

Book Reviews

David Abulafia. *The Boundless Sea: A Human History of the Oceans*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, www.oup.com, 2019. xxxii+1050 pp., 32 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, index. US \$39.95, cloth. ISBN 978-0-19993-498-0.

There is a particular pleasure in a good, big book—one that will carry the reader through the weeks, months, and seasons—even a pandemic—with the turning of its pages. Its very ungainliness and heft become assets, harbingers of the delights in store. Its breadth and depth is tonic in a distracted and noisy media landscape. Its vastness and sweep hold the makings of an unforgettable intellectual experience, and the reader genuinely regrets finishing it. Of such is David Abulafia's *The Boundless Sea*. Much acclaimed in the U.K. and the United States, it bids fair to stand as definitive for many years.

Abulafia, emeritus professor of Mediterranean history at Cambridge University, was already a figure of considerable scholarly consequence before the publication of this latest effort, thanks to his 1988 biography of Frederick II and his award-winning 2011

The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean, which *The Guardian* called “stunningly compendious.” In *The Boundless Sea*, Abulafia casts his net much wider, attempting nothing less than a balanced, or “rounded” (xxiii) as he calls it, study of how humankind developed along the shores of the world's great oceans and then connected them through travel and trade. Smaller seas, bays, and rivers figure only incidentally, and the over-emphasized Mediterranean “lurks mostly offstage.” (xxv)

Abulafia's heroes are not the oft-lauded explorers who first discovered distant lands and revealed the possibility of long-distance travel, but rather those who came after, the merchants who developed the trade networks that shaped the world. These people took significant risks, including foul weather, pirates, and political hostility, in order to deliver their cargoes and bring back coveted wares. It seems that from earliest times, people have yearned for far-away products and contrived the means to supply them. Medieval Europeans were desperate for spices like cloves and pepper; Red Sea denizens imported coconuts, sesame, mung beans, and gooseberries from India; and the Chi-

nese amassed Peruvian silver while their junks awaiting Spanish buyers in Manila harbour were the “equivalent of a floating department store” with “fresh and preserved fruits, decorated writing cases, gilded benches, live birds and pack animals.” (624)

Unfortunately, not all trade was so benign, as evidenced by the horrific centuries-long traffic in enslaved Africans to the Americas, where sugar and later cotton plantations required prodigious labour.

Given the vast stretches of time and sea that are his subject, Abulafia abjures original research, rightly noting that a book like his simply “cannot be based on close reading of the millions of archival sources that exist.” (909) Rather he sticks to secondary sources, books mostly, the majority published post-2000, “quite a few even while this book was being written” (913). This is convincing evidence that the early twenty-first century is indeed a Golden Age for maritime research and writing. Clear maps and four colour gathers enhance the text.

Abulafia begins with the Pacific, which he calls the “oldest ocean,” (3) and the early Polynesian seafarers who performed astonishing feats of navigation. This was “a largely interconnected world,” he writes, “consisting of atolls, coral reefs and volcanic islands: a very diverse world, offering very different opportunities to those who settled, and thereby providing a great stimulus to local and even long-distance exchange.” (5) By reading subtle variations in light, clouds, waves, water colour, and bird flight, Polynesian sailors comfortably steered their outriggers across awesome seascapes “without any technology at all, just the super-computer of the human brain.” (17) During his Pacific voyages, Captain James Cook marveled at the navigational ability of

Tupaia, a Tahitian native he befriended and took on board the *Endeavour*. Even far from land, Tupaia seemed to have an “almost instinctive awareness” (17) of the vessel’s location and relation to dozens of distant islands.

Shifting focus to the Indian Ocean, Abulafia paints more settled shorelines and sophisticated trade networks. Mariners there first had to master the seasonal monsoon winds before they could safely sail, but once they learned those patterns, even distant empires managed to make connections and establish reliable trade routes. This led to some exotic scenes, such as African elephants delivered to the shores of the third-century Red Sea by special “short, broad, deep, sailing ships called *elephantegoi*.” (111) Throughout his text, Abulafia uses contemporary archaeology to buttress his arguments, especially shipwreck finds. These intriguing time capsules bear remarkable witness to the extent and nature of maritime trade. For example, Roman wine amphorae have been found in India, and a Chinese wreck off the coast of Java yielded “55,000 ceramic objects” as well as coins and a mirror. Interestingly, medieval Chinese coins, which had a hole in the center, were strung together in large bunches, since they were of so little individual value.

Abulafia’s treatment of the long European and northern African Atlantic shores and their peoples will be more familiar to Western historians. He pays particularly close attention to the Vikings and their bold forays into the north Atlantic and Baltic, but notes that these shores were the “the outer edge of the known world, whereas the Indian Ocean was already functioning as the link between the Mediterranean and the South China Sea, between the high cultures of the Roman Empire and those of the Far East.” (338) But even during the

primitive days, Abulafia demonstrates connections revealed by archaeology. These include Mediterranean artifacts on the Portuguese coast and an Atlantic roasting spit in faraway Cyprus.

After 1492 the Portuguese and Spanish, followed by the English and Dutch, rose to a startling reach and influence throughout the world. This is nowhere better demonstrated than by Spain's Manila galleons. These hulking ships linked the Philippines "to China and Japan, but also to Mexico and Peru; goods transported across Central America reached Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico, were ferried to Havana, and were then carried across the Atlantic to Seville and Cádiz." (617) Again and again throughout this extraordinary book, the reader is treated to such staggering achievements, as well as to the diverse peoples who made them happen. Then as now, folks got around.

