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Schattenarmeen: Die Geheimdienste der islamischen Welt (Shadow Armies: The Secret Services of the Islamic World)

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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.

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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, *Schattenarmeen* 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.

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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