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Review of Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783

Michael F. Russo

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, mrusso1@lsu.edu

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Your affiliation: Louisiana State University Libraries—Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Phone: (225) 578-6823

E-mail address: mrusso1@lsu.edu

Title of the book: *Three Victories and a Defeat: the Rise and Fall of the First British Empire*

Author or editor of the book: Brendan Simms

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Review

Author: Brendan Simms

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Britain's empire and security, according to Oxford University historian Brendan Simms (*The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714-1837*, *The Impact of Napoleon : Prussian High Politics, Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Executive, 1797-1806*, et al.), were not so much the results of its vaunted and storied navy, but were, rather, the consequences of its many canny alliances on the continent. To forestall the always-anticipated attack by France, Britain's Hanoverian kings cloaked their nation with an ever-shifting canopy of ententes, sometimes with the Dutch, sometimes the Russians, but always with someone who had an interest in containing the dreaded Bourbons.

The defeat of Britain by its American colonies marked the end of that phase of British history as well as a definite downturn in the empire's fortunes. Yet again, Europe played a pivotal role in deciding England's fate. Britain simply could not defend itself from the east while attacking to the west, and the colonists knew it.

Professor Simms has created a prolifically annotated and vividly detailed recounting of the eighteenth century watershed that temporarily sundered the British empire. It is an account that is profoundly scholarly, yet still accessible to the non-scholar.

Recommended for academic and public libraries.

Michael F. Russo
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana