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Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy 1913-1921

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sometimes shown to be overly optimistic on the conduct and expected outcome of the war, no question is raised about his strategic or tactical decisions. Only Giap rates higher on Palmer's list of effective generals, with references to his execution of the first phase of Tet 68 and the masking of his real intentions prior to initiation of that offensive.

Secretary McNamara is shown as having an understanding of the true complexity and eventual futility of America's involvement but not having ability to do anything about it. The reader without a previously formed opinion of the Secretary is more likely to feel sympathy than disapproval.

President Johnson does not fare as well and if anyone in Palmer's story is meant to be shown as the "heavy," it's Johnson. He is portrayed as reluctant and indecisive, as inflicting a humiliating gesture on the Joint Chiefs of Staff by exacting a pledge from each that he could hold Khe Sanh, as a perplexed president, and as possibly our most reluctant and indecisive wartime commander-in-chief.

One is tempted to chide Palmer for his almost complete absorption with the ground war in Vietnam for, with the exception of 17 pages devoted to the bombing of North Vietnam ("yet another example of a strategic air campaign which miscarried"), there is little mention of the naval and air contribution to our military involvement. And his claim that the rather unique fighting in Dalat during Tet was more representative of the battles of Tet than either Saigon or Hue is open to serious question. It is also surprising to find that the key figures in the few battles he describes just "happen" to be well-known personalities today; e.g., Generals Haig, Starry, Berry and Depuy.

But these are minor complaints about what is a most impressive job of bringing a long and confusing period of America's history into sharp focus. Palmer provides clear support for Westmoreland's description, in 1966, of the conflict in South Vietnam as a protracted war of attrition with no clearly defined objective; and he demonstrates convincingly that the war's final outcome represented a political, not military, defeat for America. He closes with a trumpet summons of his own: "There must be no more Vietnams."

This is a book well worth reading and I particularly recommend it to those who are weary of the Hollywood-in-mind approaches, the half-or-worse truths, and the snide innuendoes of the Caputos, Herberts, Buntings and other pseudohistorians of their ilk. Palmer has painted a three-dimensional panorama of a frustrating military involvement that holds many significant lessons for military and political leaders of the future. One can only hope they will read this book and learn the lessons it contains.

WARREN SPAULDING
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Safford, Jeffrey J. *Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy 1913-1921.* New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1978. 282pp.

This book propounds an ambitious thesis: Woodrow Wilson's was the first modern administration to recognize the merchant marine as an instrument of diplomacy. World War I provided first an opportunity to overcome earlier opposition to government involvement in shipping, then a challenge to wrest maritime supremacy from Great Britain. The author proposes to explain how the Wilson administration used the American merchant fleet "as a powerful bargaining agent in the creation of a liberal and pro-American postwar peace."

He begins by reviewing the conflicts among farmers, industrialists, shippers, and congressional leaders that previously had thwarted efforts to implement a national merchant marine

policy. Two chapters then describe how President Wilson and his Secretary of the Treasury, William G. MacAdoo, used the war crisis to increase the size of the American merchant fleet and to secure congressional authorization for government operation of vessels. The latter one-third of the book presents a series of detailed case studies of merchant marine policy. From them the reader gains insight into the administrative complexities in trying to use global shipping shortages as a "lever" for coercing neutrals into cooperation with the United States. Safford also probes the roots of Wilson's 1918-1919 attempts to exert subtle but firm economic pressure against America's wartime associates so as to effect their cooperation in his efforts to create a League of Nations. The book concludes with an account of the efforts of Senator Wesley Jones of Washington and Rear Adm. William S. Benson, a former CNO turned chairman of the U.S. Shipping Board, to write into the Merchant Marine Act of 1920 provisions that would give American flag carriers a near monopoly on U.S. trade.

Safford exploits a wealth of new archival materials untouched by earlier historians in telling his tale. From them he fashions vivid vignettes of the problems such administrators as William G. MacAdoo, Edward N. Hurley, and William S. Benson faced in designing and implementing merchant marine policies. But the book does not measure up to William A. Williams' dustjacket claim that it presents data "in a comprehensible framework and offers a coherent and persuasive analysis and interpretation." If anything, Safford's analytical framework is too narrow. He does not correlate changes in merchant marine policies with parallel developments in the Wilson administration's naval policies. Indeed the author has not examined General Board and Naval Operations papers that shed considerable light on the interrelationship of naval and merchant marine policies. Nor does he put Washington's fears about a commercial "war after the war" in proper perspective. While genuine, these specters haunted policymakers in Tokyo, Rome, and London as well as those in Washington. The chapters, moreover, are poorly structured, making it difficult for even the specialist to follow the author's narrative.