The book's final chapters build to a crescendo of sorts with the completion of the Suez and Panama Canals, containerization, the cruise industry, and air travel, all of which served to flatten barriers and make what were once dangerous, arduous enterprises seem routine. With a flourish worthy of Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*, Abulafia contends that "the ocean world of the last four millennia" has "ceased to exist." (908)

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Sebastian Bruns and Sarandis Papadopoulos (eds.) *Conceptualizing Maritime & Naval Strategy: Festschrift for Captain Peter M. Swartz, United States Navy (ret.)*. Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, www.nomos-elibrary.de, 2020. 373 pp., ISBN 978-3-8487-5753-4. (E-book ISBN 978-3-8452-9915-0.)

This *Festschrift*, besides offering a well-deserved homage to Captain Peter Swartz, highlights the importance of strategic thinking for naval and maritime strategy, bringing together important authors from several backgrounds and nationalities for this exercise.

To create a new national maritime strategy is a herculean work. Strategy lies both in the political and military dimension, being a congregation of political objectives by means of the disposition of military forces. Therefore, a "Maritime Strategy" must follow a country's national defense objectives, but also its naval policies regarding the budget and the needs of the navy. Naval officers, strategists, analysts, researchers, and decision-makers directly face the difficulties and the pressure surrounding the process of creation, and every step must be justified logically through a comprehensive analysis. There are two tools/exercises that can be used as part of this effort: to resort to works and sources about "making Maritime Strategy" or to review past errors in history. What *Conceptualizing Maritime & Naval Strategy* does is invite the reader to take part in these exercises, reinforcing the need to create more documentation around the essentials of maritime strategy; and this correlates directly with the life of Captain Peter Swartz and his importance to the field.

Swartz is famous not only for his naval career, but also for his career post-retirement. During his time in the US Navy, Swartz was an advisor for the South Vietnamese Navy during the Vietnam War. He also worked on the staff of the Rear Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Jr, who was later designated CNO (Chief of Naval Operations) of the US Navy. Captain Swartz also played a crucial role in elaborating a new maritime strategy for the navy during the 1980s, one of the hardest times for the United

States Navy during the Cold War.

Swartz seems to have had a restless spirit, researching tirelessly among the issues around naval and maritime strategies after he retired, working at Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) for more than 25 years. His legacy personifies the unification of practice and theory. Today he is one most celebrated participants in the field of maritime and naval strategy, having influenced numerous scholars, especially the editors and the authors of the book.

Developing a concise maritime strategy means subjecting it to a full analytical process, not just the single perspective of a leader and what he thinks a navy needs to do. Using the history of Project SIXTY, the book illustrates how important the structure of the Navy is to the process. Established by Admiral Zumwalt in the 1970s, Project SIXTY was an initial step towards reforming the US Navy. Without giving too much of the story away, Zumwalt challenged a group of officers to devise an action plan for the USN, analyzing its means, ends, and needs and create a strategy within 60 days. While not completely “bulletproof,” their work established reform within the naval structure, and motivated debate about maritime strategy. It also serves as an example for other nations seeking to improve aspects of their own maritime strategy.

The book presents several Cold War case studies, but rather than focusing on the past, they reflect today’s reality. We are once more living within the context of a great power struggle where competition among China, Russia and the United States is slowly increasing. Thus, it is reasonable to explore the dimensions and consequences of the Cold War Era, searching out lessons and questions that can help us to understand today’s dynamics (many resulting from the Cold War) and prepare for what is

coming.

The major flaw of the book is the heterogeneity of the backgrounds and nationalities of the various contributors. There could have been more perspectives from outside the Global North—only one article offers a perspective outside the European-US case studies, presenting the challenges of *India’s Naval and Maritime Power* (241). This, however, does not take away from the basic quality of the work: the text flows easily and the articles present a range of interesting perspectives that encourage the reader to learn more about the processes and issues of around maritime strategy in another nations.

Professor Colin Gray (former director of the Centre for Strategic Studies at Reading University) once pointed out that the problem facing those who study or are responsible for defense planning or national strategies is that no one can predict the future, nor how the wars of the future will be fought. The only thing that one can do, is study, research the sources and the good works available. There is so much to know, and yet civilian and military institutions from around the world have produced so little on the topic of maritime strategy. Initiatives like this Festschrift must not only be praised, but encouraged. I look forward to the fourth volume, further exploring the maritime strategy, issues and challenges elsewhere in the world, especially in the Global South, where there is a different dynamic involving geopolitics and international relations.

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Timothy J. Demy (ed.), *The U.S. Naval Institute on Arctic Naval Operations*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2019. xii+200 pp., notes,

index. US \$24.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-68247-479-2. (E-book available.)

Climatic change and global warming are determining the melting of part of the Arctic Ocean, with profound consequences, both from a geopolitical and an economic point of view. All countries bordering the Arctic Ocean are preparing a series of strategies to face a possible scenario, in which both the Northern Sea and the Western Passage will be usable for the passage of ships, and the exploitation of the natural resources present in this part of the world will be possible.

This book, edited by Timothy J. Demy, a Professor of Military Ethics at the US Naval War College, is comprised of 22 articles, and addresses concerns of American geopolitical analysts about an imminent increase in military actions around the Arctic Ocean. The first threat to US security is represented by a Russian territorial claim over the North Pole, culminating in 2007, when a Russian deep submersible, used for a research expedition, planted the Russian flag on the sea floor under the geographic North Pole. Even if this wasn't an institutional act, its propagandistic effect has raised the attention of other countries. Moreover, Russia has increased its military action in the Arctic.

Chapters 6 and 12 offer a detailed view of Russian military development including increased strategic bomber flights along the Norwegian coast from 14 in 2006 to 97 in 2008. The impressive number of 41 submarines and 38 ships suggests Russian naval power, along with the largest fleet of icebreakers, including six with nuclear power, nine large icebreakers and many smaller ones.

Being the largest country bordering the Arctic Ocean supports Russia's claim of sovereignty over the Northern

Sea Route, that consists of the maritime passage from Kara Strait (dividing the Barents Sea from the Kara Sea) to the Bering Strait. In 2010, a Russian icebreaker travelled along the route, while in 2011, the oil tanker *Tikhonov* undertook the transit. A 2013 Russian military action in the Barents Sea confirmed its leadership status in the Arctic.

