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Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States

Richard Norton

Mara E. Karlin

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personalities in each station changed, sometimes more than once, over the five years under review. Yet with the start of each successive chapter Still takes us back in time through many of the earlier incumbents' thinking and interactions, albeit from a different angle. This makes everything hard to follow, to the point where I found myself crying out for a chart depicting who relieved whom in each of the key naval positions over the years in question. Therefore, a good prior working knowledge of the key naval personalities of the 1920s and where and when they served would enhance the reader's experience greatly.

Similarly, when it came to the geographic regions depicted in chapter 4 and beyond, it would have been useful to have included a map of some sort in each chapter, depicting each of the key places mentioned in the text. This would have allowed the reader to tie things together in terms of time and space and to appreciate better the enormous challenges posed by the shortages of platforms and the multiplicity of taskings. Although I am of European descent and spent most of my naval career in these waters, I was forced on many occasions to resort to online maps to appreciate better the author's points—something that perhaps should not have been necessary.

Finally, it also might have been worth including a little more detail on what became known as the “Naval Battle of Paris” in the first chapter. After all, the U.S. decision to build a “navy second to none”—and the obvious impact this was going to have on a close ally, Great Britain—constituted a monumental policy decision for the United States, with ramifications to the present day. Such an enhanced discussion would have been of abiding interest to most naval officers and the readership of this journal.

These comments notwithstanding, this book still is a very worthwhile addition to the library of anyone with a passing interest in the development of U.S. naval policy. It covers a rarely addressed and largely unsung part of naval responsibilities: providing naval support to foreign policy in its widest sense; this makes it valuable in and of itself. Even though general readers may get a little lost in the minutiae, Still's attention to detail and his intimate knowledge of the key naval personalities of the era give the book a wide application within the academic field, particularly for established naval historians of the period. The eighty-odd pages of endnotes alone are a rich source of material that can inspire any number of supporting studies and additional work. Finally, it should not be overlooked that this glimpse into how the U.S. Navy responded in a previous era of great-power maneuvering could have renewed relevance in today's uncertain times vis-à-vis China and Russia.

ANGUS ROSS



Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States, by Mara E. Karlin. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. 296 pages. \$79.95.

Building Militaries in Fragile States is a classic example of a doctoral dissertation transformed into a book. The author seeks to find the reason that U.S. efforts to create strong militaries in weaker countries are successful—or not. Her answer highlights the role of external actors, as well as the degree to which the host nation is willing to allow the United States to get involved in deep and sensitive matters of state (e.g., the assignment of personnel,

the creation of national strategy). The author details these conclusions in the book's first three pages. The majority of the rest of the book is a tour of carefully selected cases, each adding to the evidence supporting Karlin's conclusion.

This journey includes transit through an academically obligatory chapter on theory, which in this case anchors the subject in the discipline of security studies and international relations. This is followed by a central hypothesis, an equally detailed explanation and discussion of methodology, and a conclusion. Karlin has done her work well in this regard; if her dissertation committee was not impressed with her efforts, it should have been. As her evidence and analyses build, nearly 250 pages later, the reader is likely to throw in the intellectual towel and agree that an excellent job has been done.

If this were all there was to *Building Militaries in Fragile States*, from the position of the lay reader or even the security practitioner it would constitute a lot of squeeze for a fairly small amount of juice. The exceptional attention to detail, the comprehensive analysis, and the reasoning that are essential to a successful dissertation do not always make for the most-entertaining reading. Thankfully, there is more to this book.

For example, the case studies are interesting in and of themselves. Accounts of the efforts made to keep Greece in the Western sphere of influence following World War II make for fascinating reading. The fact that this story is not part of common knowledge makes Karlin's presentation all the more interesting. Although the level of American and allied effort involved may seem small—even quaint—in the current environment, the strategic consequences reverberate to the current day.

