

BOOK REVIEWS

FROM THE MED TO THE WORLD

Seagoing Ships and Seamanship in the Bronze Age Levant, by Shelley Wachsmann. College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2008. 448 pages. \$40.

Homeric Seafaring, by Samuel Mark. College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2009. 272 pages. \$60.
Byzantine Warship vs Arab Warship, 7th–11th Centuries, by Angus Konstam. Oxford, U.K.: Osprey, 2015. 80 pages. \$18.95.

These three books reviewed together are not an obvious historical match for each other as comparable scholarly studies; the only chronological thread linking them is their coverage of an era extending from the Bronze Age to the medieval period—a considerable portion of the maritime past. Yet all do focus, mostly, on the eastern Mediterranean.

The first book, *Seagoing Ships and Seamanship in the Bronze Age Levant*, is a monograph of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M University. The institute, founded by George Bass in 1973, is the flagship for underwater and maritime archaeology programs in the United States; its publications reflect that fact, as does its extensive global outreach resulting from its finds of shipwrecks and other items relating to maritime history covering the past ten thousand years.

As a world pioneer in nautical archaeology, Bass also wrote the foreword to the book. Author Shelley Wachsmann

is the maritime archaeologist—now a professor for the institute at Texas A&M—whose research on the “Sea of Galilee boat” conducted for the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums produced his earlier popular book of that name (New York: Perseus, 2000) on a single two-thousand-year-old landlocked freshwater find.

This comprehensive tome published under the auspices of the institute examines a wide swath of past Mediterranean cultures whose maritime activities led to their evolution as Bronze Age powers. This book explores economic development, by way of Mediterranean Sea trade; how seaworthy ships were built, down to the smallest details; and what technological advances made possible voyages longer than mere coast-hugging itineraries. It also addresses how ships and states dealt with piracy and—extrapolating from epigraphic evidence—what kind of agreements constituted Bronze Age maritime law.

Although such a broadly themed approach makes difficult any organizational scheme for demarcating possibly overlapping domains, this excellent book is divided into two main sections over seventeen chapters: (1) “The Ships: Review of the Evidence,” covering Egyptian to Cypriotic, Aegean, Minoan, Sea Peoples, and Homeric beaked ships, as well as extant shipwreck archaeology; and (2) “Aspects of Maritime Activity,” ranging from ship construction to types of anchors, methods of propulsion (e.g., sails, oars, or both), navigation, trade, and law. These are followed by conclusions, appendices, endnotes, glossaries, bibliography, and index. The ample illustrations (at least 450) in this book are rich: very few pages are bereft of images, up to the conclusions of chapter 17. They include archaeological fieldwork photos of sites and artifacts, illustrations, maps, drawings, site plans, and reconstructions. There are also tables containing texts and their translations. One of the best results of this monograph is the consideration of nearly every kind of possible historical evidence for Bronze Age seafaring. For example, nearly every known Minoan seal or ceramic shard with a ship image is examined closely for information. The same is true for the Medinet Habu Sea Peoples reliefs in Egypt and the exhaustive analyses of excavated ship anchors. Thus the book is a huge asset for anyone studying maritime history of the Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean.

The second book, titled *Homeric Seafaring*, also published by the Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M, is much more specific to a defined time and place. The work is much indebted to a poetic yet historically rich body of epic literary references, especially that

of Homer in his famous “Catalogue of Ships” in *Iliad* 2. Yet if it were limited to that epic, the work would not add much to existing philological studies across centuries of painstaking analysis. Author Samuel Mark begins by pointing out (p. 11) that Homer can be a frustrating “siren song,” one to which archaeologists and historians, trained in data-mining purviews very different from those of philologists and literary scholars, will apply competing hermeneutics. But Mark reminds us (p. 15) that a skilled storyteller such as Homer (whoever the author behind that name might have been) “was careful to make his characters and events as lifelike as possible,” despite whatever chronologically diverse oral redactions changed the text along the way. This book also begins where the pioneer maritime historian Lionel Casson left off in attempting to reconcile the textual with the archaeological details, although not always weighting them equally.

