

**Kohnen, David. *King's Navy: Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King and the Rise of American Sea Power, 1897-1947***

**Schiffer Publishing, 2024**

584 pp.

ISBN 9780764368370 (hardcover) US\$49.99

The recent publication of *King's Navy* by David Kohnen represents a landmark achievement in the historiography of twentieth-century naval affairs. Written with the insight of both a professional naval officer and a seasoned historian, Kohnen's monumental biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King is the most comprehensive re-evaluation of one of the United States Navy's most influential figures in a generation. It is a work of scholarship that repositions King squarely within the central arc of American and Allied naval ascendancy from the Spanish-American War through to the Second World War.

Kohnen's central thesis is as ambitious as it is persuasive: Fleet Admiral King was not merely an operational commander but the intellectual architect of a distinctly American theory of sea power, one that evolved from its British imperial antecedents and came to define the transoceanic order of the twentieth century. In so arguing, *King's Navy* makes an essential contribution to the literature of strategic studies, naval command, and international security policy. It also offers a subtle yet significant reframing of Anglo-American naval relations, highlighting transatlantic collaboration rooted in shared maritime assumptions rather than convenient wartime alliances.

Kohnen organises his work thematically and chronologically, moving through three distinct but interlinked sections: "Remain Cheerful," "Waging Peace," and "Make Best with What You Have." These parts trace King's career from his formative years through his interwar evolution into a visionary strategist, culminating in his wartime leadership as Commander-in-Chief of the US Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations. Drawing on previously unseen archival materials, including King family documents and declassified intelligence records, Kohnen deftly reconstructs how King combined the lessons of early twentieth-century naval warfare, air power development, and Allied cooperation into a holistic strategic vision.

Of particular interest to scholars of the Royal Canadian Navy is Kohnen's exploration of King's influence on Allied maritime strategy in the North Atlantic. While Canadian perspectives are not central to the narrative, the reader will find a rich analytical context for understanding the collaborative frameworks that supported Battle of the Atlantic operations, convoy systems, and the integration of Commonwealth navies into a unified maritime strategy.

Moreover, Kohnen's dissection of King's sometimes abrasive personality, a trait known to both friend and foe, never devolves into character assassination. Instead, Kohnen presents King as a man of contradictions: severe but humane, aloof yet intensely dedicated to the men under his command.

Kohnen's prose, while scholarly, is far from dry. He frequently interlaces narrative with interpretation, offering readers reflections on the enduring relevance of King's doctrines for today's naval strategists. His emphasis on the importance of continuous professional education and strategic foresight, epitomised in King's lifelong learning and institutional reforms, offers an implicit challenge to contemporary naval leadership. Kohnen's critical insight that the development of "King's Navy" was not merely about platforms or operations, but also about people and ideas, will resonate with those in uniform today.

The book is also remarkable for the inclusion of fourteen appendices that reproduce rare and, in some cases, never-before-published documents and highlight Kohnen's commitment to transparency and primary source analysis. These include King's correspondence and planning documents, many of which illuminate the behind-the-scenes dynamics of high command during the war.

There are some minor limitations. While the book's American focus is understandable, the relative underrepresentation of Canadian and other Commonwealth naval perspectives, particularly in the later war years, may frustrate readers seeking a more multinational work. Nonetheless, Kohnen's interpretation of King's role in shaping the "special relationship" and his operational diplomacy with his British counterparts provides a solid basis for further Commonwealth studies.

In conclusion, *King's Navy* is more than a biography. It is a strategic study of leadership, naval transformation, and the emergence of a new sea-power order. For the Royal Canadian Navy and the broader Canadian defence community, Kohnen's work serves as both a historical account and as a mirror through which to consider our naval evolution in relation to that of our closest ally. It is essential reading for naval professionals, policy makers, and historians alike, and it will become a foundational text in naval historiography for years to come.

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