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BOOK REVIEWS

IS BALANCE OF POWER RELEVANT IN CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL POLITICS?

Paul, E. V., James J. Wirtz, and Michael Fortmann, eds. *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2004. 384pp. \$27.95

Although this book features a number of excellent essays, it is hard to understand why it was ever written. One would have profited more from rereading Ernst Haas's brilliant 1953 essay on the topic ("The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept, or Propaganda," *World Politics* 5, no. 4 [July 1953], pp. 442–77).

In his introductory essay, E. V. Paul poses several theoretical and empirical questions about the balance of power. However, the *real* issue is whether the concept is relevant in contemporary global politics. Frankly, I did not think that anyone (except, perhaps, John Mearsheimer) seriously believed that balance of power exhibits anything much about the real world.

Happily, the contributors to this volume reach a similar conclusion. Jack Levy sets the tone with a rigorous and well reasoned historical analysis. He concludes that "the tendency to treat the theory . . . as universal is misleading," because of the limited "scope conditions" in which the theory was applied. Douglas Lemke focuses on the

utility of balance of power as defined by Mearsheimer's version of "offensive realism" and determines that the concept is so "vaguely stated" that he finds it "impossible to imagine a scenario that would be inconsistent" with it. In his imaginative effort to add an economic dimension to balance-of-power theory, Mark Brawley suggests that it "is typically too parsimonious to be of great use," and James Wirtz concludes that the theory cannot predict outcomes in the post-Cold War world. Edward Rhodes continues to flog this dead horse, concluding that "liberalism and nuclear weapons mean that states will not seek to balance power."

The regional analyses change little. Europeans, Robert Art concludes, want more influence on U.S. policy but are not doing much about it; balance-of-power theory, declares William Wohlforth, "does not apply" to Russia or its neighbors; Benjamin Miller can find "no countervailing coalition . . . against U.S. hegemony" in the Middle East; and, according to Michael Barletta and Harold Trinkunas, there is no

“evidence of balance of power behavior in Latin America in the post–Cold War period.” Get the point?

The editors try to salvage something from this muddle by some fanciful ad hoc theorizing, in particular pressing us to accept the notion of “soft balancing,” which basically translates into arguing that almost any opposition to a country’s policies or actions constitutes balancing behavior. The most vigorous effort to salvage balance-of-power theory from history’s dustbin is Christopher Layne’s unapologetic realism, which, while finding little empirical evidence for balancing, nevertheless boldly predicts that it is “a pretty safe bet” that the United States “will not be able to escape the fates of previous contenders for hegemony.” This is a bet based on faith, not fact. The other believer is Robert Ross, who contends that “balance of power politics has been especially pronounced in East Asia.” What is extraordinary about Ross’s essay is that it ignores the implications of China’s economic growth, its integration into the world economic system, and its escalating interdependence with those against whom it is presumably balancing.

Overall, this is a book of missed opportunities. Perhaps the most important is its failure to come to grips with the subjective dimension of global politics. Authors repeatedly and positively invoke Stephen Walt’s modification of balance-of-power theory with the addition of threat perception but fail to recognize its importance in directing our attention to the centrality of ideas and perceptions. There are hints, however, as when Lemke discusses the key role of the “distribution of attitudes” and Wirtz alludes to “divergence in

perception.” Only Rhodes captures the critical role played by the social construction and reconstruction of ideas in the declining relevance of balance of power. In an essay that deserves greater attention than it will receive in this volume, Rhodes succinctly captures the degree to which balance of power has been made obsolete by the disappearance of trinitarian warfare. In the end, we conclude with him that it “is simply ludicrous” to assume that “every state lives in fear of the imperial ambitions of every other state in the present age.”

RICHARD MANSBACH
Department of Political Science
Iowa State University



Haldi, Stacy Bergstrom. *Why Wars Widen: A Theory of Predation and Balancing*. London: Frank Cass, 2003. 198pp. \$114.95

Why Wars Widen is a theoretical and empirical analysis of why neutral states choose to enter an ongoing great-power war. Most international-relations scholarship neglects this question, choosing instead to explain the origins of war. Haldi, of both the Naval War College and Gettysburg College, opens her book with the observation that states entering an ongoing conflict “may have interests and policies entirely distinct from those of the initial combatants.” The book seeks to reveal these interests. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the argument that neutrals are most likely to widen great-power wars in eras of low political cost, when war is limited and less threatening to state survival. Moreover, when political cost is low, widening a war is likely to occur for predatory reasons or to acquire strategic assets that will

enhance national power. In contrast, neutrals are less likely to widen wars when the political cost of war is high. In these eras, when wars threaten a state's survival, neutrals will tend to use ongoing wars to balance against an adverse shift in the distribution of power, but only after all other balancing options have been exhausted. The remaining chapters test this argument against alternative explanations, alliances and offense dominance, and offer predictions for the likelihood of war widening in the contemporary international system.

Haldi's study encompasses great-power wars between 1700 and 1973, with a focus on the Seven Years' War, the French Revolutionary War, the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War, and World War I. Additional cases of great-power wars susceptible to widening are included in an appendix. Prior to the Napoleonic Wars, the political cost of war was low, Haldi argues, because armies were costly to maintain and soldiers were not expendable. Thus predatory-war widening became more frequent in this era. However, political and social changes that occurred alongside the French Revolutionary War and the Napoleonic Wars reduced these costs, allowing France to introduce an era of unlimited wars that sought the enemy's total destruction. From that point forward, Haldi maintains, the political cost of war was high and balancing-war widening tended to be more prevalent. Perhaps the greatest strength of this analysis is that each case study examines the motivations of states that entered ongoing wars, as well as those that could have but did not. The author concludes that the war-widening theory explains each incidence of widening much better than the competing

theories can and may even lend insight into the likelihood of contemporary war widening.

