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Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860, Vols. I and II

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the skillful management of Confederate agent James Bulloch, and no small amount of luck, the Confederates were able to take possession of the *Alabama* just hours before it would have been seized by British authorities.

Although Robinson narrates the destructive cruise that followed in workmanlike fashion, there are curious contradictions. The author is an admirer of the Federal Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, observing that Welles "is generally regarded as the greatest secretary of the navy in history." But it was Welles who directed the inept pursuit of the *Alabama*, leading Semmes to marvel that the U.S. Navy made no serious effort to impede his operations. Nor has the author examined all the implications of Semmes's relations with his crew. The sailors of the *Alabama* were, as Robinson points out, mercenaries, primarily British citizens, including many Irishmen. Yet his statement that Semmes "never had the real power to force the men into total submission" would come as a surprise to the raider's crewmen, who were constantly reminded by their captain that the *Alabama* was a commissioned cruiser, not a privateer. The crew was held under a tight rein indeed.

This book includes solid accounts of the *Alabama*'s two battles, the sinking of the *Hatteras*, and its own defeat off Cherbourg at the hands of the *Kearsarge*. With respect to the latter, Robinson correctly rejects Semmes's claim that the battle was decided by the *Kearsarge*'s protective chains, ascribing his defeat to the *Alabama*'s poor gunnery and defective powder.

The author is cursory, however, in his discussion of why Semmes chose to take on the *Kearsarge* in the first place. Far from not having any other choice, as Robinson suggests, Semmes could have either had his vessel laid up, as he had done earlier with the *Sumter*, or escaped the *Kearsarge* at night, as he had escaped the USS *San Jacinto* at

Martinique. Semmes's decision to fight grew out of his own combative temperament, a belief that the U.S. Navy might have lost its fighting edge, and a conviction that the Federal merchant marine had been so decimated by the Confederate cruisers that there was little game remaining on the high seas.

Shark of the Confederacy is a useful addition to the Civil War bookshelf, but many *Alabama* buffs will prefer Charles G. Summersell's *C.S.S. Alabama: Builder, Captain and Plans* (University of Alabama Press, 1985), an attractive book that includes the original blueprints of the *Alabama*. The illustrations in the Robinson volume, by way of contrast, are of such poor quality as to be at times unrecognizable.

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Glete, Jan. *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500–1860*, Vols. I and II. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1993. (No price given)

The seventeenth century witnessed the emergence and consolidation of powerful nation-states in Europe, most notably France, England, and the United Provinces, but also Sweden, Norway-Denmark, and, late in the century, Russia. Their appearance initiated the sharp upsurge in the size of permanent national military forces that was to be, in general, a continuing feature of subsequent European development. Jan Glete's *Navies and Nations* explores this phenomenon, largely on the basis of comparative quantitative data, as it relates to naval developments in both major and minor Western powers between 1500 and 1850.

This study occupies a unique position in current naval literature, not least for its methodology. Glete has amassed sufficient quantitative data on the strengths and qualities of almost all the navies of this period to provide not only comparative tables of fleet strengths, vessel sizes, armaments, and manning levels throughout the study's text (which itself occupies some five hundred pages) but also to supply over two hundred pages of appendices, packed with further statistical analyses of most of the major fleets throughout the 350 years covered in this work. Some earlier limited statistical surveys, confined to the principal fleets of the seventeenth century, were assembled in the 1920s and 1930s in Europe, but nothing on this scale has ever been attempted. Glete's raw statistical data by itself is invaluable. It provides historians and analysts with an incomparable tool for future studies of Western naval development during the critical period of Europe's expansion toward global hegemony.

Glete, however, does not confine himself to basic comparisons but employs them to explore more significant issues of the role of military forces, in particular of navies, in the process of state-building. He puts forward the concept of a second military revolution: the emergence of self-perpetuating and expanding military bureaucracies whose existence both contributed substantially to solidifying the development of the European nation-state and served as the vehicle for expanding state monopolization of violence. Using his statistical data, he explores the long-term interactions between national policies, naval expansion, technological advances, and bureaucratic inertia. In particular, Glete demonstrates the overwhelming importance for the durability of navies of the aggregation of domestic interests behind policy, concluding that its impact generally outweighs that of external threats.

From 1500, warships were constructed and naval organizations were created to enforce state monopolization of violence at sea, which was essential to the process of state-building because it provided the power to control organizations, factions, or groups. Aggregation of interests behind this process was essential for its consistency and durability. Glete also notes that as naval organizations became institutionalized they tended to acquire hierarchical and authoritarian bureaucratic characteristics, gradually changing from instigators of radical technological innovation to conservative importers, a process broken only by the advent of industrialization.

Glete presents his analysis within a chronological framework derived almost entirely from secondary sources. His discussion of naval strategy and tactics is consequently unadventurous and, occasionally, erroneous. This, however, does not detract from the significance of his conclusions or from the importance of this extraordinary work.

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Sobel, Dava. *Longitude*. New York: Walker, 1995. 184pp. \$19

In 1714, when the annual pay of a senior post captain was but £300, the British parliament offered £20,000 for a practical solution to the longitude problem.

Finding their longitude had bedeviled mariners since the time of the Phoenicians. In 1707 Admiral Shovell lost two thousand men and his own life to shipwreck when he miscalculated his longitude on a fog-shrouded night off the Scilly Isles. Partly in response, Parliament established the Board of Longitude, with the best naval, astronomical, and scientific minds available,