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Roundtable Review 14-28

Paul Kennedy. *Victory at Sea: Naval Power and the Transformation of the Global Order in World War II*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022. ISBN 978-0-300-2197-3.

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 Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University Northridge, Emeritus

Paul Kennedy's *Victory at Sea: Naval Power and the Transformation of the Global Order in World War II*, with illustrations by Kennedy's collaborator, Ian Marshall, may mislead purchasers who are not familiar with Kennedy's award-winning scholarship into thinking they are purchasing a "coffee table book with excellent artwork."¹ Instead, Kennedy offers a persuasive study of the emergence of US naval power out of the limitations imposed after World War I on the navies of the major powers. He further explores its significant role in contributing to the successful defense against further Japanese expansion in Asia by the spring of 1943, as well as the successful maintenance of Lend-Lease supplies to Great Britain against the German submarine campaign. The ensuing US offensive against Japan relied significantly on the expanding US naval power in the Pacific, Lend-Lease aid to Great Britain, and Russia's dependence on US naval dominance in the Atlantic and Mediterranean seas. The end result was the postwar dominance that established the US as the only pre-1930 power that had not been invaded, bombed or significantly weakened by the war. It was underlined by the US development of atomic bombs that contributed significantly to the ultimate surrender of Japan.

The reviewers are very impressed with Kennedy's study and the 54 paintings by Ian Marshall. As Roger Dingman emphasizes, "Ian Marshall's magnificent paintings...[make] the book more accessible to younger, more visually minded readers." Kathryn Barbier and John Maurer agree with Dingman. As Maurer notes, "Marshall's paintings provide a visual chronicle of the fighting at sea that goes hand-in-hand with Kennedy's account." In his response to the reviews, Kennedy further emphasizes the important role of Marshall's paintings, which both capture naval actions in the Atlantic and Pacific, but also illustrate a major dimension of Kennedy's thesis on the importance of the "massive productive output of the American super-power after 1943."

Kennedy's central theses on the role of US naval power, its sources in the tremendous productivity of the US wartime economy, and the long-term consequences of the role of US naval hegemony in shaping the status of the US after 1945 are endorsed by the reviewers. As Dingman concludes, "Kennedy demonstrates that it was the combination of productive capacity on land, superiority of lethal force at sea, and shrewd strategic direction that produced the Allied victory. Synergy, not sheer strength the key to achieving that result." Barbier's review discusses earlier naval histories that Kennedy makes use of, but concludes that Kennedy has not only reinforced the work of earlier historical studies by historians such as Craig Symonds, but "expanded on their scholarship and demonstrated the importance of writing a global narrative and of situating the role of navies in the broader story of World War II."² Maurer offers an extensive analysis of why the US failed to follow up on its plans for naval expansion after the First World War as a lead into his discussion of Kennedy's assessment. Maurer concludes that "Kennedy's analysis of the strategic decisions made by those in command of the world's navies is surehanded."

The reviewers offer a few questions and disagreements with Kennedy's interpretations. Dingman suggests that Kennedy's assessment that the turning point in the war came not in the "amphibious assaults at Normandy and Okinawa but earlier—in late 1943 and early 1944" is "open to challenge." Kennedy may give "too much weight to structural rather than circumstantial factors to explain why a particular battle proved indecisive or determinative of what would follow" in relying on the Alfred Thayer Mahan's theory of sea power versus Carl von Clausewitz's warning about the "fog of war" that blinds leaders about their plans. Nevertheless, Dingman concludes that Kennedy's book is a "must-read for historians and political scientists" as it provides a "better way to explain the outcome and significance of the war at sea."

¹ See Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), and Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Penguin, 2017).

² Craig L. Symonds, *World War II at Sea: A Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.)

In his response to the reviews, Kennedy graciously accepts the limited criticism as well as noting the mistakes he made on specific ship locations and various details. What makes the response especially valuable is Kennedy's comments on the role of the historian, and the relationship to, and differences between, naval historians and political scientists or international relations scholars who write on subject such as navies in World War II. For Kennedy, his subject needed to be explored at two levels: the naval battles in all of the relevant theaters, but also, most importantly, the massive flow of war materiel to the European theater and the Essex "newly built carriers that "streamed out of American shipyards across the Pacific." In 1943 the "United States built 42,000 aircraft and almost a dozen carriers, and this in turn meant that a new naval super-power was emerging and the global order was indeed being transformed." Kennedy notes his interest in "turning points" in history and considers this as a good way to link historians to political scientists and international relations scholars who write "hegemonic war studies." "Military historians have always been better able than generalizing social scientists to pinpoint where a historical watershed was crossed," Kennedy asserts, using the example of 1943 in his and other studies by naval historians.

Kennedy concludes his response with a discussion of his approach to history with two different aims "of telling a story (therefore a longitudinal work, a narrative that flows from one event to the next), and of offering an analysis of power structures (therefore a text which stops the clock, so to speak, in order to measure what is going on beneath the simple narrative) No one approach it seems to me gets this perfectly right. Certainly, none of mine ever did." The reviewers in this roundtable disagree. Kennedy's approach is close enough.

Participants:

Paul Kennedy, Dilworth Professor of History at Yale, was the Director of International Security Studies between 1989 and 2017. Under the aegis of the newly-established Jackson School of Global Affairs at Yale, Kennedy is now developing a small research center for Maritime and Naval Studies. His most recent work is *Victory at Sea* (Yale University Press, 2022); his best-known work is *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (Yale University Press, 1988).

Mary Kathryn Barbier is Professor of History at Mississippi State University and was Distinguished Visiting Professor at the United States Air Force Academy, 2021-2022. She is the author of several book chapters, articles, and monographs, including *D-Day Deception: Operation Fortitude and the Normandy Invasion* (Praeger, 2007) and *Spies, Lies, and Citizenship: The Hunt for Nazi Criminals* (University of Nebraska Press; Potomac, 2017). She is the editor of *I Worked Alone: Diary of a Double Agent in World War II Europe*, Co-editor of *War in History*, and Co-director of the Second World War Research Group, North America (SWWRG, NA). She is a Dean's Eminent Scholar and Fellow at the Center for International Security & Strategic Studies.

Roger Dingman is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Southern California and an American, international, military, and naval historian with a particular interest in 20th century trans-Pacific relations. His research focuses on Japanese-American relations. He is currently working on two books. *Bridge to the Rising Sun* is a study of World War II Japanese language officers and their impact on America's postwar relations with Japan. *Anchor for Peace* traces the history and cross-cultural impact of the American naval presence in Japan since 1853.

