

1976

The Encyclopedia of Sea Warfare

B. M. Simpson III
U.S. Navy

Iain Parsons

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Simpson, B. M. III and Parsons, Iain (1976) "The Encyclopedia of Sea Warfare," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 29 : No. 2 , Article 16.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol29/iss2/16>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

that resembled a revolution. Reorganization of the branches, the general staff system, the requirement of specialized education, and the elimination of party politics in the promotion process were only some of the improvements that revitalized the Army and brought it into the 20th century. But the capstone of these many endeavors was the notion that soldiering was a profession.

Bullard was hardly a mover of these changes. Anything but a thinker or theoretician, never a visionary, Bullard was rather a supreme adapter to the conditions as he found them. When political preferment led to advancement, Bullard lobbied on the Hill. When that became outmoded, he desisted. He read the signals correctly, did his duty proficiently, and found himself at the end a lieutenant general and the personification of the military professional motivated by Duty, Honor, Country.

Professor Millett's choice of Bullard as the vehicle through which to portray the changing nature of the military in the 40 years bridging the 19th and 20th centuries seems to me to be somewhat questionable, for Bullard was never at the center of the changes. Rather, he benefited from them. He was, then, a passive figure who accidentally received the good fortune of a system that rewarded the anonymous, dedicated, colorless, hard-working individual.

As a consequence, Millett's presentation of the context of the times overpowers and in the end overwhelms his picture of Bullard the man. Although Millett records Bullard's frustrations and despair, his impatience and agony, his family life and the rest, he fails to make the general come alive.

But that is probably Millett's intention, and if so, he is hardly to be faulted for the superb view he has provided of the Army as an institution

in a time of profound change. What he has written is history rather than biography, and his achievement rates cheers.

MARTIN BLUMENSON
Army War College

Parsons, Iain, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Sea Warfare*. New York: Crowell, 1975. 250pp.

The history of sea warfare can be easily and sensibly divided into two eras: that of wooden ships propelled by sail or oar and that of ironclads propelled by steam or nuclear energy. This lavishly illustrated volume presents a thumbnail sketch of major naval operations from the first ironclads to the present day. On the whole, the authors accomplish their purpose by providing no-nonsense, factual synopses of significant naval actions from the *Monitor-Merrimack* fight in 1862 onward.

Any summary runs the risk of oversimplification, which is largely avoided in this volume. American readers may be startled by the emphasis placed on actions by the Royal Navy, which clearly indicates that the U.S. Navy is somewhat of a latecomer to the exclusive club of significant, if not dominant navies. Naval engagements in the 19th century were few and far between. Hence, the extraordinary attention given to such otherwise minor naval engagements as Lissa in 1866 and the Chilean-Peruvian war in 1879. By the end of the century, the Japanese at Tsushima and the U.S. Navy at Santiago and Manila demonstrated that two significant newcomers had paid their initial dues to the club of major naval powers.

Even so, it was not until World War II was nearly 3 years old that the U.S. Navy finally commenced its brilliant series of operations in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Mediterranean. In the meantime, the Royal Navy had been

fighting a desperate battle, in the Atlantic and in European waters. Due recognition is given to the invaluable assistance of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet in 1941, but the fact remains that the Royal Navy had more than its hands full in keeping the Mediterranean and Atlantic lifelines open and getting the Murmansk convoys to their destinations. The British experience and their doggedness, determination, and professional competence will be instructive and sobering to American readers.

This detailed, factual summary of significant naval operations is the chief strength of the book. It is also its weakness, because there is no hint of the debates over strategic alternatives that were considered and discarded. The thrust of the book is what happened at sea and there is little consideration of its total effect on the rest of the war in progress. Seapower in general and naval operations in particular cannot be evaluated in isolation.

The final chapters cover the significant technological developments since 1945. The changes wrought by electronics, nuclear power, and the develop-

ment of the modern submarine can be considered without exaggeration, as a true revolution in the means and hence the tactics of naval warfare. These chapters are generally informative and they provide a much needed perspective. The book concludes with a discussion of perhaps the most significant event of all—the emergence of the Soviet Navy as a true blue-water navy. Probably the greatest weakness of this otherwise excellent volume is that it sees the utility of seapower primarily in a combat environment. The authors are undoubtedly correct as far as they go. But one wishes that they had addressed more thoroughly the political and non-combat uses of naval power. Unfortunately, this is a gap found all too often in current literature.

Both the color and black and white illustrations are truly impressive. Many will be unfamiliar to American readers, which is all to the good. The illustrations and their captions are used to good effect.

B.M. SIMPSON III
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy

— — — — — ψ — — — — —