

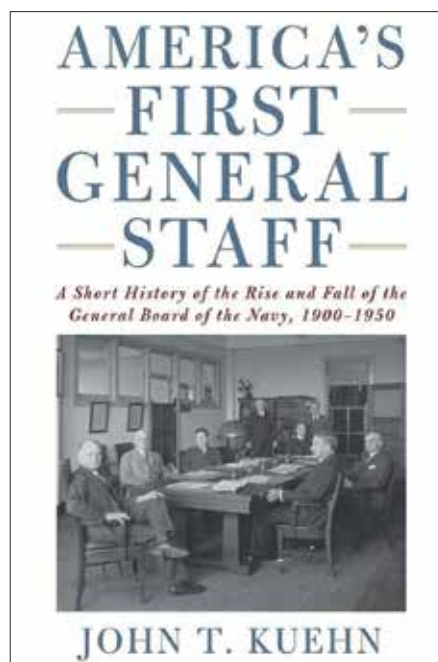
no one able to restrain him. Only his splendid days as prime minister in the days to come would save his reputation from having another Gallipoli hung around his neck. Unprepared for the combat conditions that late winter and early spring brought to Norway, British troops floundered in a muck of melting snow and mud. To make matters worse, British commanders on the ground were contemptuous of the Norwegians, who were putting up significant resistance. At least the Norwegians recognized and had operated in such conditions.

It took the British, with their control of the sea, nearly 2 months before they were able to launch an effective ground attack on Narvik. Among those leading the assault were two battalions of the French Foreign Legion, recently arrived from Africa, who performed in outstanding fashion. As one of their officers commented, "Ah, it's all very difficult. We are used to travelling on camels across the desert, and here you give us boats and we have to cross the water. It is very difficult, but it will be all right. I think so." Acidly, a French officer pointed out "that the British have planned this campaign on the lines of a punitive expedition against the Zulus, but unhappily we and the British are in the position of the Zulus." Events in France forced an Allied withdrawal in early June, ending a truly badly run campaign that lacked strategic sense, military effectiveness, and above all *professional* military leadership.

For those who are really interested in the study of war and the interrelationship between strategy, operations, and tactics, General Kiszely has written an extraordinarily important book. If military leaders fail to take the study of their profession seriously, they will inevitably find themselves incapable of connecting means to ends. Nor will they be able to provide sensible advice to politicians who have no background in military affairs or who, as occurred in Iraq in 2003, are willfully ignorant. Moreover, perhaps most disastrously, generals who have not taken the trouble to study their potential opponents will not understand the other side of the hill and, on the basis of the

most facile assumptions, will send their troops into combat unprepared to deal with a living, adapting opponent. JFQ

Dr. Williamson Murray has held numerous teaching positions at joint professional military education institutions, including the Marine Corps University, U.S. Army War College, and U.S. Naval War College.



America's First General Staff: A Short History of the Rise and Fall of the General Board of the Navy, 1900-1950

By John T. Kuehn
U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2017
\$34.95 320 pp.
ISBN: 978-1682471913

Reviewed by Randy Papadopoulos

This trim book explains the full course of the U.S. Navy's General Board, its institutional forum for innovation, during the period from 1900 to 1950. To remedy challenges identified during the Spanish-American War, Navy Secretary John D. Long established the board as an experiment. The Secretary realized he needed military advice, so he chose a mix of up-and-coming Navy

officers, the head of the Bureau of Navigation that managed careers, and one Marine officer, all led by the redoubtable Admiral George Dewey, to offer it. From the outset, the General Board strove to coherently align what we today term strategy, campaign plans, force structure, personnel, and ship design.

The author of this institutional history, John Kuehn, is a former naval aviator who earned his doctorate while teaching at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. *America's First General Staff* is an offshoot of his dissertation-turned-book, *Agents of Innovation: The General Board and the Design of the Fleet That Defeated the Japanese Navy* (U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2008). The consistency between that book and this more comprehensive one lies in Kuehn's conviction that military problem-solving is best revealed by understanding the decisionmaker's options and constraints.

In the case of naval strategy and fleet designs, the constraints are many. Innovation is not easy, and the Armed Forces must design ships, procure equipment, create doctrine, and plan wars with degrees of uncertainty. Civilian leaders can swiftly change the context, while navies are long-term investments with ships lasting up to 30 years, causing rivalries for ship design authority. In *America's First General Staff*, readers learn what happened when a 1921 Service secretary openly proposed bold international cuts to a principal weapon system (battleships) to save money, and subsequently agreed by treaty not to improve bases. That second point robbed the U.S. fleet of vital infrastructure needed for a protracted Pacific war. Only an organization that could assess threats, recommend investments, and provide top-level sponsorship for change could respond to such complexity, and Kuehn persuasively demonstrates how the Navy's General Board provided that vision and ultimately shaped innovation across the fleet.