John H. Maurer serves as the Alfred Thayer Mahan Professor of Sea Power and Grand Strategy at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. He is a graduate of Yale College and holds a MALD and PhD in International Relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He is the author or editor of books examining the outbreak of the First World War, military interventions in the developing world, naval competitions and arms control between the two world wars, and a study on Winston Churchill and British grand strategy. His most recent edited book examines the great-power contest in Asia and the Pacific that led to Pearl Harbor.

 Review by Mary Kathryn Barbier, Mississippi State University

In 1987, when he published *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, Paul Kennedy set a high bar for the historical, particularly the military historical, profession and for himself. Although he has published books on a range of topics, such as a grand strategy, Kennedy shifted his focus to World War II with his 2013 publication of *Engineers of Victory: The Problem Solvers Who Turned the Tide in the Second World War*,¹ and he continues to shine the light on that global conflict in his latest book, *Victory at Sea: Naval Power and the Transformation of the Global Order in World War II*. While he acknowledges the importance of the industrial might of the United States in turning the tide of the naval war in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans in 1943, Kennedy argues that success would not have occurred without the human factor. Technology and people fueled the international order shift as a new global power emerged. Its preeminent naval strength at the end of World War Two, among other factors, solidified the United States as that new global power. As Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto predicted, the sleeping giant awoke, and that sealed the fate of Japan and, although he did not predict it, that of Germany and Italy.

Over seventy-five years after the end of hostilities, the Second World War remains a topic of study by historians, novelists, journalists, and amateur writers. Bookstore shelves sag under the weight of novels, first-hand accounts, edited collections, and scholarly monographs dedicated to every imaginable aspect of the global conflict, all of which in some way demonstrate that World War I was no longer the “War to End All Wars.”² Not only do these books describe³ in detail specific land, air, and sea battles and the soldiers, pilots, and sailors who fought them, but they also focus attention on home fronts; on the impact of wartime intelligence organizations, deception operations, and spy/double agent activities; on women who replaced men on farms and in factories and who joined the military and on the impact of the war on economies, governments, diplomacy, trade, and the lives of ordinary citizens. While many authors focus on one aspect of the war, such as a specific battle or a specific unit, others provide global histories of the conflict writ large. Andrew Buchanan’s *World War II in Global Perspective, 1931–1953: A Short History* (2019) comes to mind. Some recent scholarship—for example, Buchanan’s *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II* (2014)⁴—examines the impact of the conflict in a particular region and focus on broader issues faced by a combatant nation.

Numerous books provide insight into the evolution of specific branches, such as air forces or navies, during wartime. For example, Samuel Eliot Morison started a vibrant conversation about navies with the publication of *The Two Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War* (1963). In 1995, James

¹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987); Kennedy, *Engineers of Victory: The Problem Solvers Who Turned the Tide in the Second World War* (New York: Random House, 2013).

² This is a common modification of H.G. Wells’ *The War That Will End War* (London: F. & C. Palmer, 1914).

³ Some examples of novels include Alan Furst, *Under Occupation: A Novel* (New York: Random House, 2019), Cara Black, *Three Hours in Paris* (New York: Soho Press, 2020). First-hand accounts include Ross Reyburn, *Eyewitness at Dieppe: The Only First-Hand Account of WWII’s Most Disastrous Raid* (Barnsley, England: Pen & Sword, 2022), Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City, a Diary*, translated by Philip Boehm (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, AG, 2003). Monographs include Richard B. Frank, *Tower of Skulls: A History of the Asia-Pacific War, July 1937-May 1942* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020); Rolf Giesen, *Nazi Propaganda Films: A History and Filmography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003), Susan L. Smith, *Toxic Exposures: Mustard Gas and the Health Consequences of World War II in the United States* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019). Edited collections include Paul R. Bartrop, ed., *The Routledge History of the Second World War* (New York: Routledge, 2022); and John Ferris and Evan Mawdsley, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Second World War, Volume 1, Fighting the War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁴ Andrew Buchanan, *World War II in Global Perspective, 1931-1953: A Short History* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019); Buchanan, *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Dunnigan and Albert Nofi shifted the discussion to the naval war in the Pacific Theater with their publication of *Victory at Sea: World War II in the Pacific*. In *World War II at Sea: A Global History* (2018)⁵ noted naval historian Craig L. Symonds made the case for a broader examination of naval conflicts and argued that to understand how they influenced the war's resolution, historians had to evaluate all major participant navies, not just those from the United States, Britain, and Japan. With *Victory at Sea*, Kennedy echoes Symonds's argument, does so in his own unique, eloquent style, and adds to an understanding of the importance of navies to the Allies' victory by building on and going beyond the work of scholars like Symonds.

Before embarking on an analysis of *Victory at Sea*, it is important to note what sets Kennedy's book apart from other Second World War naval histories. Ian Marshall's amazing, original paintings that are scattered throughout the book make *Victory at Sea* special. Marshall's artwork adds to the visualization of the various vessels meticulously described in the text. Kennedy's writing style is, as usual, eloquent, detailed, and captivating and, as a result, presents an interesting and informative read that is guaranteed to provide nuggets of new information, even for seasoned World War II scholars. By thoroughly examining the navies of the six major participants and detailing their contributions in sea campaigns and land battles, Kennedy underscores his contention, along with that of Symonds, that "the winning of the hegemonic World War II cannot be understood without knowledge of the maritime side, and in turn the vast surge in the achievements of the Allied navies cannot be comprehended without the reader's recognizing the underlying seismic shifts of this time" (xviii).

Unlike Symonds, who began his narrative with the London Naval Conference in 1930 and tied the negotiations to earlier agreements made in Washington, Kennedy explores the decisions made at the Washington Naval Conference (1921–1922). He examines how the resulting agreements affected decisions made in Washington, London, Paris, Rome, and Tokyo about future ship building and modification of existing ships to maintain navies that could achieve future goals and ensure security while at the same time complying with the restrictions that had been placed on numbers, tonnage, water displacement, and armaments. In addition to the Washington and London naval agreements, navies were further constrained by "the elements of geography and economics," which they could not control; but in some cases, although not all, technology evened out the geographical constraints (67). Kennedy meticulously details the modifications employed by some navies that involved repositioning gun turrets and that, in many cases, resulted in ships that were less stable when they encountered stormy weather conditions. Consequently, under certain circumstances, the usability of these vessels was dubious. Through this detailed examination of the evolution of the navies of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United States, Kennedy sets the stage for a discussion of the outbreak of hostilities and the performance of those navies that were players from the beginning of the war.