China's Arctic role, even without a border on the Arctic Ocean is generating concerns from both the United States and Russia. Chinese interests, that are well analyzed in Chapter 19, range from the need for natural resources to the possibility of opening a Polar Silk Road, that could minimize shipping time for cargos, and avoid the problematic Malacca Strait. Until now, China has just had one icebreaker, but the volume of investments in Greenland, Iceland and Russia has grown considerably in the last years.

Canada is another country with a large Arctic border, whose claim of sovereignty over the Northwest Passage has not been recognized by the US and Europe. The military operation NAR-WHAL in 2013 reiterated Canada's interests in Arctic resources, while some territorial disputes with other countries remain dormant, for example, the US-Canadian Beaufort Sea controversy, or the dispute between Canada, Denmark and Russia over Lomonosov Ridge, an underwater mountain ridge that splits the Arctic in half.

Denmark and Norway have respectively increased the capability of their Arctic fleets, while Iceland, after receiving financial aids from Russia in 2008, has the perspective of becoming a future Arctic trans-shipment hub, under Russian influence.

In the face of all these initiatives, how is US preparing for a future opening of the Arctic front? According to many articles contained in this book,

the US situation is a disaster. After 1966, the US Navy transferred all its icebreakers to Coast Guard, and of the three icebreakers that remain, only the *Polar Star* and the *Polar Sea* are capable of handling heavy ice. Moreover, both icebreakers were built 30 years ago, and the cost to refit them, to ensure another 25 years of service, amounts to \$400 million. To cover the Arctic border, the US defensive systems consists also of an aircraft/missile detection system, and of a fleet of submarines that can operate under the Arctic Ocean. According to the objective fixed in the National Security Presidential Directive 66, however, this system still appears too weak.

In Chapter 8, David Auerswald criticizes the US Navy's inactivity on the Arctic front. He identifies three main points: first, the US is too sure of a cooperative atmosphere among the Arctic countries, based on the slow pace of militarization and on the predominant role of international organizations, such as the Arctic Council, and the UNCLOS, that have represented the legal Arctic framework since 1982; secondly, according to the Arctic geostrategic environment, the goals fixed by the US are unachievable; and finally, there is a lack of investment in the American Arctic defensive system. He suggests that a short-term solution to ensure Arctic security lies in the use of solar-powered drones. Provided with sensors, they could monitor the Arctic territories without an excessive cost. Collaboration between the Coast Guard and Navy could ensure the launch of air and sea missions, while the submarines, with their stealth characteristics, could be used to provide a large number of personnel and equipment to a specific location.

This book, which also contains three articles about historical expedi-

tions to the North Pole, is an important document for all scholars, analysts and decision-makers interested in geopolitical and economic policies around the Arctic Ocean and in US defensive strength on this future front.

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John Dillon. *All At Sea. Naval Support for the British Army during the American Revolutionary War*. Warwick, UK: Helion & Co., www.helion.co.uk, 2019. 304 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-91286-667-0.

During the War for American Independence what was the distance between subject and citizen? The gap between the two conditions was more than a state of political philosophy. It was the Atlantic Ocean, all 3,000 miles of it! For the Americans, it was a space that held the promise of self-determination. For the British, it was a breach that had to be bridged to retain control of a vital portion of their empire. During the Age of Sail, the attempted imposition of King George III's will across that void would spur the most ambitious attempt to supply an invading army in hostile territory with all the accretments of war, as well as to support their movements to various theatres of battle and eventual retreat.

In an interesting examination of the American Revolution, Dillon addresses the challenges faced by the British navy in supplying and supporting the land forces of the king. He adds an intriguing facet to the historiography of the American Revolution with his contribution focusing on the underappreciated and understudied aspect of logistics at war.

At the end of the French and Indi-

an War, also known as the Seven Years' War, the British Navy stood ascendant upon the seas. This victory was costly, however, and required rapid demobilization and new sources of funding to balance the books in London. Demobilization was easy, simply releasing thousands upon thousands of sailors back to their homes and civilian pursuits and placing ships in ordinary. To generate revenue, Parliament passed numerous taxes that were resented by the colonial population who had to pay them but had no direct participation in their creation. The seeds of revolution were planted thousands of miles from where they grew. When war broke out, the British navy was still the largest in the world, but it was a shadow of its former self.

The British army in the colonies soon found itself without a source of local supplies. Americans, who had assisted their imperial cousins in so many other wars where France was the enemy, now withheld their succour. As British and Hessian forces rapidly increased in British North America, the demand for war material increased concomitantly. At first, the army and navy competed for civilian supply ships, raising prices for shipping. This issue was ultimately resolved when the naval bureaucracy, which was more fit for the assignment, took over the task. Now, the burdensome charge of supplying an army and navy at war was laid solely upon the naval administration.

There are many issues regarding supply ships. First, the internal competition that created conflict between the army and navy. Ships were critical in moving food and war material to the colonies in support of both services. The underdeveloped colonies did not have the infrastructure to support tens of thousands of troops, and numerous hulls were converted to barracks for

troops or warehouses for storage. This (mis)use of a limited resource kept it from its intended purpose, supply. Thus the availability of transportation vessels fell, limiting the tonnage available for the actual movement of desperately needed supplies and personnel. Many of these issues led to rising costs.

As the French, Spanish and Dutch entered the war against Britain, not all necessarily supporting the Americans, the British had to use their forces and resources to protect home waters, Gibraltar, the Caribbean, and other imperial possessions. These considerations, again, limited the number of vessels available for North American duty. Dillon adequately expresses the multiple factors that went into the calculus of setting a hierarchy of importance for supply and convoy decisions. Additionally, he delves into the naval and sometimes combined command of various campaigns and expeditions, illuminating the successes and limits of their capacity.

