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Our Man: Richard Holbrooke and the End of the American Century

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the age of sail. Descents on enemy coasts were common practice in the era. “Cutting out” expeditions designed to capture, or in some cases recapture, vessels in enemy hands also were typical. Armstrong adds some unique wrinkles to these regular features of warfare in the age of sail. In particular, one chapter deals not with the projection of power from naval vessels against objectives ashore or close inshore, but rather the reverse. He focuses on methods using innovative technology against a superior blockading force to allow a weaker maritime power to deter invaders. This chapter strikes a somewhat dissonant note, but the broader themes resonate in it as well. It also focuses attention on a significant subtheme—specifically, the role of equipment and technological innovation.

Armstrong weaves two additional themes throughout his work: the focus on unique skill sets in addition to specialized equipment, and the importance of upper-level leadership. Many senior leaders saw these operations, to use modern terminology, as *lesser included operations* that were inherent in the normal conduct of naval warfare; such opinions were not well-founded. Further, Armstrong emphasizes intersectional leadership, both at the senior level, where empowering junior officers was essential, and at the junior-officer level, where the mission-critical decisions were made. These operations served as a nursery for future successful leaders of the U.S. Navy.

If there is a weakness in this volume, it is the absence of maps. The book provides only a single, global chart with general locations corresponding to the various chapters. As most of the narrative is tactical, more and detailed maps depicting

the individual operations would have been useful for readers unfamiliar with the geography of these events.

Perhaps the strongest part of the book is the conclusion, which serves to acknowledge that this work is a brief survey of an understudied aspect of America’s naval heritage. While Geoffrey Till described naval irregular warfare as “postmodern,” Armstrong raises the idea that ideas perceived as new and innovative often are reinventions of ideas from the past. As Harry Truman was reported to have said, “The only thing new in this world is the history you don’t know.” Professor Armstrong offers a unique view of the early American navy. For the casual reader, it is an engaging series of stories. While histories generally are filled with the great battles, the actions covered in this book represent smaller, more frequent applications of naval power. For specialists, this is a framework and an important call to study events that do not fit neatly into the acknowledged schools of naval strategy.

K. J. DELAMER



Our Man: Richard Holbrooke and the End of the American Century, by George Packer. New York: Knopf, 2019. 608 pages. \$30.

The field of diplomatic history lends itself to biographies of diplomats such as Secretaries of State or other high-level officials as a means of understanding policies and the policy makers. Going through the shelves of our university library, one can chart the history of American twentieth-century foreign policy through the biographies on the shelves. These books, along with works such as *The Best and the Brightest*, tell

the story of the rise of Pax Americana in the post-World War II world.

However, George Packer's *Our Man: Richard Holbrooke and the End of the American Century* offers another narrative by chronicling the career of this important American diplomat. Using this flawed individual, Packer tells the story of America's flawed foreign policy from Vietnam through Bosnia to Afghanistan and Iraq, using the conflicts as the setting for the narrative and Holbrooke as the centerpiece. In addition to the chronicling of American foreign policy, this biography of Richard Holbrooke shows the personal side of the man, from his affair with Anthony Lake's wife that ruined his friendship with Lake and affected his future career, to his dating of Diane Sawyer.

My first memory of Holbrooke is as the architect of the Dayton Accords, but it was not until reading this heavy tome that I discovered that his foreign affairs career started during the early years of Vietnam, which would influence his later views on intervention. Packer highlights Holbrooke's early years, including his family's hiding of his Jewish heritage, his ambition to become a journalist for the *New York Times*, and his desire to one day become Secretary of State. During Vietnam, Holbrooke volunteered for a post in the Mekong Delta, where he practiced counterinsurgency methods to win the hearts and minds of the people. However, like so many young bureaucrats and military officers in Vietnam, Holbrooke soon realized the problems with the war, and befriended David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan, both journalistic critics of the war. Packer also depicts the friendship and subsequent falling-out between Holbrooke and Lake, another young Foreign Service officer, that would affect Holbrooke's life greatly.

