

Introduction

For midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, the social highlight of their second year is the Ring Dance.¹ It is an event replete with tradition and symbolism during which the midshipman's class ring is ceremonially dipped in a brass binnacle filled with water from world's oceans; the ceremony makes it clear that the young officer can expect to see service in all of them. It is surely, as *Life* magazine described it in 1939, an "odd custom," but it is one that could only be practiced – and taken seriously – by the navy of a world-dominant power.² It was not always thus. When the Ring Dance was first held in 1925, the binnacle was filled only with water from the "three U.S. seas" – the Atlantic, Pacific, and Caribbean – representing the waters in which the bulk of an officer's service might be performed and reflecting the essentially defensive posture of U.S. strategy.³ Water from the rest of the world's great waterways – the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian and Arctic Oceans – was added in 1944 as U.S. military might overspread the globe. The meaning was clear; as one French official noted warily, the "change symbolized that the United States had assumed the role of world power."⁴

By the end of World War II, the Mediterranean had become, as writer on geopolitical affairs Joseph Roucek bluntly described it in 1953, an "American lake."⁵ As the fighting ended, Washington moved quickly to consolidate its newly won regional dominance, utilizing the necessity of returning the body

¹ My thanks to Bryan Burke, USNA class of 1966, who explained the significance of the Ring Dance.

² *Life*, June 12, 1939.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Wasson to State Department, July 6, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (henceforth FRUS) 1945, *The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference)*, 1:997.

⁵ Joseph S. Roucek, "The Geopolitics of the Mediterranean," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 13, no. 1 (October 1953), 82.

of the recently deceased Turkish ambassador to his homeland to dispatch the fast battleship *Missouri* to the Mediterranean in early 1946. The ensuing “battleship cruise” furnished, in U.S. ambassador to Greece Lincoln MacVeagh’s ponderous phrase, an “ocular demonstration of America’s naval strength” in and around the landlocked sea.⁶ The *Missouri*’s demonstrative voyage was widely interpreted as a symbol of Washington’s undisputed control over the Mediterranean and as a token of its willingness to confront the perceived extension of Russian influence into the so-called northern-tier countries of Greece, Turkey, and Iran. It also signified that the mantle of senior partner in the region was passing from Britain, the prewar hegemon, to the United States.

In October 1946, Washington further strengthened its naval presence, deploying the new aircraft carrier *Franklin D. Roosevelt* to the Mediterranean and using it to project dramatic displays of air power over actual or potential trouble spots from Athens to Algiers. From then on at least one aircraft carrier battle group – the basic unit of modern naval power projection – would be permanently on station in the Mediterranean. In 1948, the U.S. Navy recognized the region’s strategic importance by establishing the Sixth Fleet, headquartered in Naples and drawing on numerous wartime base and port facilities established in the Mediterranean. Throughout the Cold War, the Sixth Fleet operated an average of forty major warships in the Mediterranean.⁷ In the immediate postwar period, the Air Force followed suit, reactivating wartime airbases from Casablanca to Wheelus Field, Libya, and securing air transit rights through a corridor linking Morocco to the Philippines.⁸ In 1954, the first nuclear weapons to be based outside of the United States were sent to U.S. forces in Morocco, and the same year American-led exercises rehearsed a coordinated naval, air, and nuclear response to a projected Russian incursion into the Mediterranean.⁹

These moves consolidated U.S. military predominance in the Mediterranean, strengthened the “southern flank” of the newly formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and provided Washington with a strategic “ace in the hole” with which to project power into Europe.¹⁰ This military force structure rested not only on the successful and large-scale deployment of armed forces in the Mediterranean during World War II, but also on the broad-fronted advance of U.S. political and economic interests with which it was inevitably intertwined. This presence was evident throughout the Mediterranean basin, from

⁶ Lincoln MacVeagh, quoted in Edward J. Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy, the Mediterranean, and the Cold War, 1945–1947* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 29.

⁷ See C. T. Sandars, *America’s Overseas Garrisons: The Leasehold Empire*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 242.

⁸ See Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 56–59.

⁹ See Simon Ball, *Bitter Sea: The Brutal World War II Fight for the Mediterranean* (New York: Harper, 2009), 327.

