

Naval War College Review

Volume 32
Number 4 *May-June*

Article 24

1979

The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service 1890-1913

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Recommended Citation

Etzold, Thomas H. (1979) "The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service 1890-1913," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 32 : No. 4 , Article 24.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol32/iss4/24>

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PROFESSIONAL READING 131

Werking, Richard Hume. *The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service 1890-1913*. Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1977. 250pp.

This fine study of the reform and reorganization of American consular and diplomatic services between 1890 and 1913 should be of interest to military men for two reasons. First, it focuses on the vital connection between American foreign trade and government support of that trade. This concern, prominent in the expansionist-imperialist years at the turn of the century, is if anything more important than ever in view of the unfavorable trade and payments balances of the 1970s. Second, it illuminates aspects of administrative and organizational history also germane to the study of other American institutions, including those of the military.

Werking describes the beginnings of serious effort in the Department of State, the consular service, and the Department of Commerce and Labor to extend American business abroad. He concludes, in fact, that "the pre-World War I foreign service was first and foremost an instrument for the nation's commercial expansion. It not only held open the door to equal opportunity for American exports (ensuring *protection* for American trade), but it increasingly attempted to shove American businessmen through the open door (*promoting* foreign trade)."

Werking's conclusion that the foreign service led rather than followed the commercial community into overseas

trade expansion forms the basis for his contributions to administrative history. First, the book elaborates important but often neglected considerations of how organizations and institutions affect their environments in addition to the more customary analysis of how environments may shape organizations. Second, the volume illuminates the relationship between circumstances, organizational needs, and personal ambitions in the cases of a handful of the individuals most important to the reform and reorganization of the foreign and commercial services. This is a difficult task, exceptionally well handled here so as to avoid the usual tendencies either to criticize ambition too harshly or to ignore the human element in institutional development.

In these times of post-Vietnam, post-Great Society disillusion, a certain estrangement has developed between government and the public. This considerably enhances the value of sound studies, such as this one, of the interplay between individuals and agencies private and public. Such studies may ultimately help in rebuilding the cooperative relation between private and public institutions so essential to the American political system, and in this endeavor, one must add, both the members and the students of American military institutions have a large responsibility.

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