

## How to Think like an Officer: Lessons in Learning and Leadership for Soldiers and Other Citizens

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the particular tablet from which a figure derives, but scholarly readers may wonder why Llewellyn-Jones describes Diodorus Siculus—a historian long considered unreliable, and whom Llewellyn-Jones earlier dismisses as a prurient “Orientalist” (p. 191)—as “logical and wide-ranging” (p. 273). Perhaps slightly more-robust citations, as Donald Kagan provided in his history of the Peloponnesian War, would have solved some of these problems.

On the subject of sources, Llewellyn-Jones acknowledges the major issues. First, most of our existing knowledge of the Persian Empire comes from Greek and Latin histories or the Old Testament. As a result, there are both some real problems of bias—as Llewellyn-Jones nicely puts it, Greeks cared more about describing what Greeks *were not* than what Persians *were* (pp. 11–14)—and misconception verging on orientalism. Second, Persian sources are atypical in that “the Persians never wrote narrative history,” which forces any historian to rely on “songs, poetry, fables, and legends” (p. 20). Llewellyn-Jones’s introduction features an overview of the reliability of sources, and he offers his own commentary sporadically, at one point telling the reader that “there is no obvious reason not to [believe a source]” (p. 288).

While nonacademic readers may take Llewellyn-Jones at his word, I would have loved to see how he determined the reliability of his sources. For example, he scoffs at Herodotus’s description of Darius falling in love with a tree as a clear attempt by the Greek author to “other” the Persian emperor by making him a ridiculous foreigner (pp. 233–34), but he recounts page after page of harem-based intrigue (pp. 320–34) without much critical commentary. For his chapter on Alexander, however, Llewellyn-Jones delivers the goods with a short section

describing the major issues with the sources, the disagreements among authors, the missing pieces, the lack of historical Persian accounts, and—most importantly—his methodology for solving this problem (pp. 353–55). Llewellyn-Jones clearly knows more about this topic than most, but more of such insights into his methodology throughout would have been invaluable.

In the end, I did not learn much about Persian perspectives on the Greco-Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, but I doubt that was Llewellyn-Jones’s intent for the book. However, I did learn a lot about Persia, as well as the problems incumbent on attempting to decenter Greek authors from a history for which there are few traditional alternatives. As a result, *Persians* is great for readers looking for a non-Greek, although perhaps not unbiased, take on Persia. And, just as Kagan inspired a generation of writers to consider the Peloponnesian War in more detail, one hopes that Llewellyn-Jones’s work will prove to be the beginning rather than the end of this kind of scholarship.

JOSHUA HAMMOND



*How to Think like an Officer: Lessons in Learning and Leadership for Soldiers and Other Citizens*, by Reed Bonadonna. Guilford, CT: Stackpole Books, 2020. 221 pages. \$29.95.

Reed Bonadonna begins his book sounding like a teacher driven by a mission but badly constrained by time. He explains, or perhaps bemoans, how little time he had, as a professor at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), to get his midshipman students to “think like officers” (p. ix). This book is ostensibly an attempt to get the reader

to think that way, for Bonadonna clearly and deeply believes that thinking like an officer is superior thinking, even if, as he avers, many officers do not think as they should. He also states that at least some, if not all, civilians would benefit from thinking like officers.

Bonadonna brings passion and a wide-ranging, almost dizzying, array of sources to his work. Ideas, assertions, and references come at the reader in a fast and furious barrage of claims, ideas, and statements of fact. This work sprawls across several fields of study like an ever-widening flash flood. The pace at which the book moves is so rapid that readers may find themselves being propelled along. This raises the risk that the reader—ironically—may accept the author's arguments and admonishments uncritically, without thinking them through first. This risk is likely to be higher if the reader has not made a disciplined and dedicated study of military thought and leadership, the science of thinking, and the profession of arms.

Careful readers and those more steeped in the literature will be less likely to be swept along, and even may find areas of disagreement with Bonadonna. Some of these issues are small—the type of marginal topic that is ripe for a friendly discussion over drinks or in the faculty lounge. For example, Bonadonna states that “James Jones may have understood the Army better than any other major American writer” (p. 105). That is high praise, even with the inclusion of the somewhat diffident “may have”; it is also debatable. But this is a relatively simple matter.