The text is well footnoted; there is a healthy bibliography and index. The bibliography can be plumbed for those who wish to do deeper research into the issue. Maps are appropriate and effective when viewed in concert with the content. Considering that the Atlantic was the logistical hurdle being bridged, and home waters as well as Gibraltar and the Caribbean are given account, an overall map would have been helpful to visualize and appreciate the logistic quandaries in guarding and provisioning those regions in conjunction with British North America.

As an American, this reviewer found it easy to discern some British bias. John Paul Jones was not a privateer; he was a duly commissioned officer in the Navy of the United States. There are some geographic errors, placing Charleston in Georgia and Nantuck-

et Roads—is there a Nantucket Roads?—in Boston harbour, but these are minor. They could have been eliminated with better editing, as in some instances, the geography is correct, and in others, not. Minor quibbles for an otherwise fine monograph that synthesizes both original research and information from many secondary sources.

All at Sea, which is number 43 in the Helion *From Reason to Revolution 1721-1815* series that examines the changing nature of warfare during the period, should be of interest to any military or maritime historian. A distinctive study on the war as well as the logistical battles adds a creative perspective and appreciation to what the British navy and army had to contend with to fight an American rebellion cum worldwide conflict.

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Mark Jessop. *The Royal Navy in the Napoleonic Age. Senior Service 1800-1815*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword History, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2019. xi+180 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. UK £19.99, US \$39.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-52672-037-5.

As the title suggests, Mark Jessop explores the British navy's role in Britain's struggle against Napoleonic France and its allies in the first 15 years of the nineteenth century. The navy's primary role of protecting the island nation, its colonies and trade justified the idea that it was the senior service, dominating the army in terms of national importance. The cover image, an isolated Napoleon standing at the stern of HMS *Bellerophon* in 1815, with the surrounding water of Plymouth Sound packed with boat loads of civilians straining to get a

glimpse of the beaten enemy, symbolizes the navy's deliverance of Britain from the threat of foreign dominance. The title and the cover augur well, but the book fails to deliver.

Jessop begins by touching on the Battle of Copenhagen (1807) and the subsequent collapse of the Northern Alliance, the change of government in England, the Treaty of Amiens' short peace, and the six Navy Board commissions to examine corruption within the dockyards and supply chain. He moves to Napoleon's political and military machinations on the continent, followed by a return to war, the great increase of British ships-of-war and seamen, the Trafalgar campaign, and the naval tensions in the Baltic. The long blockade of the French and Spanish fleets after Trafalgar, the trade war between Britain and France and its allies, the war with America in 1812, the British condemnation of the slave trade, and the effects on Britain at the end of two decades of war round out the topics covered within the book. Most of these elements have their own chapter.

The author begins and ends each chapter with a fictional conversation, or series of fictionalized events, that serve to introduce and cradle the factual elements of the topic under discussion. The fictional characters are there to provide the reader with a sense of the emotional experience of people who lived through the circumstances, without any insight into the larger picture. They dominate the chapters. For example, the Battle of Trafalgar chapter follows "a rather large amateur poet and his even larger wife" (39) through their visit to Plymouth, as he attempts to write an epic poem on the victory and death of Nelson. The reader is not only given the description of the poet, his wife, and the events in their day, but many lines of rather poor poetry. There is only a

glimpse of Trafalgar.

The main issue with the book, however, is Jessop's choice of largely nineteenth-century sources to tell the fictional accounts and to present the historical facts. The most recent book in his bibliography is Alfred Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire 1793-1812* (1902). Not only is it the only book written in the twentieth century, but there are no current references that examine the era and address the shortcomings of earlier sources. This is painfully evident when he discusses manning of the navy and deals with the press gang (37-8). The present debate over the number of volunteers versus pressed men is absent, and we are left with the idea that the navy pressed all its crews, period. He also perpetuates the earlier generalization that there was high percentage of non-British men aboard, since refuted by current research.

Another problem with older sources is the errors in their recounting of events. When Jessop discusses the defeat of British frigates by American frigates early in the War of 1812, for example, he states that the USS *Constitution* had 32 guns while its opponent, HMS *Java* carried 38, a decided advantage (82). Yet a few pages later, when discussing the American frigates as a group, the *Constitution's* armament is correctly noted as 44 guns (89). The first source was M. Clark, a contemporary American writer (1813) striving to make the battle more heroic than it was. The second rating of the American frigates comes from H. Kimball who, writing a bit later (1836), got his figures correct. It is interesting to note that Jessop does not mention Sir Philip Bowes Vere Broke whose HMS *Shannon* defeated the US Frigate *Chesapeake*, 1 June 1813. In his account of the British burning President Madison's

mansion in Washington in August 1814, he erroneously refers to it as the White House, although it wasn't called that until 1901.

The factual side of each chapter is overpowered by the fiction, and without thorough analysis of the events and developments, the reader is left with little more than lists of ships, expenses, and extremely brief engagement details. There is minimal insight into the political wrangling, both within Britain and between European nations that raged throughout the era, affecting the course of the war and the Royal Navy's assignments. This drops the book into the murky void between non-fiction and historical fiction. Some less informed readers might have difficulty determining where the creative writing ends and the facts begin.

There are 17 images of nineteenth-century prints related to various events covered in the text, and 13 maps of locations relevant to the stories in various chapters, all of which are placed in the centre of the book. The useful index is extensive. As noted, the bibliography features late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources on the British navy, the French and Napoleonic Wars, and the War of 1812, which might be useful for students looking for a list of these sources. Anyone with prior reading or study into the events covered in the book will find nothing new here. It might possibly motivate an interested secondary school student to pursue the study of this dynamic period for the British navy and nation.

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P. Whitney Lackenbauer, et al. *China's Arctic Ambitions and What They Mean for Canada*. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, www.press.ucalgary.

ca, 2018. 274 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. CDN \$34.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-55238-901-0.

