

2016

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

Volume XVII, No. 15 (2016)

7 March 2016

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse

Roundtable and Web Production Editor: George Fujii

Introduction by Matthew Jones

Andrew Buchanan. *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II.*
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9781107044142 (hardback, \$110.00).

URL: <http://www.tiny.cc/Roundtable-XVII-15>

Contents

Introduction by Matthew Jones, London School of Economics and Political Science	2
Review by Mary Kathryn Barbier, Mississippi State University	6
Review by Dan Plesch, Center for International Studies and Diplomacy, SOAS University of London	8
Review by Douglas Porch, Emeritus Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey	10
Review by Avshalom Rubin, Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State.....	17
Review by David B. Woolner, Roosevelt Institute/Marist College.....	20
Author's Response by Andrew Buchanan, University of Vermont	24

© **2016 The Authors.**

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 United States License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

Introduction by Matthew Jones, London School of Economics and Political Science

In his post-war recollections of the January 1943 Casablanca Conference, General Albert C. Wedemeyer, who had attended as a senior member of the U.S. Army's Operations Division, wrote that the Anglo-American strategic decisions taken there to concentrate on Mediterranean operations for the coming year, with the immediate target an invasion of Sicily, represented a victory of British guile over American innocence: "...we lost our shirts and are now committed to a subterranean umbilicus operation in mid-summer. One could say we came, we listened and we were conquered."¹ Later in that same year, Harold Macmillan, having arrived in Algiers as British Resident Minister at General Dwight Eisenhower's Allied Force Headquarters, explained to a young Richard Crossman (who was later to become a minister in the Labour Governments of the 1960s) the importance of allowing his American colleague on the integrated Anglo-American staff to "have the feeling that he is running the show. This will enable you to run it yourself. We, my dear Crossman, are Greeks in this American empire ... We must run AFHQ as the Greek slaves ran the operations of the Emperor Claudius."² These two famous quotations capture the abiding impression, derived from a whole generation of military historians and memorialists, of the nature of Anglo-American relations, and the disinterested and almost aimless nature of much U.S. strategy and policy when it came to the Mediterranean theatre of operations during the Second World War. In this reading, U.S. resources and attentions were diverted by British pressure (much of it originating from considerations of post-war British power and influence) and strategic circumstances into a series of peripheral operations which led into a grinding battle of attrition on the Italian peninsula. Only with the Tehran Conference of November 1943 was some resemblance of strategic sense restored, when British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was pushed by the combined weight of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin into full-fledged commitment to a cross-Channel invasion of France in the summer of 1944, to be complemented by an attack on southern France using forces otherwise employed in Italy. Moreover, when it came to the affairs of the liberated territories of the Mediterranean, the Americans, it was believed, had no ostensible political aims, in contrast to a British approach that favoured the restoration of pre-war monarchical regimes. As in the military sphere, the Americans tended to play a secondary role throughout.

Andrew Buchanan's refreshing and significant new take on wartime U.S. involvement in the Mediterranean, as all the reviews below affirm, successfully challenges many of these entrenched images. By meshing military, diplomatic, and economic factors into his analysis, and through extensive mining of the archival record, Buchanan presents American policy as activist and opportunistic, in a part of the world perceived as vital for both victory over the Axis powers and the post-war projection of U.S. values and interests. Central in Buchanan's account is the strategic vision of Roosevelt. While for some historians Roosevelt's wartime policies are regarded as opaque or slippery, for Buchanan Roosevelt had a 'grand strategy' which he executed in a consistent and effective way. Far from being drawn reluctantly into the Mediterranean, it was Roosevelt who sensed the strategic opportunities that would open up if the U.S. military presence were exploited. As Mary K. Barbier puts it, the Mediterranean would become a 'springboard' toward the U.S. post-war role of 'superpower', and certainly a state with a dominant influence over the post-war settlement in Western and

¹ Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!* (New York, 1958), 192.

² Quoted in Anthony Sampson, *Macmillan: A Study in Ambiguity* (London, 1967), 61.

Southern Europe. Barbier sees Buchanan as presenting a Roosevelt where “every strategic position he took” had the post-war position in mind where the U.S. could assert global leadership.

Similarly, Douglas Porch notes how Buchanan has Roosevelt pursuing both military victory and preparations for post-war hegemony simultaneously. But Porch also wonders about the coherence of Roosevelt’s plans, when flexibility was often necessary and policy sometimes inconsistent, making the notion of a grand strategy arguably ‘meaningless’ and dominance coming more by ‘default’ than design. Finding Buchanan’s book both “fascinating and informative”, Dan Plesch wanted to see more stress on the UN aspect to Roosevelt’s thinking, and to hear more about the play of domestic politics, particularly as they related to the key decision to commit the United States to an invasion of French North Africa in the autumn of 1942. Nevertheless, for David B. Woolner, Buchanan’s study fundamentally changes our ideas of Roosevelt’s policies in the region, and, by tying together all aspects of U.S. involvement, not just the military dimension favoured by more orthodox histories, opens up new dimensions, such as American hostility, despite the high phrases of the Atlantic Charter, to signs of anti-colonial restiveness in Morocco and Algeria. Avshalom Rubin writes that Buchanan “will inspire his readers to think harder about Roosevelt’s geopolitical legacy” and the essential alignment of the United States behind the forces of reaction in France, Spain, Italy and the Balkans that he recounts. For Buchanan it was the “industrial workers, communist activists, and leftist partisans” who were marginalised by the post-war political settlement that U.S. policy did so much to bring about. According to Rubin this “essentially Marxist” argument is reminiscent of the Wisconsin school of revisionism, and he mildly chides Buchanan for presenting no credible alternative to the forms of regime which emerged in post-war Italy and France in particular.

Alongside all the plaudits, Porch offers the most sustained and detailed critique of Buchanan’s work. He raises concerns over the presumption that U.S. post-war hegemony in the Mediterranean must have been achieved through a series of pre-meditated steps, and argues that at times there is too much conjecture mixed in with the careful sifting of evidence (especially over the decision by General Mark Clark to drive directly for Rome in May 1944, which Buchanan sees as likely to have resulted from Roosevelt’s political intervention rather than Clark’s notorious quest for favourable publicity). Lacking as well, Porch suggests, is the sense of the ongoing war itself – where military operations were unrelenting and could carry their own momentum. That said, Porch still finds Buchanan’s book “thoroughly researched and compelling,” helping to reinvigorate the field.

Overall, the reviewers agree that Buchanan has written an ambitious, provocative and wide-ranging book that challenges prevailing narratives of U.S. policy, and of the Anglo-American relationship. By 1945 there was a quite remarkable range of American interests in evidence across the region, with an entire network of new bases along the North African littoral, a firm hand being played in the politics of both Italy and Spain, political involvement in Balkan affairs, and the extension of influence into Turkey and the Middle East from the eastern end of the Mediterranean. “The result of Washington’s wartime engagement with the Mediterranean,” Buchanan writes, “...was that on every level – military, diplomatic, political and economic – and in relation to every country in the region with the partial exception of Yugoslavia, the United States emerged from the war immeasurably stronger than it entered it” (271). By this time, the Mediterranean was seen by many burgeoning U.S. strategists as a ‘unified entity’ whose future was now inexorably bound up with American security and prosperity. Buchanan pictures President Harry Truman as working to consolidate Roosevelt’s legacy in the region, and his significant and persuasive work provides a platform for further research – which could provide an accent on either continuity or change – to span the important divide separating the end of the war in May 1945 and the extension of aid to Greece and Turkey in 1947.

Participants:

Andrew Buchanan is a senior lecturer at the University of Vermont. In addition to *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II*, he has published several articles on World War II. His latest work, on the touristic experiences of American GIs in Italy during the war, will be published in a special issue of *American Quarterly* in fall 2016. He is currently working on a comparative history of universal military service and on a textbook on the global history of World War II.

Matthew Jones studied at St Antony's College, Oxford, for his D.Phil. degree in Modern History. His books include *Britain, the United States and the Mediterranean War, 1942-44* (1996), *Conflict and Confrontation in South East Asia, 1961-1965* (2002), and *After Hiroshima: The United States, Race, and Nuclear Weapons in Asia, 1945-1965* (2010). He is currently Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science and working on a project dealing with UK strategic nuclear policy in the Cold War.

Mary Kathryn Barbier received a Ph.D. from the University of Southern Mississippi and is Associate Professor at Mississippi State University. Her books include, (editor) Sergueiew, Lily. *I Worked Alone: Diary of a Double Agent in World War II Europe*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, 2014), *Culture, Power, and Security: New Directions in the History of National and International History*, co-edited with Richard V. Damms, (Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012); *America and the Vietnam War: Re-examining the Culture and History of a Generation*, Co-edited with Andrew Wiest and Glenn Robins (New York: Routledge Press, 2010); *D-Day Deception: Operation Fortitude and the Normandy Invasion*, Paperback edition, (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2009; *D-Day Deception: Operation Fortitude and the Normandy Invasion* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007; *Strategy and Tactics: Infantry Warfare: The Theory and Practice of Infantry Combat in the 20th Century*, Co-written with Professor Andrew Wiest, (Staplehurst: Spellmount Publishers, 2002).