The greatest appeal of this work is its attempt to delve into the largely neglected area of international-relations theory. However, it suffers from two serious flaws. First, it attempts to cover a lot of material succinctly, resulting in insufficiently explained references to history and theory, including the concept of great-power war, which is central to the author's argument. A deeper analysis of the alternative theories of alliances and offense dominance would also have been more satisfying. This deficiency makes the work most appropriate for graduate students and researchers already familiar with the terrain. The subject matter is interesting, but the author could have attracted a broader audience if she had analyzed her work in greater depth. Second, the contemporary relevance of Haldi's policy implications is unconvincing. Her conclusions drawn from European great-power wars are not clearly applicable to the contemporary international system, simply because the threat of such wars, let alone war widening, is negligible. Moreover, because future occurrences of great-power war widening will probably include at least one nuclear power, nuclear weapons should definitely be considered more systematically if Haldi's predictions are to carry any weight. These concerns might have possibly been overcome by including an analysis of the Korean or Vietnam wars—two cases found in the appendix—or perhaps an even more contemporary conflict like the 1991 Persian Gulf war. Despite these limitations, serious students of interstate warfare will find this

work a useful entry into the question of why wars widen.

KIRSTEN RAFFERTY
*Department of Government and International
 Studies*
Berry College



Roberts, Paul. *The End of Oil: On the Edge of a Perilous New World*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. 386pp. \$26

By 2025 world energy demand is expected to increase by 54 percent. Oil and natural gas consumption is expected to increase 57 and 68 percent, respectively, by then. Total energy consumption in 2025 for China, India, and South Korea is predicted to equal that of the United States. What do these figures really tell us about today's energy economy? The answers can be found in *The End of Oil*, in which Paul Roberts superbly navigates the complex topic of energy and explains how energy has become the currency of political and economic power. Roberts's argument centers on three key points: "that energy is the single most important resource, that our current energy economy is failing, and that the shape of the next energy economy is being decided right now—with or without our input." The author's hope is that *The End of Oil* will provide nonexperts with a way to begin to think about energy.

The End of Oil is broken down into three parts. Part 1 explains how and why energy has become central to human existence. Part 2 examines the mechanics of the energy order. This section contains excellent discussions on consumption, the current

transformation of the oil and natural gas industries, alternate fuels, and conservation. Part 3 looks at the promise and peril of the world's energy future; it includes a valuable discussion on energy security. Roberts concludes with a look at how the world could transition to a new energy economy based on current trends.

Several important implications emerge from Roberts's analysis. First, the current energy system is failing to keep up with current demand. As the developing world tries to catch up with the developed world, the demand for energy will continue to increase regardless of what happens with population and energy technology. In the future, the issue may not be whether the world is producing the right type of energy but whether it can produce enough. Second, there may be real limits to our ability to produce ever-increasing volumes of energy. If this is true, then we will need to radically rethink how we consume and produce energy. Third, the sooner we start to transform the current energy economy, the more time there will be to assess options and technologies. Fourth, the world cannot politically or economically shift from a hydrocarbon-based energy economy to a new energy economy overnight. During the transition, the world will need to develop a transition, or "bridge," energy economy. A bridge economy will give markets and society the flexibility and opportunity to phase out the worst of current trends while creating a new energy system. According to Roberts, such an economy will likely require significant improvements in energy efficiency, and an increased reliance on natural gas. Fifth, America's energy

policy can no longer afford to focus solely on defending the supply of oil. As time goes by, less oil will remain outside OPEC countries; proportionally more will be in areas where its extraction is more difficult and costly. Over time, this trend will make access problematic and uncertain. Lastly, energy is political. Because energy is centrally connected to everything else of importance, overhauling the current system is going to be one of the most politically difficult challenges facing the world in the twenty-first century. This process will entail considerable political and economic risk.

Overall, Roberts's coverage is balanced, providing significant insights into all aspects of the energy economy. One of the strengths of *The End of Oil* is that it offers the big picture without bogging down the reader in endless technical details or facts. Another of its strengths is that although the author is somewhat pessimistic about the world's ability to transition effectively and peacefully to the next energy economy, he is able to be optimistic as well.

In summary, *The End of Oil* is an effective argument for the need to take a proactive role in building America's energy future. We can either construct the kind of energy future we desire or wait and hope that the transition to the next energy economy will work out on its own. Hope, as any good strategist will tell you, is not a strategy. *The End of Oil* is therefore a must read for strategists, political and business leaders, and anyone interested in America's future.

ALAN BOYER
Commander, U.S. Navy
Naval War College



Fukuyama, Francis. *State Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2004. 132pp. \$21

This is an important policy analysis. Francis Fukuyama, an expert on political and economic development, has served on the State Department's policy planning staff and is now professor of international political economy at Johns Hopkins University.

In his book *State Building*, Fukuyama argues here that the international community must do a better job of "state-building . . . because weak or failed states are the sources of many of the world's most serious problems." We know a lot about public administration, he says, but much less about how to "transfer strong institutions to developing countries."

Fukuyama coins the term "stateness," referring to a regime's ability to perform. He distinguishes two dimensions of stateness: state *strength*, which denotes that a government can "enforce laws cleanly and transparently," and state *scope*, which embraces the range of the functions that a government tries to accomplish.

To understand what Fukuyama means by scope, imagine a government that seeks only to maintain public order, enforce contracts, provide national defense, and manage its money supply. Fukuyama would describe that state as having modest scope. Next, imagine a government that, in addition to what was just mentioned, owns and runs steel mills and hospitals, tries to provide free education through the university level, and promises its people pensions. Such a government would

have considerable scope. However, whether it could carry out any or all of these functions well is an entirely separate matter of state strength.

What do poor countries need to develop economically? According to Fukuyama, “conventional wisdom’s” answer to this question has changed in recent years. During the Ronald Reagan and the Margaret Thatcher years, development experts focused on state scope, arguing that less-developed countries (LDCs) needed smaller governments; accordingly, they urged states to discontinue activities that other parties could handle better. Unfortunately, they did not recognize the importance of institutions like courts that work and legal regimes that defend property rights. As a result, international bodies like the World Bank demanded that states get smaller without distinguishing between scope (which should have been reduced) and strength (which should have been enhanced).