Some of the perhaps surprising conclusions Mark contributes to the available literature include that seafaring was a very common activity even in agronomy-based societies, and that coast hugging can be more treacherous than open-sea sailing because of rocks, shoals, and currents. (Think Strabo’s warning in *Geography* 8.6.20 about rounding Cape Malea off the Peloponnesus: “When you double Cape Malea, forget your home.”) Mark also concludes that sea battles were more common than prior opinion allowed; that Homeric ships were more for sailing than for rowing; and that the helmsman was a sailor’s best hope for a safe return.

The alphabetic Greek glossary is very useful, as is the textual index of all passages on seafaring from at least

thirty-five classical author sources in addition to Homer. This is even an enjoyable read for anyone ready for a different and fresh approach to traversing Homer's "wine-dark seas" and other Greek epics as well as encounters with Herodotus and encyclopedists such as Theophrastus and Pliny. It is well to remember that rarely in ancient Greece could you be more than fifty miles from the sea.

The third and last book is Angus Konstam's *Byzantine Warship vs Arab Warship, 7th–11th Centuries*. Osprey Publishing in Oxford is the prime book source of past military histories. Lavish color illustrations are a constant in Osprey books (of which this reviewer owns more than a dozen) and concise, clear texts are to be expected—and are found here. Angus Konstam is a prolific author, with scores of published books, mainly for Osprey, comparable to this one. He is a former naval officer who is also familiar with museum collections as a curator, so his publishing template and understanding of resources for historical naval warfare are well established.

This book is part of the Osprey Duel: Engage the Enemy series, in which two competing systems, generally enemy forces, are compared across multiple parameters. In the medieval Mediterranean chronology of the post-late antique world, in which Rome is no longer viable and Constantinople has replaced it, the two main fighting vessels under consideration are the Byzantine *dromon* and the Arab *shalandi*, which made up the bulk of the official navies of the opposing powers.

Shared or copied methods and tactics of naval engagement (according to contemporary treatises such as the

Greek *Taktika* and the *Naumachika* of Emperor Leo VI [r. AD 886–912] or the Arabic *Al-Adilla al-rasmiyya*) are covered here, from grappling with grapnels, to boarding, to hand-to-hand combat, as well as the maneuverability of both ships by sails, rudders, or oars. Very specific types of weaponry are annotated: bows, *cheirotobolistrae* or *tzangrae* (crossbows), catapults, ballista bolts, caltrops, pikes, *corseques* (trident stave weapons), and—the most feared of all—the unquenchable flaming oil known as "Greek fire." (Any of several Greek phrases [e.g., *pyr thalassion*, "sea fire," and *pyr kolletikon*, "sticky fire"] could convey the incendiary nature of this substance forcefully expelled from deck-mounted siphons.)

Ultimately, both opposing forces used nearly the same weaponry. Konstam consulted artifactual material, historical documents, and extant manuscripts revealing many technical specifications for outfitting both Greek and Arab ships, including design features, how the combatants fought, and specific battle outcomes for this fascinating single-subject book. We also should credit Arab navigators who used the measured night stars, hundreds of which still retain names derived from Arabic.

One quirky legacy of the Arabic side of naval warfare comes to us in our English word *admiral*, meaning sea commander, from the later Moorish Arabic term *amir al-rahl*, meaning something akin to "ruler of outfitted [ships]," since the word *amir* or *emir* already meant a type of leader or ruler functioning as war commander. Our word *admiral* thus derives from this seminal time when the Arabic naval command first came to be seen as distinct from a land general's command during the rapid

spread of Islamic hegemony across not just the land but also the sea.

In a world where information has not always been easy to come by, Konstam's small but highly esteemed book does justice to the world of competing Arab-Byzantine interests. It covers the specifics of the fierce at-sea dueling that went on within the larger competition that spread over a sea claimed by both Byzantine Greek and Arab powers, anticipating by half a millennium the Ottoman conflict that would include both the fall of Constantinople and the ensuing battle of Lepanto.