This collection of essays offers a detailed study of the “opportunity school” of Arctic development thought, championed by Lackenbauer and his compatriots, and contrasted with the “Conflict School,” driven by military historian David Wright and political historian Rob Huebert of the University of Calgary. These two scholars are also known as “alarmists,” who believe that Chinese grand strategists are operating counter to Canada’s Arctic interests. Commentators such as Lackenbauer and his fellow authors argue that Canada’s national interests would be complemented by Chinese cooperation, an outcome that would be characterised as attaining mutual benefit. It is in this bifurcated analytical context that Lackenbauer, et al display their evidence, and form their argument.

A statement of Arctic protection, the Ilulissat Declaration (2008), informed the international community of the willingness of Arctic nations to abide by international law, and to avoid conflict amongst themselves, at least within the Arctic. It is curious that the authors have not mentioned this in their index. The Ilulissat Declaration rendered Chinese interests in the Arctic questionable, and the motivations of the Chinese government suspect. Chapter One points out that China’s Arctic ambitions are possibly being driven into confusion as the disconnect between China’s current Arctic interests and its historical foreign policy appears to have widened. In Chapter Two, the authors argue that rising Chinese scientific, commercial, and industrial interests in the Arctic illustrate that this non-Arctic (a state whose physical borders do *not* lie within the Arctic circle) nation is

working to spread its interests and influence globally. This suggests that should China gain a foothold in the Arctic, whether in the short term or in the long term, it could act upon the foreign and domestic policies of all Arctic states. Alarmists would point out that this is a security risk, especially for nations such as Canada, which has borders within the Arctic, and very little by way of Arctic defence. For all Canada could know, China could have an installation within the Arctic archipelago. Lackenbauer and his co-authors shrug this possibility off as needlessly alarmist, and in fact, argue that Chinese presence in the Arctic means that its commercial and industrial efforts could benefit northern states to a large degree.

Chapter Three is concerned with the legal implications of trans-Arctic shipping, and possible issues of national and international sovereignty, topics that the alarmist school of thought take seriously. It offers a detailed investigation of such substantive issues as exclusive economic zones (EEZ), national and international jurisdiction, as well as a curious discussion of how the international community can balance the needs of coastal state rights with the freedom of the seas. Chapter Four follows this argument, pointing out that most Arctic resources fall within the regions claimed by Arctic nations. Sweden, however, is an Arctic nation that does *not* have any access to the Arctic Ocean, casting doubts on whether it has any right to Arctic resources beyond its current territorial boundaries.

Chapter Five argues that while the Arctic Council has little or nothing to lose by welcoming China into its ranks as an observer, it has a great deal more to lose by preventing China from gaining membership. Canada’s open perspective toward China as an observer on the Council enables Cana-

da to study Chinese foreign strategy in an almost benign manner, particularly in terms of seabound transportation and trans-boundary pollutants.

Classifying *China's Arctic Ambitions* is a difficult task. Its authors and editors weave an optimistic perspective through the tapestry of analysis within the book. They pay something more than mere lip-service to the alarmist view vis-à-vis China's relationship with Canada, but it is not enough to ensure a realistic accounting of the tensions between the two nations. What was clearly needed was a member of the alarmist school of thought in the authors' circle to point out in more detail the dangers that the book fails to address or, more frequently, addresses too lightly. That having been said, *China's Arctic Ambitions* should be a core textbook in any class which addresses Canada and the Arctic, including regional North American and North Pacific topics. Despite failing to address alarmist perspectives to this reviewer's satisfaction, it remains a book well worth reading more than once, especially in light of current Canadian-Chinese relations.

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Ron Macdonald. *Deeper into the Darkness*. Dunbeath, Scotland: Whittles Publishing, www.whittlespublishing.com, 2018. xii+240 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, glossary. US \$25.95, UK £19.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-84995-360-3.

Wreck diving requires a flexible mind and imagination from the here and now to a time and place that once was. Surrounded by the sounds of the water, the diver enters a remarkable world. Depending on its environment, a wreck either remains as it was at the time of its

demise, or deteriorates as it is subjected to organisms, currents, divulging sands, and scrap-metal hunters.

In *Deeper into the Darkness*, the last in a diving trilogy, the author again tells stories about the maritime past, dividing his book in three parts. In the first, he discusses First World War wrecks around the United Kingdom. The second part focuses on the Pacific in the Second World War. Part 3 features the latest developments. The stories are accompanied by charts and photographs of various wrecks, as well as pictures taken during the action. As a bonus, QR Codes are inserted at a number of stories on wrecks and the dives. These allow the reader to go straight to the videos on You Tube and watch the dive on the wreck. Top-notch.

The author takes issue with the desecration of ship wrecks that are war graves such as those at Jutland from the First World War, and in the South China Sea and in the Java Sea from the Second World War.

The Battle of Jutland between the navies of the United Kingdom and Germany resulted in the loss of some 25 major warships. These wrecks constitute the graves of 8,648 sailors who perished. But they do not rest in peace. In the quest for scrap metal, salvage works have been carried out on 15 of these ships. In the South China Sea and the Java Sea, Second World War naval ships, like Britain's HMS *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* and several ships from the navy of the Netherlands have illegally disappeared into the furnace of commerce, without the slightest regard for the fact that the wrecks were considered war graves by the nations involved.

According to the author, each shipwreck, each cargo, each artefact lying on the bottom of the sea today still has a legal owner. Rights of ownership are not simply lost by abandonment.

On the other hand, the removal of the wrecks is a lost opportunity for divers to see the remnants of the past with their own eyes, and a note in their diver's log book.

Deeper into the Darkness is an excellent dive in the murky waters of history.

Jacob Bart Hak
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Ryan K. Noppen. *Osprey New Vanguard* #285. *The Royal Netherlands Navy of World War II*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2020. 48 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. UK £11.99, US \$19.00, CDN \$25.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-47288-4191-9.