Fukuyama lists the causes for LDC state weakness. Sometimes local elites benefit from the status quo, which in many instances is, for them, a life-or-death issue. In other cases, society may not understand how much better off it would be given better institutions—foreign donors’ efforts to develop stronger state institutions via “conditionality” often fail. (Donors find it hard to show “tough love” by cutting off states that fail to meet their conditions. Even if one does so, moreover, often another steps in.) In addition, donors often give higher priority to first-rate service delivery than to building the capacity of the LDC’s fledgling state bureaucracy. So they hire away the best locals, often leaving the LDC even weaker.

The book examines the “international dimension of state weakness,” stating that instability is in fact driven by state weakness. Since the Berlin Wall came down, the author notes, most international crises have had to do with weak or failing states. Sovereignty has been eroded because of this weakness. No one, says Fukuyama, in the international community believes in a “pure” sovereignty any more. The humanitarian interventions of the 1990s eroded what force that idea may once have had.

What should national security professionals learn from Fukuyama’s argument? Here are three lessons. First, do not assume that postwar stabilization operations always involve state building. For example, some people have expressed optimism about U.S. chances for making Iraq and Afghanistan into democracies, on grounds that the United States defeated tyrannical regimes in Germany and Japan and successfully made democracies of them. Fukuyama points out that those latter occupations did *not* involve state building. Germany and Japan were hard to beat because they were already strong states. U.S. victory and occupation changed those states’ bases of legitimacy; doing so was easier than creating a strong state from a weak one. Second, the United States should have modest expectations for building democratic states and growing economies in countries with weak states. The United States has “intervened and/or acted as an occupation authority . . . [and] . . . pursued . . . nation-building activities in . . . Cuba, the Philippines, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Nicaragua, South Korea, and South Vietnam.” Despite U.S. efforts, “South Korea was the only country to achieve long-term economic growth.” Third, given America’s poor track record

at creating strong states via occupation, it should be thinking about fall-back positions if it fails at creating democracy overseas.

The United States needs to get better at state building. The U.S. military cannot avoid bearing much of the implied burden, like it or not. Read *State Building* for a thoughtful introduction to the challenges involved.

MARSHALL HOYLER
Naval War College



Coll, Steve. *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. New York: Penguin, 2004. 695pp. \$29.95

The events of 9/11 led many in the United States to wonder what had actually led up to that fateful day. Who was to blame? How could the United States, with its multibillion-dollar intelligence and defense budgets, have allowed such a thing to happen? In *Ghost Wars*, Steve Coll provides a useful, if overly long, chronology and analysis of pivotal events, missteps, indecision, apathy, and ultimately tragedy up to the day before the attacks.

Coll, who served as the managing editor for the *Washington Post* until 2004, was the paper's South Asia bureau chief from 1989 to 1992. He won a Pulitzer Prize in 1990 for his reporting on South Asia, and he has been a keen observer of events in the region. He begins his story with the burning of the U.S. embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, in November 1979 and traces the long road of events to 11 September. It was shortly after the riots in Islamabad that the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, in December 1979.

As he weaves his narrative, Coll meticulously documents every player and agenda in this drama. Coll divides the book into three parts. In the first he discusses the Soviet occupation from December 1979 to February 1989. It is here that we are introduced to mujahedeen leaders Ahmed Shah Massoud, Hamid Karzai, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and Osama Bin Laden. One also becomes acquainted with key players in the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI-D) and in the Saudi monarchy who played key roles in bankrolling the resistance. The author also provides valuable insights into the U.S. policy-making process. During this period, the United States was consumed with battling the Soviet occupation, and most policy makers did not give serious thought to the repercussions of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate's growing control over aid distribution or the increasing anti-American attitudes of such rebel commanders as Hekmatyar.

Coll continues to trace events in Afghanistan after the Soviet pullout in 1989. Once the Soviets were gone, interest in a stable Afghanistan rapidly waned as other crises in the immediate post-Cold War era monopolized U.S. attention. As a result, Afghanistan fell into chaos as warlords fought each other for control of Kabul. The lack of American involvement after the Soviets withdrew left Pakistan as the primary force to manage the post-Soviet environment. The author captures the rivalries within Afghanistan, the manipulation of events by the Pakistani government, and the apathy of U.S. policy makers throughout this period.

One of the major strengths of *Ghost Wars* is how it skillfully captures the interagency debates within the U.S.

government on Afghanistan—specifically, the discussion on various debates among the CIA, the State Department, and the National Security Council—which were wide-ranging and often contentious. After reading these accounts one is left with the distinct impression that there was no overarching policy or strategy to attack al-Qa'ida. Instead, U.S. government policy comes across as ad hoc, driven by current contingencies or spurious information about Osama Bin Laden's whereabouts.

In the final section, Coll documents the often frantic and uncoordinated inter-agency campaign to find Bin Laden. Despite George Tenet's declaration in December 1998 that the CIA was at war with al-Qa'ida, the U.S. government as a whole never fully came to grips with the threat posed by terrorism. For many in Washington, terrorism represented only one threat among many facing the United States in the post-Cold War era. Although terrorism did elicit concern among top U.S. policy makers, it rarely moved into a sustained, inter-agency strategy to combat the threat.

Prospective readers of this book should be aware that it is lengthy and requires close attention. Characters and events discussed in part 1 are revisited. Coll helps the reader along with a list of principal characters at the front of the book. Despite its length, however, *Ghost Wars* will provide valuable insights for anyone working within the interagency process, as well as scholars and regional observers interested in how the United States got Afghanistan and Bin Laden so tragically wrong.