PATRICK HUNT



Mayday: The Decline of American Naval Supremacy, by Seth Cropsey. New York: Overlook, 2014. 348 pages. \$29.95 (paperback \$17.95).

Mayday is an extended argument for the expansion of the U.S. naval fleet to confront Chinese ambitions in the South China Sea, secure U.S. global interests, and ensure America's future as a great power. The author, Mr. Seth Cropsey, has considerable experience in defense and government, having served as a Deputy Under Secretary of the Navy in two administrations, in addition to other roles; he is associated with various think tanks. He demonstrates an in-depth and well-developed understanding of the strategic issues the Navy faces as he traces the development of U.S. sea power, assesses its current state, and examines a number of proposals before offering his own prescription for the Navy's future.

In many ways this book is a reapplication of pre-World War I naval theory espoused by the Naval War College's

own Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan. The author uses Mahanian thought extensively in his analysis of the historical development of American sea power into its current incarnation, explaining that, because of the U.S. Navy's current build rates and mismatched strategies, it is on a downward trajectory that will result in the loss of U.S. sea power. This, in turn, will result in a loss of U.S. influence and global stability worldwide. This channeling of Mahan is generally well executed, with one exception: at several points within the text, Mahan's equation of naval strength with the size of the national shipping fleet is referenced, without a solid explanation of how that relates to the current U.S. reliance on foreign carriers. The proposed repeal of the Jones Act (which mandates the use of U.S.-produced, -flagged, and -crewed carriers for cargo moved between U.S. ports) appears almost out of nowhere, and while a repeal definitely would improve competition and lower shipping costs, Mr. Cropsey fails to explain how this would be beneficial to the Navy or assist in correcting the strategic issues it faces.

The chapters on China's naval expansion and the ongoing gap between the U.S. Navy's force requirements and the number of hulls that its shipbuilding plan and budget can deliver are very informative and well reasoned. When observed through the Mahanian lens that Mr. Cropsey provides, it is not difficult to see how the People's Liberation Army Navy has embraced the idea that naval power is key to China's ability to influence the region and secure its interests from the African littorals to the deep waters of the Pacific.

The book runs a bit thin in the delivery of economic arguments regarding

the American deficit, national debt, and entitlements, and the occasional departures into partisan rhetoric do not really serve the overall thrust of the book. Some of the arguments it contains are inconsistent or undeveloped. An example is the suggestion to build smaller, single-mission hulls, which is followed later by a diametrically opposite recommendation to build multimission frigates with anti-air, anti-submarine, and anti-surface warfare capabilities. Additionally, his proposal to relegate much of the Army to National Guard or Reserve status is probably politically infeasible because of the dire effects this would have on the communities around major Army bases. All that aside, it is difficult to disagree with the fundamental tenets of *Mayday*—that a sufficiently sized and equipped Navy is crucial for our continued national security and the maintenance of international order—and on these bases his arguments for a naval expansion are sound.

Mayday provides an excellent case for reversing the piecemeal downsizing of the Navy, a return to pragmatic platform design, and consistent funding of a shipbuilding program to deliver and maintain a fleet sized to secure our interests and achieve our international objectives. Although the quote is not mentioned specifically, this book recalls President George Washington's observation in his letter of 15 November 1781 to the Marquis de Lafayette: "[W]ithout a decisive naval force we can do nothing definitive, and with it, everything honorable and glorious." Mr. Cropsey's recommendations are pragmatic and worth consideration by senior Navy leadership and policy makers alike.

JOSH HEIVLY



Realpolitik: A History, by John Bew. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015. 408 pages. \$27.95.

John Bew, a historian at King's College London, provides the first comprehensive intellectual history of the often-misunderstood term *Realpolitik*. Drawing on the experience gained from his acclaimed biography of Lord Castlereagh, the Napoleonic-era British foreign secretary, Bew traces *Realpolitik* from its obscure, nineteenth-century origins in revolutionary Germany to the term's use and misuse in contemporary Anglo-American foreign policy debates. Scholars and practitioners seeking to gain a more nuanced understanding of the evolution of Western foreign policy thinking over the last century, particularly before 1945, would be well advised to consider Bew's compelling narrative.

