts that do not contribute to desired long-term goals and objectives? In other words, how do you align effort from top to bottom without traditional bureaucratic approval procedures that waste time and effort? Kurtzman cites as extreme negative examples the FBI just prior to the attacks of September 11 and the Enron Corporation. In the first example he demonstrates the danger of not

empowering people at lower levels to act when they become aware of information, and in the second he shows what can happen when people are empowered to act but get carried away with short-term goals without considering the effect over the long term.

In later chapters Kurtzman identifies ingredients of leadership that produce an atmosphere of shared, common purpose in high-performing organizations. He points to many examples, leaders like Gordon Bethune at Continental Airlines, Steve Wynn at Wynn Resorts, and Shivan Subramaniam at FM Global (an insurance company in Rhode Island that has been in business since 1835). He discusses the importance of values that are demonstrated, not just preached, by the entire leadership team, serving as examples for everyone in the organization. He points out that the best organizations have leaders who acknowledge and incentivize the flow of new ideas from all levels of the company, not just from the top. He speaks about the importance of trust within organizations and identifies ways in which trust can be developed and strengthened despite tough economic times in which massive layoffs have diminished the loyalty of employees toward organizations.

Finally, Kurtzman believes in the power of positive thinking and the importance of the leader performing the roles of coach and mentor. Citing the research of Richard Boyatzis of Case Western Reserve University, he maintains that the best leaders create supportive environments that are enjoyable to work in, an effort that pays off in increased retention and even increased willingness of employees to take prudent risks to produce better outcomes. Kurtzman believes that the mutuality of interests

among employees and the organization is one of the most important aspects of achieving a state in which everyone is working together, with a common purpose. He also provides some useful insight for older leaders working with an emergent Generations X and Y workforce.

This is a well written book that offers some time-tested and proven ideas to new leaders and serves as a good reminder to seasoned leaders, who may have gotten into bad habits.

ROGER H. DUCEY  
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Aurelius, Marcus. Translated by C. Scot Hicks and David V. Hicks. *The Emperor's Handbook: A New Translation of the Meditations*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002. 150pp. \$22

Whether or not the first-century Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius ever intended his personal musings to be shared with anyone, his *Meditations* has been translated and published numerous times over the centuries. Writing at the end of long days campaigning against Rome's enemies, Aurelius sought to capture his personal thoughts on the best way to approach the many challenges presented by life, not only as a military leader and emperor of Rome but also as a father and a man. His thoughts are presented within the framework of the Stoic philosophy, one of the prevailing schools of thought in the first-century Roman world. *The Emperor's Handbook* is Scot and David Hicks's translation of this great philosophical work. Does it offer anything to the reader that other translations do not? The short answer is yes.

For ease of reading alone *The Emperor's Handbook* soars above both previous and more recent editions of *Meditations*. The prose is rendered in modern American English—clearly delivered and designed to present Marcus Aurelius to a contemporary audience. Short sidebar quotes presented every two or three pages allow skimming through the book while still capturing the enduring wisdom it contains; even the most casual readers can become acquainted with Aurelius's thoughts in a very short time simply by reading them. What they would miss, however, is the extensive notes that support much of the text and contribute to the book's strength. For those interested in pursuing further study on either the *Meditations* or the Stoic philosophy of which it is a part, the translators list plenty of additional reference material in their short introduction. There is a short index.

Scot and David Hicks believe that anyone can benefit from reading Marcus Aurelius's thoughts. Many previous editions of his *Meditations* are specifically geared toward military leaders or to leaders in business or government. However, these translators have aimed their work at a much wider audience. The back flap of the book states Aurelius's wisdom "speaks to the soul of anyone who has ever exercised authority or faced adversity or believed in a better day." That means almost all of us, and if this book can spark interest in readers who might not otherwise have turned toward the Stoic mind-set or these particular precepts, it can only be considered a success. *The Emperor's Handbook* is recommended highly for anyone—whether student of philosophy, person in authority, or someone

who, as the authors say, believes in a better day.

The last sidebar, presented on page 144, asks, “Are my guiding principles healthy and robust? On this hangs everything.” *The Emperor’s Handbook*

delivers possibly the most robust translation yet of this great philosophical work.

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