Dan Plesch is Director and Reader at the Center for International Studies and Diplomacy, SOAS University of London. His recent publications include (with Professor Thomas G. Weiss) the edited volume, *Wartime Origins and the Future UN* (London: Routledge 2015, and *America Hitler and the UN* (London: I B Tauris 2011). He is currently writing a book on the 1943-1948 UN War Crimes Commission.

Avshalom Rubin is a historian at the U.S. Department of State, specializing in the Middle East. He is the author of *The Limits of the Land: How the Struggle for the West Bank Shaped the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (forthcoming) and the editor of forthcoming volumes on Lebanon and the Arab-Israeli peace process in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series. He received his Ph.D. in Middle Eastern history from the University of Chicago in 2010.

Douglas Porch earned a Ph.D. from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University. Distinguished Professor Emeritus and former Chair of the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, he is at present an Academic Visitor at St Antony's College, Oxford and Visiting Fellow at Oxford's Changing Character of War Programme. His books include *The French Secret Services. From the Dreyfus Affair to Desert Storm* (1995), *The French Foreign Legion. A Complete History of the Legendary Fighting Force* (1991) which won prizes both in the United States and in France, *The Conquest of the Sahara, The Conquest of Morocco, The March to the Marne. The French Army 1871-1914, The Portuguese Armed Forces and the Revolution*, and *Army and Revolution. France 1815-1844. Wars of Empire*, part of the Cassell History

of Warfare series, appeared in October 2000 and in paperback in 2001. *The Path to Victory. The Mediterranean Theater in World War II* was published by Farrar, Straus, Giroux and Macmillan in the UK in May 2004. It received the Award for Excellence in U.S. Army Historical Writing from The Army Historical Foundation. His latest book, *Counterinsurgency. The origins, Development and Myths of the New War of War*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2013 and has been placed on the Army Chief of Staff's reading list for all officers. At present, he is researching a book on French combatants in World War II.

David B. Woolner is Senior Fellow and Resident Historian of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, Senior Fellow of the Center for Civic Engagement at Bard College, and Associate Professor of History at Marist College. He is the author of *Searching for Cooperation in a Troubled World: Cordell Hull, Anthony Eden and Anglo-American Relations, 1933-1938*, forthcoming from Praeger Press and is co-editor with Warren Kimball and David Reynolds of *FDR's World: War, Peace and Legacies* (Palgrave, 2008); with Henry Henderson of *FDR and the Environment* (Palgrave, 2005); and with Richard Kurial of *FDR, the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church in America, 1933-1945* (Palgrave, 2003). His research interests include American foreign policy 1933-1945, transatlantic relations, US-Canada relations, and the history of the New Deal.

Review by Mary Kathryn Barbier, Mississippi State University

Library and bookstore shelves groan under the weight of volumes related to the Second World War. These books engage a wide range of topics from a variety of perspectives and include official histories, campaign, diplomatic, home front, and political narratives, and firsthand accounts written by, among others, soldiers, sailors, pilots, government officials, and civilians. Because World War II historiography is quite extensive, scholars might legitimately ask whether or not historians can contribute anything else to the existing scholarship. With his newly published book, Andrew Buchanan, by proposing that scholars entertain a new interpretation of American decision making with regard to campaign in the Mediterranean, demonstrates that scholars still have much work to do.

Scholars who focus on the military alliance forged by the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the United States identify the complex negotiations of the Big Three--Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Premier Joseph Stalin, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt--and their military advisors as they crafted a unified strategy to defeat the Third Reich. A crucial issue in those negotiations was the debate over the establishment of a second front in western Europe. Scholars agree that very early on Stalin demanded that the western Allies launch the second front campaign and that for the Soviet leader the only acceptable location for that assault was in northwest France. They also identify the different UK and U.S. positions regarding that second front. While the Americans advocated a 1942 Allied offensive across the English Channel into France, the British argued for an operation in the Mediterranean--in North Africa.

As historians demonstrate, British and American political and military leaders hotly debated the proper, as well as the feasible, strategy for taking the war to the Germans. The prevailing thesis is that because of their desire to exert influence in the Balkans after the war, the British strenuously pushed for a North African campaign as the first joint military effort after America's entry into the conflict. In addition, as both Churchill and his military advisors correctly argued, the possibility of a successful amphibious assault against northwest France in 1942 was slim. At the end of the day, because he wanted U.S. forces to launch a military operation in 1942, Roosevelt agreed to the North African campaign, known as Operation Torch. According to the accepted narrative, Roosevelt and his advisors reluctantly bowed to pressure from the British and acquiesced on the campaign front. As a result, Allied forces landed in North Africa in November 1942.

In *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II*, Buchanan challenges the prevailing narrative. He argues that the American decision to support the British proposal for Operation Torch was not a reluctant one--at least not for Roosevelt--and that America was not a reluctant Allied partner. According to Buchanan, Roosevelt saw the big picture--that U.S. involvement in the Mediterranean could extend beyond the war. With Operation Torch, the United States gained a foothold in the Mediterranean that propelled the nation into a new global role in the postwar period, and the United States has never looked back. Buchanan concludes that Roosevelt was forward-thinking. While historians have criticized Churchill for maneuvering to preserve Britain's empire after the war, they have failed to notice that, with every strategic position he took, Roosevelt was positioning the United States to step to the forefront and to supersede the United Kingdom by becoming the preeminent global leader after the war. Churchill did not have to pressure Roosevelt to deepen U.S. involvement in the Mediterranean. The President understood "how initial military success in North Africa created new military and political opportunities in the Mediterranean, and at Casablanca he kept pushing toward those prospects" (113). In other words, the United States' grand strategic interests in the Mediterranean were substantial and were not the result of bowing to pressure to follow the British lead.

After identifying his thesis, Buchanan then sets out to prove it. He painstakingly details the U.S. military and political engagement throughout the Mediterranean. For example, he chronicles the United States' efforts to guarantee Spain's neutrality by negotiating a trade agreement. As Buchanan demonstrates, because Spain was in need of certain goods, the United States used the trade deal as leverage to shape Spain's behavior. When necessary, the United States slowed down the flow of goods until Spain complied with U.S. demands. Buchanan pays equal attention to U.S. efforts--political and military--in Italy, southern France, and the Balkans.

Scholars have noted that the nature of the Allied relationship evolved during the war. That evolution played out in a number of ways--through campaign decisions and the nature of wartime occupation--and indicated that the Americans and the British did not always agree on strategy. The Big Three meeting at Teheran highlighted the split in the goals of the western Allies. Roosevelt and Churchill increasingly found themselves at odds. Scholars agree that the Yalta Conference further demonstrated the changing relationship dynamic. In the course of negotiations about future campaigns and plans for postwar Europe, Roosevelt and Stalin were so often on the same page that Churchill became the odd man out.

Buchanan chronicles the reversal of western Allied leadership roles by weaving the political and military stories together in his discussion of the Italian campaign and Operation Anvil/Dragoon--the Allied landing in southern France. In doing so, he demonstrates that the United States moved from being the secondary to being the primary partner in the western Alliance. The United States increasingly became less likely to make decisions based upon what the British wanted. The litmus test for decisions was what the United States wanted or what was politically or militarily expedient for achieving America's end goal. Buchanan demonstrates that shift by focusing on Italy, France, and the Balkans. In each case, the United States took steps to insure a postwar world in which it would be able to influence the emerging government. In addition, the situation on the battlefield occasionally forced the United States to adapt its policy to the political situation on the ground. By integrating the political situation into the military narrative, Buchanan presents a more complete picture of actions taken by the United States as part of its Mediterranean grand strategy.

In order to explore this strategy thoroughly, Buchanan relies upon an extensive amount of source material, both archival and secondary. Although he draws from documents utilized by his peers, Buchanan reaches different conclusions. He presents an interesting, plausible account of U.S. engagement in the Mediterranean and makes a good case, supported by exhaustive evidence, that the United States used the Mediterranean campaigns as a springboard to the postwar role of superpower.

American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during the Second World War makes an important contribution to the existing historiography of the war. Buchanan advocates for a new interpretation of the events. Suggesting that the Mediterranean was not a 'peripheral' theater for the United States, he argues convincingly that America was an active participant in the region; gradually assumed the lead role, forcing the British to take a back seat; and had substantive grand strategic interests in the Mediterranean. Buchanan's book should appeal to a wide audience, including both interested lay readers and World War II scholars.

Review by Dan Plesch, Center for International Studies and Diplomacy, SOAS University of London

This is a fascinating and informative account of U.S. involvement in the Mediterranean during World War Two. The book provides a wealth of detail drawn from the archives on the development of intra-administration policy in the U.S. and especially on U.S. relations with the British.