According to the author, the General Board grappled sequentially with changing technology, World War I's evolving lessons, post-1922 treaty limits to construction, the Great Depression, World War II, and the early Cold War. Throughout the pre-1941 period, the board sponsored studies,

recorded testimony from witnesses (a reason historians appreciate it), and weighed the choices to be made. Its answers meant some ideas wound up discarded, as in fending off a single aviation service in 1925 before any procurement changes or realignment of careers took place.

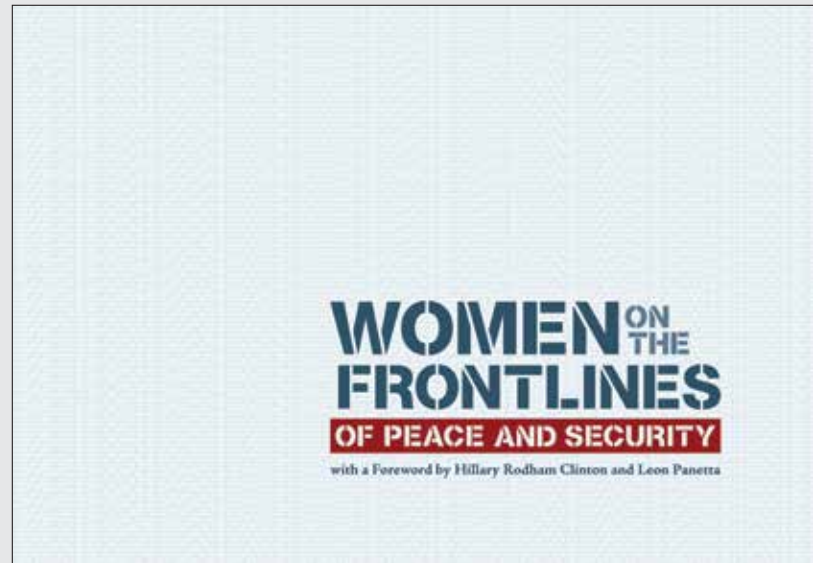
The book uses the records of the General Board, backed by a large helping of related literature. The only book missing is Dirk Bönker's *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States Before World War I* (Cornell University Press, 2012).

Authors need not cite every book related to their work, but since Kuehn centers his argument on the Navy's desire to create a Prussian-style "Great General Staff," Bönker's explicit comparison would have helped make his case.

Was the General Board "America's first general staff"? As a measure of the board's value, on one occasion President Herbert Hoover chaired a daylong meeting with the Secretaries of the Navy and State in attendance. The specific 1929 issue was negotiating cruiser limits with Great Britain. For the General Board to serve as the arms control forum, while writing war plans with the help of Newport, speaks to its central place as the Navy's strategy organ. There was nothing equivalent anywhere else in the U.S. Government of its day.

In sum, *America's First General Staff* explains how the U.S. Navy's leadership grappled with rapid pre-1950 change. Through this work, Professor Kuehn provides a collective intellectual biography of the Navy's leadership for the period. Among those leaders, pride of place must go to Rear Admiral Henry C. Taylor, who set up General Board practices before his death in 1904. Only more than 40 years later, when it faced the changed context of the Cold War, a new Department of Defense, and a bureaucratically stronger Navy staff, did its role lose importance. That it took such a long time and an array of altered circumstances to negate the General Board's influence is a testament to the value it offered. JFQ

Dr. Randy Papadopoulos serves as the Secretary of the Navy Historian at the Department of the Navy.



From NDU Press

Women on the Frontlines of Peace and Security

Foreword by Hillary Rodham Clinton and Leon Panetta

NDU Press, 2015 • 218 pp.

This book reflects President Barack Obama's commitment to advancing women's participation in preventing conflict and keeping peace. It is inspired by the countless women and girls on the frontlines who make a difference every day in their communities and societies by creating opportunities and building peace.

Around the globe, policymakers and activists are working to empower women as agents of peace and to help address the challenges they face as survivors of conflict. When women are involved in peace negotiations, they raise important issues that might be otherwise overlooked. When women are educated and enabled to participate in every aspect of their societies—from growing the economy to strengthening the security sector—communities are more stable and less prone to conflict.

Our understanding of the importance of women in building and keeping peace is informed by a wide range of experts, from diplomats to military officials and from human rights activists to development professionals. The goal of this book is to bring together these diverse voices. As leaders in every region of the world recognize, no country can reach its full potential without the participation of all its citizens. This book seeks to add to the chorus of voices working to ensure that women and girls take their rightful place in building a stronger, safer, more prosperous world.

Available at ndupress.ndu.edu/Books/WomenontheFrontlinesofPeaceandSecurity.aspx