¹⁰ Roucek, “The Geopolitics of the Mediterranean,” 86.

the sprawling U.S. military bases in Morocco to burgeoning commercial investment in Egypt, and from accelerating intervention in Italian politics to blunt the electoral challenge of the Communist Party to the discrete contacts with Franco's Spain that by 1953 would result in Madrid's de facto membership in NATO.

Without substantial wartime preparation, this postwar deployment of U.S. power into the Mediterranean would have been an act of baseless bravado; with it, Washington was able to step confidently into the Greek civil war in 1947 and to strengthen its hand in the Middle East by underwriting the founding of the state of Israel the following year. On top of all this, American business interests pushed eagerly through the doors "blown open," as historian Lloyd Gardner put it, by the "gales of war," taking advantage of the establishment of regimes of U.S.-sponsored "free trade" to drive deep into the economy of the entire region.¹¹

While these advances were impressive, the full measure of Washington's political accomplishment in the wartime Mediterranean can only be judged by weighing what did *not* happen as well as what did. In contrast to the years following World War I, when war-generated devastation and economic breakdown gave rise to revolutionary explosions across Europe, the second world war in a generation culminated in Western Europe and the Mediterranean in a relatively smooth transition to a stable new capitalist order under U.S. hegemony.¹² This outcome was by no means inevitable. Throughout the war, U.S. policy makers were haunted by the specter of revolution, whether in the form of workers' insurrections in Italy, France, and Spain, "native" uprisings in French North Africa, or popular resistance to the Axis occupation of the Balkans spilling over into social revolution. These fears were not misplaced, as the "autoliberation" of Naples in October 1943, the outpouring of Algerian nationalism at Sétif in May 1945, and the victory of Tito's Partisans in Yugoslavia demonstrate. Yet by a combination of armed force, adept – if often domestically unpopular – political maneuver, and the forging of a common front with Moscow, Washington and its new allies among regional elites succeeded in containing popular anticapitalist and anticolonial upsurges.

The establishment of U.S. hegemony in the Mediterranean is all the more striking given that the region had not loomed large in American diplomatic and strategic thinking since the wars against the so-called Barbary Pirates in the

¹¹ See Lloyd Gardner, *Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), especially 220–226.

¹² Throughout I use the term "hegemony" in the Gramscian sense of implying leadership of a system of states, and not simply as a synonym for "dominance." Hegemony can include both military coercion and the ideological and political leadership that convinces the elites of subordinate states that the hegemon is acting in their general interest. See David Forgacs (ed.), *The Antonio Gramsci Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), especially 249–251, and discussion in Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (New York: Verso, 2010), 28–37.

early nineteenth century. The Barbary Wars (1801–1805, 1815) prompted the development of a blue-water navy and signaled the emergence of the United States as an important but junior power in the Atlantic world.¹³ In their aftermath – and not surprisingly in a seaway policed by the British Royal Navy – U.S. commercial interests in the Mediterranean required the support of only a modest naval squadron operating from the British base at Port Mahon, Minorca.¹⁴ In the early twentieth century, the Mediterranean offered a stage on which to show off the rising power of the United States rather than a base for sustained power projection. President Theodore Roosevelt dispatched a battle fleet to the region in 1905 in a demonstration of support for France during the First Moroccan Crisis.¹⁵ Four years later, the “Great White Fleet” transited the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean on its round-the-world cruise, detaching units to garner good publicity by assisting earthquake victims in Naples.

During World War I, U.S. naval units operating from the British base at Gibraltar conducted anti-submarine patrols in the western Mediterranean, but after the war, Washington’s interest again declined. During the interwar years, the U.S. Navy maintained a sporadic presence in the Mediterranean, policing the eastern coast of the Adriatic prior to the consolidation of Yugoslavia, evacuating Greek refugees during the Greco-Turkish war, and “showing the flag” in support of U.S. business interests in Syria, Lebanon, and Spain.¹⁶ While this naval activity helped reinforce Washington’s diplomatic presence in Europe, its modest scale – and the equally modest significance of the region to the overall development of U.S. overseas trade – reflected the lack of any overarching interest in the Mediterranean. Washington viewed it primarily as a region of British influence, recognizing London’s desire to protect both its “imperial highway” from Britain to India via Gibraltar and Suez and its oil interests in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.¹⁷

American policy makers remained largely indifferent to the looming conflict between Britain and Italy in the mid-1930s, a stance reinforced by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini’s positive standing in U.S. ruling circles.¹⁸ In response to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, Washington established nonbinding “moral” sanctions against Rome – measures that actually allowed U.S. oil

¹³ See Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 201.

