

Nevertheless, this book should be in any academic collection of naval and Russian history and read by anyone studying European history, politics, and diplomacy.

Ian Dew

Thunder Bay, Ontario

Edward J. Marolda. *Admirals Under Fire. The US Navy and the Vietnam War*. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, www.ttupress.org, 2021. xxiii+496 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$49.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-68283-089-5.

A Vietnam War veteran himself, Edward Marolda has produced an excellent analysis of the US Navy during that war, as seen through the lens of the five Chiefs of Naval Operations (CNO) who led the navy from 1958 to 1978, and thus, encompassing the entire period of the conflict from its most early days to the very bitter end.

Admiral's Harry Felt, Ulysses Sharp, Thomas Moorer, Elmo Zumwalt and James Holloway each undertook four year terms as the CNO. Their service also corresponded closely with the terms of Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford and Carter. The naval-political relationship was often very difficult – hence the title of the book.

Marolda's in-depth analysis of the US Navy's roles and tasks during the war stretches chronologically from the grand strategic to the tactical and provides a candid view of each admiral's strengths and weaknesses. Felt and Sharp appear too stuck in a Second World War/Korean War view of the world and the way the war should be fought. Moorer was more realistic, seeing Vietnam as a side show, with the real threat being the rise of Soviet naval power, but he was also focused on becoming the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Zumwalt also saw the growth of the Russian Navy as more important than Vietnam and sought to improve ship numbers and capability. This was a difficult task with funding shortages meaning many elderly vessels were retained and shipbuilding reduced.

Zumwalt also undertook several reforms to improve discipline, in the face of increased drug usage in the US Navy, as well improving morale and retention of junior personnel – particularly among minority personnel, such as African-Americans, Hispanics and women. His Z-Grams to the fleet became famous (and in some cases, infamous) and alienated him from many within the Navy's leadership. In 1974 Holloway inherited a navy struggling for numbers of effective ships and personnel; but he saw the method in some of Zumwalt's perceived madness and modified the reforms, which later saw increased

personnel retention and more officers among the Navy's minorities.

Unlike the Second World War, where the operational and tactical commanders were generally 'left alone' to get on with the fight, the Vietnam War saw what is now often termed "the 10,000 mile screwdriver" where politicians and senior officers played an active role in the tactical activity. The political selection of targets and imposing restrictions on what targets could be bombed in North Vietnam is an example of this – but this was a necessary evil. Both the USSR and Communist China were providing direct military support to the North Vietnamese Government and there was a valid concern that the localized war could expand. At one point, China had deployed over 23,000 troops into North Vietnam to conduct logistics tasks and operate anti-aircraft systems/weapons. Successive US administrations strove to keep the war contained. This, of course, created friction with the various US naval and military commanders who struggled to fight the war with 'one arm tied behind their back'.

The political influences are quite Machiavellian with Sharp literally side-lined by Johnson, and Zumwalt similarly side-lined by President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Equally Nixon and Kissinger treated Secretary of Defence Melvin Laird with contempt! Moorer, as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during 1970-74 (after his time as CNO) also often kept the service chiefs in the dark until after decisions had been made at the highest level. Holloway is seen as the "white knight to the rescue" in 1974 and Felt is basically forgotten; even though he opposed becoming embroiled in a land war in Asia. Also behind the scenes lurked Admiral Hyman Rickover, as director of the US Naval Reactors Office, who sought to increase the number of nuclear submarines, vice surface ships especially aircraft carriers, until he was forcibly retired in 1981.

The analysis of the various operations in Vietnam and Cambodia are excellent and detail the various strengths and weakness of the US Navy involvement. I will not comment on whether the war was a waste of lives and resources and will leave that up to the reader. Personally I would have liked to have seen some more description, and analysis, of the role of naval gunfire support (including integration of the Australian destroyers into this role) and the part played by the logistics support ships operating in the theatre; based out of Subic Bay. A list of abbreviations would also have also assisted; but these are very minor comments on what is an excellent book regarding the US Navy in the Vietnam War. Very Highly Recommended.

Greg Swinden
Canberra, Australia