AMER LATIF
Joint Warfare Analysis Center
Dahlgren, Virginia



Maurer, John H., ed. *Churchill and Strategic Dilemmas before the World Wars: Essays in Honor of Michael I. Handel*. London: Frank Cass, 2003. 164pp. \$79.95

One of three volumes of essays (two focus on different aspects of strategy) published in Handel's memory, this work is based on a conference held in Newport, Rhode Island. It offers four scholarly papers on Churchill's assessment of the German naval challenge before the First World War, Pacific security and the limits of British power between the wars, Churchill and the German threat in the late 1930s, and Churchill's views of technology. Each assesses a different aspect of Churchill's changing role.

Editor Maurer focuses on the early 1900s' battleship naval race with Germany. Brought in as First Lord of the Admiralty after the Agadir crisis of 1911, Winston Churchill is seen here as fully aware of the danger to Britain if its fleet were to be seriously disabled. The Admiralty tried to maintain at least a 60 percent advantage in dreadnought construction against Germany. Churchill sought to impress the Germans with the futility of trying to catch up with, let alone outbuild, Britain. Cognizant of the costs of this race, however, in 1913 he proposed a naval "holiday" to stretch out the construction of projected new ships over more time, hoping to reduce the pace. Maurer reviews the important domestic political battles that underlay this naval arms race.

Christopher Bell, who teaches history at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, assesses Churchill's concern over the growing threat posed by Japan in the interwar years. He notes a 1928 Churchill comment that "of all the wars

in the world, [war with Japan] was the least likely to happen.” After all, the two countries shared an alliance that dated to the beginning of the century. Extension of the “ten-year rule,” first promulgated in 1919, saw war in the Far East as highly unlikely for at least another decade. As Bell makes clear, this rule underlay a compromise between the Treasury, concerned about costs, and the Admiralty, which sought completion of its Singapore naval base and more ships. By the mid-1930s, an out-of-office Churchill began to change his position, now expressing (as were Whitehall ministries) growing concern about Japan’s intentions. However, his greater worry about a rearming Germany dominated naval needs in the Far East. Even in 1939 he argued the unlikelihood of a Japanese attack on far-off Singapore, just as he (and others) felt naval power alone could hold off aggression. Events, of course, proved this to be wishful thinking.

B. J. C. McKercher, the sole revisionist here, teaches history at the Royal Military College of Canada. He sees Churchill’s famous speeches against Hitler’s Germany in the late 1930s as revealing a politician on the make: “Quite simply, he sought the premiership above all else; thus, his criticisms of British foreign and defense policy were less selfless than either he or his disciples later claimed.” McKercher’s arguments help balance excessive praise (years later) of Churchill’s stance in this period. He strongly defends prime ministers Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain as working to rebuild British defenses just as Churchill was attacking their seeming inaction. Munich is seen here—as by other revisionists—as a vital play for time to allow rearmament to reach full

effect. Churchill’s years in the political wilderness “resulted from his own follies, primarily his antipathy to Baldwin and Chamberlain,” during which, he argues, “Churchill consistently exaggerated threats.”

David Jablonsky teaches at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and makes clear Churchill’s fascination with what technology offered to overcome potential enemies. There are a host of interesting Churchill quotes on the impact (sometimes literally) of newly developed dum-dum bullets, improved pistols, and later the tank and the airplane. At the same time, Churchill was often concerned about possible unintended effects of technological choice, as well as the ethics of applying certain approaches. As the author notes, “The basic problem, Churchill came to realize, was that technology had changed the scale of warfare.” Before and during the war, he was fascinated with technical options, not all of them workable. Those that did work—such as signals intelligence—made a huge difference in the outcome.

This is a very useful collection, carefully researched and written, adding insight to what we know of Churchill’s varied diplomatic and military roles in a world that moved from cavalry charges to hydrogen bombs. Michael Handel would surely be pleased.

CHRISTOPHER H. STERLING
George Washington University



Mullis, Tony R. *Peacekeeping on the Plains: Army Operations in Bleeding Kansas*. Columbia: Univ. of Missouri, 2004. 273pp. \$40.50

Tony Mullis, a serving officer in the U.S. Air Force, takes a close look at a

time when approximately 10 percent of the U.S. Army was intimately involved in one of the most challenging and politically charged assignments ever given to the U.S. military. Assigned occupation duties in a land where tribal loyalties had been the primary form of government, Army officers, in cooperation with diplomats appointed by the president, were tasked to assist a fledgling democracy attain statehood while avoiding incipient civil war. The task was complicated by the infusion of ideologically motivated outsiders, most of them heavily armed. The two main local factions committed a variety of atrocities, including the massacre of innocent civilians. Elections, new to the area, were viewed with open suspicion by most of the population. Local militias were often little more than muscle for political leaders. Many of the thornier underlying political issues had religious and economic overtones. Several Army officers assigned to these duties were involved in scandals, and at least one associated court-martial received national attention. Meanwhile, powerful individuals in Washington disagreed, sometimes publicly, over tactics, strategy, and policy in the affected region. To make matters worse, ingrained organizational barriers and an inherent resistance to change prevented promising new technologies from being used with maximum effectiveness. Finally, while the Army may have portrayed its role as one of neutral professionalism, both Democrats and Republicans were using the results of the occupation as a key component of their respective strategies for the next presidential election. The year was 1854, and the theater of operations was the Kansas Territory.

Peacekeeping on the Plains clearly began life as a doctoral dissertation. In its introduction Mullis lays out his basic premise. Debunking the perhaps popular conception that the United States has but recently come to experience peace operations, Mullis shows that the U.S. Army has been involved in missions of this type since the first days of the Republic—though this historical involvement has long been overlooked and underanalyzed. Mullis seeks to begin correcting this omission by examining in some detail the 1855 punitive expedition against the Lakota (of the Great Sioux Nation) as an example of the Army's efforts to keep peace in "Bleeding Kansas." Chapter 1 gives an overview of the U.S. Army's involvement in peace operations, and chapter 2 provides background information on the issue of slavery and the creation of the state of Kansas. Chapters 3 and 4 take a detailed look at the 1855 punitive expedition led by General William S. Harney. Chapters 5 through 8 deal with Army operations supporting civil actions in Kansas from 1854 to 1857. A conclusion and epilogue complete the work.