In his analysis of the evolution and potential performance of the major navies, Kennedy factors in the influence of economies, geography, and geopolitical writings. Not only did size matter, but location, modernization, and theory also influenced success. Unsurprisingly, Captain (Rear Admiral, Retired List) Alfred Thayer Mahan, President of the Naval War College (1886–1889, 1892–1893), played a large role in the understanding of naval power and how that translated into the size of, and emphasis on ship types in, the navies of the future belligerent countries. As Kennedy notes, as early as 1902, Mahan published writings on the hows and whys of naval power distribution.⁶ Although he recognized that current (i.e., in 1902) naval

⁵ Samuel Eliot Morrison, *The Two Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974); James Dunnigan and Albert Nofi, *Victory at Sea: World War II in the Pacific* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1995); Craig L. Symonds, *World War II at Sea: A Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁶ Alfred Thayer Mahan's publications include: *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812*, 2 vols. (London: Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., 1892); *Sea Power in Relation to the War of 1812*, 2 vols. (London: Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., 1905); *The Interest of American Sea Power—Present and Future* (London: Sampson, Low,

tensions garnered attention, Mahan believed that longer-termed naval power distributions were of greater concern. Despite the lessons about the role of location and distance that emerged during World War I and vindicated Mahan's position, Kennedy notes that within two decades, as admiralties considered the ways in which they would wage another global conflict, "they struggled once again to understand and exploit the role of location and distance" (69). While this was not unusual for victorious militaries, focusing on this lapse allows Kennedy to carefully, and in great detail, examine the relevant navies on the eve of World War II and to analyze their performance in the first years of the conflict.

Mahan was not the only naval officer/strategist to advocate for the role of navies in the establishment of empires. In 1929 German Rear Admiral Wolfgang Wegener articulated a military solution to change Germany's disadvantaged naval position in the North Sea: take Denmark and Norway (112).⁷ Little did he know that his recommendation would come to fruition in 1940. Kennedy devotes several chapters to a description of the global naval situation from the beginning of the war through 1942. During this period, the Axis powers, despite Britain's valiant efforts, had the upper hand on, and below, the seas. Germany's efforts to interrupt Britain's shipping lanes were beginning to bear fruit, although, with assistance from the United States on multiple fronts, the British navy continued the fight and inflicted damage on the enemy navy in the Atlantic Ocean and in the Mediterranean Sea where it also had to contend with a powerful, but poorly used, Italian Navy.

In demonstrating that navies played a large part in the global nature of the Second World War, Kennedy meticulously describes the evolution of the Japanese navy, the importance of aircraft, Japanese expansion, the nation's quest for resources, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that gave legitimacy to the United States' non-neutral support for the British and Soviet war efforts. The struggles to upset the Axis balance of power, and to reestablish an Allied balance of power, come to life in Kennedy's narrative. Axis successes continued in 1942, but the US steamroller, which had started heating up two years earlier, was gaining momentum.

According to Kennedy, in 1940 when the US Congress passed a \$8 billion appropriation for construction of a laundry list of ship requests, including 18 aircraft carriers, Hitler realized the importance of acquiring Soviet resources sooner rather than later because Germany lacked what it would take to defeat the United States, particularly a United States that was on the verge of creating a large, powerful navy that could potentially thwart Germany's expansionist agenda. This situation, according to Kennedy, influenced Hitler to move forward with the invasion of the Soviet Union. He argues:

Although it may not have been completely understood by any of the participants in this drama until much later, the Fall of France, the Two-Ocean Navy Act, the Battle of Britain, Operation Barbarossa, the unfolding Battle of the Atlantic, and Pearl Harbor, all occurring during the long seventeen months between June 1940 and December 1941, were all strategically connected, all part of a larger struggle for global mastery to which the turbulent 1930s had been a mere prelude (137).

By 1943, however, the strength of the Axis powers on land and sea reached its apex and the pendulum, which had rested on that side, began to swing in the other direction. Kennedy eloquently describes the shift in naval warfare that occurred in 1943. The impact of German U-boats on North Atlantic shipping lanes was negligible. By the end of the year, the impact of mass mobilization in the United States was making itself felt. After June, the carrier balance in the Pacific Theater began to shift in the favor of the United States. The USS

Marston, & Co., 1897); and *The Life of Nelson: The Embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain*, 2 vols. (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, & Co., 1897).

⁷ In discussing Wegener, Kennedy refers to his book, Wolfgang Wegener, *Die Seestrategie des Weltkrieges (The Naval Strategy of the World War)*, trsl. Holger H. Herwig (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989).

Essex arrived in theater and signaled the beginning of a new era—“the creation of the largest aircraft carrier force in history” (293). The new *Essex* carrier fleet was not constrained by naval treaties or fiscal limitations. The result was faster carriers that had the capacity to hold more aircraft. From this point on, the United States demonstrated its industrial edge, which had resulted from an abundance of natural resources, ingenuity, and people. For Kennedy, the culmination of this shift—despite the introduction of Kamikaze attacks, which increased as US troops, supported by naval vessels, captured Iwo Jima and Okinawa and were poised to invade Japan—came when carrier aircraft relentlessly attacked and sank the Japanese battleship, *Yamato*. The sinking of the *Yamato* by “American naval dive-bombers and torpedo bombers,” according to Kennedy, vindicated General Billy Mitchell, who had argued in 1925 “that aircraft alone could sink the largest warships at sea” (289), and lost his job as a result.

In his final assessment, Kennedy argues that “the Anglo-American victory at sea helped the USSR win the war on the Eastern Front, just as the Soviet smashing of the Wehrmacht aided the victory at sea” (408). He demonstrates the interconnectedness of the theaters, i.e., the global nature of the conflict. By the end of 1943, which was the turning point in the war, the Axis powers were losing steam. Italy surrendered, and even though the war would not end until 1945, Germany and Japan were on the road to defeat. Kennedy credited sea power for the reversal of the Axis position. Echoing Mahan, Kennedy concludes that “the influence of sea power on history was indisputable” (408).

