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Coalition of the UnWilling and UnAble: European Realignment and the Future of American Geopolitics

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the sea's ability to link us back to our forebears. As Professor Holmes states, "Seafarers join something larger and older when they go down to the sea in ships" (p. 14). Not only does the sea connect us as a global community, but it also has the ability to connect us with our past and with our naval and military history and heritage.

Wardrooms and classrooms would do well to add *Maritime Strategy* to their list of books to discuss. Training commands should consider including this book in their curricula for new accessions, as it provides a big-picture view of the Navy's place on the national scene.

SCOTT CAUBLE



Coalition of the UnWilling and UnAble: European Realignment and the Future of American Geopolitics, by John R. Deni. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2021. 274 pages. \$75.

In this exceptional and contemporary analysis, John R. Deni provides a sobering view of the largest U.S. European military allies and their abilities to function as effective partners. In short, the current and future pictures are not pretty. As the book's title indicates, whether one considers the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, or Poland, these states suffer from considerable—arguably profound—military limitations that will circumscribe their ability to serve as military partners to the United States. Likewise, whether one focuses on demographics (declining birth rates), national economies that cannot support military ambitions, the absence of advanced military capabilities, or strategic directions that do not square well with those of

the United States, the applicability to these allies of all these factors, to varying degrees, helps to explain how significant the barriers in place are.

Certainly, previous scholarship has examined European military shortcomings. Many have written on American military preeminence in NATO's operation in Kosovo; others have demonstrated the different strategic perspectives and European military limitations apparent in NATO's bombings in Libya. Deni provides an updated analysis that looks closely at the historical "big four" European allies, plus Poland.

For the United Kingdom, Deni notes that over the last decade major reductions in defense expenditures have cut deeply into British military capabilities. He also devotes much analysis to the British economy, noting that Brexit similarly will cut deeply into Britain's tax base, effectively preventing the British from investing in their military forces, even if they had the political desire to do so.

The author's contrasting analysis of Germany is especially perceptive and revealing. He makes the case that the Germans' strong and robust economy, favorable labor market, and budget surpluses provide the *potential* for them to play a far more significant role in global security. The German public, however, remains generally opposed to the projection of German military force; opinion polls even indicate that Germans are among the least likely, compared with respondents from other European allies, to express a willingness to use force to defend another NATO ally if it got into a "serious military conflict" with Russia (p. 72). Political-elite and youth opinions differ on this point, yet the dominant norm remains

in place, which has translated into “debilitating shortcomings” for German military capabilities, despite having an economy that truly has prospered and will continue to do so (p. 66).

Deni sees France as the closest U.S. ally in terms of strategic outlook; the French hold views nearly identical to Americans’ in these areas, and their perspectives on the role of the military as a foreign policy tool are similar as well. But the author argues that France’s foreign and military visions cannot be sustained, owing to the country’s inadequate economic growth. Moreover, some political-sovereignty issues still stand in the way of more-fruitful interstate dialogue.

Among the allies examined, Italy stands out as the one that has fallen the furthest. Owing to a deeply troubled economy and a backward environment on technology and innovation—along with the inability of political moderates to face these challenges effectively, which has resulted in the rise of populist politicians—the Italian military is only a shadow of what it once was, with the likely prospect of additional languishing ahead. With an aging population and a military that increasingly is used as an internal dual-use security force, Italy’s prospects as a meaningful military ally continue to shrink.

Deni’s last study is devoted to Poland, which, unlike nearly all other European countries, has spent consistently and meaningfully on defense over the entire last decade. Russian military incursions into Georgia, Crimea, and eastern Ukraine, along with Russian military activities in Kaliningrad, build directly on Poland’s historical fears of an aggressive and expansionist Russia. Yet despite Poland’s economic strengths, new military

capabilities, and legislation that requires ongoing defense spending, it suffers a severe limitation: its singular focus on Russia, with its resultant investments in territorial defense. This limits its ability to partner with the United States.

The author concludes with several recommendations for how to address these significant shortcomings. Among his proposals is sharing more American military intelligence with allies, especially Germany, in an effort to increase transparency on existing global threats and challenges. Deni also recommends that the United States fully use international organizations, including the United Nations and NATO, given the high strategic value the allies place on them. And he encourages the United States to support a strong European security identity, which may help translate into greater defense spending, and perhaps the development of specified niche capabilities among the allies.

This book is impressive. Deni has used an extensive body of scholarship and data on each of these countries. He also conducted a multitude of interviews with both American and foreign defense officials. While some of his policy proposals certainly will generate debate, his ideas are welcome, as they provide some optimism that positive change is possible and that policy directions worth pursuing do exist.

RYAN C. HENDRICKSON



Dangerous Narratives: Warfare, Strategy, Statecraft, ed. Ajit K. Maan. Washington, DC: Narrative Strategies Ink, 2020. 188 pages. \$45.

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