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Churchill and Seapower

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In his farewell address to the nation in January 1961, Eisenhower advised government to “guard against the unwarranted influences, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.” Koistinen analyzes Ike’s caution and considers the evolution and development of the MIC.

Koistinen does not argue that the MIC created itself or was constructed with intent in some coordinated or collaborative effort led by the government. He, however, does state that U.S. foreign policy and national security requirements led to its development and that the MIC’s pervasive influence in government, economics, and society is the result of numerous mutual and supporting interests of government and nongovernment institutions and organizations.

The author evaluates what he describes as the “noncompetitive” defense industry as an economic sector within the U.S. domestic economy, considering fundamental economic principles. This government-constructed defense sector operates free of the market pressures of supply and demand; prices, accordingly, result from the contracting processes between the military services and contractors. The conditions of the defense sector rarely stimulate competition, owing to numerous mergers among a decreasing number of defense corporations.

Today, the U.S. defense budget remains large, yet insufficient to meet the requirements placed on the military. Koistinen observes that the MIC continues to produce high-technology weapons at high cost. The cost of these weapons results in smaller quantities, a fact that results in a force structure that is insufficient to meet the requirements of the national strategy.

The author concludes that over time the MIC has become so entrenched in the economic, political, and social lives of the nation that today it is nearly impossible to diminish its influence. This book presents a compelling explanation of the effects on the U.S. economy of government and private-sector actions of recent decades regarding the development of the current national-security system.

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Bell, Christopher M. *Churchill and Seapower*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013. 429pp. \$34.95

Although Winston Churchill is still regarded as one of the great British leaders of the twentieth century, he continues to attract not only praise but a large measure of criticism. This book is a valuable addition to a formidable library of such analysis. As its title tells us, this is a review of Churchill’s thinking about sea power in general and British sea power in particular. Its central theme is nicely encapsulated by a famous remark made about Churchill by General Sir Alan Brooke, arguably one of Britain’s most famous and successful soldiers during the Second World War: “A complete amateur of strategy, he swamps himself in detail he should never look at and as a result fails ever to see a strategic problem in its true perspective.”

However, Christopher Bell asks, is this kind of criticism, from a number of scholars, any more justified than the uncritical adulation Churchill usually receives? Where does the truth lie in this spectrum of possible reactions to Churchill as naval strategist?

Bell, an established and well respected historian of the twentieth-century Royal Navy, explores the subject by a balanced and stimulating chronological review of Churchill's direct and indirect association with the Royal Navy from before the First World War to the end of the Second. Churchill generally emerges quite well, in much better shape than his detractors would lead us to expect. But this is no hagiography. Churchill's limitations, mistakes, and misperceptions are pointed out as well as his achievements. Bell shows Churchill to have been realistic and pragmatic about naval construction in the period before the First World War; not wholly and solely to blame for the disastrous outcome of the Dardanelles campaign of 1915; and capable of recognizing, even in political exile, that the battle of Jutland *had been* in fact a strategic victory for the British. In the First World War, and indeed the Second as well, Churchill was an "ideas man" who continually pushed for offensive schemes, running up against the staid and conservative counsels of his service chiefs.

His was one voice, but there were many others. Occasionally too, his ideas now seem extraordinarily ill judged (most obviously that of sending a "surplus" fleet into the Baltic to attack the German coast without defeating the German fleet and air force first). Normally, though, Bell shows that there was sense in what he said, and certainly his restless pursuit of action that could help bring victory was a necessary, though sometimes much resented, goad to his military men. Many were less than happy with his infatuation with, and pretended expertise in, military technology. "Machines save life," he said in 1917; "machine-power is a substitute for manpower." Hence his enthusiasm for the airpower in the

First World War, an enthusiasm that, when allied to his push for offensive action, led to the British strategic bombing offensive of the Second World War but also the relative neglect of the all-important Battle of the Atlantic.

This is rich fare. Many of Churchill's conceptions of sea power are thoroughly and sensibly considered in this book, which deserves to be read not just because it is about Churchill but also for its secondary topic (which the author could well have better developed)—the balance struck between the military and its political masters in the direction of war. To what extent should civilian leaders like Churchill "interfere" in the planning and conduct of military operations when their motivations are more *operational* than political or diplomatic? It was on this very point that Churchill's service chiefs really had objections during the war. Churchill insisted that his operational ideas about what the Royal Navy could and should be doing were good enough to be taken seriously, even if not accepted in the end by professional sailors. Christopher Bell shows us that in the main they were taken seriously, and deservedly so.

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Scott, James. *The War Below: The Story of Three Submarines That Battled Japan*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013. 420 pp. \$28

The War Below is a remarkable historical analysis of submarine warfare in the Pacific during World War II. It interweaves stories of submariners (especially their skippers) with comprehensive description of naval warfare from Pearl Harbor