In the often-glib foreign policy discussions that characterize public understanding of the discipline's key terms and points of contention, *realism* is often supposed to be interchangeable with *Realpolitik*. Bew's greatest contribution is his voluminous research into the term's early history, beginning with the 1853 book *Foundations of Realpolitik* by the little-known German philosopher Ludwig von Rochau. This original formulation, distinct from later uses in both Germany and the Anglosphere, was a creature of its time and place: a disunited Germany torn between the liberal impulses of the 1848 revolutions and the conservatism of its traditional ruling class, as personified by Otto von Bismarck.

Rochau's *Realpolitik* was not an ideology at all; it was a lens for viewing the political circumstances of Germany's

bourgeois liberals at a time of conservative reaction. Rather than continue to build “castles in the sky,” as Rochau believed the failed revolutionaries of 1848 had done, he argued for a specific focus on the essential truth that ideas have little currency without some acquaintance with power. To have any hope of success, Germany’s liberals had to understand the underlying social, economic, and political context of how power was wielded and the limitations that existed on their freedom of action. A fervent believer in German unification for liberal ends, Rochau supported much of Bismarck’s foreign policy under the guise of *Realpolitik*. A sober appraisal of the domestic political situation meant that German unification, even under the leadership of a reactionary conservative such as Bismarck, provided the best long-term prospects for German liberalism.

It was Rochau’s unsentimental acceptance of the facts of the situation, as he interpreted them, that defined the original *Realpolitik*. Bew’s essential mission is to chart the course from Rochau’s relatively benign concept to the fraught foreign policy debates of today, with intermediate stops in Wilhelmine and interwar Germany. In his zeal to demonstrate the laudable breadth of his research on the term’s multientury evolution, Bew occasionally overwhelms the reader with quotes and anecdotes from relatively obscure academics whose opinions of *Realpolitik* and its various permutations have only tangential relevance. His point, seemingly inarguable given the clarity of Rochau’s writing, is that the term quickly lost its essential benignity and was co-opted by German intellectuals advocating something

very different from Rochau’s cold-eyed analysis of the facts on the ground.

Realpolitik’s introduction to British and American audiences at the beginning of the twentieth century was in a far different form. Namely, after Germany’s nationalist academics transformed the term into an amoral ideology of “might makes right,” Anglo-American opinion came to regard it as a synonym for German militarism and ultranationalism. Bew is particularly elegant in his parsing of Rochau’s original work and the contrast with much of the ultranationalist proselytizing that came to define Anglo-American understanding of *Realpolitik* before the First World War.

Bew’s narrative shines particularly brightly during his analysis of the interwar period, notably the use of “*Realpolitik*” by British prime minister Neville Chamberlain to justify his appeasement of Nazi Germany. The counterreaction to the perceived failures of Woodrow Wilson’s liberal internationalism precipitated a reappraisal of the term in London during the 1920s and 1930s, with it coming to be seen more positively as a steady adjustment to facts, as opposed to Wilson’s starry-eyed idealism. Bew, seeing the appeasement debate as a critical node in the term’s evolution to its ultimate place in the twentieth-century realist paradigm, is convincingly dismissive of Chamberlain’s co-option of the term. Quoting at length from contemporary sources, Bew notes that Chamberlain’s *Realpolitik* lacked many of the essential elements of commonly accepted foreign policy realism and instead relied on a world-weary pessimism that left Britain unprepared for the Nazi challenge. Winston Churchill’s blend of tactical realism, in the form

of advocacy for a British rearmament policy, and ideological opposition to Nazism serves as a powerful contrast to Chamberlain's flawed use of *Realpolitik*.