As was often demonstrated during the 1990s, the line between peace enforcement and war is often difficult to determine. This was no less true in 1855. The U.S. Army used deadly force against the Lakota, took hostages, and committed various acts that would, by the standards of today, be judged illegal. Yet, as Mullis points out, these operations were carried out with a political objective in mind, and, in the main, they were effective. Furthermore, Harney's success did have a positive impact, in that they influenced other tribes to remain peaceful. Such results would seem to have contemporary parallels with peace

operations conducted by the French in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the British in Sierra Leone, and the U.S. Marines in Liberia.

The parallels between current operations in Iraq and those of the Army in bleeding Kansas are even more strongly apparent. Faced with a unique and unwelcome mission, the Army faced a steep learning curve. There were missed opportunities and at least several instances of officers engaging in dubious ethical behavior in order to take advantage of perceived business opportunities. The initially appointed political leadership proved too vacillating and incompetent to deal with the complex difficulties inherent in the situation. Furthermore, the entire issue was a red-hot political football, which the newly created Republican Party was using to excoriate the incumbent Democrats.

Like those against the Lakota, the peace operations in Kansas were eventually successful. Nationalizing factional militias, deploying federal forces to prevent civil strife, and arresting infiltrating partisans all contributed to political stability and a safe election environment. Yet, as Mullis points out, several facets of policy either failed or were badly flawed. These included the failure to utilize the telegraph to transmit information rapidly to and from the area of operations. Mail was simply too slow to be operationally relevant—the telegraph could have been a powerful tool in the hands of the administration.

Peacekeeping on the Plains helps fill a gap in the coverage of some of the formative experiences of the U.S. Army. This is valuable in and of itself. However, the more immediate contribution of the work is to identify lessons learned in the

mid-1800s that may be applicable in the early years of the twenty-first century. However, as one would expect given the immense technological differences between the eras, these lessons are rather general in nature.

For example, it proved impossible to craft orders so detailed as to cover every situation the occupying forces encountered. Until local authorities began exercising authority they technically did not possess, the result was a paralysis of action. In connection with the Lakota reprisal, Mullis also makes a convincing argument for assigning older and presumably more mature officers to positions that would in these operations, under normal circumstances, go to younger officers.

Mullis's work also shows that the central conundrum of peace operations was as valid in the mid-nineteenth century as it is today. Enough troops with the right leadership can impose a peace, and might even be able to enforce a peace, but unless the root causes of conflict are resolved the peace has to be pinned into place by bayonets and will not endure. The peace imposed on the Lakota by the U.S. Army did not last long; it took a civil war and the destruction of the Confederacy to deal with the root causes that led to bleeding Kansas.

As mentioned earlier, this work is clearly derived from a dissertation, and for that reason, while it is intellectually stimulating, at times the writing is somewhat ponderous, repetitive, and dry. Yet the contribution this work makes to understanding both past and present eras of significance makes the effort worthwhile.

RICHARD NORTON
Naval War College



Herman, Arthur. *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the World*. New York: HarperCollins, 2004. 648pp. \$26.95

The subtitle of Arthur Herman's grand maritime history *To Rule the Waves* gives it all away: *How the British Navy Shaped the World*. Through a series of well-described episodes, Herman convincingly discusses how the Royal Navy came to dominate the seas and sustained Britain's ability to expand and maintain its empire.

From John Hawkins and Francis Drake to the amazingly named Cloudsley Shovell, as well as Horatio Nelson, John Fisher, David Beatty, and the like, Herman traces the development of men, ships, and strategies, and the technologies that forced change.

The initial impulse for trade was matched by a desire for plunder, so that the relationship that later developed between the navy and the merchant trade required maturation. John Dee, writing a memorial to Queen Elizabeth in 1577, proposed a permanent navy as the "master key wherewith to open all locks that keep out or hinder this incomparable British empire." Although the queen lacked the means, the idea never really died. John Holland, not quoted by Herman, wrote in his 1638 "Discourse of the Navy": "If either the honour of a nation, commerce, or trade with all nations, peace at home, grounded upon our enemies' fear or love of us abroad, and attended with plenty of all things necessary either for the preservation for the public need, or thy private welfare, be things worthy thy esteem . . . then next to God and the King, give thy thanks for the same to the navy, as the

principal instrument whereby God works these good things to thee."

And nothing has changed.

This is a good book that describes all the twists and turns necessary for a nation to become a great commercial power and to protect itself from substantial competition and extraordinary technological challenges. What Herman establishes clearly is that ultimately it was the will to develop a navy and the willingness to use it in the most courageous manner, whether as a matter of policy or as a commander's individual initiative, that effectively supported the realm.

Unfortunately, Herman is not as well supported by his publisher. There are numerous editorial lapses in grammar and proofreading, and although substantive factual errors are few, there are enough to be annoying. For example, the assertion that the average Britisher consumed four pounds of sugar a day in 1700 and twelve pounds a day in 1720 should actually read "per year." Saint Michel should read Saint Mihiel. It is Saint Nazaire, not Nizaire, and Veinticinco, not Veinticino. There is also the omission of Port Stanley as a principal town in the Falklands, and the incorrect statement that "from [Prince] Alfred on, every generation of the royal family would make sure someone carried on the navy tradition, King George V and Louis Mountbatten being the most famous and Prince Philip the most recent" would leave Prince Charles and Prince Andrew wondering where they fit in. In citing the Falklands campaign, Herman also mentions what we in Naval Control of Shipping refer to as "ships taken up from trade." It is worth mentioning that without adequate auxiliaries a navy may be at risk and that

without a controllable merchant marine, a nation may be at risk.