With *Victory at Sea*, Paul Kennedy makes an important contribution to the historiography of Second World War naval history, which will inform the work of future naval historians. In addition to reinforcing the work of historians, such as Craig Symonds, he has expanded on their scholarship and demonstrated the importance of writing a global narrative and of situating the role of navies in the broader story of World War II. His attention to detail and his eloquent prose are a testament to the quality of Kennedy’s work. As noted earlier, Kennedy set the bar with *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. *Victory at Sea* does not disappoint. It meets and exceeds that bar.

 Review by Roger Dingman, University of Southern California, Emeritus

When I first saw this book, my first reaction was “Oh no!” Another lavishly illustrated survey of war at sea in the Second World War. What can it possibly say about that subject that has not already been said? Then I spotted the author’s name: Paul Kennedy. My thought about the book changed instantly, for I knew from his earlier major work, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*,¹ that he was a different kind of naval historian: one who married grand strategy and battle narrative. This book would not narrow its focus to particular ships, their battles, their command, and the geographic scope of their operations as other recent publications had.² Kennedy would raise big questions and develop clear answers to them. I was hooked.

Kennedy’s preface confirmed my suppositions. This book explains how and why the Allied navies defeated their Axis opponents and what difference this made for the outcome of the war. It shows why this greatest war in history proved transformative. It reshaped the global balance of power from a Euro-centric multipolar to an American hegemonic; demonstrated that command of the sea was the key to victory; and transformed navies, their ships, and the ways in which they were used. Above all, Kennedy demonstrates that it was the combination of productive capacity on land, superiority of lethal force at sea, and shrewd strategic direction that produced the Allied victory. Synergy, not sheer strength, was the key to achieving that result.

Kennedy lays out his argument along two parallel tracks. One is traditional narrative history, illustrated by Ian Marshall’s magnificent paintings. Their inclusion makes the book more accessible to younger, more visually-minded readers, as well as ships’ history buffs and those of us fortunate to have spent any length of time at sea. The other is analytical. It demonstrates how a more thorough examination of a longer and broader chain of causation can produce a better understanding of the links between population size, real and potential productive capacity, and force in being and victory, in both battle and war itself. Kennedy’s careful analysis aims to deliver more nuanced explanations of battle outcomes, more precise determination of the war’s turning points, and fuller comprehension of the war’s significance.

What does this analytically enhanced narrative deliver? First, it offers a reminder that the theories of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan still mattered.³ Geographic position, population size, and natural resources, as well as ships’ numbers and capabilities, and the wisdom of those who commanded them, shaped how command of the sea could be achieved. Second, it presents a clearer understanding of the significance of the war’s two phases. Its first two years removed France and Italy as major combatants, demonstrated that the day of battleship supremacy was over, and showed that neither Britain nor Germany could win without control of the air, surface, and depths of the sea.

Its final four years produced fresh insights into the weapons, battles, and turning point of the war. Kennedy argues that the size and projective power capability of the aircraft carrier alone did not promise victory. The capacity to produce huge numbers of smaller Essex-class carriers, and the knowledge that they were best deployed in groups, was what made these ‘new’ capital ships so valuable in battle and the war overall. Numbers alone did not determine the outcome of the submarine war. The United States flooded the North Atlantic with submarines, destroyer escorts, and aircraft, but it was Anglo-American cooperation in intelligence collection and the bombing of German factories, together with German Chancellor Adolf Hitler’s

¹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987)

² On ships, see James D. Hornfischer, *Ship of Ghosts: FDR’s Legendary Lost Cruiser and the Saga of Her Survivors* (New York: Random House, 2007); on commanders, see Craig L. Symonds, *Nimitz: Command Leadership from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022); on geographic scope, see Ian W. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods: War in the Western Pacific, 1944-1945* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2020).

³ Mahan, then a captain, laid out his basic ideas in *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1890).

determination to triumph on the eastern front, that denied Admiral Karl Doenitz the resources needed to replace the loss of U-boats. The turning point in the war did not come with the great battles in its last year—the simultaneous amphibious assaults at Normandy and Okinawa—but earlier, in late 1943 and early 1944. That was when the Allies achieved sufficient productive capacity and force in being to end the German submarine threat in the Atlantic and simultaneously all but destroy the Imperial Japanese Navy’s ability to wage offensive war at sea.

That interpretation, and Kennedy’s way of shaping it, are open to challenge. It can be argued that he gives too much weight to structural rather than circumstantial factors to explain why a particular battle proved indecisive or determinative of what would follow. Put another way, his interpretation relies too heavily on Mahan’s theory of sea power and loses sight of Clausewitz’s warning: In the fog of war, all men are blind and none can foresee how chance might render their plans for achieving victory useless.⁴ⁱ

To bolster his argument Kennedy appends a detailed defense of it by tracing the history of the Higgins boat from its origins in bauxite from the Andes to its use in amphibious operations in both the Atlantic and the Pacific. Careful examination of key elements in its production—the use of lightweight aluminum which made it easier to transport and able to put men closer to shore; reliance on industrial entrepreneur Henry J. Kaiser’s mass manufacturing techniques; and the work of previously un- and under-used women—explain why staggering numbers of the boat quickly became available and enabled the navy to put enormous numbers of men and tons of the vehicles, weapons and materials they needed safely and simultaneously ashore on Normandy beaches and Pacific islands. That achievement set the stage for local success in battle and eventual global victory. In short, Kennedy argues that a thorough exploration of the chain of causation from the boat’s origins through its production, deployment and use produces a superior understanding of a battle’s place in the sequence of events which led to total victory.

In my view this book is a must-read for historians and political scientists in general, not just naval or diplomatic history specialists or those who focus on the Second World War. Its value is to be found not in the presentation of “new” information or revisionist interpretations, but in the broader and deeper analytical approach it takes. Kennedy offers a better way to explain the outcome and significance of war at sea in the Second World War. He has written a book of enduring value and importance. Yale University Press deserves praise for producing a beautiful volume at reasonable cost. BRAVO ZULU⁵ to them both.

⁴ Clausewitz’s theories were collected and published posthumously by his wife as *Vom Kriege* in 1832. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008) is the most accessible English translation.

⁵ The World War II nautical flag and shorthand way of saying “Well done!”

 Review by John H. Maurer, Naval War College

In *Victory at Sea*, Paul Kennedy has written a sweeping account of the great power struggle for command of the seas during the Second World War. Kennedy recounts the desperate battles fought by the great navies across the world's oceans. Great Britain and the United States, the world's strongest sea powers at the war's outset, faced formidable, determined adversaries in the navies of Nazi Germany, imperial Japan, and fascist Italy. Kennedy underscores the harsh reality that when great powers go to war against each other, the command of the maritime commons is a hard-fought naval contest. Victory at sea did not come cheap in lives lost and ships sunk for Britain and the United States.