Bew breaks less original ground in the post-1945 period, as *Realpolitik* in the postwar United States is decidedly intertwined with the much-discussed "realist" school of foreign policy exemplified by academics such as Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz. The term's Germanic origins and use by discredited proponents of the Second and Third Reichs undoubtedly contributed to a period of limited use, even by self-proclaimed realists. Bew's narrative, post-1945, begins to merge into the broader discussion of the different schools of American foreign policy that emerged during the Cold War—an area of much previous research without room for the compelling scholarship offered in this book's early chapters. Like all who study "realism," Bew is drawn to an extended meditation on Henry Kissinger and his influence on U.S. foreign policy. Refreshingly, Bew is cognizant of the subtlety and nuance of Kissinger's worldview and refuses to paint that enigmatic figure with an overly broad brush.

Realpolitik: A History is an important contribution to international relations scholarship, not least for resurrecting Ludwig von Rochau and the origins of *Realpolitik*. Bew is to be credited with tracing the term's evolution in multiple countries with different political cultures with relative ease and skill, showing time and again the slow metamorphosis of the term into something far different from what its creator intended. Particularly in the interwar appeasement debate, *Realpolitik* found itself misused toward ends that were anything but realist. More

broadly, the term has been twisted to mean any policy that is believed to lack a moral foundation or, from the contrary viewpoint, is seen as grounded in realistic levelheadedness. As Bew's narrative ends and the term is gradually subsumed into the broader tradition of American realism, the reader is reminded of the inherent flimsiness of the structure of so many of the terms endemic to the debate over American foreign policy. Professor Bew's new book is a helpful antidote to such rhetorical laziness.

ALEXANDER B. GRAY



Grand Strategy in Theory and Practice, by William C. Martel. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015. 548 pages. \$115.

"The main goal of this book," Martel writes, "is to provide contemporary policy makers and scholars with a rigorous historic and analytic framework for evaluating and conducting grand strategy" (p. ix). Acknowledging that the term itself is "relatively new," although its concepts certainly can be found throughout history, Martel credits academics during World War II (particularly "the founder of modern grand strategy, Edward Mead Earle") with being the first to focus on a nation's "highest political ends," employing all elements of national power—"diplomatic, informational, military, economic"—to achieve global, long-term security goals (pp. 23, 25, 30). He thus elevates grand strategy above "strategy," "operations," "tactics," and "technology" while acknowledging that for most of history "strategy"—how to achieve overall military victory—was

largely identical with “grand strategy” when the other components of national power were inconsequential. Thus, until the twentieth century, the Royal Navy—not English ambassadors nor the East India Company nor the inventors of steam power—dominated Britannia’s grand strategy because it determined Great Britain’s strategy, i.e., its means of winning important wars.

Martel’s theoretical presentation explains strategic thinkers from Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke through Jomini, Clausewitz, Smith, Hamilton, and List. From the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, Martel reviews Philip II, Frederick II, Napoleon, Bismarck, and Metternich, then examines the apogees and declines of the British and Ottoman Empires.

“Revolutionary” thinkers—Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, Hitler, and Ho—are also covered because of their impact on the contemporary world. However, “[w]ith the advent of thermonuclear weapons, classic approaches to strategy [for military victory] became largely irrelevant, having lost any practical meaning in the face of intolerable urban destruction, if not the annihilation of societies and humanity itself. This development effectively shifted strategy from its historical foundations of how to win wars to how to avoid wars” (p. 121).

Turning in the second half of this book to American history, Martel asserts that the nation’s grand strategy fundamentally has been that of neither a “status-quo” state nor a “revolutionary” one; it consistently has been that of a “gradualist” state, always seeking change but never rapid and radical change. “Restraining Sources of Disorder” is the chapter title for American foreign policy

from Theodore Roosevelt through Franklin D. Roosevelt. Since 1945, the United States has opposed revolutionaries but supported democratic-leaning reform. (Critics certainly would argue specifics, pointing to instances of American to-the-hilt backing of undemocratic rule when specific economic, political, or military priorities submerged sensitivity to social justice.)