Herman rightly celebrates the daring and enterprise of British naval officers and their willingness to use the means at hand to achieve their goals. A fleet in being is useless if not backed up by the commitment to use it. The problem was, as always, how to pay for the navy, which Herman cites as the major cause of Britain's civil war in 1642. The same issue faces us in 2005.

PAUL WILLIAM GARBER
Captain, U.S. Naval Reserve, Retired



Stevens, David, ed. *The Royal Australian Navy in World War II*. 2d ed. Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2005. 336pp. AU\$39.95

Australia is quintessentially a maritime nation. From the arrival of Lieutenant James Cook, RN, in Botany Bay in 1770, navies have featured heavily in the historical experience of Australia, and for this naval officer, the navy is rightfully regarded as "the senior service." Given this background, it seems surprising that there is not more written about this naval tradition and especially about the triumphs and tragedies of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in wartime. The recent publication of a second edition of David Stevens's *Royal Australian Navy in World War II* fills a very important gap. First published in 1996, the book has been augmented significantly in this new edition.

David Stevens is a former naval officer, a graduate of the University of New South Wales and Australian National University, and currently director of Strategic and Historical Studies within the Sea Power Centre–Australia. He

brings a critical and experienced eye to his editorship, and this is reflected in the many changes made in this edition. This book has a new cover, new photographs, six new chapters, and substantial updates to all preexisting chapters, with an increase of over a hundred pages. This work eschews any single theme but rather seeks to encapsulate an eclectic array of approaches to the general topic. While initially disconcerting, this methodology is skillfully used and provides a holistic account of the RAN wartime experience.

The chapters deal with, inter alia, matters of grand policy concerning Australian naval strategizing in the lead-up to the war, interesting accounts of battles experienced by former crew members, an outline of regional confrontation with Vichy French representatives, social assessments of the officer corps and female participation in the naval service, and a description of industrial reorganization within Australia, as well as accounts of naval operational thinking and planning during the course of the war. By any measure, the achievements of the RAN during the conflict were astonishing. At the war's close, the RAN comprised 337 ships and over forty thousand mobilized personnel. The navy served in almost every theater of that global war and earned its fair share of battle glory. As James Goldrick notes in chapter 1, the RAN had been involved in the sinking of numerous enemy capital ships and submarines, the destruction of over a hundred enemy aircraft and over 150,000 tons of axis merchant shipping. Perhaps the RAN's most significant achievement was its ability to keep open sea lines of communication to Australia at a

time when Japan had conquered vast swaths of South East Asia and the South West Pacific.

There are chapters devoted to a number of distinguished wartime Australian senior naval officers, and others that (re)address some of the perennial mysteries, such as the complete loss (and vanishing) of the cruiser HMAS *Sydney* on the eve of the Japanese entry into the war. The book also devotes a significant amount of attention to the Australian-U.S. alliance. Indeed, such concentration is not surprising. World War II represented a sea change for Australian security thinking, with attention diverted away from the United Kingdom and toward the United States as the key strategic partner within the region. Indeed, American readers will surely find interesting the accounts in chapter 7 (“The Pacific War: A Strategic Overview”) and chapter 8 (“Forging an Alliance? The American Naval Commitment to the South Pacific, 1940–42”) of the Australian-U.S. military partnership within the Pacific campaign. Particularly enlightening are the conclusions drawn of the essential correctness of prewar U.S. strategic naval thinking and the thorough testing of naval war plans at the Naval War College. On the other side, I am sure that American interest will also be piqued by the chapter by Commodore Loxton (retired), giving his account of postwar American revisionism concerning the battle of Savo Island. In this chapter he notes his attendance as a student at the Naval War College’s newly founded Naval Command Course (as the Naval Command College, today the senior of the school’s two international programs, was then known), and in 1959, his participation in a study that emphasized

U.S. virtue and Australian failings in that battle. Having been a badly wounded participant in the battle, he observes, “My arguments against some of those hypotheses were therefore largely based on an innate belief that we Australians and our Royal Navy Admiral could not have done as badly as we were led to believe. At the time I thought that I had not made much of an impression, but the following year Savo was not studied.”

David Stevens has produced a book that is both highly readable and engaging. He provides a much needed public face for the Royal Australian Navy wartime experience, and he effectively preserves the legacy of the period. Since the Second World War, the RAN has continued to fight alongside its U.S. Navy allies in conflicts ranging from Korea and Vietnam through Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

For the American reader, this book provides rare insight into the historical events that formed the genesis of the modern Royal Australian Navy identity and thus has allowed an inside understanding of the impulses that continue to drive it. The RAN is a steadfast and reliable partner to the USN; gaining this appreciation of it is reason enough to read this valuable book.

DALE STEPHENS
Commander, CSM, RAN
Australian Liaison Officer
Naval War College



Ellis, Joseph J. *His Excellency: George Washington*. New York: Knopf, 2004. 320pp. \$26.95

Fischer, David Hackett. *Washington's Crossing*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004. 564pp. \$35

Wienczek, Henry. *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves and the Creation of America*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. 404pp. \$26

Our nation's first commander in chief, George Washington, is back in the news. At Mount Vernon they are striving to recast Washington's image as America's first action hero, while also sponsoring a high-tech, computer-driven rejuvenation of him to figure out exactly what he looked like at ages nineteen, forty-five, and fifty-seven. These current labors, part of an eighty-five-million-dollar "To Keep Him First" campaign, have been bolstered by the efforts of others. The University of Virginia is in the process of publishing *The Papers of George Washington* (fifty-two of the ninety volumes have been completed), and the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art recently exhibited thirteen stunning portraits of Washington by the Rhode Island-born artist Gilbert Stuart.

A recent outburst of serious and extremely enjoyable books about the man has reinforced this worthwhile cause. The three books chosen for this review, all published within the last two years, emphasize a particularly important theme concerning Washington's incredibly eventful life—the development of his character and his growth as a man. One is a full biography, one focuses on the American Revolution, and the third explores Washington's attitudes on slavery; they make for a rich collection of informative reading.