Kennedy, however, goes beyond a narrative of battles won and lost to dig deeper, examining what the American strategic thinker Alfred Thayer Mahan called the elements of sea power, the underlying geographic, economic, demographic, and political sources of naval strength.¹ Mahan's classic histories examined the great power wars of the long eighteenth century from the 1680s to 1815 and how, over the course of those conflicts, Britain emerged to become the leading state of the international system. In an earlier book *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, Kennedy revisited and built upon Mahan's analysis.² Like Mahan, Kennedy examined not only how navies fight at sea, but also the immense effort it takes to build them up.

In this latest book, Kennedy turns his attention to the rise of the United States to become the dominant sea power by examining the struggle for naval mastery during the Second World War. The scope of Kennedy's history is truly Mahanian. His study emphasizes the American mobilization of resources, the development and deployment of new technologies, and the learning curve of naval officers and enlisted personnel to build the navy of a superpower that brought about "the transformation of the global order"—the book's subtitle (Chart 13 graphically illustrates the mammoth growth of American naval power, 448). Victory at sea formed part of a larger story arc about the emergence of the United States as a hegemon on the world stage. Kennedy sees "the explosion of US power during World War II...as the natural culmination, though delayed by almost half a century, of the huge shifts in the world's balances once the American continent industrialized; as the culmination, more or less, of Alexis de Tocqueville's 1835 prophesy that this nation was one day destined to sway the destinies of half the globe" (326, italics in the original).

A question to ask is what accounts for the delay identified by Kennedy? Why did the United States not build up a more powerful navy before the Second World War? Already by the beginning of the twentieth century, the US was an industrial giant, whose economy dwarfed that of the other great powers. Brooks Adams proclaimed the era of America's economic supremacy in 1900.³ In a previous book, the bestselling *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Kennedy highlighted American economic strength as underpinning its international standing: "Of all the changes which were taking place in the global power balances during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there can be no doubt that the most decisive one for the future was the growth of the United States."⁴ Adam Tooze agrees with Kennedy's assessment. Tooze contends: "Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the British Empire had been the largest economic unit in the world. Sometime in 1916, the year of Verdun and the Somme, the combined output of the British Empire was overtaken by that of the United States of America."⁵ America's growing economy undoubtedly provided the

¹ A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1890).

² Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Penguin, 2017).

³ Brooks Adams, *America's Economic Supremacy* (New York: Macmillan, 1900)

⁴ Paul Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), 242.

⁵ Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1932* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 12-13.

wherewithal to build a navy stronger than that of any other country, one even more powerful than Britain's Royal Navy, which had been unequaled in power since the Napoleonic era.

The increasing American capacity to build a navy did not escape the notice of British observers who were concerned with shifts in the international balance of power. The famed scholar, academic leader, policy commentator, and politician Sir Halford Mackinder observed: "A great naval Power is rapidly rising beyond the Western ocean. Bases have been taken in the Pacific and in the Gulf; the Isthmus of Panama is to be pierced; a fleet is being built." Mackinder warned: "Nature is ruthless, and we must build a Power able to contend on equal terms with other Powers, or step into the rank of the States which exist on sufferance."⁶

While the United States possessed the underlying sources of economic strength to build a navy second to none, the American government and people lacked the political will to acquire it. Even an ardent advocate of sea power and warship construction like President Theodore Roosevelt had no intention of acquiring a navy to rival or surpass that of Britain. The British navy helped underpin a liberal international order, from which Theodore Roosevelt believed the United States greatly benefited. The growing economy of the United States did not require a supreme navy so long as Britain ruled the waves. Prominent American leaders like Roosevelt wanted only an "adequate navy" that provided for the defense of the Western Hemisphere. They sought to work within the British-led world system, and not to overturn it.⁷

Only if Britain faltered in upholding the international balance of power, if the extended deterrence provided by the British fleet came to be questioned by aggressive challengers, would the United States need to do more to provide for its own security by building up its navy. Roosevelt was explicit about how the decline of British power in the international arena might compel a buildup of American military might. He warned a German diplomat: "As long as England succeeds in keeping 'the balance of power' in Europe, not only in principle, but in reality, well and good; should she however for some reason or other fail in doing so, the United States would be obliged to step in at least temporarily, in order to restore the balance of power." The United States, Roosevelt maintained, because of its strength and geographic position, had become "more and more the balance of power of the whole world."⁸

The First World War forced a reassessment of American security needs and spurred the United States to undertake a major naval buildup. The breakdown of international order, and the intense fighting on land and sea, highlighted for Americans the strategic importance of naval power. In their quest for victory, Germany and Britain trampled over the interests of the United States, as a neutral power, on the high seas. Britain sought to control American trade as part of its strategy for waging economic warfare against Germany. Meanwhile, Germany embarked on an all-out submarine offensive against world trade in a desperate bid to defeat Britain. This submarine offensive provoked President Woodrow Wilson to lead the United States into war as an "associated power" in the coalition fighting to defeat Germany. In preparation for war, the Wilson administration had already sponsored legislation passed by the Congress in August 1916 to provide the United States with a navy as strong as that possessed by any other country. Wilson not only wanted to usher in a new liberal international order with the United States playing a prominent leadership role in the League of Nations, but he also wanted to bring about what the naval historians Harold and Margaret Sprout called a new order of sea power.⁹

⁶ H.J. Mackinder, "Man-Power as a Measure of National and Imperial Strength," *National Review*, vol. 45, no. 265 (1905), 139, 143.

⁷ Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 335-347.

⁸ Beale, *Roosevelt and Rise of America*, 447.

⁹ Harold and Margaret Sprout, *Toward a New Order of Sea Power: American Naval Policy and the World Scene, 1918-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940).