During the 1970s, Holbrooke left government during the Nixon and Ford administrations, edited *Foreign Affairs*, and served in the Carter administration. During his time in and out of government, Holbrooke's brash attitude made enemies among Democratic members of the national security community, including Zbigniew Brzezinski. During the Reagan years, Holbrooke tried a career in investment banking, with some success; yet, with the election of Clinton, Holbrooke saw his opportunity for (or destiny of) a top diplomatic spot in the administration. However, Anthony Lake's appointment as national security advisor stalled that hope for Holbrooke. It was not until Holbrooke had toured Bosnia as a private citizen and began discussing the crisis in the media that he received his ambassadorship to Germany, and then his role as negotiator of the peace accords in Dayton. The sections of the book that explore the diplomacy of this period are excellent and breathe life into an aspect of recent history that I feel has been ignored. Packer depicts Holbrooke as the right man for the right time; the same elements of Holbrooke's personality that caused problems with his peers allowed him to be successful in working with the Serbian and Bosnian leaders.

The success at Dayton marked the high point of Holbrooke's career (and, one could argue, the high point of the American post-Cold War diplomatic era as well). As with so many officials, the changing of administrations pushed Holbrooke out of government and back into the private sector, until the next round of presidential campaigns began looking for foreign policy advisers, first Kerry in 2004, then Clinton in 2008. Packer shows how Holbrooke's personality and ambition turned off President

Obama, and his only role in the new administration was as a special adviser for Afghanistan and Pakistan to Hillary Clinton, the new Secretary of State—the job Holbrooke really wanted. Packer chronicles Holbrooke's failing health and his tragic death after having a coronary incident in the Secretary of State's office.

While we only are starting to put America's post-Vietnam War foreign policy into context, Richard Holbrooke and his story provide one narrative looking at a flawed policy through the prism of a flawed, but great, man.

EDWARD SALO



The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, ed. Elizabeth D. Samet. New York: Liveright, 2019. 1,068 pages. \$45.

Arguably, the editor of an annotated work of significant size has one of the more difficult jobs in the field of literature, especially when the work being annotated is well-known, such as the Bible, the collected Sherlock Holmes stories, or the complete works of William Shakespeare. The editor needs to provide historical background; increase the reader's understanding of the author's personal and professional motivations and influences; and provide definitions of words, phrases, and concepts that are now forgotten, out of fashion, or greatly changed in meaning. Finding appropriate maps, illustrations, and the like also is a requirement. Despite these challenges, Dr. Elizabeth Samet, a professor of English at the U.S. Military Academy, has created a welcome addition to the field of military history and biography.

Samet's introduction to this volume is worth reading in itself. She freely admits

her profound admiration for Grant since first encountering his *Memoirs* as a graduate student, and credits him with having as significant an influence on her life as "Virgil, Plutarch, Li Po, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Herman Melville, Leo Tolstoy, Virginia Woolf, and Joan Didion" (p. xx). This is high praise from an English professor. She notes that Grant's other admirers are as varied as Theodore Roosevelt and Ta-Nehisi Coates. For Samet, annotating this work clearly was a labor of love, as well as a chance to rehabilitate Grant's image, which, she points out, long has been intentionally tarnished by political opponents, jealous military contemporaries, and Southern leaders building the myth of the "Lost Cause." Taking on Grant also means taking on the questions whether he was an alcoholic, drunk and disoriented at Shiloh, and a brutal, unimaginative general who defeated the Confederacy with tactics that boiled down simply to killing more Confederate soldiers than the South could replace.

While Samet does much that is praiseworthy, there are not enough maps, although the majority used are from the Army's exceptional *West Point Atlas of the Mexican War* and its counterpart the *West Point Atlas of the Civil War*. Other illustrations include photos of notable figures, scenes of the war, and contemporary political cartoons; readers wishing to take a hard look at the latter are advised to have a powerful magnifying glass close to hand.

Samet is not afraid to take a stand on issues on which the Army and the U.S. military at large traditionally have displayed a studied neutrality. She views Confederate civil-military leaders as traitors. She holds no truck with the stainless reputation of the