Timothy Heck and B. A. Friedman’s *On Contested Shores: The Evolving Role of Amphibious Operations in the History of Warfare* is a compilation of essays that draws upon the expertise of professionals in the field of military history and, more specifically, amphibious warfare. If there is a cohering theme within these essays, it is that amphibious warfare proficiency is not only necessary but a vital component of national security. Moreover, this expertise needs to be revisited in an age when the United States’s near-peer adversaries continue to place increasing emphasis on amphibious operations. The editors suggest this volume has particular relevancy as the US Marine Corps is debating its purpose as a branch of the military. Consequently, and given recent advances in technology, a knowledge of this operational history is important as the Pentagon debates whether amphibious operations are worth the expense in time and training.

While technology surely provides an advantage, one would be remiss to omit the fundamentals of military planning. Using historical examples, Heck and Friedman display how military leaders have developed and executed amphibious operations, within the constraints of available technology. They show how the depth and complexity of amphibious operations runs deeper than the headline beach assaults of popular memory. They argue that “there are five types of amphibious operations in current American doctrine: the assault, the withdrawal, the raid, the demonstration, and amphibious support to other operations” (p. 5). An appreciation of this differentiation provides a foundation from which to understand the case studies contained in this work. As a result, their stated purpose is to “fill a gap” in the understanding of amphibious operations (p. xiii). This gap, they argue, stems from the oversaturation of works pertaining to America in World War II. Consequently, World War II examples are only included where necessary (pp. xiii-xiv). *On Contested Shores* is an all-encompassing work building on previous efforts to understand the history and relevance of amphibious warfare. The in-depth analysis examining the importance of these kinds of operations on history makes this a definitive work on amphibious warfare.

The chapters are organized in chronological order beginning with the sixteenth century and concluding with the present day. Each explains the historical background, planning, and significance of the operation. These case studies are written by experts in their respective fields, be they from the realms of foreign policy, military, or academia. In addition to the emphasis on fundamentals, there are two major themes that deserve recognition: joint operations and lessons learned. Heck and...
Friedman note the relationship between these themes. “Academics tend to look at history, while practitioners tend to look at the future where they may need to put ideas into practice. Both can benefit from the viewpoint of the other” (p. xiv). Cooperation between academics and military leaders, they maintain, is vital to the understanding of amphibious warfare, the same way cooperation between military branches is necessary to carry out amphibious operations. An early example of joint operations can be found in Andrew Young's chapter, “Amphibious Genesis: Thomas More Molyneux and the Birth of Amphibious Doctrine.” During The Seven Years War, British naval tactician Molyneux recognized the need for cooperation between the army and the navy in carrying out amphibious operations. Molyneux understood how using historical examples could help better understand the future. As Molyneux argued, “the best use that can be made of history is to correct in our times the errors committed by those of our ancestors” (p. 42). Herein, Young finds, is the foundation for lessons learned.

With the future of US Marine Corps being the fulcrum of this work, I would like to specifically draw attention to a sampling of the works pertaining to the Marines. The theme of lessons learned is further built upon in Angus Murray's chapter, “The U.S. Marine Corps and Gallipoli.” After World War I, there was a debate within the defense community as to the relevance of the Marine Corps, not too dissimilar from debates occurring today. Given early twentieth-century counterinsurgency operations in the Caribbean and Central and South America, there were those who believed that amphibious operations were no longer necessary or relevant. There also was a school of thought that believed Japan to be an emerging threat, which warranted a re-emphasis on amphibious operations. With a look to the future, the Marines aimed to develop lessons learned from the British Empire's failed landing at Gallipoli. Building off the idea that the past offers lessons for the future, Bruce Gudmundsson examines the development of the Marine Corps schools. In his chapter, “Ambiguous Application: The Study of Amphibious Warfare at the Marine Corps Schools, 1920-1933,” Gudmundsson analyzes how the Marine Corps formalize its training for its officers, modeling themselves on the methods of the US and German armies. Gudmundsson asserts that the formalized training offered in the schools were believed to be relevant for an upcoming war with either Japan or Germany.

The final author I would like to draw attention to is Walker D. Mills. Mills is both a captain in the Marines and a published fiction and nonfiction author. In the spirit of cooperation between the academic and the military worlds, Mills is able to construct expert analysis on what the history means for the future of the United States Marine Corps. In his chapter, “The U.S. Marine Corps and Advanced Base Operations: Past, Present, and Future,” Mills introduces how the Marines went about establishing an identity for itself following the Spanish American War. He asserts that following the conclusion of the war, the United States was able to take quasi-imperial possession of islands belonging to Spain, specifically in the Caribbean and the Pacific. This gave credence to the emphasis on “advance base concepts” (p. 376). In essence, the purpose of the advance bases would be to serve as a staging point from which to capture adversarial holdings. Furthermore, practices derived out of the conclusion of the Spanish American War would go on to aid in the development of strategy for World War II in the Pacific. Finally, and turning back to the argument that technology voids the needs for fundamentals, Mills counters this argument, and maintains that the continuation of advance base practice will be necessary to compete with the near-peer adversarial threats of Russia and China. He asserts that advance bases plus advance technology will play a significant role in future and potential conflicts.

On Contested Shores deserves a spot in the libraries of both scholars and military professionals
alike. Its analysis of amphibious operations spanning multiple centuries sets the standard for specialized military history, the specialization being amphibious warfare. Members of the armed forces will appreciate the argument that the lessons learned from the past are still relevant in the present day. This is a concept that applies to all branches, not just to the Marine Corps. With an increasing emphasis on joint operations and cooperation between military and civilian agencies, *On Contested Shores* is the definitive manual on the history of amphibious operations.

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