The Royal Netherlands Navy (RNN) played a small part in naval activities during the Second World War—but from December 1941 to March 1942, its activities were very much in the news. In this new *Osprey* volume, Ryan K. Noppen continues his studies of lesser-known naval aspects of both world wars.

The Netherlands had once been a naval power but beginning with the Napoleonic Era and the consequent European peace, the Dutch government no longer felt the need for an expensive navy. Moreover, with the British navy just across the English Channel and Royal Navy bases at Singapore, maritime protection of both the Dutch homeland and the vital Dutch colonies of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) could be left to the Royal Navy. At the end of the nineteenth century, two developments forced the Netherlands to rethink its position on naval strategy and strength.

The first was the Second Boer War of 1899-1902 wherein Dutch public

opinion favoured the Afrikaans-speaking South African Boers over the British. Perhaps the Royal Navy would not be the best maritime guardian of Dutch interests. At the same time, the rise of Imperial Japan in Asia—Japanese victories in the 1894-95 Sino-Japanese War, the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War, and Japan's limited participation in the First World War—meant that the Imperial Japanese Navy was becoming a potentially powerful naval adversary and a threat to the Dutch East Indies. The Netherlands managed to stay neutral during the conflagration that was the First World War, but no matter what happened in Europe, Japan was THE potential future foe.

Accordingly, the Netherlands began to rebuild its navy. A budget-minded Parliament, however, coupled with the Great Depression of the 1930s meant that any sizeable increase in naval strength was out of the question. The RNN staffs decided on a risk theory—send the main elements of the RNN to defend the Dutch East Indies, in hopes that the RNN in that area would be supported by the British Royal Navy and perhaps the US Navy as well. Depression restrictions meant the Dutch navy was unable to build any surface ships larger than a light cruiser—and not many of those. The RNN therefore entered the Second World War with four light cruisers in two classes—*De Ruyter*, *Java*, *Sumatra*, and *Tromp*. A fifth light cruiser, *Jacob van Heemskerck*, was commissioned on 10 May 1940, the day that Germany invaded the Netherlands. In addition, the RNN had eight destroyers in two classes, and a larger submarine force. Elements of the Netherlands Navy, including the incomplete *Jacob van Heemskerck*, sailed to Britain and continued to serve the Allies until the end of the European War in May, 1945.

The major RNN theatre of surface operations was in the Dutch East Indies. *De Ruyter*, *Java*, *Sumatra*, and *Tromp*, seven destroyers, and 15 submarines comprised the RNN fleet there. The combats those vessels saw are well-known and chronicled in most histories of the Pacific War. (A recent full account of the RNN's combat in 1941-42 can be found in *Osprey Campaign #144: Java Sea 1942*, reviewed in *TMN/LMN*, vol. XXIX, #4, Fall, 2019.)

This book follows Noppen's usual style. He writes well and covers the subject appropriately. He discusses the historical background of the RNN prior to the Second World War, relates the classes of light cruisers, destroyers, and submarines, analyzes the risk theory that the RNN adopted, and briefly discusses the 1942 Java Sea campaign. The reader interested in more detail on the Java Sea campaign should refer to the Osprey book mentioned above or one of the many available works on the Pacific War.

In Osprey style, the book is heavily illustrated; photographs appear on every page and several colour illustrations add to the text. Colour plates of *Java*, *Tromp*, *Admiralen* and *Gerard Callenburgh* class destroyers, along with KXIV- and O 19-class submarines illustrate the main features of RNN equipment. The centre spread is a colour cutaway drawing of *De Ruyter*. Further colour plates of the naval battle for Rotterdam in May, 1940 and the February 1942 battle for the Badoeng Strait further highlight naval combat of the period.

The book could have been improved by a section devoted to the overall operational use of RNN assets throughout the war. Some of this information is available in the book, but it is located within captions to colour plates and thus, a bit hard to find. A brief

section relating the RNN cruisers, destroyers, and submarines post-1940 and post-1942 would have made this information clearer to the reader.

Overall, when read in conjunction with other books on the War at Sea from 1939-45 or on the Pacific War more specifically, this book can be recommended. It is a tribute to a small navy that fought hard when challenged.

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Jonathan D. Oates. *The Last Spanish Armada: Britain and the War of the Quadruple Alliance, 1718-1720*. Warwick, UK: Helion & Co., www.helion.co.uk, 2019. 184 pp., illustrations, index. UK £25.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-91286-661-8.

This book is an entry in the "Century of the Soldier" series and focuses on the period 1618-1721; namely, from the beginning of the Thirty Years War to the end of the Great Northern War, and the cusp of nearly twenty years of a theoretical greater European peace. It refers to the 1718 alliance between Austria, Britain, the Dutch Republic and France against Spain. Oates describes the war from an English perspective, beginning with the naval Battle of Cape Passaro in 1718 between Britain and Spain, then focuses on the fighting in Scotland and particularly the 1719 Jacobite uprising, before turning to the British amphibious attacks on southern Spain, and the end of the war in Italy and Sicily.

Oates is clearly a capable researcher, and dives into each topic with admirable attention to detail. The first chapter on the Battle of Cape Passaro is followed by "The War Widens," where he first discusses the wider conflict. The next four chapters all discuss "The Spanish Invasion of Britain," includ-

ing “The Campaign in Scotland,” “The Armies” and “The Battle of Glenshiel.” The last two chapters comprise “The Invasions of Spain” and “Sicily and the End of the War.” The author’s attention to detail is also, unfortunately, one of the book’s drawbacks. There is no in-depth introduction or discussion of context that would be helpful to readers who are not already familiar with the topic at hand. In particular, this book would have been improved by a discussion of European wars since the Glorious Revolution, with emphasis on the semi-integrations—and the conflicts—between the Dutch and English authorities and governments during the last war of the Allies against Louis XIV’s France and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). It would also benefit from a discussion of what followed beyond “the next two decades were ones of peace”, referring to Britain. Oates misses an opportunity for clarification by not discussing the 1710s as the last gasp of the old Williamite system and networks, and the 1720s and beyond as a different Hanoverian milieu.