A more serious issue involves Bonadonna's frequent citing of military historian S. L. A. Marshall, without ever

mentioning the important fact that the accuracy of Marshall's work has been criticized strongly, and his reputation has suffered, for years. This same selective representation applies to historical figures. Bonadonna speaks highly of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's acumen, without ever mentioning that Eisenhower's character—an essential part of what Bonadonna argues constitutes vital officer attributes—has come under fire for an alleged intimate relationship with his wartime Army driver, Kay Summersby. Nor are these questions of character new; at the time of the widely rumored infidelity, General George C. Marshall, one of Bonadonna's military avatars, expressed concern over Eisenhower's behavior.

Mention of the book's “avatars” points to another weakness in this work, to which the author confesses to some extent in his closing chapters. His icons of the profession of arms are all Western, almost all are from the United States, and they come almost exclusively from the Army. Interestingly, Generals Stanley A. McChrystal and David H. Petraeus fail to make his cut, without explanation. There is one brief nod to Marine general James N. Mattis, but there are no other Marines; useful examples might have included John A. Lejeune or Anthony C. Zinni. There are no admirals—no Sims, Nimitz, or Stavridis. No Army Air Corps or U.S. Air Force officer makes his list of greats. Perhaps an argument can be made that for some reason the sea and air services do not produce officers worthy of inclusion in Bonadonna's pantheon, but if so the reason for the exclusion should be explained. Soviet and Asian officers also are missing completely, notwithstanding that

Soviet admiral Sergey G. Gorshkov and Vietnamese general Vo Nguyen Giap might have been worthy of inclusion.

Because Bonadonna seeks to cover so much so quickly, he shortchanges important topics and concepts; he introduces them, but then leaves them by the wayside. These include Daniel Kahneman's work on slow and fast thinking and the techniques that Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May recommend to aid decision makers.

In several places in the book, Bonadonna brushes against potential intellectual and professional firestorms, but he simply sidesteps them. One of the most problematic is the exclusionary nature of the very term *officer*. In 1957, Samuel Huntington published *The Soldier and the State*. In his work, Huntington clearly and deliberately excluded enlisted personnel, including senior noncommissioned officers, from membership in the profession of arms. Bonadonna acknowledges that this distinction is out of favor today, yet he continues to focus on officers, tacitly reinforcing Huntington's distinction. Officers evidently think one way; enlisted personnel, including the most senior E-9s, apparently think another.

It should be no surprise to learn that the young women and men who were Dr. Bonadonna's students at USMMA revere and admire him. If his pedagogic teaching style was similar to his writing, he likely had those young minds on the edge of their mental seats. However, when it comes to andragogy, more-senior and -seasoned readers easily may regard his assurance as arrogance and his no doubt well-meaning efforts to communicate as condescension.

It is telling, given Bonadonna's thesis, that no serving or retired officer

penned an endorsement for the book's cover; it would be interesting to know whether any were invited to do so.

RICHARD NORTON



*Mahan, Corbett, and the Foundations of Naval Strategic Thought*, by Kevin D. McCranie. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2021. 344 pages. \$42.95.

For more than a hundred years, Alfred Thayer Mahan and Sir Julian Corbett have stood at the pinnacle of modern naval strategy. Even today, Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (1890) and Corbett's *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (1911), each considered to be the masterwork of its author, often are required reading for young, developing naval officers. Unfortunately, many modern readers tend to limit their study to those apparent masterworks, or even just the most popular passages thereof. In doing so, readers miss much of the nuance and steady development that both Mahan and Corbett presented through a plethora of other books and articles. The result is a limited and flawed understanding of the material, which in turn has contributed to a mistaken depiction of the two theorists as having founded contradictory schools of thought. According to Kevin McCranie, professor and former head of the Strategy and Policy Department at the Naval War College, Mahan and Corbett align and agree too much for their ideas to be considered in competition (p. 251). In his introduction, McCranie declares that there is no substitute for reading the works of Mahan and Corbett themselves; however, reading enough of the work