

Strategy Shelved: The Collapse of Cold War Naval Strategic Planning

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themselves. While the number and variety of the groups can be confusing, Peiss focuses on the individuals—scholars and librarians, male and female—who had to make critical decisions about books and collections out in the field.

Just as warfare sometimes is the catalyst for great leaps in technology and science, such as the development of the rocket and jet engines during World War II, Peiss contends that, in addition to preserving physical books, the LCM and other groups brought about innovations in library science. The sections on the use of microfilm and the development of organizations that would develop into ProQuest and OLIC also were interesting to this scholar, who uses those services on a daily basis.

Peiss also delves into parts of the mission that were less than ethical. She shows the shadowy actions of some black-market dealers, as well as bringing up the ethical dilemma of obtaining a portion of a nation's intellectual heritage during a time of war. Finally, I was taken by the discussion of saving Nazi records and propaganda, first for the war trials, then to preserve them for future historical studies.

Peiss's book is a joy to read; her recounting of this aspect of World War II is interesting in itself. It also provides the perfect companion piece to Robert Edsel's *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* (2009) or Joshua Hammer's *The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu: And Their Race to Save the World's Most Precious Manuscripts* (2016); the latter deals with efforts to save important manuscripts during a more recent war. Peiss's book deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone interested in intelligence gathering, library science, the protection

of cultural artifacts, or the power of information warfare. I also would advocate that it be included in the training of civil-affairs personnel in the military. Peiss provides the history of efforts to gather and preserve books, manuscripts, and other sources, but she also provides lessons on how to conduct similar operations during future military operations.

EDWARD SALO



Strategy Shelved: The Collapse of Cold War Naval Strategic Planning, by Steven T. Wills. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2021. 292 pages. \$44.95.

In *Strategy Shelved*, Center for Naval Analyses analyst and retired surface warfare officer Steve Wills examines the U.S. Navy's struggle to reestablish its purpose and recapture its identity following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The "strategy shelved" motif refers to both the late-1980s *Maritime Strategy*—perhaps the most successful employment and force-structure plan in the Navy's history—and the apparent disinterest of the Navy's leadership in drafting a unifying strategic vision of its future during the later 1990s and the early part of the following decade.

In Wills's depiction, the cadre of uniformed naval strategists that the naval services carefully developed during the Cold War was shelved. Instead, the Navy's full attention turned toward preserving its force structure and its share of the dramatically shrinking defense budget by grasping at stray concepts and shoehorning itself into land-centric joint plans. Under the latter conditions, having creative strategic experts did not seem particularly

important, and many of the best blue-suited thinkers drifted to the Joint Staff, where the “real strategy” was being done in an “every service gets its equal share” fashion. This trend obviously was reinforced by the career requirements imposed for joint qualification.

Wills’s book is primarily a history of the drafting of a unifying naval service strategy, from the late 1970s forerunners to *The Maritime Strategy* through the . . . *From the Sea* series of documents in the 1991–97 period to the *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (first version) of 2007. However, these three eras hardly are treated equally; the majority of pages are devoted to the development of *The Maritime Strategy*, a smaller but respectful number to . . . *From the Sea*, and barely a handful to the 2000s. But this is logical given Wills’s construct, since much of his effort goes toward explaining the effects of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, the land-centric 1991 Gulf War, and other currents affecting the transition from *The Maritime Strategy* to . . . *From the Sea*, particularly during the tenure of Admiral Frank Kelso as Chief of Naval Operations.

The originality of Wills’s work is in challenging the blue-water Navy’s post-9/11 strategic-planning stupor, which only recently is being dispelled by the “shock” of the growing maritime might of China’s People’s Liberation Army Navy. He does this by illustrating the tremendous effort that the naval leadership (including the Marine Corps) and the most creative naval thinkers poured into crafting, assessing, articulating, disseminating, and defending *The Maritime Strategy*, in contrast to the relative indifference displayed by their successors. As Wills points out, the Cold War–era Navy had a system for developing very experienced strategic

planners through sequential (repeated) shore-duty tours in the strategy divisions of the Navy Staff (OPNAV). Few were the O-6 branch heads or the O-7 (and above) division directors who had not been previously a strategy-action officer as an O-3/O-4/O-5 in those same branches (or their equivalent on the Joint Staff or fleet planning staffs). Many had been sent to the most challenging civilian graduate schools of international relations or public policy for their master’s degrees (and a handful of PhDs). The Navy may still do that, but not with the same intensity. These officers were expected to be capable of outreasoning the Navy’s academic and think-tank critics. In contrast, a Navy strategic-planning billet largely is seen today as an isolated ticket punch.

Wills names names of almost all those involved in drafting *The Maritime Strategy* and the . . . *From the Sea* series. Most circulated around OPNAV’s Strategic Concepts Branch, then the hive of strategy document production but now no longer existent. Yet throughout the book Wills stresses that it was always the level of the CNO’s and SECNAV’s *personal* commitment and routine *attention* that determined whether a dynamic and public naval strategic vision would be created and would drive programming, budgeting, and acquisition decisions, as well as the necessary congressional and public support. Those who might challenge the effect of strategy documents—with their “soaring, elegant words”—on “deck plate” budgets need to recall that *The Maritime Strategy* originally was a classified document to which all programming and Navy war planning were directed to adhere; the public version is but a fragment.

In addition to his pointing to the need for direct, personal CNO and SECNAV

involvement in the crafting of naval strategy (whether classified or public), Wills's secondary and more subtle theme is that the Navy cannot rely merely on the homogenizing Joint Staff to "staff and process" the Navy's mission. Wills does not go so far as to assert (as I would) that—for all its discussion of the future and support for unattainable programs—the Joint Staff is unable to shake its (natural) fixation on the "wars (and budget) we are in." However, he makes it obvious that naval control of the global commons (which is the primary purpose of navies) aroused no joint interest until the People's Republic of China demonstrated its growing antiaccess capabilities and started pouring sand on reefs.

Overall, the history offered is accurate and the writing excellent. As noted, Wills details the effects that the Goldwater-Nichols Act and Gulf War had on the Navy's strategic planning,

self-confidence, and sense of purpose. These effects, plus the American experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, continue to ripple. Who needs a strong Navy for wars of choice and attempted nation building? And if you do not really need a Navy—it having fallen victim to its own Cold War success—why would you need a naval strategy?

However, a new Cold War—and the need to deter wars of necessity—is coming upon us (or is already here). We can approach our potential opponents effectively only from a maritime axis (which includes the air and the space over the oceans). Perhaps this is the time for national-security professionals to determine whether there are lessons to be learned from *The Maritime Strategy* and its era. To do this, *Strategy Shelved* is an essential reference.

SAM TANGREDI

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