There are several other issues with this book. The first is one of implied scales. The title, *The Last Spanish Armada*, invokes a grand event, as do the chapter titles that reference reciprocal invasions. The reality is that the events described are somewhat limited, and the actual text immediately drives down into the details and the historical narrative to a point that makes the juxtaposition a bit jarring. The second issue is that although Oates make excellent use of archival sources and printed primary sources, his secondary sources are generally quite dated, with a few exceptions, references that he was familiar with and likely already had to hand. Had he been able to pull something from the recent work of Catherine Scheybeler or Sarah Kinkel, it would have provided context for the historical

narrative.

I found this book a conundrum. For readers unfamiliar with the War of the Quadruple Alliance, it is too detailed and moves too quickly into historical narrative and the ‘19 Stuart invasion of Scotland, but is too brief a treatment and too much a restatement of existing literature to be particularly useful for those who are knowledgeable of the subject.

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Stephen Taylor. *Sons of the Waves: The Common Seaman in the Heroic Age of Sail*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, www.yalebooks.yale.edu, 2020. 416 pp., illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. US \$30.00, cloth; ISBN 978-0-30024-571-4. (E-book available.)

Stephen Taylor’s diverse bibliography includes two excellent works of naval history, a biography of Admiral Sir Edward Pellew and a history of the 1809 naval campaign in the Indian Ocean. *Sons of the Waves* is an altogether more ambitious title. Whereas his previous naval history books—indeed, most naval history titles—centre on matters of strategy, operations, and the officers who directed them, *Sons of the Waves* explores the history of the common seamen, the navy’s Jack Tars, during the height of the age of sail (1740-1840), a period running from the circumnavigation of Anson to the early Pax Britannia, when sail gave way to steam. This remains an under-studied aspect of British naval history, as few historians have attempted such a study. (Brian Lavery’s *Royal Tars* being a prominent exception). The reasons are easily imaginable; the ordinary sailor of the Royal

Navy, often illiterate and of low social class, left few texts behind, and until the emergence of Social History as a proper historical research field, narratives and studies typically paid the Jack Tars little notice.

And yet, much of Taylor's narrative relies on the words left behind by those lower deck men. Taylor uses the few such texts in existence to flesh out the history and the life of these seamen, while grounding each of their stories in carefully researched context. A handful of narratives—including those by William Spavens, Robert Hay, Samuel Leech, Jacob Nagle, John Nicol, and William Richardsen—form the backbone of Taylor's research and narrative. Their accounts are supplemented by over a dozen additional narratives, as well as official documents. Basing this work on the men's own words is important, as from the eighteenth century onwards, their story was primarily told from the perspective of the officer class and plagued by common misconceptions in popular culture. Typically, the difficulty perceived in writing a history that depends primarily on Jack Tar's own words was barrier enough for most historians. The few surviving accounts traditionally have been used more as a source of anecdotes; Taylor demonstrates it they provide more than enough material to examine this subject thoroughly.

Being primarily a narrative rather than an argument, Taylor's book appears not to have a defined thesis. Rather, it is a collective portrait of the Jack Tar, describing and defining the perspectives, ideology, and mannerisms of the British naval sailor through his own words. Sailors' experience of life at sea, of battle, and hardships are examined through their eyes. It is a deeply researched and thoroughly readable survey of the lives and perspectives of

the men of the Lower Deck

Taylor proves the usefulness of these sailors' account in the more traditional field of naval history, thanks to the differing perspectives they bring to a field long dominated by official reports and officers' correspondence. One key example is that of HMS *Vengeance*, a 28-gun frigate, which in 1759 was ordered to undertake a press gang mission, stopping British ships at sea and impressing whatever sailors they could. Official accounts of the mission are sparse, telling historians only the list of ships stopped and searched, whereas the narrative of one of her crewmen, William Spavens, provides so much more. It includes details of stiff resistance put up by some ships in the face of British impressment, and the great discomfort the mission caused Spavens and his fellow sailors. Worst of all, Taylor points out, was the crushing guilt felt by Spavens upon seizing fellow seamen on a homeward-bound ship, within sight of home and safety.

Taylor opted, quite successfully, to examine this history as a narrative story. From the circumnavigation of George Anson (1740-44) to the age of steam in 1840, Taylor presents the events and voyages of this century through the eyes of those common sailors whose accounts survive. He describes ship-board life, both in the navy and in the merchant service, in great detail. Recurring is the theme of desertion and impressment. Jack Tars detested the impress service, of course, and yet, as Taylor found, they recognized it as an occupational hazard, necessary to the maintenance of the Wooden World. It would explain the willingness of many seamen who had been impressed themselves to participate in press gangs.

Taylor admits that men he describes bear "a surprisingly strong resemblance to the Jack Tar of folklore." There is

a touch of romanticism in Taylor's frequent references to punishment and floggings, although he rarely goes into any more detail than the particulars of punishments doled out, the number of lashes sentenced, and for which crime. This despite several of the sailors describing their feelings and impressions of flogging.

The final chapter itself appears more motivated by a sense of romanticism than a natural conclusion to the story. It focuses on the Preventative Squadron, which in the decades following the abolition of the slave trade (1807) and slavery itself within the British Empire (1833) worked to suppress the illegal trade in enslaved Africans. Unlike previous chapters, this one features none of the characters whose accounts formed the backbone of the book, and indeed, very little of it is based on primary research involving Jack Tars at all. Taylor correctly acknowledges that these men did not participate out of an anti-slavery ideology, and correctly describes the hardship and losses suffered by British sailors on anti-slavery missions—1,000 men died between 1825 and 1840. The Jack Tars' involvement in the evil of the slave trade, however, which flourished under the protection of the Royal Navy up until the end of the long eighteenth century, is not considered in great detail in the earlier chapters of the book. This disconnect makes the final chapter feel like a one-sided, romantic analysis unsupported by primary statements from the Jack Tars themselves, and thus, runs contrary to the stated aim of the book.