It is generally accepted that Washington has become ever more remote from the hearts and minds of his countrymen and women. To use a prevalent expression, he is perhaps the "deadest, whitest male in American history." To paraphrase

Richard Brookhiser, he is in our textbooks and in our wallets but not in our hearts. Perhaps these books will at least help put him back in our minds, if not in our hearts.

The leadoff selection, *His Excellency: George Washington*, is a concise and exceedingly readable biography by Joseph Ellis, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (Knopf, 2000). Ellis's earlier biographies examined the characters of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. He once again has chosen to center his work on the character of his subject. Ellis has set out to write not another epic portrait of Washington but rather a fresh picture focused tightly on his character and based in part upon new scholarship on the revolutionary era. Ellis's goal is to relate how Washington became who he was. He gives us this new portrait of Washington's growth most admirably.

In looking for patterns of emerging behavior, Ellis cites the combination of Washington's bottomless ambition and near obsession with self-control. He also traces the development of Washington's personality, beginning with his experiences as a young man in the wilderness of the Ohio Valley. The author states that what in later years would be regarded as aloofness and cold reserve began with Washington's need as an inexperienced colonial officer in the French and Indian War to insulate himself and his reputation from criticism. To do this, he had to rely on the hard core of his own merit and self-control, his strongest assets as a young man on the way up.

Ellis notes that nothing had a greater influence on Washington's rise to distinction than his marriage to the widow

Martha Dandridge Custis. Her immense dowry launched Washington to the level of great planters in Virginia's Northern Neck region and provided the foundation for his rise in wealth and influence.

Ellis is particularly effective in reminding readers that nothing was inevitable about the success of either the American Revolution or Washington's role in it. If Washington had not been able to learn from his mistakes early in the war, caused in large part by his naturally aggressive strategy, the conflict could well have ended in defeat and subjugation for the colonies. Washington himself wrote, upon initially arriving at Yorktown, "What may be in the Womb of Fate is very uncertain." Nonetheless, Washington was the centerpiece around which the Continental Army and the cause had formed in 1775, and it was Washington who sustained the army for nearly eight years of desperate fighting, which enabled the ultimate victory.

Ellis also notes that historians have recently concluded that the American Revolution occurred simultaneously with a virulent smallpox epidemic in the colonies; it claimed about a hundred thousand lives, many of them soldiers. He makes the compelling case that one of Washington's most consequential and strategic decisions during the war was his policy of requiring smallpox inoculation for all troops serving in the Continental Army.

In what Ellis calls "the greatest exit in American history," Washington returned his commission to Congress in 1783. His retirement from power and return to Mount Vernon have been noted by other biographers as the greatest act of Washington's life. However, the author also argues that

Washington's unique character was primarily molded by his experiences during the Revolution. Just as he had employed a Fabian strategy of avoiding battles that would have risked the Continental Army's destruction, he also "fashioned a kind of Fabian presidency that sustained the credibility of the federal government by avoiding political battles that threatened to push federal sovereignty further and faster than public opinion allowed."

In the final chapter of this well written book, Ellis states that there were two distinct creative moments in the founding of America: the winning of independence and the creation of nationhood. Washington was the central figure in both events, and his judgment, in Ellis's view, on all major political questions proved prescient—this "remarkably reliable judgment derived from his elemental understanding of how power worked in the world."

Ellis ends his search for how Washington became the "unquestioned superior" of all the Founding Fathers by declaring that Washington "was that rarest of men: a supremely realistic visionary, a prudent prophet . . . devoted to getting the big things right. His genius was his judgment."

If the American Revolution was the key experience in forming Washington's personality and character, David Hackett Fischer's outstanding book *Washington's Crossing* goes a very long way to explain why. Fischer, a historian at Brandeis University and author of the equally masterful *Paul Revere's Ride* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1994) and *Albion's Seed* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), reminds us again that historical events are

not the products of irresistible forces outside the influences of human choice. They are instead the result of “decisions and actions by people who had opportunities to choose and act otherwise.” The summer, fall, and winter of 1776 was a time when human choices and actions truly mattered in determining the fate of the rebelling American colonies. In the famous words of Thomas Paine, first published in *The American Crisis* on 19 December of that year, they were “times that try men’s souls.”

The British had landed more than thirty-three thousand crack troops near New York during the summer and had driven Washington and the Continental Army from New York across New Jersey all the way to the banks of the Delaware River. They also had seventy warships lurking off the coast. America had none. The British had taken Rhode Island and threatened Philadelphia. American morale was at a nadir, while British smugness and confidence were soaring, and the “glorious cause” hung by a slender thread. This “cataract of disaster” was compounded both by the thousands of Americans who were signing oaths of loyalty to the crown and by the hard evidence at roll call that the Continental Army was shrinking daily. To reverse this desperate situation seemed almost hopeless, but it happened; Fischer masterfully relates not only how but why, and the deeper implications of it all.

Fischer expertly recounts the even now unbelievably dramatic facts. On Christmas night of 1776, Washington led a ragged army of 2,400 colonials across the ice-choked Delaware River during a raging storm. After marching all night, they surprised and defeated a garrison of 1,500 tough and well-led Hessian

soldiers at Trenton. These professional troops were not drunk from celebrating Christmas but exhausted from standing vigilant guard and fighting off harassing militia attacks. Within a few days after the New Year, the American forces had thwarted a violent British counterattack in Trenton, then slipped away overnight to surprise and defeat a British brigade at Princeton. These victories assuredly revitalized the American cause and saved the American Revolution.

Fischer greatly enriches the story of these historic and climactic events. He argues that after the loss of New York, Washington changed and adopted a new strategy that became an element of the new American way of war. This strategy was in part Fabian, as noted by Joseph Ellis—that is, to avoid a risky general action but strike only when a “brilliant stroke could be made with . . . probability of success.” Washington also adapted and learned to use artillery, initiative, speed, and intelligence as force multipliers, and he evolved an adaptive system of counsel and command that contrasted markedly with the rigidity of control in the British military.

