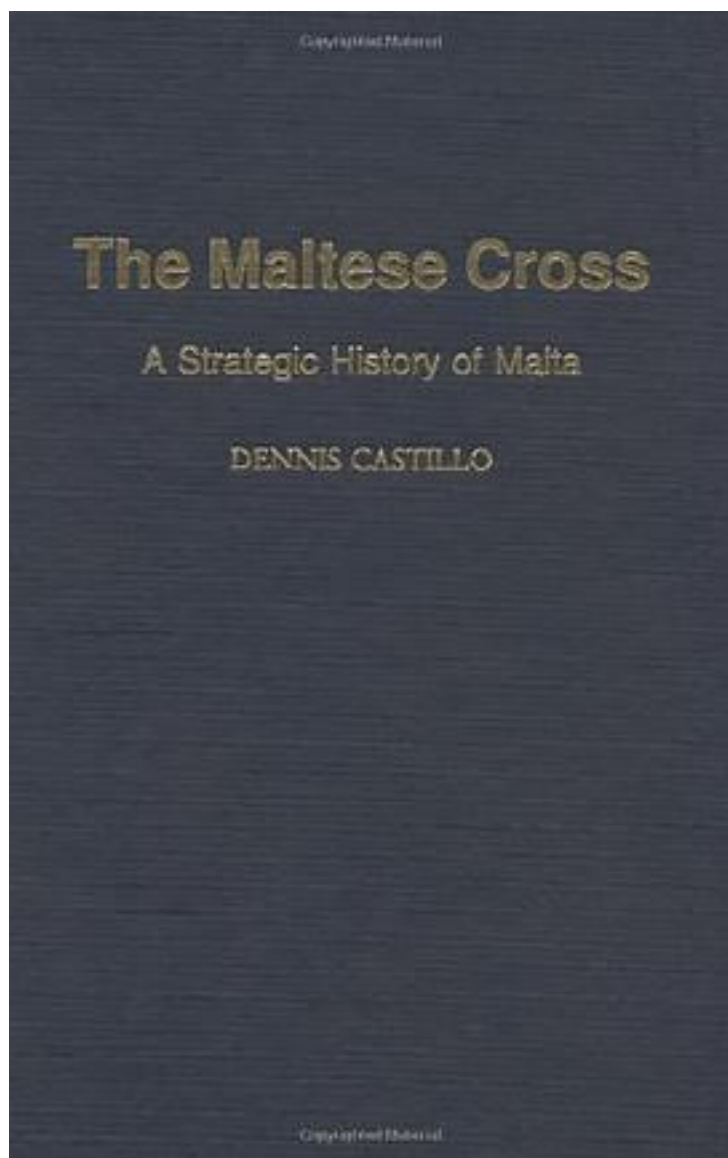


The Maltese Cross



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出版者:Greenwood Pub Group

出版时间:2005-11

装帧:HRD

isbn:9780313323294

Malta is one of the smallest nations in the world, yet has one of the longest histories of any country. The accidents of geology and geography produced an island at the center of the Mediterranean with a large harbor and ample resources for the construction of fortifications. As a result, the Maltese bore witness to many of the great conflicts in world history, from the Punic Wars, to Napoleon's conquests, to the North African and Mediterranean campaigns during World War II. Covering the entire sweep of the island's history, Castillo argues that not only was Malta's geographic location critical, its people played a crucial role in many of these struggles. The Maltese contributed largely to the defense of the islands when invaded by the Ottoman Turks in 1565, and the people rebelled against French rule after Napoleon evicted the Knights of Malta. During World War II, Malta became a strategic hub for the Allies' Mediterranean campaign, and the islands endured some of the most sustained and intensive bombing during the war - up to 15 tons of bombs per square mile. It includes chapters on the Knights of Malta, the 1565 siege, Napoleon's invasion, Malta's role in World War II, and modern Malta.

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