The book is at its strongest in considering U.S. policy towards Spain, France, and Italy, whereas the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean get a lighter touch. The engagement of U.S. diplomats in the field, who in the main leaned towards fascist if not Nazi regimes, is well detailed. In the case of the Spain the transition from appeasement out of military necessity early in the war to appeasement from political preference in 1945 is well analysed.

The author's description of the United States' use of military, food, and commercial supplies to ease out the British and control the development of politics in France and French Africa through to the end of the war is matched by a comparable account in Italy. The elegant discussion of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's likely instruction to his field commander in Italy in May 1944 to ignore British orders and go for Rome rather than the capture of the German army is plausible (152-154). Though quite why a military victory and rapid advance into Northern Italy would not also have enabled U.S. political success is not really explored.

There is substantial evidence here to support the view that Roosevelt's open handed approach to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin bore fruit, with Communist support for Western-orientated coalitions being crucial to stability in France, Italy, North Africa, and even Spain. The book does not, however, make this broader connection to Roosevelt's grand strategy.

And here lies a key issue with the argument. Grand Strategy is presented as focused on the prevention of Communist insurrection and the securing of markets for U.S. goods. This is somewhat inadequate.

From the beginning of 1942, Roosevelt and his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, relentlessly framed the war as being fought by the United Nations alliance on the principles that would build the peace.¹ At the micro level, the book speaks of U.S. supplies of food to Africa as bearing U.S. markings, however they also bore a variety of United Nations marks by early 1943.² The Italian armistice, for example, refers to the United Nations in almost every clause. For Roosevelt's Administration, the Grand Strategy, which indeed included free trade, was the United Nations.

There is a question too about U.S. pro-colonial policies. Elliott Roosevelt recounts his father's grand scheme for a U.S.-style Tennessee-valley scheme for Morocco, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill complained that Roosevelt kept pressing on him a draft plan for a timetable of decolonisation, and the International Labour Organisation in Philadelphia in 1944 heard Roosevelt's denunciation of government and corporate exploitation based upon his experience in the British colony of Gambia.

The book begins naturally enough with a discussion of the U.S. landings in Africa – or Torch as they were called. Here the book portrays U.S. policy as driven by a desire to have a post-war presence in the region. There are other more decisive factors that need to be explored. First there was a clear imperative for Roosevelt to start fighting the Germans. In the U.S., the pre-war and pro-German policy of 'America First' had segwayed into Japan First. On the face of it, concentrating America's fire on the nation that had attacked it

made perfect sense, but the corollary was to delay perhaps indefinitely an attack on Adolf Hitler's Third Reich in Europe. This left room for even Stalin to make a separate peace.

Thus, with a landing in France demonstrably suicidal, as the Dieppe raid of August 1942 had demonstrated, Africa was the only place to fight at the end of 1942. It is also only late in the book that the utility of the landings in clearing the Mediterranean as a supply route to Russia is mentioned. At the time it loomed rather larger as a priority.

It is a shame that apparently unanswered questions about the timing of Torch remain unexplored. Roosevelt wanted the landings before the midterm elections. Churchill was desperate that El Alamein come before Torch so that Britain would get the first glory. American generals leaned to the Republican Party. This was, and is not, a petty matter. Despite the best efforts of Roosevelt and Hull, the Republicans made large gains in Congress in the elections that came before the landings in Africa. And one of their first actions when Congress resumed was to attempt to micro-manage Lend Lease to Russia with the support of America's own Ambassador to Moscow, then Admiral Standley.

A point of comparative analysis arises from the book's careful analysis of individual nations. British policy favoured bolstering the '*anciens regimes*' of kings and their associates. Only in Greece did British policy prevail over Roosevelt's. And in Greece, even without Stalin's support, the country sank into civil war whose scars remain today. In Italy and France, the British were pushed aside along with some of the independent and radical left. It was U.S.- and Soviet-supported regimes that were in place at war's end, while, as the book describes, the ruling classes were re-established but in a broad-based coalition. Absent the grand strategy of Roosevelt, U.S. policy would have favoured the British approach and the Greek civil war could well have been but one of several along the littoral of the North-West Mediterranean.

Review by Douglas Porch, Emeritus Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey

In his thoroughly researched and compelling *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II*, University of Vermont historian Andrew Buchanan advances the process of reassessing the importance of the Mediterranean theater to Allied victory in World War II. He generously gives this reviewer credit for challenging the master narrative formulated during the war largely by disgruntled U.S. generals of the Mediterranean as a wasteful, diversionary theater.¹ When U.S. General Albert Wedemeyer complained that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had been enticed there by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's 'baneful influence,' he merely parroted the views of Generals George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and Secretary of War Henry Stimson, verdicts endorsed by a couple of generations of post-war historians. And while Buchanan agrees with Porch that the Mediterranean was indeed the war's 'pivotal theater' for the Western Allies, he argues that so far the debate has been "fundamentally trapped within the framework of an argument over military strategy" (6). Instead, Buchanan's ambition is to broaden the discussion from an adjudication of a wartime dispute between a protracted British-inspired dawdle on Europe's southern flank versus the prompt cross-Channel punch sought by U.S. military leadership. Instead, he argues convincingly, the Mediterranean was central to Roosevelt's grand strategy to remake Europe.

Because 'grand strategy' is one of "the most elastic, slippery and abused concepts in the foreign policy lexicon,"² and one that has evolved over time, Buchanan might have given rather more space to defining what exactly he means by the concept, and how 'grand strategy' differs from national strategy, strategic doctrine, war planning, and whether grand strategy shapes policy, or vice versa. Indeed, since he can find no document actually defining Roosevelt's 'grand strategic' vision, one may question whether his 'grand strategy' exists at all? Buchanan clearly interprets 'grand strategy' to mean non-military forms of power. As such, his definition reaches beyond simply military statecraft as the World War II era and some scholars since might have understood it, to embrace the framework assumptions that underpin and govern policy-making.

Buchanan's essential thesis is that "Roosevelt understood that a U.S. victory required defeating the Axis powers while *simultaneously* preparing for a new world order of capitalist nations and free markets structured under the hegemony of the United States" (7). Roosevelt viewed the Mediterranean, not as an opportunistic venture, but as the place where this process would be initiated. So 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," through the exercise of political and economic, as well as military power (11). This point is hardly new – I and others have pointed out that one of the strategic benefits of the 'Mediterranean detour' was that it allowed the full power of the United States to be brought on line so that the American President would have a preponderant voice in shaping the post-war settlement. Nor is it a secret that Roosevelt had a vision of a post-World War II world inherited from Woodrow Wilson in which 'American Internationalism' and market capitalism would loom

¹ Douglas Porch, *Path to Victory. The Mediterranean Theater in World War II*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2004).

² I thank my colleague at St. Antony's College, Oxford, Lukas Milevski for these observations on the definition and scope of Grand Strategy.

large. This was sometimes lost in his pragmatism, opportunism, and the opaque, even “idiosyncratic” (11) nature of U.S. foreign-policy making under Roosevelt.

Buchanan reinforces and expands this view with the argument that Roosevelt realized that the June 1940 fall of France opened an opportunity to reshape the Mediterranean region. Strategically, the Mediterranean offered an entrée into Europe. It became the locus of his experiment, the test bed for his grand strategic vision of the democratization and liberalization of European politics and economies through political manipulation, civil affairs, Lend-Lease, security assistance, and other measures, so that the war and post-war became a continuum. (269) And while as a navalist with a particularly Mahanian geopolitical vision Roosevelt was a pioneer, by war’s end, Buchanan believes that U.S. policy makers “were developing a conscious grand strategic vision of the Mediterranean as a unified entity in which... ‘American security’ was linked to a ‘larger complex of Mediterranean issues’” (271). By 1945, the Mediterranean had been geopolitically transformed from Mussolini’s ‘prison’ or Churchill’s corridor to empire, to become Europe’s “southern flank” (271) in the words of Secretary of the Navy from May 1944 James Forrestal.

Buchanan is nothing if not thorough; *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean* is comprehensively researched, at least from an Anglo-American perspective. However, given that his theme is how Roosevelt deployed various dimensions of U.S. power to achieve ill-defined influence in the region, a more extensive use of French and Italian sources, as well as Spanish ones, might have strengthened his case. The chapters on how Roosevelt attempted to deploy ‘carrots’ of food aid to appease Spanish caudillo Francisco Franco and Vichy leader Marshal Philippe Pétain are particularly successful. The machinations around the surrender of Italy in September 1943 are also enlightening. He is also honest, to the point that his research actually on occasion threatens the credibility of his thesis. For instance, Buchanan underscores the inconsistencies and ad hocery of Roosevelt’s policies which in many respects undermined his vision: on one hand, the President promised to reshape the Mediterranean through the implementation of Atlantic Charter freedoms while reforming and modernizing the politics and economies of southern Europe and French North Africa. On the other, Roosevelt’s addictive appeasement and promotion of some of the Mediterranean littoral’s least savory reactionaries and mediocrities – Franco, Pétain, Admiral Jean Darlan, General Henri Giraud, Italian Marshal Pietro Bagdolio, the exiled monarchs of Greece and Yugoslavia, and Washington’s stubborn courting of royalist Yugoslav resistor “Draža” Mihailović long after it became clear that he was a doomed man – rather compromised the uplifting aspirations and geopolitical vision that Buchanan ascribes to him. The reason, of course, is that Roosevelt was a pragmatist. He had a war to win and courted those who he believed could help him achieve that goal.

