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## The Kaiser's U-boat Assault on America: Germany's Great War Gamble in the First World War

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new political outcome will be found in a stand-alone approach that emphasizes military solutions to end conflict. Moreover, it is perhaps discomfoting to read that the political-settlement process in states that experience civil wars does not lend itself to an easily replicated road map. Rather, this book provides nuanced and thoughtful analytical windows into the similarities and differences among these civil wars and some blunt assessments from experts concerning the limitations and possibilities of war-termination processes.

KURT BUCKENDORF



*The Kaiser's U-boat Assault on America: Germany's Great War Gamble in the First World War*, by Hans Joachim Koerver. Philadelphia: Pen and Sword, 2020. 360 pages. \$34.95.

George M. Cohan's 1917 patriotic anthem "Over There" was written to encourage young American men to enlist in the military and fight with determination in Europe, such that "we won't come back till it's over, over there." What most Americans did not expect was that German forces, specifically those of the Kriegsmarine, might seek to fight in American waters—"over here." Military historian Hans Joachim Koerver's engaging history of that effort affords readers a detailed study of an oft-overlooked aspect of the First World War. The devastating effects of German U-boat technology and warfare in the Second World War had their genesis in the experience of and lessons derived from undersea operations of the First World War. Providing a study of diplomatic and economic aspects of the U-boat

operations against the United States as well as the tactical and strategic use of the U-boats, Koerver provides a volume that is extensively researched in primary and secondary sources, yet very readable. Numerous charts, graphs, and photographs enhance the volume. Additionally, four appendices, including one providing copies of pertinent documents, supply resources for those wishing to do further study.

Of particular note to those with an interest in the U.S. Navy in Newport, Rhode Island, and the Naval War College is Koerver's presentation of the *U-53* incident of 7 October 1916. The day after *U-53* left Newport, it boarded one U.S. merchant vessel, reviewed the cargo list, and let the ship pass; however, it then sank five non-U.S. ships in the vicinity of the U.S. lightship *Nantucket* (LV 112)—two of them in the presence of seventeen neutral U.S. destroyers from Newport.

In a volume containing much information and many details, readers will appreciate the presentation of the material in fifty-eight short chapters grouped into five sections, one for the prewar setting and one for each year of the war, excluding 1918. The author addresses many aspects of the U-boat assault and views the ethical and legal dimensions of Germany's unrestricted warfare in 1917, as well as a host of other matters, such as U-boat construction, manning, armament, tactics and operations, strategic significance, and propaganda. Yet the work is balanced and affords readers—whether they begin with little knowledge of U-boat operations or greater knowledge and interest—a very useful volume. Ships receiving individual chapters pertaining to their destruction are RMS *Lusitania* (7 May 1915), SS *Arabic* (19 August 1915), and SS *Sussex* (24 March

1916), aboard each of which U.S. citizens died. Each ship was attacked prior to America's entry into the war, and each attack initiated diplomatic fervor and furor from President Woodrow Wilson and the United States. Each attack was avoidable, did little to further Germany's war aims, and significantly damaged the country's international reputation and image. Yet it was not these three ships that Wilson referenced in his 2 April 1917 war message to Congress; rather, it was the sinking of three U.S. merchant ships—SS *Vigilancia* (16 March 1917), SS *City of Memphis* (17 March 1917), and the tanker SS *Illinois* (18 March 1917)—that became the tipping point for America's entry into the war.

As mentioned, the text is interspersed with numerous photographs and charts that supplement the content. Readers will find the book to be an enjoyable and engaging work. The several appendices, whose contents include photographs of decoded German documents from Room 40 within the directorate of intelligence of the British Admiralty, enhance the work by providing a glimpse of the tedious yet significant work of intercepting and decrypting German naval and diplomatic traffic, including the Zimmermann telegram, to which the author devotes several pages. The book's title is somewhat misleading, in that out of five sections only one is devoted to the U-boat assault on the United States. A more detailed index would benefit readers. Some readers will wish for more details on specific boats or incidents, but Koerver states that he is writing for a general audience (p. vii). Thus the work should be read by those who seek to gain a broader understanding of the First World War at sea and the importance of U-boats in that conflict.

TIMOTHY J. DEMY



*The American Way of Empire: How America Won a World—but Lost Her Way*, by James Kurth. Washington, DC: Washington Books, 2019. 464 pages. \$30.

In the second year of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenian people reproached Pericles for bringing invasion, plague, and ruin upon them. Pericles warned his fellow citizens that Athens possessed an empire and that, while it might have been wrong to take it, it would be unsafe to let it go. Persuaded, the Athenians persisted with policies that made them even more enemies, including among erstwhile allies, ultimately leading to the dissolution of their empire. In *The American Way of Empire*, James Kurth draws on but departs from Pericles as he offers his own warning: that America no longer possesses an empire, and—to those still seeking to preserve this fallen empire—it would be unsafe *not* to let it go.

Kurth, a professor emeritus of political science at Swarthmore College, is a luminary of U.S. foreign policy. A PhD from Harvard who studied under Samuel P. Huntington, to whom he dedicates the book, Kurth is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute. Kurth has authored over 120 articles, and he revised some of them to serve as chapters in the book's five substantive parts, which are titled "Hegemony," "Ideology," "Strategy," "Insurgency," and "Political Economy." This composition allows the reader to absorb the book in chapters or parts or as a whole. That the chapters derive from articles originally published as early as the 1990s yet address current crises so deftly reflects Kurth's prescience and the book's timeliness.