The case of Vietnam makes for equally compelling reading—and Karlin's analysis reveals that America's failure in its attempts to build the South Vietnamese army was even more spectacular than commonly is acknowledged.

Given the enormous sacrifice that South Vietnamese soldiers made, the price of failure was exceptionally high. Karlin's work, at least by implication, adds to the ethical questions pertaining to the implementation of U.S. strategies. She is not afraid to name names, identifying Lieutenant General Samuel T. "Hanging Sam" Williams as one of the principal architects of failure.

The final two case studies both involve Lebanon. The first examines U.S. efforts to strengthen the Lebanese national army in the early 1980s; the second looks at similar efforts undertaken approximately twenty years later. Although it can be debated whether the lack of success in creating a strong Lebanese national army was the single most critical failure of U.S. policy and strategy, Karlin leaves no doubt that her hypothesis accounts for the failure of that portion of the U.S. effort.

In her first chapter, Karlin identifies many cases that do not fit within her construct. On page 1 she identifies the effort to strengthen other militaries as predominantly a post-World War II phenomenon. However, the historical record suggests that similar efforts were made much earlier, in places such as Haiti, Nicaragua, and the prewar Philippines. She also, for reasons that are obvious, does not include more-recent cases, such as that of Mali, that may lack accessible, nonclassified research material to perform proper analysis, or where conditions on the ground are simply too dangerous to allow research, as in Yemen. This observation neither

negates nor even seriously calls into question Dr. Karlin's conclusion, but it does suggest that additional opportunities to test her hypothesis are available.

However, it is in the concluding chapter of her work, "Findings and Implications," that Dr. Karlin best engages those readers concerned with the current state of the U.S. national-security enterprise. In these pages, her role as scholar shares ground with, or even gives way to, her experience as a practitioner. Her voice becomes more distinct and personal. Her questions and recommendations for current and future strategists and implementers of policy are pertinent and sharp edged—as they should be. One hopes that this chapter points toward Karlin's intentions regarding future writings and research, and if these future works include more of her personal experiences, backed with her academic bona fides, they promise to be of immense interest.

RICHARD NORTON



Empire of the Winds: The Global Role of Asia's Great Archipelago, by Philip Bowring. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2018. 336 pages. \$31.50.

At a recent conference, I overheard several participants discussing the best terminology for maritime Southeast Asia. While *South China Sea* is partly applicable, this term not only fails to include the entirety of the region (particularly the Indonesia archipelago) but also provides titular deference to disputed Chinese claims in the region. In his book *Empire of the Winds* Philip Bowring solves this quandary by resurrecting an ancient term to define the region: *Nusantaria*.

Bowring, a journalist with over forty years of experience in Southeast Asia, makes a convincing case for Nusantaria as a coherent historical entity. He includes therein the modern-day Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam, and impressively stretches his argument back fifteen thousand years. Evidence from the fields of linguistics, genetics, archaeology, and anthropology works together to form an image of a vibrant web of maritime culture and commerce. Bowring certainly acknowledges the impact of India and China on the early history of the region, as well as the later impact of Europe, but remains anchored throughout the text to Nusantaria. This is especially refreshing in his treatments of the spread of Islam and Christianity to the region, and the more recent spread of nationalism. In each case, he appropriately traces the origins of these ideologies to external forces, all the while remaining focused on their integration and syncretization into Nusantarian culture and society.

Not only does Bowring convincingly argue for the existence of Nusantaria as a region or geographical category of analysis; he also convincingly argues that for the majority of the past it was Nusantaria—not China—that dominated the region. China is not ignored but rather is relegated to being a marginal actor—which is a welcome and powerful orientation. An example of this is chapter 9, which tells the story of Champa from a Nusantarian, sea-facing perspective, rather than emphasizing the Vietnamese and Chinese overland connection. Bowring makes this theme explicit: "Today, the history of the Cham, and before that of Sa Huynh, and their presence in the Spratly Islands provides historical