The curious last chapter aside, Taylor's work is illuminating and innovative. It tells the oft-neglected stories of common sailors in the British world during the long eighteenth century. It demonstrates the potential of serious historical research relying on the words of ordinary seamen instead of their officers, and it highlights the ways in which

these sailors' accounts can contribute to traditional naval history. This book is a must-have addition to any collection on the Age of Sail.

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Christopher Wright. *Of Penguins and Polar Bears. A History of Cold Water Cruising*. Glos, UK: The History Press, www.thehistorypress.co.uk, 2020. 224 pp., illustrations, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, indices. UK £20.00, CDN \$46.95, paper: ISBN 978-0-7509-9057-8.

Prior to the (hopefully) temporary shutdown of cruises to the polar regions due to the COVID 19 pandemic, expedition cruises to the Arctic and Antarctica have been one of the fastest growing sectors in the global cruise industry. Little known is the fact that cruises to the icy fringes of the globe started a relatively short time after the exploration of these regions and shipboard tourists have been travelling to these regions for more than a century. Until recently, historians of Arctic and Antarctic exploration have more or less completely neglected the subject of polar tourism, making Christopher Wright's book a welcome addition to the existing literature. Although the book is not the ultimate scholarly analysis of cold water cruising that the academic reader might hope for, it is nonetheless a well written introduction to Arctic and Antarctic cruising and its history. It will appeal to the armchair traveler as well as future visitors to the polar regions. In addition, it is a useful compendium providing detailed descriptions of ships, operators and destinations.

The actual historical narrative of cold water cruising only constitutes about one quarter of the book and is largely descriptive, containing little

beyond what is already known to most specialized polar historians. The subsequent descriptions of today's cruising fleet and operators along with destinations comprise the largest section of the book and, while by no means analytical, they provide a good overview that might even come in handy as a compendium for everybody involved in the industry. A quick discussion of cruise ship incidents in the polar regions basically illustrates that Arctic and Antarctic cruising has been very safe, especially considering the extreme hostile waters these ships are sailing. On the other hand, a more nuanced and detailed discussion of the development of standards as well as a discussion of the more numerous small incidents, would have helped to provide a better picture of the overall development of the industry and what distinguishes it from cruising in other parts of the globe. One of the strongest sections of the book is the short, but very comprehensive, discussion of the regulatory system of polar cruises. This helps explain the complex system of international and national law, but also industry regulations and standards governing every operation of a cruise ship in the polar regions. The book's six appendices, covering lists of ships employed in the polar cruise industry, passenger numbers at major destinations, ships that have carried tourists to the North Pole, ships that navigated the Northwest Passage, the cost of polar cruises over time and known cruise ship incidents in polar waters might not be the most readable section of the book, but without any doubt they are among the most useful sections for the professional historian, strengthening the character of the book as a compendium.

One of the few topics that many readers might miss is a discussion of the people involved in the industry, whether as crewmembers or passengers, since

polar cruises have always attracted people very different from those found aboard other cruise ships. In particular, the author could have mentioned the development of educational/academic programs aboard these ships, since they are probably the single most important difference between polar cruises and others. For decades, it was the industry-standard to hire the most renowned Arctic/Antarctic academic specialists to inform and educate their passengers. Today, many of these subject experts have been replaced by activity experts, like mountaineering guides. This means that the once-exclusive character of polar cruise ships as floating quasi-academic adult education centres is being gradually transformed into sports and activity hubs catering to a public that aims to complete a bucket-list of accomplishing a particular activity on all continents. Wright's clear aim of writing a history rather than the entire history of cold water cruising means that there are several topics not covered. Rather than being a serious criticism of the book, the previous comment refers to what is left for the consideration of future writers on the subject.

For the armchair traveler who has never had the opportunity to visit the polar regions, the more than one hundred illustrations and photographs are probably one of the most attractive features of the book. They provide a real preview of what might be encountered and experienced when traveling to these most extreme regions of the continent. For readers who have been lucky enough to have had this opportunity, the illustrations will bring back fond memories of a trip that might have been the trip of a lifetime. As a professional researcher who has traveled these waters on a regular base, I find the photos sometimes look as if they have been taken directly from a glossy

marketing brochure. While this is not a major flaw, some of the captions are incorrect. Even as a historian who travels these waters on a regular base, I can easily recognize various species of seals or penguins that are wrongly identified.

This book can easily be commended to every potential cruise-traveler to the polar regions. It would be ideal reading while saving up for one of the most expensive (and exclusive) cruises on the globe. For the maritime or tourism historian, it can also be recommended as an overview and compendium of the historical development and current state of a niche industry within the wider cruise and tourism sector with a very different history from traditional cruise travel. I would also recommend it to anyone working on board today's polar region cruise ships. It will provide them with a quick insight to their industry and how it has developed over time, as well as useful details about that industry. The few historians who specialize in polar regions research and know the cold-water cruising industry on an intimate basis, might quibble over the superficial level of analysis in a purely descriptive history. But even for this small and highly specialized group, it will be a welcome quick reference. It would certainly serve as a quick pre-read for someone landing on an icy shore prior to a lecture on the history of polar cruising. This particular reviewer found Wright's book a welcome read during the first season in over a decade when I was prevented from traveling to Antarctica due to COVID 19. It will remain a helpful compendium whenever travelling to the Arctic and Antarctica resumes and I need to look up some details on a ship, an operator or a destination.

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