The heart of Martel’s descriptive review of American grand strategy and his prescriptive conclusion on the future of that strategy rest on three principles that Martel argues always must be balanced. The first is that the domestic foundations of American economic, military, diplomatic, and social power have to be strong. (It is illuminating to view two centuries of American foreign policy from the internal perspective of the influence of slavery, territorial expansion, isolationism, and economic development rather than the usual wars, crises, and treaties. On the other hand, when Martel’s “domestic foundations” of national strength extend to “education, health care, and retirement systems,” questions about prioritization naturally arise [p. 355].)

The second principle, of leading efforts to restrain “sources of disorder that present direct threats to U.S. vital interests,” is complicated by Martel’s assertion that “America needs to stand for and defend principles that promote human rights and dignity, equality for all peoples—men and women—freedom of expression, free enterprise, and fair elections” (pp. 357–58). Thus, realist attempts to distinguish American “vital interests” from Wilsonian idealism are rejected. But how then are extensive economic relations with China or Saudi Arabia to be weighed in light of

blatant human rights violations if all are “American vital interests”? Yes, it can be done—but the argument is less clear.

Martel’s final principle is that the nation must strengthen alliances and partnerships to promote shared responsibilities effectively to solve global problems. Recognizing that American power is limited, Martel counsels against temptations toward either American overreach or American withdrawal on key global and regional problems.

Martel applies these principles to “current” foreign policy issues to illustrate their utility; the inevitable drawback to such relevance is the danger of “shelf life” interest, i.e., how long will readers care about or even recall foreign policy specifics from 2014? Conversely, some topics that seem important at the time of this writing (e.g., violent Wahhabism, Russian aggressiveness) receive little attention.

A weakness of generalized, historically centered summaries of policy decisions is the tendency to see, in retrospect, clear choices and definite paths, but to underestimate the uncertainty and angst that decision makers suffered. By contrast, specific case studies (e.g., the Cuban missile crisis, Vietnam, the 2003 Iraq war, the 2008 economic crisis) always show the confusion and fear. Martel’s sweeping review gives surprisingly little attention to the fact that nearly all grand strategy decisions are made while under risk or amid uncertainty by those who are fraught with anxiety and apprehension, and constitute gambles on guesses rather than calm choices about how best to balance good principles and achieve optimal outcomes. Martel—who certainly understood the policy-making process—might have replied that the

purpose of his final book was to advise policy makers and scholars on how such decisions should be made, rather than to describe how they will feel while doing so. But readers might have benefited from at least an acknowledgment of this apprehension, the way Bill Martel used to offer a cheerful but sympathetic smile to friends and students struggling with problems he had posed to us.

The date of this book’s release—12 January 2015—was the day its author died at the age of fifty-nine after a yearlong battle with leukemia. Bill Martel was for ten years a professor of international security studies at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University (where he received the James L. Paddock award for teaching excellence) and an adjunct electives professor at the Naval War College. Previously, he had taught in the College’s National Security Decision Making Department for half a dozen years, following a similar period as founding director of the Air Force’s Center for Strategy and Technology at the Air War College. He also had served as an adviser to the National Security Council and the Romney 2012 presidential campaign. This reviewer was one of his many colleagues and students who counted themselves blessed by his friendship.

THOMAS GRASSEY



The Struggle for Sea Power: A Naval History of the American Revolution, by Sam Willis. New York: W. W. Norton, 2016. 608 pages. \$35 (Kindle \$16.05).

Sam Willis describes (p. 5) the war for American independence as “the most

intriguing naval story in history.” To support this contention, Willis has written a book aimed primarily at a general audience and based on a narrative approach, first chronicling the maritime conflict between Britain and its rebellious American colonies, then addressing the ensuing global maritime war.

Although the book is written as a chronological narrative, Willis identifies five underlying themes that knit the maritime story of the war into a broadly defined seapower thesis.

The first theme involves the author’s assertion (p. 5) “that sea power can exist without navies.” Although lacking Britain’s established naval infrastructure, the colonists, Willis argues, still developed and exploited sea power. This theme dominates the text during the early years of the war, but regrettably becomes but a minor story line after the French entry.