Those who apparently had little to contribute to Allied victory, like General Charles de Gaulle before 1944, were quick to point out the inconsistencies between Roosevelt’s grand rhetoric and his actions and to assign nefarious motives to them. Rather than rehabilitate and modernize Europe’s order, de Gaulle believed, Roosevelt sought to fragment the Continent to render it weak and dependent on the United States – which, of course, is precisely what transpired. Nor were the chosen executors of his Mediterranean ‘grand strategy,’ the smugly self-righteous when not totally clueless U.S. chargé d’affaires in French North Africa Robert Murphy and Roosevelt’s personal friend and U.S. Ambassador to Vichy until November 1942, Admiral William Leahy, visionaries to lead a revolution in Mediterranean affairs. This suggests that the Mediterranean may not have been as high a priority for Roosevelt as Buchanan believes that it was. In fact, the diplomatically inexperienced (at this stage) soldier Dwight D. Eisenhower seemed to have a more realistic grasp of the Mediterranean’s ground truths than did Murphy and Leahy. But, despite Eisenhower’s pleas, President Roosevelt stubbornly refused to recognize the *Comité français de libération nationale* (CFLN) and its President,

Charles de Gaulle, on the spurious pretext that de Gaulle had not been ‘elected.’ Buchanan acknowledges that this was mere cussedness on Roosevelt’s part, as he did business with a brace of leaders whose only claim to legitimacy was that they had managed to combine spinelessness with serial opportunism and incompetence. Indeed, Roosevelt might have followed Leahy’s advice at the Liberation of France to restore Pétain too, had Hitler not kidnapped the wretched Marshal and his collaborationist sidekick Pierre Laval to Sigmaringen.³

But, as Buchanan concedes, political legitimacy in the Mediterranean was an elastic concept. Which leads one to ask – did the ‘flexibility’ of Roosevelt’s tactics render his master grand strategic concept as laid out by Buchanan meaningless? And if so, did U.S. quasi-hegemony in the Middle Sea then not come about by default, the result of the strategic vacuum created by the defeats of France and Italy, the irreparable weakening of Great Britain, and the rise of anti-colonial nationalism in North Africa and the Near East, rather than springing from Roosevelt’s overarching “grand strategic impulses?” (266) If American domination of the Middle Sea was going to occur in any case, how important was Roosevelt’s grand vision for the Mediterranean?

The limits of Roosevelt’s Wilsonian liberalism were also evident as European reactionaries communicated to their U.S. interlocutors their fear of insurrection spearheaded by North African nationalists and British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and U.S. Office of Strategic Services(OSS)-armed resistance groups. So, rather than capture and channel the region’s revolutionary dynamic, the Allied arrival saw restorations, not revolutions, that dashed hopes for a remaking Europe’s political and economic structures. Furthermore, as Buchanan recognizes, this conservative outcome was incongruously assisted by none other than Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, rather than a grand strategic promise of American-style liberalism, modernization, and capitalist induced prosperity that diffused this alleged threat. Worried about the political radicalization of Mediterranean resistance movements, Moscow repatriated both communist leaders Palmiro Togliatti and Maurice Thorez to Italy and France respectively with orders to finish off the Wehrmacht before launching experiments in governance and ‘popular’ military reorganization.

While Buchanan’s insistence on the limitations of viewing the World War II Mediterranean through a purely military lens is refreshing, one almost forgets in this account that there was actually a war going on. For instance, Michael Howard noted forty-five years ago that it was the General Bernard Montgomery’s October 1942 victory over German General Erwin Rommel at El Alamein, not U.S. food aid, that ultimately convinced Franco that the Mediterranean military balance had definitely swung against the Axis. As a consequence, he did not invite Hitler to seize Gibraltar on news of the 8 November 1942 Allied invasion of French North Africa, the scenario most dreaded by Allied planners.⁴ Nor is there any mention of shipping, which was an important driver of strategic decision-making in the Mediterranean, as well as a limiting factor in securing ‘grand strategic’ influence through food aid and lend-lease. In the process, Buchanan demonstrates how Roosevelt’s ‘grand strategy’ stumbled on the political level. It may be that Roosevelt was a Mahanian with a Wilsonian belief that post-war American security required a liberal world order. Buchanan

³ Indeed, until the eve of the invasion, Roosevelt continued to insist that any governance agreement with the *Comité française de libération nationale* (CFLN) was merely “tentative” and that Eisenhower was free to seek collaborators beyond de Gaulle’s structure, e.g. Vichy officials. Hilary Fotitt and John Simmonds, *France 1943-1945* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), 28.

⁴ Michael Howard, *August 1942-September 1943*, Volume IV, *Grand Strategy*, (London: HMSO, 1970), 167.

concedes, however, that there is no equivalent of George Kennan's famous June 1947 "X Article," no smoking gun policy document that outlines a coherent vision of transforming the Mediterranean into an American lake lurking in presidential or diplomatic archives. Rather, U.S. capital unleashed a "tide of history" that washed even through the tideless Mediterranean. () But it seems rather more like the "tide of history" swept through those countries where U.S. boots were on the ground. There were simply too many imponderables and variables for the Mediterranean to have witnessed the unfolding of "any a priori scheme" (267-268).

Buchanan's argument is certainly plausible. But when strategies, even grand strategies fail, one has to decide whether it was because the strategic vision was too 'grand,' or because it could not be realized on the operational and tactical level. The irony of Buchanan's book is that the strategy seemed to succeed, despite the fact that it was poorly executed. So while Buchanan's contribution is the important one of reminding us of the political dimensions of the Mediterranean venture, that venture's success relied on military progress and the collapse of alternatives, not simply on the successful application of a political grand strategic vision.

Despite the considerable strengths of this work, which reside both in its detail and its breadth, one nonetheless comes away with two fundamental concerns about Buchanan's approach: first, his method, which he admits consists of "walking the cat backwards" – in other words, measuring in a linear fashion results against intentions (11) – might be criticized as fundamentally unhistorical. The second concern follows from the first: in his haste to reinforce his overarching grand strategic narrative, Buchanan on occasion deploys a mixture of hypotheses, speculation, circumstantial evidence, and hazardous conjecture to bolster his conclusions. It is one thing to state that evidence for a grand strategic vision will not be discovered in the archives. But it is quite another to speculate about the course of events for which proof is ambiguous or non-existent.

Let me take three examples, beginning with the decision for Torch, the Allied invasion of French North Africa in November 1942. At the January 1942 Arcadia Conference, with the USSR appearing on the verge of collapse, Roosevelt backed an early cross-Channel invasion, known as Sledgehammer, over Churchill's plan for an invasion of the Mediterranean to rescue a beleaguered Malta, code-named Gymnast.. According to Buchanan, the American President's ostensible support for his Chief of Staff was a ruse for his Mediterranean predisposition. The usual explanation for Roosevelt's change of heart -- that the surprise fall of Tobruk to Rommel in June 1942 put the British Prime Minister's parliamentary majority at risk -- is important to Buchanan's thesis only in that it spurred a sense of crisis at the Washington Conference of that month that silenced opposition among the Joint Chiefs and tipped the scales for the U.S. commitment to the Mediterranean..

A second example of how Roosevelt deployed Washington's enormous productive capacity to achieve profound political and strategic advantages is his decision taken at Casablanca to arm eleven, later reduced to eight, French divisions. This served to convince the French elite that gradually coalesced around de Gaulle that only the United States would be capable of restoring French power. "Given the sharp clashes that continued to mark Franco-American relations to the end of the war and beyond, this may seem to be an exaggerated claim," Buchanan writes. "But with its path smoothed by the provision of trade and military aid, Washington shifted its relations from Pétain, to Darlan, to Giraud, and finally de Gaulle without crippling breakdowns and disjuncture." (87) Indeed, if Buchanan proves anything by invoking the French case, it is the tenuous link between aid and 'influence.' Aid did little to stop Vichy's chief minister Pierre Laval's collaboration with the Nazi occupiers, nor induce Free French leader Charles de Gaulle to blubber with gratitude to the Anglo-Americans for rehabilitating the French army and Liberating France.