¹⁴ See Sheehy, *The U.S. Navy*, 10.

¹⁵ See Seward W. Livermore, “The American Navy as a Factor in World Politics, 1903–1913,” *The American Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (1958).

¹⁶ See Herbert Maza, “Turkish-Arab Economic Relations with the United States,” *World Affairs* 143, no. 3 (1979).

¹⁷ See Hector C. Bywater, “The Changing Balance of Forces in the Mediterranean,” *International Affairs* 16, no. 3 (1937); Michael Simpson, “Superhighway to World Wide Web: The Mediterranean in British Imperial Strategy, 1900–1945,” in John Hattendorf (ed.), *Naval Strategy and Policy in the Mediterranean* (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁸ See John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

exports to Italy to expand – and for much of the Spanish Civil War it joined London and Paris in imposing an arms embargo that effectively undermined the warmaking capacity of the Republican government.¹⁹ None of these policies amounted to a consistent approach to the Mediterranean as a region.

Viewed in the light of America's modest and often inconsistent prewar aspirations in the region, its emergence barely five years later as *the* predominant power in the Mediterranean stands out in sharp relief. By the end of World War II, the United States had replaced Britain as the major power in the region, with its influence resting on its wartime operational experience, on the continuing presence of American arms, and on its residual network of airbases, ports, and military depots. Behind this lay the largely invisible but always critical networks of contacts forged by American diplomats, businessmen, aid workers, technical advisers, intelligence operatives, and military officers with their counterparts in other countries, which make international relations – and great power hegemony – work. A generation of U.S. leaders and officials had, in a few short years, come to know the Mediterranean world and to be known in it.

This book is a study of this dramatic transformation. It is a study necessitated by the fact that, despite the substantial accomplishments of U.S. military, political, and economic engagement, the idea that the United States had *any* strategic approach to the Mediterranean during World War II remains heretical. In both academic and popular histories the Mediterranean is almost invariably described in as a “diversionary theater,” at worst a place where U.S. armies squandered many lives and wasted a great deal of time for little gain, at best a useful adjunct to the main story that would unfold in northern Europe after D-Day. In all its many versions this regnant master narrative draws strength from the bitter and protracted opposition of U.S. military leaders to any substantial U.S. involvement in the wartime Mediterranean. Some recent studies have argued that this opposition may not have been quite as protracted as has often been assumed, but the myth of unbending opposition to any Mediterranean front persists.²⁰ This version of events is grounded in the outlook of senior U.S. planners like General Albert Wedemeyer who, from the time of the first Allied discussions of an invasion of North Africa, viewed Mediterranean operations as the regrettable product of civilian intervention in military affairs and as the consequence of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's “baneful influence” over President Roosevelt.²¹

¹⁹ See Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 110–121; Dominic Tierney, *FDR and the Spanish Civil War: Neutrality and Commitment in the Struggle that Divided America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

²⁰ See James Lacey, “Towards a Strategy: Creating an American Strategy for Global War, 1940–1943,” in Williamson Murray, Richard Hart Sinnreich, and James Lacey (eds.), *The Shaping of Grand Strategy: Policy, Diplomacy, and War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), especially 204.

²¹ Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958), 330.

In the early 1950s, official U.S. Army histories by Maurice Matloff and Edwin Snell echoed this judgment, as did influential memoirs by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and Secretary of War Henry Stimson.²² As the Cold War deepened, some authors reworked the old trope of conflict between Washington's advocacy of a cross-Channel assault and London's pursuit of a self-interested "peripheral strategy" to highlight the alleged prescience of Churchill's "Mediterranean Strategy" as a vehicle for confronting Russian expansionism in the Balkans. In this version, expounded in Churchill's own influential history of the war as well as in works by Chester Wilmot and others, U.S. strategy is presented as a naïve, simplistic, and apolitical obstacle to canny and sophisticated British stratagems.²³ But while the poles of the debate shifted, the issues were still framed in narrowly *military* terms. Even as the "historians war" subsided and calmer voices insisted that both Britain and the United States had pursued strategies driven by pragmatic considerations rather than overarching "national ways of war," the idea that, for better or worse, the Mediterranean had been primarily a British concern remained fundamentally in place.²⁴

Recent writers have challenged this master narrative, with Douglas Porch reimagining the Mediterranean as the "pivotal theater" without which the final assault on Germany would not have been possible.²⁵ However, even Porch's revisionist challenge to the view of the Mediterranean as a "cul-de-sac" remains fundamentally trapped within the framework of an argument over *military* strategy.²⁶ His approach, even as it draws substantially different conclusions, retains the bipolar Mediterranean-versus-cross-Channel framework of the argument first advanced by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in opposition to President Roosevelt's demands for action in North Africa. The problem, as Roosevelt well understood, was that the United States' orientation toward the countries

²² See Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953); Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959); Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948); Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York: Macmillan, 1948); McGeorge Bundy and Henry L. Stimson, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948).

²³ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, 6 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948-1954); also see Hanson Weightman Baldwin, *Great Mistakes of the War* (New York: Harper, 1950); Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (New York: Harper, 1952); Sir Arthur Bryant, *Triumph in the West; a History of the War Years Based on the Diaries of Field-Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

²⁴ Trumbull Higgins, "The Anglo-American Historians' War in the Mediterranean, 1942-1945," *Military Affairs* 34, no. 3 (1970); Richard M. Leighton, "Overlord Revisited: An Interpretation of American Strategy in the European War, 1942-1944," *The American Historical Review* 68, no. 4 (1963); Michael Howard, *The Mediterranean Strategy in the Second World War* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 1-2.

²⁵ Douglas Porch, *The Path to Victory: The Mediterranean Theater in World War II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), especially Conclusion; see also Ball, *Bitter Sea*.

²⁶ Porch, *Path to Victory*, 675.

of the Mediterranean – or any other part of the world, for that matter – could never be an exclusively military question. On the contrary, it always and inevitably involved the intertwining of the military with broader economic, diplomatic, and political concerns.

America's wartime engagement with the Mediterranean was not driven simply by the requirements of *military* strategy, but rather was the product of a broader *grand* strategy. Paul Kennedy offers a useful working definition of grand strategy, describing it as a “complex and multilayered thing” in which the “nonmilitary dimensions” are as important as the military, and in which the “longer-term and *political* purposes of [a] belligerent state” are primary.²⁷ War, as British military theorist Sir Basil Liddell Hart argued, must be waged with a “constant regard for the peace you desire:” war is always pregnant with the postwar, and must be conducted with that end in mind.²⁸ The potentially shocking corollary to this approach is that, contrary to popular belief – and to the early-war thinking of the Joint Chiefs – grand strategic wisdom does not necessarily lie in finding the shortest path to victory. With the postwar always in mind, Roosevelt understood that a U.S. victory required defeating the Axis powers while *simultaneously* preparing a new world order of capitalist nations and free markets structured under the hegemony of the United States. From this point of view, a premature cross-Channel invasion would not only be a highly risky military undertaking but would also short-circuit critical opportunities to shape the emerging postwar configuration of southern Europe and the Mediterranean. Developing such a grand strategy was not optional; the experience of World War I taught that if the foundations of postwar capitalist stability were not firmly established while fighting was still going on, war was likely to be followed by revolution.

The development of grand strategy inevitably puts a great deal of emphasis, as Williamson Murray points out, on national leaderships capable of “acting beyond the demands of the present,” transcending the pressures simply to respond to contingent events in order to advance an overarching vision of both the war and the desired postwar.²⁹ By 1947, the difficult task of securing America's war-won hegemony required the complex coordination of a full spectrum of diplomatic, political, military, economic, and covert elements, leading to the establishment of the National Security Council, an executive council charged with grand strategic planning. As the United States rose to global hegemony during World War II, however, no such body existed. In the interwar years, military and military/political coordination had been improved

²⁷ Paul M. Kennedy, “Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Towards a Broader Definition,” in Paul M. Kennedy, ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1991), 4, 2.

²⁸ Basil Liddell Hart, quoted in Kennedy, “Grand Strategy,” 2.

²⁹ Williamson Murray, “Thoughts on Grand Strategy,” in Murray et al. (eds.), *The Shaping of Grand Strategy*, 2.

by the establishment of the Joint Army-Navy Board in 1919 and by the organization, after 1935, of episodic contact between it and the State Department.³⁰ But these arrangements were incapable of meeting the grand strategic challenge of world war. Even when the establishment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in early 1942 further strengthened Washington's capacity for strategic planning, the initial desire of its members to eschew "politics" ensured that its focus, at least for its critical first eighteen months or so, remained steadfastly and narrowly military.