The second theme argues (p. 6) that naval historians generally “make a false distinction between” saltwater and freshwater navies in places such as Lake Champlain. Willis claims that contemporaries made no such distinction. Certainly, Willis is correct to point out similarities between the types, but the differences are more significant than Willis admits, particularly in the instruments used and the obstacles faced. Even more than the first theme, this one is episodic and hardly merits being elevated to a theme.

Willis’s third theme focuses on the global nature of the war. Willis clearly demonstrates that much more was at stake than the independence of thirteen of Britain’s North American colonies. This theme is addressed quite effectively after 1778 through a traditional narrative of naval operations.

The global nature of the war meant that numerous campaigns occurred simultaneously, and events in one region influenced what occurred elsewhere.

This is Willis’s fourth theme. Willis provides insightful commentary on such interactions when explaining fleet movements and campaigns, but devotes too little attention to the decision making in London and Paris. To understand truly the interaction among theaters, Willis needed to explain more effectively how leaders in Paris, London, and Madrid prioritized among competing options. For example, Willis fails to grasp the nuances of Britain’s strategic position, including the calculus used in determining the distribution of fleets between home and foreign waters, and particularly the essential role of Gibraltar in Britain’s strategic architecture.

The fifth and final theme is the most far-reaching. It addresses how sea power affected the broader war—whether through diplomacy, campaigns on land, the politics of the states involved, or particularly the decisions of the military and political leadership. “As always,” Willis maintains (p. 292), “the impact of sea power must be measured in more ways than one.”

Willis aptly argues that sea power was a significant element in the American Revolution that should not be overlooked. It influenced events from the war’s origin to its end. Yet although he often supports his arguments with a high degree of skill, the book fails to entirely meet its potential. Willis is not the first to address sea power and its relation to this war, but he does not place his thesis into the context of previous works on the subject. This is particularly glaring with regard to Alfred Thayer Mahan.

Willis cites only Mahan's book on the American Revolution; he does not cite *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, Mahan's most significant work and the one that put the term "sea power" into widespread use. Considering that Willis has written a book about sea power and even uses (p. 6) the phrase "the influence of sea power," the omission is evident. Although Willis defines sea power more broadly than does Mahan, many of *The Influence of Sea Power's* themes echo powerfully in his work. Like Willis, Mahan considers the global maritime war spawned by the struggle for American independence to be the most intriguing of naval wars.

The second, related weakness involves the quality of the scholarship. Although Willis uses archival and published primary sources, he often relies on other historians. This is particularly true regarding memorable quotations from those who were present. Rather than

consistently consulting original sources for both the accuracy and the historical context of the quotes, Willis relies on the legwork of previous historians.

Overall, Willis has written an intriguing appraisal of sea power in the American Revolution. It is a sweeping narrative that benefits greatly from Willis's eloquence as a writer and his superb ability to tell a story. However, the book is not without its weaknesses. Some of the author's themes require development, the source base could be strengthened, and Willis needed to develop stronger links between naval operations and the decision making by those at the highest positions in government. The book is on its surest ground in the early chapters when addressing the development of American sea power, and later in the text when recounting major naval operations.

KEVIN D. MCCRANIE

OUR REVIEWERS

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Kevin D. McCranie received a BA in history and political science from Florida Southern College, and an MA and PhD in history from Florida State University. Before joining the faculty of the Naval War College, he taught history at Brewton-Parker College in Mount Vernon, Georgia. In 2001, he held a fellowship at the West Point Summer Seminar in Military History. Specializing in warfare at sea, navies, sea power, and joint operations during the age of sail, he is the author of *Admiral Lord Keith and the Naval War against Napoleon* (2006), as well as *Utmost Gallantry: The U.S. and Royal Navies at Sea in the War of 1812* (2011). His articles have appeared in *Naval History*, *Journal of Military History*, and *Northern Mariner*.