Third, while Buchanan's account of the machinations surrounding the Italian surrender is interesting, his description of the fall of Rome lapses into conjecture. Buchanan insists that the capture of Rome marked a critical turning point in the war in the Mediterranean because possession of the Italian capital allowed Washington to prevail over London in debates over Allied strategy and the reshaping of Italy. Buchanan's account of events goes as follows: 5th Army Commander Mark Clark was summoned to Washington in secrecy to meet with Marshall and Roosevelt on the eve of Operation Diadem, the breakthrough attack on the Monte Cassino line launched in May 1944. While Buchanan admits that it is impossible to know exactly what happened during Clark's visit, in the context of the evolving political situation in Italy, "it is entirely possible that the president stressed the political importance of having *American* troops capture Rome." (153) Armed with political cover, Clark ignored the instructions of 15th Army Group Commander Harold Alexander and ordered VI Corps commander General Lucien Truscott to break out of Anzio and dash for Rome. This allowed the German Tenth Army a resistance-free escape north.

The title of "Liberator of Rome" failed to rescue Clark's reputation. Carlo D'Este labeled Clark's dash to Rome, "as militarily stupid as it was insubordinate,"⁵ in part because he would have reached Rome sooner had he not tried to fight through the Alban Hills. But according to Buchanan, Roosevelt was eager to seize Rome ahead of the British so that King Victor Emanuel could fulfill his promise to abdicate and Bagdolio could be shunted aside in a cabinet reshuffle for someone more amenable to U.S. influence. But again, conjecture appears to guide Buchanan's analysis. "Most importantly, the evidence suggests that [Roosevelt] was instrumental in urging Mark Clark to march directly on Rome, thereby setting the stage for the reform of Italian politics and the consequent deepening of U.S. economic and political influence" (270). This is a curious assertion for several reasons, beginning with the fact that Buchanan never defines what he means by 'influence.' The seizure of Rome was also superfluous politically, as Michael Howard opined that by the time of the Tehran Conference (28 November – 1 December 1943), the Allies had achieved all of their aims in the Mediterranean. Nor was the requirement to control the Italian resistance a dominant concern, as Stalin had stood down the Communist International the previous May and ordered all Communists in Italy and France to become "radical patriots." (163-164)

The charge that Roosevelt instructed his senior general in theater to disobey superior orders, allowing a German army to escape from the Cassino line to fight again another day, is also pretty serious, and all the more so since the tradeoff, according to Buchanan, was an unspecified reshuffle of a government in which the six major Italian parties including the Communists had already agreed to cooperate and that had accepted the 'long terms' of the Italian surrender. King Victor Emanuel's promise to abdicate was already in the bag. And all this was supposed to translate into an ill-defined increase of 'American influence' at the expense of the British. Why did Roosevelt need to seize Rome to increase U.S. 'influence' when Britain's power and sway were clearly in decline? It is far more likely that Roosevelt told Clark to get off his arse and break the six-months long siege of Monte Cassino. Otherwise, he would spend the remainder of the war pushing the tea trolley around the corridors of the Pentagon. The urgency was not so much to push forward some ill-defined experiment in Italian democracy and stiff the British. Rather, Clark needed to free up ships supplying the Anzio beachhead, and French and American divisions for Anvil, the overdue invasion of Southern France. That was Roosevelt's priority, especially as Churchill was lobbying heavily for an invasion of the Balkans and an advance into central Europe through the Ljubljana Gap.

⁵ Richard Holmes, *Battlefields of the Second World War* "Cassino" 2001 BBC Worldwide, 126.

Roosevelt's 'vision thing' also appears to have fallen short in France. And no wonder. Having witnessed the disastrous application of Roosevelt's new world order in Italy, the French, not surprisingly, were desperate to avoid Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories (AMGOT) or, especially, watch Roosevelt cut another shady deal with French collaborators as he had done in North Africa. Most historians concede that by 1944 even FDR realized that he could not apply AMGOT in France, but he continued to threaten it just to keep de Gaulle off balance. For his part, the French leader-in-exile turned the tables on the American President by using the threat of Allied governance to whip recalcitrant French factions into line behind the CFLN. De Gaulle had pre-designated *commissaires de la République* and departmental 'liberation committees' standing by in order to prevent Resistance groups from taking power, and to impose order lest Liberation-induced chaos give the Allies an excuse to turn to Vichy prefects and police for support.⁶

Buchanan is unclear about Roosevelt's vision for France: on one hand, he agrees with other historians that the President wanted to keep France weak, divided, and under Washington's thumb, as de Gaulle predicted. On the other, he explains that Roosevelt sought to prevent "the re-establishment of the armed power of the French ruling class on its native soil." (166) France required a well-defended government and state to disarm partisans, and neutralize potential rival centers of political power under U.S. oversight. But if that was Roosevelt's vision, what was his plan to accomplish that beyond infusing France with civil affairs officers and what de Gaulle dismissed as "counterfeit" Allied occupation script?⁷ The result was that from a U.S. 'grand strategic' perspective, the invasion of France took place "in a political vacuum." (179) The irony, of course, was that de Gaulle filled that political vacuum with a cadre of Free French administrators and a program to disarm the resistance, in defiance of Roosevelt's grand strategic plan.

How does *American Grand Strategy* change the narrative? Buchanan certainly seizes the momentum of World War II Mediterranean revisionism, and broadens Allied intervention in that sea to include a non-military focus. This makes *American Grand Strategy* an important book for bringing this to light, even if on occasion the author tries to over prove his thesis. His account may be interpreted as an essentially triumphalist U.S.-centric vision of the war's largely beneficial, if conservative and at times contradictory, outcome for the region.

Likewise, if Roosevelt's vision was to shape and stabilize the wartime Mediterranean by integrating it into a U.S.-dominated capitalist system, the result was significantly different. Indeed, when Buchanan kicks over the traces of his grand strategic vista, to focus on the social and economic dislocation caused by the Allied invasion and occupation of North Africa, Italy, and southern France in particular, the result appears to be significantly at odds with the plan. Arab nationalists who had been deceived by the vacuous promises of the Atlantic Charter, Italians who had been forced into crime and prostitution to survive the Allied 'liberation,'

⁶ Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre. De l'appel du 18 juin à la libération*, tome 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 48; François Rouquet, *Une épuration ordinaire (1944-1949). Petits et grands collaborateurs de l'administration française* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2011), 16.

⁷ Roosevelt refused to allow the *Comité française de libération nationale* (CFLN) to issue its own currency because it would have implied recognition of de Gaulle. Nor was "République française" to be printed on U.S. issued occupation script ostensibly so as not to preclude the French peoples' post-liberation regime choice. François Kersaudy, *Churchill and de Gaulle*, (London: Collins, 1981), 319. Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre. De l'appel du 18 juin à la libération*, tome 2, (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 1033, 1036. De Gaulle was indignant: *Allez, faites la guerre, avec votre fausse monnaie*"

and Marseilles dock workers who remained unconvinced about the benefits of *Pax Americana*, leave one to question whether Roosevelt's Mediterranean 'vision' was embraced by those at whom it was directed. Indeed, more recent *fin de la guerre* evaluations have stressed the dark, humiliating side of World War II liberation, including a crisis of masculine, when not one of national, confidence, in France and Italy especially.⁸ This made particularly difficult the task of rebuilding societies that had been forced to make wartime compromises in order to survive. In fact, what World War II left behind was not an American-dominated lake, but a region roiled by anti-colonial revolts in North Africa and the Levant, Zionist immigration into Palestine supported by Washington, civil war in the Balkans, and an isolated and impoverished Iberian peninsula frozen in a pre-war ideological system. The Algerian War (1954-1962) that imploded the French Fourth Republic was also a World War II legacy clash between unreconstructed Vichyites and Arabs jilted at the altar of the Atlantic Charter. This tumultuous outcome does not appear to have caused Buchanan to question the assumptions of Roosevelt's grand strategic vision or its consequences. But he has nevertheless given us a well researched, important, imaginative, and provocative book that significantly advances our understanding of the importance of the Mediterranean theater in World War II.

⁸ Fabrice Virgili, *La France 'virile.' Des femmes tondues à la libération*, (Paris: Payot, 2000); Olivier Wieviorka, *Divided Memory. French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); Mary Louise Roberts, *D-Day Through French Eyes. Normandy 1944*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014); William I. Hitchcock, *Liberation. The Bitter Road to Freedom, Europe 1944-1945*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).

Review by Avshalom Rubin, Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State¹

To most Americans, World War II remains ‘the Good War,’ a disinterested crusade fought to defeat the dark forces of Nazism and fascism. The less savory aspects of the Roosevelt administration’s wartime policies, including its alliance with the Soviet Union, its tepid response to the genocide of European Jewry, its indiscriminate use of bombing against German and Japanese civilians, and the internment of Japanese-Americans at home, still primarily interest professional historians. Nevertheless, those who study American foreign policy for a living have been critically re-evaluating President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s wartime diplomacy for several decades. While the President has been criticized from the right for his alleged naiveté in dealing with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, some of the most pointed attacks on his foreign policy record have come from left-leaning scholars. For William Appleman Williams and his disciples, Roosevelt’s wartime policies were motivated not primarily by a desire to defeat totalitarianism but by the economic interests of a narrow elite. The so-called ‘Wisconsin school’ revisionists argued that the Roosevelt administration hoped to ensure that American capitalism, whose survival had been threatened by the Great Depression, would flourish during the postwar period. According to these scholars, the United States exploited the fight against the Axis powers in order to integrate Western Europe and East Asia into its economic orbit and to thwart the rise of indigenous leftist forces that played a prominent role in anti-Nazi and anti-fascist resistance organizations.

