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Navalist and Anti-navalist: the Naval Policy Debate in the United States 1785-1827

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1967 (at which time the rifling was changed to improve stability and hitting probability) or upon later manufacture, improved versions of the M193 bullet, even though it is clear from the writing that more up-to-date information was at the researcher's disposal. Other theories offered in the book (and at the Conventional Weapons Conference) have been discounted in the meetings of experts at the Conventional Weapons Conference to the point that there is no proposal regarding small-caliber, high-velocity weapons under consideration for the forthcoming conference session.

Anti-personnel Weapons is an extensive but not comprehensive treatment of modern military weaponry. While voluminous, it is so skewed in its intent that it contributes little to the subject. Many of its conclusions, reached through simplistic or convoluted argumentation, have proved to be without foundation when tested in the forum of international negotiations. More galling than its deliberate inaccuracy, however, is that much of the content of *Anti-personnel Weapons* is based on data provided in the course of the technical exchange of information with U.S. military authorities. That material in turn has been skewed to place the United States in the worst possible light while advancing an opposing cause. If there is any lesson in this book, it is that our oft-times open exchange of technical information should be viewed as not always working to our advantage.

W. HAYS PARKS

Symonds, Craig L. *Navalists and Anti-navalists: the Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785-1827*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1980. 252pp.

Craig Symonds' book is one of particular interest to the Naval War College. It is a piece of original research that was inspired by the author's

experience as a professor of strategy at the War College, and it is a direct application of several ideas that are raised in the Strategy and Policy course. This, in itself, is an unusual attribute. As anyone who has taught or taken the course will readily appreciate, there are few books that start and carry forward in the particular areas on which that course focuses. Usually, one must read books written for other purposes in order to view the many aspects in the interrelationship between strategy and policy.

In order to explore the opposing viewpoints that affect the formulation of policy, Professor Symonds focuses on the public debate in Congress during the early years of the Republic, between 1785 and 1827. He dispassionately examines these viewpoints and defines their basic outlook and concerns. In the process he very effectively supersedes the earlier work of Harold and Margaret Sprout in examining these issues. While such earlier historians have scoffed at the Republican opponents of the Navy, Symonds shows that they had very legitimate concerns. The navalists who supported the construction of a large Navy were driven by a vision of the United States holding the balance of power in Europe. To antinavalists, this was an impractical and irresponsible course at a time when the young nation barely had the resources to deal with the Indians on the western frontier. In short, this is the debate between those who see the proper role of the Navy as one of protecting direct and immediate national interests and those who value the role of the Navy in the broad context of international affairs. While the broader viewpoint includes that of defense, the narrower interest does not accept the implications of an international role. Quite clearly, the political debate related here is very much a part of the historical debate between "blue-water" and "continental" strategy. While historians have tended to view

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that debate only in the context of British history, we have clear evidence here that it applies not only to a great power, but even to a small republic with very limited resources. It is a political debate that represents a recurring attitude and that has had a continual effect on the policy that controls both the construction and employment of navies.

Symonds' distinction between "Navalists" and "Antinavalists" is an interesting and useful one to make, although it involves a thorough understanding of concepts that are not readily apparent to the nonspecialist. The terms are well defined in the "Introduction." There, the author makes it clear that he is not dealing with a simple pro-Navy-anti-Navy, good guy-bad guy relationship. He starts from the definition that Alfred Vagts made in his *History of Militarism* (1937) that militarism comprises all the activities, institutions and qualities not actually needed for war. This is what lies behind Symonds' application of the term to those who supported such things for the American Navy. Those who opposed these men were not opposed to the Navy, but they opposed those who wanted to build the Navy beyond the immediate defense needs of the country. In particular, Symonds has identified as navalists those who valued the Navy for its "image, honor, prestige and diplomatic clout." Vagts, himself, focused on the qualities of caste, cult, authority and belief which contrasted with the efficient, rational and humane use of armed force to achieve specific objectives. Symonds' extension of Vagts' definition to include peacetime uses of military force raises some interesting issues. Recent theoretical writing has stressed the role of armed

force, short of war, in achieving specific national objectives. In theory, it is a rational use of armed force, not an extraneous factor. Symonds has convincingly demonstrated that those who supported such views in the early days of the Republic had in mind unrealistic aims that were inappropriate to the national interest and, therefore, navalist. Viewing this one example in a broad context, one is left to speculate when the diplomatic uses of a navy are effective and efficient uses of armed force and when they do not serve national interests.

Navalists and Antinavalists is a thorough study of the congressional debate based on a wide range of published documents, and it is a study carefully placed within the context of the historical literature on the period. In this regard, it is particularly unfortunate that the publisher has relegated the footnotes to the end of each chapter. Many of them make substantive corrections and comments on the literature, particularly on the works of Mahan and the Sprouts. Several of them are important enough to have been put into the body of the text.

Symonds has explored and defined an important aspect of the public expression of opinion in regard to the use of the Navy. In doing this, he has shown the two major contending viewpoints and defined the considerations that lie behind them. This is a most useful contribution to political and naval history as well as a case study in understanding one of the forces that affect the determination of policy.

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