The repudiation of Wilson's international vision also led to the abandonment of American ambitions to acquire incomparably the greatest navy in the world. Not surprisingly, Senator William Borah, the ardent irreconcilable opponent of Wilson's League of Nations, also led the charge to cut American naval spending after the First World War. One way to restrain America's role in world politics was to hold down the strength of the navy. Borah's success in calling for naval arms limitation forced President Warren Harding to call the Washington Conference that slashed the American navy's buildup started by Wilson. Throughout the interwar period, the dominant view among the American public and their elected representatives was to put a brake on naval construction.¹⁰

The writings of the popular historian Charles Beard provide insight into the outlook of those who opposed a major buildup of the navy by the United States. Beard wanted to limit the growth of a naval-industrial-propaganda complex that he contended was warping American foreign policy. In his book *The Navy: Defense or Portent?*, Beard drew upon the writings of the German historian Eckart Kehr, who examined the internal political, economic, and social forces motivating imperial Germany's naval buildup before the First World War.¹¹ Kehr analyzed the motivations of Germany's leaders, including the architect of the German navy's buildup, Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, for engaging in a naval arms race against Britain. Beard applied Kehr's methodology to analyze the buildup of the American navy from the end of the nineteenth century down to the early 1930s. Beard ridiculed the "expert" opinion of naval officers, who, he maintained, had proffered strategically unsound policy recommendations. "Men trained primarily in the technology of warfare are not more competent than civilians to determine the fate of the nation," Beard insisted. "Tirpitz and his advisers were experts, but see what happened to them." He warned that "navy leagues, navy bureaucrats, armament profiteers, and facile journalists" were misleading the American people as to their true interests in world affairs. The United States needed to heed imperial Germany's fate and avoid playing the "old game" of "neck-breaking rivalry that may spell disaster to any or all powers." Instead, Beard called for a "policy that defines American interests in terms of the domestic civilization of the United States, that considers only adequate defense for those interests, and proceeds on the assumption of live and let live rather than bombast and threats." On the American political scene, Beard's hero was President Herbert Hoover, who he praised for pursuing "limited objectives in this hemisphere...in keeping with national interests" and "by asserting anew the supremacy of the civilian branch of the federal government, by defining in terms of policy the objects and objectives of national defense, by repudiating the gospel of *Welt- und Machtpolitik*, and by bringing the Navy League propagandists to bay."¹² Beard's message was clear: America should heed the lesson provided by Germany's defeat in the First World War and eschew ambitions that aspired to elevate the US to the status of world power by building a supreme navy.

Even the election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a close student of Mahan and supporter of the navy, did not lead at first to a major buildup of American naval power. While Roosevelt used funding from the National Recovery Act to undertake warship construction early in his administration, it did not change the relative rank of the United States among the world's naval powers. Even though warship construction relieved unemployment in the industrial sector of the economy, Roosevelt came under harsh criticism from those who were opposed to funding a naval buildup. Nor did Japan's withdrawal from naval arms control limitations at the Second London Naval Conference spur a strong response from the United States. American legislation to undertake naval construction and fund the Navy barely kept the United States ahead of Japan.¹³ The American people were content with a navy that could provide a credible defense of the Western

¹⁰ John H. Maurer, "The Washington Conference 100 Years Later: Averting Great-Power Conflict in Asia," *National Interest*, November 18, 2021, accessed at <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/washington-conference-100-years-later-averting-great-power-conflict-asia-196386>.

¹¹ Eckart Kehr, *Battleship Building and Part Politics in Germany, 1894-1901*, trans. Pauline R. Anderson and Eugene N. Anderson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

¹² Charles A. Beard, *The Navy: Defense or Portent?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1932), 7, 197-198.

¹³ Stephen E. Pelz, *Race to Pearl Harbor: The Failure of the Second London Naval Conference and the Onset of World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

Hemisphere. The outbreak of fighting between Japan and China in 1937 and the start of the war in Europe in 1939 also did not alter much the national security outlook of the American people. As Walter Lippmann highlighted, a glaring gap emerged between American naval strength and foreign policy obligations.¹⁴

It took the downfall of France in 1940 to shock the United States out of strategic narcolepsy and into undertaking the massive buildup of the American war machine that transformed the international balance of power. The Nazi triumph also led Roosevelt to run for a third term as president. The administration and Congress moved rapidly to endorse a major buildup of American military power. The war's opening battles—the surprise of Pearl Harbor, the maiming of the battle fleet, the heavy shipping losses off the East and Gulf coasts of the United States inflicted by German submarines—brought home to the American people that even hemispheric defense would require a much more powerful navy than what they were accustomed to maintaining in the past. The Japanese and German offensives also underscored the dangers of strategic isolation. As the noted strategic thinker and Yale professor Nicholas Spykman put it, “Hemispheric defense is no defense at all.”¹⁵ American security called for the projection of military might overseas, and that required a global navy.

Before the war, the United States was just one of several great powers that possessed strong navies, with the American fleet lagging behind Britain and just ahead of Japan in naval strength during the 1930s. Under Adolf Hitler's regime, Germany rearmed and committed considerable resources into acquiring a powerful navy. In 1942, the German and Japanese navies posed dangerous threats to the ability of the Allies to control vital sea lanes, what Mahan called the great common. Shipping losses to German submarines crippled Allied efforts to win the war. In the Pacific, the American and Japanese navies slugged it out, both sides losing four of the six fleet carriers with which they entered the war during the first year of fighting.

The correlation of forces in the war at sea would dramatically change with the buildup of American naval power. The arrival of the *Essex*, first of a class of fleet carriers, at Pearl Harbor in the spring of 1943, marked the shift underway in the war against Japan. Kennedy highlights that “somewhere around the middle period of this great war at sea, more exactly as the critical year of 1943 unfolded, a massive shift in the global balance of power took place, a change of fortunes that was both reflected in and helped by alterations in the naval balances themselves.” (xvii) In numbers of ships, technology, doctrine, training, the United States put to sea naval forces to support the major offensive operations that doomed Germany and Japan to defeat. In addition to examining the sources of naval power, Kennedy's analysis of the strategic decisions made by those in command of the world's navies is surehanded.

Kennedy's narrative and analysis is accompanied by the extraordinary paintings by the maritime artist Ian Marshall, who passed away while the book was being written. The two men had a close friendship and deep admiration for each other's work. Marshall's paintings provide a visual chronicle of the fighting at sea that goes hand-in-hand with Kennedy's account. *Victory at Sea* is thus both a work of history and a handsome book of maritime art. This remarkable book—achieved by the collaboration between a master artist and accomplished historian—is unlike any other recounting of the global war to command the seas and the rise of America as a world power.

¹⁴ Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1943).

¹⁵ Nicholas John Spykman, *American Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942), 457.