Andrew Buchanan’s *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean During World War II* is in many ways a throwback to the Wisconsin school’s view of the U.S. role in the Second World War. He argues that the existing scholarship on U.S. involvement in the Mediterranean during World War II has been narrowly focused on the question of whether the U.S. invasion of North Africa in 1942 and the subsequent Italian campaign were a necessary precursor to the cross-Channel invasion of France or merely the result of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s ‘baneful influence’ on Roosevelt. “The problem, as President Roosevelt well understood, was that the United States’ orientation toward the countries of the Mediterranean – or any other part of the world, for that matter – could never be an exclusively military question,” Buchanan writes. By sending U.S. forces to fight in the Mediterranean theater, he argues, Roosevelt sought not only to achieve short-term military objectives, but to integrate the Mediterranean basin into “a new world order of capitalist nations and free markets structured under the hegemony of the United States” (6-7).

And indeed, the case that Buchanan makes for his essentially Marxist argument is a good one. He has done prodigious research in American and British archives, contemporary press sources, and memoirs, and has carefully read the sizeable secondary literature on his subject. He is also a talented writer who explores his vast and complicated subject with subtlety and clarity. He demonstrates remarkable agility in moving between the many dimensions of America’s wartime involvement in the Mediterranean - from the debates between Roosevelt and his generals about the timing of a cross-Channel invasion to the intricacies of U.S. trade policy with Franco’s Spain and Vichy France to the Office of Strategic Services’ haphazard plans for covert intervention in Yugoslavian politics.

From the beginning, Buchanan writes, Roosevelt and his advisors “never lost sight of the potential social consequences of the war or of the problematic nature of the postwar regimes that might emerge from the

¹ The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the United States government.

wreckage” (13). U.S. policy toward Franco’s Spain and Vichy France was shaped not only by Roosevelt’s desire to keep those regimes from lending military help to Hitler, but also by administration officials’ fears that wartime deprivation would later help leftist forces take power. In March 1941, the administration signed a lucrative trade deal with the Vichy authorities which permitted huge supplies of American goods to be shipped to France’s colonies in North Africa. Even after the United States entered the war in December 1941, “the trade accord staggered on.” Roosevelt did not fare quite so well in his efforts to extend a \$100 million dollar loan to Spain for the purchase of American commodities. For liberal publications like *The Nation* and *The New Republic* as well as policymakers like Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, aid to the hated *Falange* was a bridge too far. But the President still quietly permitted private trade between the two countries to continue.

Roosevelt justified his policies toward Spain and Vichy France on the grounds that they helped keep both countries from entering the war on Hitler’s side. But even once American GIs landed in North Africa, the President was in no hurry to empower Vichy’s opponents. Disingenuously insisting that the United States could not recognize leaders who had not been chosen by the French people, Roosevelt quickly recognized the Vichyite commander-in-chief of the French armed forces Francois Darlan as high commissioner of the ‘French North African state.’ Though the ‘Darlan Deal’ outraged American liberals, Roosevelt and his advisors initially saw it as preferable to dealing with Free French movement leader Charles De Gaulle, whom they saw as a possible stalking horse for communists within the French resistance. Not until June 1943 would De Gaulle be permitted to take part in governing North Africa. The administration’s socially conservative approach to North Africa was likewise evident in the economic sphere. To prevent popular unrest, the United States provided French North Africa with Lend-Lease aid, which was funneled through Vichy authorities who exploited their position as middlemen for personal profit. Roosevelt and his advisors unwaveringly supported continued French colonial rule in the areas under American military control, despite the fact that this policy did not quite align with the principles of the Atlantic Charter. Morocco, Roosevelt confided to one American diplomat, might be ready for independence in “thirty or forty years.” (107) While such policies frustrated indigenous Arabs and Berbers and enraged De Gaulle, they provided the Americans with an environment in which they could build up a vast network of military bases and secure a foothold in the North African economy, making it much easier to turn the Mediterranean into an ‘American lake’ once the war was over.

As Buchanan ably demonstrates, America’s occupation of North Africa also provided the Roosevelt administration with a jumping-off point from which the much more important prizes of Italy and France could be secured, as well as practical experience in the art of shaping the politics of countries under occupation to the long-term advantage of the United States. In both the Italian and French cases, the Americans also benefited from Stalin’s desire to protect his gains in Eastern Europe by acknowledging the western Mediterranean as part of the Anglo-American sphere of influence. This meant that French and Italian communists did not capitalize on the widespread labor unrest that flared up in both countries as the Nazis were driven back. Roosevelt was thus spared having to choose whether, as he put it in the case of Italy, to “use force against the anti-Fascist leaders and groups” (144). The popularity of leftist groups and the scale of civil unrest in both France and Italy made cooperation with figures associated with the Vichy and Fascist *anciens regimes* a less attractive option than in North Africa. Yet Stalin’s decision to rein in his French and Italian followers meant that the Americans had a free hand to fashion liberal governments in both countries. Indeed, when it came to reestablishing political order in France and Italy, the Americans found themselves at loggerheads with the British, not the Soviets. Churchill frowned upon U.S. efforts to rehabilitate the Italian economy and opposed American plans for using Allied troops in Italy to take southern France. Yet, as Buchanan shows, the British Prime Minister was largely powerless to prevent Roosevelt from doing as he

pleased. By 1944, the Americans, not the British, were very clearly the ‘senior partner’ in the Mediterranean theater.

Even readers who do not have a particularly triumphalist outlook on America’s role in World War II may find Buchanan’s critique of Roosevelt’s policies overly harsh. While Buchanan evinces grudging respect for Roosevelt’s skill as a statesman, he makes it clear that he regards the President’s ultimate aims as morally suspect. To the extent that Buchanan’s book has heroes, they are the industrial workers, communist activists, and leftist partisans whose aspirations Roosevelt sought to marginalize in order to create a liberal-capitalist postwar order. He never acknowledges that the postwar order that the United States helped to establish in Italy and France brought those countries prosperity and political stability, or that the governments established there had much popular support. Rejecting Geir Lundestad’s argument that the postwar Western European order was a form of “empire by invitation,”² Buchanan argues (in the case of Italy) that “the wartime occupation regime morphed seamlessly into a postwar relationship of U.S. hegemony, with the so-called empire by ‘invitation’ resting firmly on military government and direct intervention into the affairs of another ostensibly sovereign state” (208).

This rather cavalier dismissal of Lundestad’s thesis flies in the face of findings by scholars like Melvyn Leffler and John Lewis Gaddis, who have emphasized the economic and legislative constraints that the Truman administration faced in maintaining a U.S. role in Europe during the 1945-47 period.³ But it also raises the question of what Buchanan thinks a ‘good’ postwar outcome in a Mediterranean state would have looked like. For Buchanan, the answer is something like Yugoslavia, where leftist forces triumphed and managed to avoid being coopted by either superpower. Yugoslavia, he writes, “offers a glimpse of the alternative possibilities latent throughout southern Europe” (277). Given the choice, however, I believe that most Europeans would have preferred to live in liberal-capitalist Italy or France than Josip Broz Tito’s police state. Buchanan may be right that Roosevelt’s wartime policies in the Mediterranean were animated more by power politics and U.S. economic interests than the lofty ideals of the Atlantic Charter. But such policies never would have enjoyed such of a postwar afterlife without the support of Mediterraneanites themselves.

Regardless of whether readers share Buchanan’s critical view of American globalism, they will profit from reading his well-written, thoroughly researched, and passionately argued book. He has succeeded in illuminating many hidden dimensions of a well-known episode in American foreign policy, and will inspire his readers to think harder about Roosevelt’s geopolitical legacy.

² See Geir Lundestad, “Empire By Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952,” *Journal of Peace Research*, 23 (3) (1986): 263-277.

³ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

Review by David B. Woolner, Roosevelt Institute/Marist College

I agree that we had better leave the past to history, but remember if I live long enough I may be one of the historians—Winston Churchill, January 1944

Thanks to the commanding influence of those writers whom the scholar David Reynolds has referred to as “the court historians” of the Second World War, some very powerful narratives about the course and nature of the conflict have become almost permanent fixtures in the historiography of the period.¹ Perhaps the most compelling of these truisms—fostered in large part by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s massive account of the war—is that the Mediterranean was preeminently a British theatre; an area of operations that the United States entered most reluctantly, and in which the U.S. played an important, but nevertheless, secondary role—always with an eye toward getting out of the region as quickly as possible. This narrative has been reinforced by the official U.S. Army histories of the war, by the memoirs of General Dwight D. Eisenhower and others, and by such works as Michael Howard’s brief but astute *The Mediterranean Strategy in the Second World War*, in which Howard argues that the war in the Mediterranean was pursued largely as a result of political necessity and opportunism.² Under this scenario, President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s decision to launch the invasion of North Africa in the fall 1942—over the objections of his Chiefs of Staff—was based solely on his determination to open a ‘Second Front’ that year and get the American public and military involved in the war in Europe as quickly as possible. Unable to bring the fighting in North Africa to a close until May, 1943—too late to reassemble the forces required to launch an invasion of France that summer—the Allies made the decision to take Sicily, in the expectation that this in turn might lead to the capitulation of Italy, allowing Allied forces to move onto the Italian peninsula that fall in a further effort ‘to close the ring’ around Germany before the final thrust into France.

There is a good deal of truth in Howard’s account. There is no question, for example, that opportunism played a significant role in determining the course of the war in the Mediterranean. Howard’s evidence also puts to rest any notion that the British determination to press on into Italy

¹ David Reynolds, “On Histories and Historians,” in *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt’s America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan R Dee, 2001), 6; “FDR’s Foreign Policy and the Construction of History, 1945-1955,” in *FDR’s World: War, Peace, and Legacy*, edited by David B. Woolner, Warren F. Kimball, and David Reynolds (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 7. Among others, the “court historians” Reynolds refers to would include Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper, 1948); Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War they Waged, the Peace they Sought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); and William Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966).

² Michael Howard, *The Mediterranean Strategy in the Second World War* (London: Greenhill Books, 1993); Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942* (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980); George F Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957); Dwight David Eisenhower *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1948).

was driven by Churchill's prescient desire to get into Central and Eastern Europe ahead of the Russians. But like most other historians of the Mediterranean Theatre in World War II, Howard makes no mention of the possibility that the Roosevelt Administration might have pursued the war in the Mediterranean not merely for reasons of political and military expediency, but also out a desire to further America's own long-term military, political and economic interests in the region.

The idea that the Roosevelt Administration's might have used the conflict in the Mediterranean as a means to establish American hegemony in this important part of the world is taken up in Andrew Buchanan's excellent new book, *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II*. Not content to confine his work merely to an examination of the military history of America's involvement in the Mediterranean theatre, Buchanan's comprehensive study shows us that to fully understand America's involvement in the region we must examine *all* aspects of American policy. When we do so, a number of important considerations come into sharp relief, perhaps the most important of which is his assertion that the pursuit of American interests in the Mediterranean became Roosevelt's 'personal policy'—a personal policy based on a multi-faceted and multi-layered approach to this complex part of the world that in retrospect constitutes the essence of grand strategy. Viewed from this perspective, Buchanan makes clear that “far from being a diversionary theatre 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” (11).

Buchanan's analysis also brings to life a number of other new and largely overlooked dimensions of U.S. wartime policy in the Mediterranean. In North Africa, for example, we learn that the requirement to maintain order and stability among a restive colonial population during wartime, which necessitated throwing U.S. support behind the conservative ruling elite, in essence meant that the United States maintained unwavering support for French colonial rule in North Africa and that this policy formed a fundamental aspect of the postwar reestablishment of French power. Of course, striking deals with such nefarious figures as the arch conservative Vichy collaborationist, Admiral François Darlan, did not sit well with the American press, which was quick to point out how this arrangement violated the principles articulated in the Atlantic Charter. Fortunately for Roosevelt, Darlan's assassination a few weeks after signing the deal provided the Roosevelt Administration with the opportunity to 'moderate' its policies in the face of this criticism. The result was the promotion of General Henri Giraud and the first tentative steps towards U.S. support for the Free French Committee of National Liberation (CFLN). But given the fundamentally conservative nature of Giraud, and the equally conservative nature of his irascible arch rival, General Charles de Gaulle—neither of whom had any interest in promoting democracy or self-determination in the Maghreb—these apparent shifts towards a more liberal policy in North Africa in fact helped solidify the status quo not only there, but also in France.

A similar story can be found in the U.S. involvement in Italy, where America's initial support for the monarchy and a new government formed under Mussolini's former Chief of Staff, Marshal Pietro Badoglio—a regime that the *New York Times* cynically described as “a military dictatorship resting

on the shadowy authority of a puppet king”—soon gave way to American support for a more broad based regime (129). As in North Africa, Badoglio’s ouster, which was initiated by liberal forces within Italy and resulted in the formation of a new government under the former prime minister and anti-fascist Ivanoe Bonomi, allowed the Roosevelt administration to throw its weight behind moderate as opposed to radical reforms, staving off the possibility of a socialist revolution, while at the same time allowing US policy towards Italy to take on a more forward-thinking nature. Buchanan also asserts that these developments were greatly facilitated by a general understanding achieved among the Big Three at the 1943 Teheran conference, in which Stalin tacitly agreed to divide Europe into two broad spheres of influence, with Poland and much of Eastern Europe falling under the Soviet sphere, while Italy, France, and Western Europe fell under the Anglo-American sphere. In practical terms this meant that while Stalin might continue to use national Communist Parties under Soviet influence as instruments for the application of political pressure in Western Europe, he would also—under the ‘grand accommodation’ achieved at Teheran—use his influence to ensure that “popular hostility towards discredited social and political systems did not give rise to revolutionary upsurges” (164). Hence, in a very direct sense, Moscow became an active participant in securing the postwar order in Western Europe. Interestingly, the one exception to this rule was Yugoslavia, where the fierce independence and radicalism of Josip Broz Tito’s communist partisans “caused as much concern in Moscow as it did in Washington” (247).

Taken together, the developments on the ground in places like Italy, along with the understandings achieved with Stalin, allowed the Roosevelt Administration to take a more progressive political approach in its dealings with Western Europe. This ‘liberal turn,’ Buchanan argues, eventually brought Washington’s Mediterranean policy into conformity with the ideological war aims articulated in the Atlantic Charter and Four Freedoms. Finally able to put its previous dealings with the assorted ‘Quislings’ of the early years of the war behind it, and free too to put greater pressure on Franco’s Spain now that it was clear to all concerned that Germany was indeed going to lose the war, Washington was at last able to seize the moral high ground. This allowed the Roosevelt Administration to bury the actual history of its political intervention in the Mediterranean deeply and permanently—at least in terms of its popular political perception—with the result that its policies in the region could take their rightful place in the narrative of the ‘Good War’ (247).

Buchanan’s book—which is well written and well researched—makes for fascinating reading. Perhaps its only shortcoming stems from the author’s treatment of the Roosevelt Administration’s push for ‘bi-lateral free trade,’ which, while important, and driven in part by American business interests, was also part of a much larger effort to secure a *multilateral* freer trade regime under the auspices of U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull’s Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act. For Hull and his adherents in the State Department, these bilateral agreements were but a means to achieve multilateral ends; they constitute an important part of U.S. foreign economic policy during the war, which Buchanan alludes to in his discussion of American promotion of the ‘Open Door,’ but never quite fully addresses.

This is an important work. It not only fundamentally changes our understanding of the Roosevelt administration's wartime policy in the Mediterranean, but also places America's involvement in this region within the larger military, political and economic context of the war. Thanks to Buchanan's efforts, this much maligned and oft-overlooked "peripheral theatre," may now take its rightful place as an integral part of the overarching effort to win the war in Europe.

Author's Response by Andrew Buchanan, University of Vermont

I would like to thank all five reviewers for their close and attentive reading of *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II* and for their insightful comments and criticisms. All five agree that the existing master narrative of the war in the Mediterranean—a narrative crafted by “disgruntled U.S. generals” (Douglas Porch) and “court historians” (David Woolner)—is in need of revision. To various degrees, they are all open to my argument that the United States did in fact have a grand strategic orientation to the Mediterranean during World War II, even if its precise nature and scope remains a matter of debate. In this light, the reviewers raise numerous important points of difference and probe areas of unclarity, but it seems most productive to take their comments as contributions to an ongoing discussion rather than as points requiring specific rebuttal. In this brief reply, then, I restrict my comments to one overarching issue and four questions of detailed interpretation.

The most substantial challenge to my thesis raised here comes in the form of Porch’s astute probing of my use of the concept of ‘grand strategy.’ My intention in using the term ‘grand strategy’ is to capture what Mary Barbier refers to as Franklin D. Roosevelt’s focus on the “big picture,” and my approach rests, as Woolner notes, on an examination of “all aspects of American policy,” integrating its military, political, and economic elements into a “multi-faceted and multi-layered” approach to the Mediterranean basin. The integration of these elements enables us to see how America’s postwar predominance in the Mediterranean did not, as Porch suggests, “come about by default,” but was the product of a conscious effort driven forward from the very highest levels of the American government. This is easy to assert but hard to prove. As Williamson Murray has argued, grand strategy is not a “recipe” or a blueprint, but an “idiosyncratic process” that gives rise to a broad line of march, the precise contours of which can often only become fully evident with hindsight.¹ This definition may seem like an evasion, particularly because it inevitably leads to an evaluation of intent in the light of outcome. In reality, however, this is the only way that grand strategy can work, particularly where a rising power is extending its influence into a complex, war-riven, and highly fluid region, and when the unexpected contingencies of battle can upend the best-laid plans.

