

Michael J. Crawford, ed. *Needs and Opportunities in the Modern History of the U.S. Navy*. Washington, DC: Naval History and Heritage Command, 2019. 425 pp. n.p., cloth, ISBN 978-1-943604-11-1.

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What determines success or failure in combat? Naval history and military history often focus on wars and battles, and battles are often what we first think of when approaching the subject. Chronicling those events is essential. Such writing begins to provide insight on the question of what makes battlefield success more or less likely. Histories of battles are replete with descriptions of large forces, individual decisions, and small, sometimes luck-dependent details, all of which play a role in shaping outcomes.

To a chief of a navy or a defense reformer, however, most of the details and decisions in the heat of battle are, at least directly, uncontrollable. Their leverage point to secure future victory lies in building the institutions that will select, train, and educate the people who will fight and will develop and purchase the equipment those individuals will fight with. For this reason, the histories of these decisions and institutions are at least as important to naval history as the histories of battles and operations, even though they may not be what first comes to mind.

Michael J. Crawford's edited volume, *Needs and Opportunities in the Modern History of the U.S. Navy*, implicitly makes this point. He seeks to enable historical research that will inform the US Navy's leadership about the past as they make decisions about the future. Crawford's selection of

historiographical essay topics highlights the importance of institutional and policy decisions in shaping all aspects of the forces that will fight future wars. Of the eight essays in the book, five—"Personnel," "Programming and Acquisitions," "Science," "Social History," and "Technology"—are explicitly about the institutions that create the navy that will be used in war. Gary Weir's essay on science and Mark Mandeles's on technology are noteworthy in part because of how little they focus on the development of the navy's use of science and technology, which one might expect, and how much they focus on the institutions and people who connect science to and make use of technology for the navy. Similarly, Donald Chisholm argues that the fundamental question facing any naval personnel system is less how to create brilliant admirals than how to produce the large number of competent workhorse officers and enlisted sailors needed to operate a fleet.

Of the three remaining essays, two—"Forward Presence" and "Strategy"—similarly focus on preparing for war and peacetime deployments. Only one of the eight essays is on operations. Even this essay focuses not on general naval operations since the Second World War—the general time-frame for the volume—but instead looks specifically at mine counter-measures operations in the late twentieth century. Still, as its author Scott

Truver notes, the sheer number of named naval operations was too numerous for him to assess, and he chose to focus on mine warfare mostly out of personal interest. His comment only further highlights the book's focus on other than operational history; a similar length volume could easily have been written on naval operations alone.

The essays themselves vary considerably in approach. Some provide surveys of the subject history, while others are more traditional historiography. Almost all the essays have extensive bib-

liographies that will help any researcher approaching one of the covered topics. Truver's also contains a useful catalog of naval operations from 1980 to 2010. Most of the authors incorporate academic sources as well as government oversight and think tank reports, which helps unite these often-separate literatures. The essays in the volume began as a series of presentations in 2015 and 2016, so the cited sources are generally a few years older than the 2018 publication date might otherwise suggest.

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