Response by Paul Kennedy, Yale University

Anyone who glances through the three reviews of my book will realize that this author's reply could hardly be one of angry disagreement. The reviewers' remarks are not uncritical in places, but overall they are strongly supportive and positive. In addition to comments made upon the text, though, all three scholars were kind enough to compliment the beauty of the 54 paintings by my [deceased] collaborator Ian Marshall, which made this author glow with pleasure. It took a long time for Ian to complete all those paintings, and a long time also for me to embed them in the book's text and then to wait upon the lengthy production process, so it is deeply satisfying to read the universally positive praise given to his artistic work. If another scholar also has the chance to collaborate with a painter or other sort of illustrator—I recognize that this comes rarely—I would urge them to consider doing so. Later in this reply I include a few remarks on how examples of Marshall's paintings were used to reflect and demonstrate points made in the text about the arrival of the Allied "victory at sea" as the Second World War unfolded.

The reviewers here are not strictly maritime historians (even though the work of both Roger Dingman and John Maurer has frequently touched upon topics such as naval races, international security, and great-power naval relations).¹ Had they been so, perhaps they would have chided this author for some of the errata in *Victory at Sea* in respect of warships, armaments, fleet dispositions, and the like. I am quite sure that had not Ian Marshall prematurely passed away (in December 2016), he would certainly have spotted a few errors of detail in the draft manuscript concerning particular warships or dates, errors that kindly or sometimes not-so-kindly readers have pointed out, viz. the battleship H.M.S. *Rodney* was detached to join the *Bismarck* chase of May 1941 from escorting an ocean liner rather than a merchant convoy, or that HMS *Warspite's* hit on the Italian *Giulio Cesare* was at 26,000 yards and not 26,000 feet, and so on. The diplomatic history readers here may regard such things as minor facts, but to the naval historian a complete mastery of warship details and battle actions is regarded as a *sine qua non*; I did not know, for example, that repairs to damaged Royal Navy warships were usually done in yards along the River Tyne, *not* the Clyde; or that the battlecruiser *Prince of Wales* carried only six 15-inch guns, not eight. In a way, this offers a nice commentary about the sheer spread and richness of the historian's remit; our discipline needs both generalists to give us the broad sweep of historical change, *and* it needs specialists to offer important detailed examples and correctives.

By the same token, this generalist tried his best to keep the scholarly notation to a minimum, as shown in the endnotes on pages 453 to 486, and thus held off referencing (say) many more books on the Pacific war or the Mediterranean campaign. Specialists in both fields will doubtless wince at the brevity of references for their aspect of the war. What I would like to record here, by the by, is my growing admiration for the coverage and accuracy of so many of the Wikipedia articles that I found (see "Internet Articles," 495-496), not just for details on specific warships but also for their coverage of larger topics like the Norwegian campaign or the Malta convoys. For years I had warned my Yale students away from using Wiki articles lest they employ them as a "short cut" to their own historical researches and reading for a term paper, but now I have somewhat changed my line of advice: some Wikipedia pieces really are original (I think of one of the articles on the 1940 Norway campaign that was clearly composed, importantly, by a Norwegian historian of the *land* fighting, and with a different slant from the usual British narratives). I wonder whether diplomatic historians reading this reply have had the same experience?

My comments here are partly a response to observations in the three reviews and partly a few reflections of my own on what was, after all, a rather hybrid book, viz., a narrative of the great war at sea, a notation on a cluster of fine paintings, a Mahanian look at the components of sea power at this time, and a structural

¹ See, for example, Roger Dingman, *Deciphering the Rising Sun: Navy and Marine Corps Codebreakers, Translators, and Interpreters in the Pacific War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), and John H. Maurer, *The Outbreak of the First World War: Strategic Planning, Crisis Decision Making, and Deterrence Failure* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995).

history of larger international power shifts between 1939 and 1945. My reviewers all get that, and I am grateful to them that they do: Kathryn Barbier and John Maurer join in re-affirming the idea that paying attention to the economic and technological underpinnings of navies really does improve an understanding of how great sea struggles unfold. I confess that that has been something of an obsessive point with this author. (I note here in parenthesis that it is over 50 years ago since this young lecturer at The University of East Anglia, encouraged by the keen-minded Peter Carson at Penguin Books, tried to make *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* [1976] a rather different work from traditional histories of the Royal Navy).² Most authors do not stray far from their own early ideas about the meaning of History.

More than anything else, the sub-title of this work, “Naval Power and the Transformation of the Global Order in World War II,” reveals this interest with the deeper historical forces for change. Professors have long taught students that they will usually learn more about the contents and purpose of a book from its *sub*-title than from the title itself, and that is clearly the case with this present work of mine as well. The title “Victory at Sea,” as many older readers readily recognized, was also the name of that magical, multi-part television documentary of the early 1950s, with its remarkable video footage married to Richard Rogers and Robert Russell Bennett’s haunting theme music.³ The “victory” referred to in this present book was that which the Anglo-American navies and air forces were steadily achieving from the critical year of 1943 onwards. The early British defeats—Norway, Fall of France, Greece/Crete—had been replaced by steady Allied advances through the Mediterranean. And the awful Anglo-American losses at Pearl Harbor, Malaya, and the Philippines had been answered by US victories at Guadalcanal, Midway, New Guinea. Unlike that earlier and often stalemated naval struggle of 1914–1918, this was an intensive and battle-strewn war. For good reason I term 1942 “the fighting-most year in all of naval history” (197), since the overall losses in battleships, carriers, heavy cruisers, and smaller warships were eye-popping, as were the totals of merchant-ship losses in the Atlantic and Mediterranean convoy fighting.

But something else was happening in addition to all this shooting and sinking, and here we come to the book’s sub-title, “Naval Power and the Transformation of the Global Order in World War II,” and especially to Chapter Eight on the huge surge in US war manufactures in the midst of this great conflict. Those bi-weekly convoys that streamed from New York to Liverpool in one direction, at the same time that newly-built carriers streamed out of American shipyards across the Pacific, were not just historical “events” (*événements*) as Braudel might have termed them, they were also the physical manifestation of a huge and irreversible shift in the world balances. At last American shipbuilding capacity, which had been reined in for some 20 years after 1919 (as John Maurer shows in his review), would work at full throttle. Herein lies the deeper reason, then, for the eventual Allied victory. As each alliance built and then sent more and more warships and planes into the conflict, and as their respective armaments industries geared up for more and more production, by 1943 that particular competition, the so-called war behind the war, tilted ever further in favor of the Allied side. This was the year in which the United States built 42,000 aircraft and almost a dozen carriers, and this in turn meant that a new naval super-power was emerging and the global order was indeed being transformed. *Victory at Sea* is then a book that should be read at two levels, with the actions at the front being complemented by the productive shifts below. It is not Marxist or quasi-Marxist to say that once the productive foundations of a nation [*Der Unterbau*] changes, then there will be alterations at the top [*Der Oberbau*]. It is simple common sense.