In this context, presidential leadership assumed considerable importance. Franklin D. Roosevelt might seem an unlikely grand strategist; widely recognized as a "master opportunist who disliked rigid planning," he led an administration notorious for its plethora of competing agencies and for its lack of clear lines of decision making and accountability.³¹ Yet beyond all the approximations, compromises, and short-term expedients, Roosevelt's actions were informed by a set of ideas – assumptions rather than a clear and coherent ideology – described by Warren Kimball as "Americanism."³² In part a Wilsonian vision of liberal American world leadership and in part a straightforward drive to advance the U.S. military, economic, and political dominance, these ideas are critical to understanding the overall grand strategic character of U.S. involvement in World War II. It was through war, as publisher Henry Luce argued in his influential February 1941 *Life* editorial "The American Century," that the United States could redeem the opportunities for world leadership squandered in 1919, neatly uniting self-interest and idealism in a "truly American internationalism."³³

Henry Luce's "American Century" reflected the sense of many ruling-class figures that the time had come to "assert America's wealth and power on an international stage."³⁴ In July 1940, Luce joined the Century Group, a secretive bipartisan organization that included presidential speechwriter Robert Sherwood as well as businessmen, academics, and theologians.³⁵ Lobbying for a more aggressively interventionist foreign policy, members shared journalist Walter Lippmann's exhortation to "make ready" to fulfill America's "destiny" as leader of the "world of tomorrow."³⁶ These notions furnished Roosevelt

³⁰ See Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 1–3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

³² See especially Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), especially chapter IX.

³³ Henry Luce, "The American Century," *Life*, February 17 1941, reprinted in *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 2 (1999), 166.

³⁴ Kimball, *The Juggler*, 192; David Reynolds, *Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 122.

³⁵ See Alan Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 267.

³⁶ Lippmann, quoted in Brinkley, *The Publisher*, 266.



FIGURE I.I.I. Roosevelt the navalist: the president under the guns of the USS *Indianapolis*, December 1, 1936. (Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.)

with a world-political framework that reached far beyond short-term opportunism – his typical “quick fixes, fire-fighting, and political balms and soothing oils” – and stimulated the broader vistas of his grand strategic impulses.³⁷

Roosevelt’s grand strategic notions were underpinned by the insights gleaned from seven years as Assistant Secretary of the Navy (1913–1920), by his admiration for the muscular nationalism of his uncle, Theodore Roosevelt, and by his long-standing respect for the writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan.³⁸ These formative influences and experiences, including intimate involvement in the global deployment of U.S. naval force, led Roosevelt to approach grand strategy with a navalist’s appreciation for global position and regional command rather than with a simple urge to “get there fastest with the mostest.” And, as Colin Gray points out, in the looming war for global hegemony, sea power would be the “engine of strategic possibilities.”³⁹

³⁷ Kimball, *The Juggler*, 192.

³⁸ See James Tertius de Kay, *Roosevelt’s Navy: The Educations of a Warrior President, 1882–1920* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2012).

³⁹ Colin S. Gray, *The Leverage of Sea Power: The Strategic Advantage of Navies in War* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 238.

In his feeling for grand strategy Roosevelt shared the approach of leading figures in the new field of security studies.⁴⁰ Emerging in response to the deep world crisis of the 1930s, nurtured in well-funded institutions including the Princeton-based Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) and the Yale Institute of International Studies, the new field was ecumenical and interdisciplinary in its approach.⁴¹ Practitioners advocated the integration of academic study and state-level policy making, situating security studies within the context of the close ties between university and government typical of the emerging military-academic complex. Writing in 1937, IAS leader Edward Mead Earle “doubted whether the United States has any officially recognized policy” and argued, as David Ekbladh points out, for a “fully-fledged grand strategy that would ... coordinate the diplomatic, military, and executive branches in the effort.”⁴² This integration of grand strategic planning and policy making would not attain organizational maturity until the formation of the NSC, but in the late 1930s, the impulse in this direction was already evident.