The new way of war also included much more. It embodied Washington’s belief in what John Adams called a “policy of humanity,” extending quarter in battle and insisting on the decent treatment of prisoners, which aligned the conduct of the war with the values of the Revolution. These values were further extended by Washington’s strict prohibitions against the pillaging of civilian property and by his insistence on deference to his civilian superiors in Congress.

Fischer also comments on the unabashedly heroic painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, by Emanuel Leutze.

He reminds us that the magnificent (twenty by twelve feet) canvas that now hangs in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art is highly symbolic. Completed in 1851, the painting was intended to inspire the mid-nineteenth-century European revolutionaries and depict the crucial importance of Washington's ability to unite the diverse Americans pictured in the boat to pull together in the common cause of freedom.

Fischer concludes his superlative book in the same manner Leutze conceived his painting—with a message for his contemporaries. He states that the message of Washington's crossing "tells us that Americans in an earlier generation were capable of acting in a higher spirit, and so are we." Trenton and Princeton were brilliant strokes, and *Washington's Crossing* is both a brilliant description of the events and an illumination of the man who made them possible.

If Americans in an earlier generation were capable of acting in a higher spirit, there is a reasoned argument to be made that George Washington himself did so particularly in the fourth paragraph of his last will and testament. After the brief first sections of the will, where Washington declared himself a citizen of the United States, settled his few debts, and provided for his wife, Martha, he began the fourth paragraph with the following extraordinary sentence: "Upon the decease of my wife, it is my Will & desire that all the Slaves which I hold in my own right, shall receive their freedom."

The story tracing Washington's tortured journey to personal awareness and moral change concerning slavery, and ultimately to the act of emancipation, is

superbly told by Henry Wiencek in his revisionist work *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America*. Wiencek, winner of a National Book Critics Circle Award for his earlier book *The Hairstons: An American Family in Black and White* (St. Martin's, 1999), sees the Revolution as the primary experience that motivated Washington's reflection and ultimate change on slavery. Wiencek does not see Washington's freeing of his slaves as a parting act of grace or as a sign of his natural benevolence but as a testament to a "profound moral struggle," one that represented a "repudiation of a lifetime of mastery."

Tracing Washington's path to repudiation of slavery is a difficult task, necessarily filled with subtleties of interpretation. As one historian has said of Washington, "no more elusive personality exists in history." Nonetheless, *Imperfect God* aptly reinforces what Joseph Ellis notes, that the Revolution transformed almost everything, both for the country and for Washington.

Washington initially came to own slaves through inheritance from his father (at age eleven) and then from his half-brother Lawrence. Although he used his slaves and his wife's dower slaves to work the five joining farms of Mount Vernon his entire life, there are clues that Washington's long transformation concerning slavery began at least as early as 1769. Wiencek emphasizes that Washington took part in a slave lottery in Williamsburg that year and witnessed a slave auction "consisting chiefly of boys and girls, from 14 or 15 down to the ages of two or three years." Wiencek believes that this auction and similar experiences caused Washington to reflect on the monstrous cruelty of breaking apart families, so

that by the mid-1770s he had offered to buy an entire family he did not need rather than separate its members. In 1786, Washington wrote that he never wanted to purchase another slave unless there were most unusual circumstances, referring to “that species of property which I have no inclination to possess.”

Yet it was as commander in chief in Boston in 1775 that Washington really began to see blacks as human beings rather than as something to be owned. He must have been shocked on arriving in Massachusetts to see large numbers of black men bearing arms. He was introduced to a black hero of Bunker Hill, and the black poet Phillis Wheatley wrote a poem in his honor. In response to Wheatley’s poem and her accompanying letter, Washington invited her to his headquarters in Cambridge. He was changing his view of blacks, and the greatest impact of this change was in the Continental Army. His general orders issued 30 December 1775 stated: “As the General is informed, that Numbers of Free Negroes are desirous of enlisting, he gives leave to recruiting Officers, to entertain them, and promises to lay the matter before the Congress.” This was a new policy, and according to Wiencek, “Washington won the Revolutionary War with an army that was more integrated than any military force until the Vietnam War.”

Wiencek further traces Washington’s change in attitude after the war. With the encouragement of the Marquis de Lafayette, Washington, before he became president, had deeply reconsidered the implications of slavery. In 1786, he wrote that he hoped the Virginia legislature would abolish slavery “by slow, sure, & imperceptible degrees.” Wiencek believes there is evidence that

by 1789 Washington had experienced a moral epiphany, as he outlined a plan in secret to sell his western lands to finance gradual emancipation of his slaves. In 1794, Washington wrote to a relative, “I am principled against selling negroes, as you would do cattle in a market,” and he later stated to a friend that the “unfortunate condition” of his slaves “has been the only unavoidable subject of regret.”

In the end, he did what no other slave-owning Founding Father did. He freed the 123 slaves he had legal control over at Martha’s death and provided from his estate for the care and basic education of those who most needed it for the next thirty-three years. All this was done despite his wife’s (and his extended family’s) embittered opposition. He realized that this act made him a stranger in his own land. He had once remarked to Edmund Randolph that if slavery continued to divide America, “he had made up his mind to move and be of the northern.”

Wiencek’s book gives a balanced view of his subject. He is careful to place Washington in the context of his times, neither apologizing for nor condemning him. He does not avoid the fact that Washington owned, worked, punished, bought, and sold slaves. Yet the sum of Washington’s stature as a founder is not diminished by Wiencek’s portrait but rather better brought to light.

In sum, these three excellent books help to reveal Washington as a man in full who had the self-awareness, the will, and the moral courage to change. He saw life steadily, and he tried to see it whole. There is still a great deal to admire and to learn from his personal journey as a human being.

WILLIAM M. CALHOUN
Naval War College