Still, I fully accept Roger Dingman’s observation that this book may stress too much the “structural rather than the circumstantial factors” in writing about World War II and about the eventual Allied victory. I am in fact a great fan of the circumstantial. Consider that single torpedo from an aged Swordfish aircraft that halted the *Bismarck* in its tracks (as shown in the painting on the cover of *Victory at Sea*), or the story of those early trial flights when a Rolls-Royce Merlin engine was put into the chassis of the underperforming P-51 aeroplane

² Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Penguin, 1976).

³ Richard Hanser and Henry Salomon (writers), M. Clay Adams (director), “Victory at Sea,” aired October 26, 1952 (NBC: United States, 1952). Most of the series is on YouTube.

and turned it into the mighty Mustang.⁴ It is, in other words, rather wonderful when one can show where the circumstantial then goes on to have a far broader impact, again, like when those fragile early trials of a home-constructed miniature radar by two Birmingham postdocs led within a mere couple of years to almost all Allied escort warships being equipped with surface radar.⁵ Marrying the particular to the general is the real genius of the historian's craft, and where this profession may differ from the other social sciences.

This may also be why I am so very much intrigued by “turning points in History,” that is, an event where the historian can say: “from this time on, Doenitz had lost the Battle of the Atlantic” or where he notes: “from the arrival of the first of the new Essex-class carriers into Pearl [June 1st, 1943], the end of the Pacific struggle was, if distantly, in sight.” By the very nature of the evidence they are handling, military historians have always been better able than generalizing social scientists to pinpoint where a historical watershed was crossed. Thus, the military historian can claim in confidence that, when the battered U-boat wolfpacks limped home after their bloody encounter with Convoy ONS 5 (June 1943), they would never again be a serious threat to the vital Atlantic convoys. A historic watershed had been crossed, indeed: the “hegemonic war” had been won.

Still, locating turning-points in History is, if one thinks about it, probably one of the best ways that scholars in this discipline can be linked to those in our sister-discipline, Political Science, and more particularly, to International Relations scholars of “hegemonic war studies.” Because of their methodology, books such as George Modelski and William R. Thompson's *Seapower in Global Politics 1494–1993* have a great interest in the Second World War because it is one of the most important examples in their study of rising and falling maritime powers.⁶ Yet by the nature of their discipline they have little time for the circumstantial, and thus for explaining where and how such a “hegemonic” war came to be won. In the case of this greatest war at sea, the humbler naval and diplomatic historian can pinpoint the immense May-June 1943 convoy battles, and then use his own statistical tables (Chart 4, and Table 8) to confirm that that was when the tide of victory had turned.

So, in this book, as in many previous works of mine, I have tried so hard to reconcile those two very different aims, of telling a *story* (therefore, a longitudinal work, a narrative that flows from one event to the next), and of offering an analysis of *power structures* (therefore, a text which stops the clock, so to speak, in order to measure what is going on beneath the simple narration). No one approach, it seems to me, gets this perfectly right. Certainly, none of mine ever did.⁷

Allow me in this final set of remarks to return to Ian Marshall's 54 lovely paintings, for they, being the third important feature of this book, capture very well both the other aspects. There are action pictures alright—just look at HMS *Warspite* blasting at the German destroyers in Narvik Fjord (106), or the bombardment of the *Richelieu* in Dakar (138-9). But many of Ian's other warship paintings tell the observer of the massive productive output of the American super-power after 1943: witness the picture of the US carriers resting in Ulithi Atoll (306-7), or the grand, symbolic scene of the massive American fleet in Tokyo Harbor (370); nothing quite like this had ever happened in world history before. So this author can only humbly appreciate the kind words of all three reviewers as they call the attention of readers to the narration in this book, to the fact that I have laid stress to the background productive story in the Great War at Sea (especially in chapter 8), and to the beauty of Ian Marshall's paintings.

If I myself had to choose only one symbolic painting, it would be the beautiful, Turner-esque portrayal of the British cruiser H.M.S. *Sheffield* off Gibraltar (142). In my comment upon Ian's work, I call this a “classy and

⁴ See Kennedy, *Engineers of Victory: The Problem Solvers Who Turned the Tide in the Second World War* (New York: Random House, 2013), 120–126.

⁵ Kennedy, *Engineers of Victory*, 59–61.

⁶ George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Seapower in Global Politics 1494-1993* (London, Macmillan, 1988).

⁷ Maybe the closest I came in this was in *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1945* (London/Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1980), where the text was divided into static, structural chapters and flowing narrative ones.

symbolic” picture because I like the way that this powerful vessel, and, actually, the historic Force H of which it was a significant part, stands as a sentry at the “gate” to the Mediterranean, poised either to steam into the Atlantic to join with, say, the hunt for the German battleship *Bismarck*, or to turn eastwards, through the Pillars of Hercules, as an escort to many of the important convoys to Malta. From the Fall of France in mid-1940 to the Fall of Italy in late-1943, the Royal Navy always made sure that it stationed a powerful, flexible squadron in Gibraltar. This was where Britain’s fate as an imperial Mediterranean power rested. And this is where, I think, the historian [namely, myself] benefitted so much by having another medium—Ian’s paintings—to hand. Here was an artist whose knowledge of World War Two warships and their historical settings was huge, and whose choice of topic was both informative and dramatic. Again, just consider as examples that picture on 221-222 of the American carrier *Wasp* being loaded with boxed Spitfires in the lower Clyde (this was Churchill’s famous “Spitfires to Malta”), and think of how it captures the story of the unfolding Anglo-American relationship; or consider the painting on pages 342-343 of the two Japanese super-battleships *Yamato* and *Musashi* “lurking” in Brunei Bay in 1944, held back from contesting the Pacific seas because they were always short of fuel and because by this stage in the war the Japanese naval authorities were extremely wary of being exposed to vastly superior American air-sea power. Paintings often do tell a story that is much larger than words. In all my other nineteen or so (completely-authored or edited) works, I have never had to compose my text to fit a set of visual images like this, but if any reader gets the opportunity to do the same, I would encourage them to try. Perhaps one of my three kindly reviewers might be the first to do just that.