Much of the geopolitical foundation for the burgeoning field of security studies was furnished by the ideas of British geographer Halford J. Mackinder. As developed by American strategist Nicholas Spykman, this vision centered on maintaining a world balance of power – and America’s leading role within it – aimed at controlling the “pivot area” of the Eurasian “heartland” by means of power projected from the chain of maritime “rimlands” stretching from Western Europe, through the Middle East, to India and China.⁴³ Edward Earle regarded Spykman’s “realism” as being too “restrictive and reductive,” but the broad outline of his geostrategic vision, his insistence on the necessity of an interventionist foreign policy, and his recognition that this would inevitably involve the use of military force in the “rimlands” were highly influential.⁴⁴ What is not so clear is the precise influence of such ideas in shaping President Roosevelt’s own grand strategic thinking, either in general terms or in the Mediterranean. Roosevelt certainly had a number of books by Earle’s IAS colleagues in his extensive personal library, and while the grand strategic ideas they advocated did not sit well with an army leadership still largely committed to “continental defense,” their contents certainly conformed to the president’s increasingly interventionist vision.⁴⁵ Roosevelt’s decision-making process was

⁴⁰ See Colin S. Gray, “Harry S. Truman and the forming of American grand strategy in the Cold War, 1945–1953,” in Murray et al. (eds.), *The Shaping of Grand Strategy*, 238, n. 54.

⁴¹ See David Ekbladh, “Present at the Creation: Edward Mead Earle and the Depression-Era Origins of Security Studies,” *International Security* 36, no. 3 (Winter 2011/12).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 117.

⁴³ See Nicholas John Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1944), especially chapter V.

⁴⁴ See Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 144–145.

⁴⁵ The card index to Roosevelt’s Hyde Park library shows that it included Spykman’s *American Strategy in World Politics*, Bernard Brodie’s *Sea Power in the Machine Age*, and *The Rise of American Naval Power* by Harold and Margaret Sprout; on “continental defense,” see Michael

notoriously opaque, with numerous and often conflicting lines of command concentrated in his own well-concealed hands.⁴⁶ While frustrating to subordinates and historians alike, his *modus operandi* was remarkably well suited to the task at hand. In the rising arc of a great power's drive to hegemony – before the more prosaic tasks of consolidation become necessary – and as both resources and opportunities expand, national leaderships may be faced with numerous possible lines of advance. Deciding between them in order to shape specific strategies is not, as Williamson Murray stresses, simply a matter of applying a “recipe”; rather, it is an “idiosyncratic process” that flows largely through the informal and hence inherently unrecoverable channels.⁴⁷ As William Maltby shows in relation to Britain in the eighteenth century, literally “thousands of discussions in saloons, taverns, dinner parties, balls, and random encounters” went into the making of critical foreign policy decisions.⁴⁸ Analogous circles of informal discussion functioned in wartime Washington, centered on Roosevelt and his unofficial national security adviser Harry Hopkins and, via confidants within the upper echelons of the administration and the military, encompassing business figures, financiers, and journalists.

Tracing the development of Washington's grand strategy toward the Mediterranean, therefore, involves “walking back the cat”: evaluating results and outcomes in an effort to deduce goals and intentions. Grand strategy, it seems, is often easier to recognize after the fact.⁴⁹ Because they involve the movement of hundreds of thousands of men and machines, the specifically military elements of strategy necessarily leave a thicker paper trail and thus can provide a critical framework for understanding the whole. But they can also tend to occlude the ultimately weightier, but often poorly delineated and imprecisely recorded, political, diplomatic, and economic aspects of grand strategy. This is particularly true in the wartime Mediterranean, where fierce fights over military strategy between Washington and London and among the U.S. leaders themselves have dominated the historiography, allowing the broader – and more significant – advance of U.S. economic and political power in the entire region to slip by largely unnoticed.

This book aims to rebalance this picture of U.S. engagement with the Mediterranean world during World War II, placing military strategy in its proper grand strategic context. From this viewpoint it becomes clear that, far from being a diversionary theater or a cul-de-sac, Washington's intervention in the Mediterranean was an indispensable element in the overall process by which America's postwar hegemony in Europe and beyond was established.

McAllister Linn, *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 140–141.

⁴⁶ See Kimball, *The Juggler*, chapter 1 and 203; Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 108.

⁴⁷ Murray, “Thoughts on Grand Strategy,” 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.