As I suggest in the book, rather different criteria apply once predominance has been established and a new hegemonic power is working to organize and defend its position. This is the framework within which the National Security Council was established in 1947 (272–273). During the wartime rise of American power, however, grand strategy could not simply proceed from a master plan drawn up (and carefully documented) by top-level leaders and then executed by their agents on the ground. It must necessarily have had a more improvisational and provisional character. My argument here rests, as Avshalom Rubin underscores, on an appreciation of Roosevelt’s ability to keep the desired postwar order in sight even as he navigated the turbulent and unpredictable rapids of war (Rubin, 2). Roosevelt was guided in this process by what I refer to as a grand strategic *impulse*, a ‘vision thing’ that sought the establishment of a capitalist, liberal, and American-led postwar Mediterranean that would be embedded in a similarly-structured world order. ‘Impulse’ may not be the best word, but I use it in an attempt to capture the messy reality in which the economic and political imperative to create a new American-led order was connected to the actual establishment of that order by a series of feedback loops that were themselves shaped by complex

¹ Williamson Murray, “Thoughts on Grand Strategy,” in Williamson Murray, Richard Hart Sinnreich, and James Lacey (eds.), *The Shaping of Grand Strategy: Policy, Diplomacy, and War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9, 10.

contingencies. These contingencies included both unpredictable outcomes on the field of battle and shifting networks of political relationships with both allies and adversaries.²

From this point of view, Roosevelt’s “inconsistencies and ad hocery” did not “undermine[d] his vision,” as Porch suggests, but were on the contrary indispensable to its realization. As Woolner notes, Roosevelt’s capacity to make grand strategy his “personal policy,” juggling numerous and often apparently contradictory elements while keeping his eyes fixed on the horizon, was the essence of his leadership. That is not to suggest that everything was well executed. Far from it. America’s war in the Mediterranean was replete with its fair share of blunders, missteps, and downright errors; indeed, looking at the Allied military campaign in Italy, one can agree with Porch that American strategy was successful “despite the fact that it was poorly executed.” The bigger point, however, is that Roosevelt and his senior colleagues kept moving forward towards their desired goals *despite* the military and political difficulties on the ground. In this sense, my ‘respect’ for Roosevelt’s skill is by no means as “grudging” as Rubin suggests—although, of course, respect does not necessarily imply agreement or approval.

This touches on a broader question of method. I am happy to own the “essentially Marxist argument” that Rubin attributes to me, with the proviso that this is the Karl Marx who wrote that “men make their own history [...] but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.”³ In this sense, my work is an attempt to explicate some of the complex linkages between determinism (the rise of American economic and military power), agency (the actions of individual human beings, including those of Roosevelt and other leaders), and contingency (particularly the inherent chanciness of military affairs). Not surprisingly, I do not see this methodology as a ‘throwback,’ to the Wisconsin school, but as a contribution that points towards achieving greater (and more complex) integration of various levels of historical analysis.

Moving on to some brief comments on more specific questions. Firstly, all five reviewers acknowledge the attention that I give to Soviet policy, and recognize the importance of bringing it more to the center of the Mediterranean stage: as Dan Plesch notes, Roosevelt’s “open handed” approach to Stalin was crucial to the establishment of stable “Western-oriented coalitions” throughout the region. Joseph Stalin’s policy here was not as “incongruous” as Porch suggests. On the contrary, Moscow’s stance in the Mediterranean, and in particular its explicit instructions to local communist parties not to take advantage of wartime chaos to launch bids for power, flowed from the essentially defensive character of Soviet Russian policy. I do not say this to prettify Stalin’s police state, but simply to observe that the defense of that state, and of the power and privileges of its ruling elite, ranked far higher in the Kremlin’s priorities than did any notion of extending the socialist revolution. From this point of view, the division of Europe sketched out at Teheran set the framework for the establishment of American hegemony in the Mediterranean and Western Europe.

Secondly, the establishment of American predominance required the forging of suitable relationships with emerging postwar governments throughout the region. As Rubin underscores—and I, perhaps,

² Warren Kimball gets at a similar idea in his discussion of Roosevelt’s “relaxed but unshakeable Americanism.” Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 198.

³ Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979) Vol. 11, 103.

underemphasized—this process required *both* American military power (and in Italy an increasingly American-led military government) *and* the forging of close working relationships with national elites. As Geir Lundestad has argued, this new order was to a significant extent an “empire by invitation.”⁴ My point, however, is that the ‘invitations’ were issued in the context of American military supremacy, and their appeal to national elites was sweetened by large-scale American economic assistance. This understanding, as I stress in the book, speaks to a concept of hegemony that *combines* a claim to political, moral, and cultural leadership with the blunt assertion of military and economic predominance (3). Both Woolner and Plesch rightly point to aspects of the exercise of American hegemony through multilateralism that I either downplayed or neglected entirely: Woolner emphasizes the importance of multilateral free trade over the bilateral trade agreements that I focus on, while Plesch stresses that Washington often spoke and acted on behalf of the putative United Nations. While these corrections do not alter my main argument, they are important nuances.

Thirdly, Plesch suggests that the book would have benefitted from a closer examination of the connections between the timing of Operation *Torch* and domestic political considerations in the United States. He is right. While Roosevelt was extremely sensitive to American public opinion, he was not driven by it. In this light, Plesch’s suggestion that (unspecified) “generals [who] leaned to the Republican Party” ensured that *Torch* was postponed until after the November 1942 midterm elections is surely misplaced. Roosevelt’s interest in an American intervention in North Africa dated back to the fall of 1940, and it was motivated by geopolitical concerns rather than the pursuit of partisan advantage. Moreover, while Roosevelt certainly hoped to reap electoral gains as the side product of a successful invasion, he was sanguine when army Chief of Staff George Marshall informed him that the invasion would have to take place after the midterm elections.⁵ Senior officers did not usually—and with the important exception of Douglas MacArthur—participate in party politics, and I know of no evidence that the officer corps as a whole ‘leaned’ to the Republican Party. In fact, many officers, like Marshall himself, studiously avoided partisan politics altogether. The big point here is that while Roosevelt certainly had his differences with his military chiefs, they centered not on party politics, but on his frustration with what he saw as their narrowly focused opposition to his broad grand strategic vision. Moreover, as the war went on—and after Roosevelt had won the decisive battle over the large-scale commitment of American forces to the Mediterranean—these tensions diminished to the point of vanishing.

Fourthly and finally, a few comments on the American capture of Rome in June 1944. Here, Porch suggests, my book lurches off into a world of “conjecture.” If that means advancing an unproven (and perhaps, given Roosevelt’s well-known aversion to minutes and notes, inherently unprovable) hypothesis to explain one of the most controversial episodes of the Mediterranean war—General Mark Clark’s decision to disobey direct orders from his immediate superior in order to launch his own successful bid to capture Rome—then I plead guilty. Like all good hypotheses, however, this one is grounded in the available evidence, including Clark’s often-overlooked meeting with Roosevelt right before the launch of the campaign. The direct and immediate *political* consequence of Clark’s military action was the removal of Pietro Badoglio’s conservative government

⁴ See Geir Lundestad, “Empire By Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1986), 263-277.

⁵ See Matthew Moten, *Presidents and Their Generals: An American History of Command in War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014), 217–218.

and its replacement by a liberal-Communist coalition under Ivanoe Bonomi. This new government, as Washington well knew, would be amenable to forging close ties with the Americans, whereas the previous Badoglio government had conformed closely to Churchill's conservative vision. The violence of Churchill's reaction to this American-sponsored *coup de main*, conducted while Clark's orders excluded all British civilian officials from Rome, indicate that he was in no doubt that the removal of Badoglio signaled a marked decline in British influence and a further step towards the consolidation of American predominance. These are, as Porch points out, weighty matters. But my conclusions offer a coherent explanation of Clark's blatant insubordination—usually attributed, rather unconvincingly, to his vanity and hunger for publicity—and of the remarkable fact that he got away with it. I do not deny that this explanation involves a leap of conjecture, but it is a leap, as Barbier points out in relation to my overall methodology, that is grounded in the careful intertwining of political and military narratives.

Once again I would like to thank the five reviewers for their hard work, and Tom Maddux and Diane Labrosse at H-Diplo for pulling this roundtable together; in the light of these comments and contributions, I trust that this will be the beginning of a lively and fruitful discussion.