Safford's central thesis, much in the fashion of those found in Soviet historical studies, is frequently asserted but never quite proven. It may in fact be unprovable. As any historian who has dealt with Woodrow Wilson can attest, the President was a complex man who, despite protestations of determination and consistency, not infrequently expressed his thoughts obliquely and changed his mind. Safford also falls into the trap of labeling as Wilsonian administrators who as often as not harbored thoughts and pushed policies quite inconsistent with the aspirations of their chief. One simply cannot speak of *the* Wilson administration policy when, as Safford's own evidence shows, subordinates disagreed and fought with one another.

Despite these weaknesses, the book should interest the naval professional reader. If he is determined enough, the would-be strategist will find in this volume ample evidence of the difficulties governments face in implementing embargoes and other policies of economic coercion. There are also lessons in leadership to be pondered. Safford is at his best in analyzing the problems that beset the second-level administrator—precisely the type of burden that presidents frequently ask distinguished naval officers to bear. Finally, although it deals with another time and a different set of problems, this book cannot help but enlighten and sharpen the judgments of those concerned about contemporary Soviet-American merchant marine rivalries. It stands as a caution to those who would

too hastily draw conclusions about intent from the outcomes of merchant marine policy.

ROGER DINGMAN
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Sharp, U.S. Grant. *Strategy for Defeat, Vietnam in Retrospect*. San Raphael: Presidio Press, 1978. 324pp.

Strategy For Defeat is Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp's personal account of the war in Southeast Asia during the four years (1964-1968) he directed the Pacific Command as its Commander in Chief. He arrived well-equipped for the job: he had worked both at sea and ashore in the Pacific and had served in Washington as Deputy CNO for Plans and Policy. His most recent assignment had been Commander of the Pacific Fleet. Although he exercised supervision over *all* military actions in South Vietnam, Sharp has limited his discussion to the air war over North Vietnam, the conduct of which "had a tremendous influence on the outcome of this conflict and was an especially revealing example of near flagrant misuse of air power."

Beginning with a brief but comprehensive history of military involvement in Vietnam, Sharp records the natural hesitancy that accompanied initial American policies in Southeast Asia and documents the evolution of the ideological schism that existed between the military (JCS, CINCPAC) and the Administration (President, SECDEF, SECSTATE). This initial difference of perspective became an ever-widening gulf separating the civilian leadership from professional military advice. His chronicle draws heavily from messages he sent to the JCS that repeatedly advised vigorous prosecution of specific targets, strikes against Hanoi, destruction of known supply routes, and the mining of Haiphong Harbor. In general, his advice and counsel were largely ignored and his recommendations were stripped of their effectiveness.

From the time he assumed the leadership of the unified Pacific Command, Sharp strongly opposed the Administration's policy of "gradualism." He insists that airpower, unfettered with target restrictions and pauses, would have concluded the war in short order. While many will challenge this assertion, Sharp emphatically states that airpower was misused by the Administration, that restrictions amounted to fighting the war with one hand tied behind our backs. The contrasting views, I am sure, will define the fulcrum of future debates on the effectiveness of airpower in modern conflicts.

Gradualism was the adopted policy of the Administration, articulated and canonized by Secretary of Defense McNamara. This policy was based in part on the prospects of Soviet or Chinese entanglement and the political sensitivity to growing public concern, both domestic and international. It held that "carefully calculated doses of force could bring about predictable and desirable responses from Hanoi, the threat implicit in minimum but slowly increasing force . . . would, it was held by some, ultimately bring Hanoi to the (negotiating) table on terms favorable to the U.S." Sharp argues that a strategy derived from such a policy was doomed to disaster on the basis of both history and common military sense.

Because of a bureaucratic distinction between the ground war in the south and Rolling Thunder, the air war in the north, Sharp could never reconcile his views with the prevailing civilian attitude that somehow the air war was a lesser included case to which the strategy of gradualism was equally applicable.

Despite the modest expansion of the air war in 1966-1967, it remained medicinal; Sharp contends that the results of these measured doses were hardened resolve, stronger commitment, and increased military strength on the part of