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Letter from the Editor

Hi, everyone. The Journal Team put together the Fall issue with a focus on WWI. This, to mark the centennial of America's entry into that war. As such, Tormod B. Engvig provides an in-depth study into the Battle of Jutland from the German perspective in "Not to Lose the War in an Afternoon: the Battle of Jutland in German Context." Roger Greezicki discusses the effects of the Treaty of Versailles and the Washington Treaty on the Royal Navy in "Back me or Sack Me." If the Cold War is of interest then see Erickson Huertas's evaluation of both past and present United States and Russian relations in "Brinkmanship Between Great Powers: US and Russia." For members in the Southeast or those planning a visit, Jim Werbaneth provided a review of The Airborne and Special Operations Museum in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

The WWI theme continues in the book review section of this issue. Tormod B. Engvig reviewed *The Kaiser's Battlefleet: German Capital Ships 1871–1918*. Jeff Ballard reviewed *Company K*. Chris Booth reviewed *The Coast Guard in WWI: An Untold Story* and Bill Hanson reviewed *The Great War in Africa: 1914-1918*. If WWII is a favorite topic then see Robert Smith's review of *Germany and the Second World War: Volume VIII: The Eastern Front 1943-1944: The War in the East and on the Neighbouring Fronts* and *The Allies Strike Back 1941-1943: The War in the West*. Also see Tormod B. Engvig's review of *Reporting the Second World War*.

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Not to Lose the War in an Afternoon: The Battle of Jutland in German Context

Tormod B. Engvig

The Battle of Jutland is probably the most controversial naval battle in history. Frustratingly inconclusive, it satisfied few, and continues to spur debate to this day. Jutland was a battle of great expectations, missed opportunities, and greater disappointment. The stakes could not have been higher. A crushing defeat at Jutland for either side would likely have meant losing the war. However, the battle had monumental strategic implications. It led to the end of Germany's attempt to break the British blockade with conventional naval power alone. Instead, she turned to unrestricted submarine warfare as a way to counter-blockade Great Britain into submission. This decision, in turn, brought the United States into the war, and sealed the fate of Imperial Germany.

Most of the Jutland debate is Anglo-centric. A popular consensus in the English-speaking world is that after Jutland, the German High Seas Fleet ceased to be an instrument of any value, cowering in port until its sailors mutinied at the end of the war. In fact, the Germans followed up their tactical success at Jutland with further efforts to isolate and destroy portions of the British Grand Fleet. While these came to naught, the High Seas Fleet played a supporting role in U-boat operations and amphibious operations in the Baltic. Lastly, the High Seas Fleet had value as a "fleet-in-being," acting as a strategic counter against a British foray into the Baltic. Until the mutinies of 1918, it remained a significant force.

The Battle of Jutland is known in Germany as the *Skagerrakschlacht*, or Skagerrak Battle. The Skagerrak is the body of water between Denmark and Norway. Fought in the North Sea off the Danish mainland between Great Britain's Grand Fleet and Imperial Germany's *Hochseeflotte*, or High Seas Fleet, on 31 May –1 June 1916, it was the largest naval battle of World War I, and the last and largest battleship fleet action in history. Jutland represented the pinnacle of a traditional way of naval warfare, little changed from the age of sail—the Germans, for example, still referred to their battleships as *Linienschiffe*, or ships of the line. Future naval battles would take place in three dimensions, while at Jutland the dreadnought battleship—one of the western world's crowning technological achievements—held center stage. When dawn broke on 1 June, it signaled the end of an era. It was one more, if unlamented, casualty of the Great War.

The Great War had already been raging for almost two long and bloody

years before the British and German fleets met in the North Sea. This was largely due to the nature of the naval balance of power, which was itself the result of a long and bitter prewar arms race. It had all begun, one might say, with a book: Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*.¹ In 1890 Mahan, an American naval officer, offered a thesis on how great power stems from command of the sea. Taking a navalist, zero-sum view of sea control as something requiring a large navy centered on battleships, Mahan's writings dovetailed nicely with the imperial mindsets of the great powers at the time. Germany, as an up and coming empire, sought to create a battle fleet to rival those of the established powers.²

Germany's quest for a battle fleet with which to not only protect its coast and burgeoning maritime commerce, but also to show that it was truly among the ranks of the great powers, caused concern and resentment in Britain, which had long felt utterly secure as an island nation protected by the mightiest navy in the world. Now, as the twentieth century began, her position seemed threatened. While this may not have been the intention of the German monarch, Kaiser Wilhelm II, and his navy minister Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, the battle fleet they created helped alienate Germany from Britain. France, eager to isolate Germany politically, was quick to seize on the value of Britain's naval and economic power.³

In the end, German naval expansion was just one of Kaiser Wilhelm's many nails in the coffin of the Bismarckian system, which by its diplomatic intricacies had kept Germany's neighbors from uniting against her. By the early twentieth century, Germany was poised to become the hegemonic power in Europe. In the event of war, the German Army intended to seize neutral Belgium, a state created to keep any major power from controlling the best invasion route across the English Channel. Germany would therefore have found herself at odds with Britain no matter what the size of her fleet. A single dominant continental power—be it Napoleonic France or Wilhelmine Germany—was anathema to British self-interest. Nevertheless, the traditional Anglo-centric view of the *Kaiserliche Marine*, the Imperial German Navy, is that it was unnecessary—a “luxury” in the words of Winston Churchill—antagonized Britain, and was largely a product of Wilhelm's desire to outshine his uncle, Edward VII, and his cousin, George V. In any case, German naval history had an air of self-fulfilling prophecy: in order to keep enemies from blockading her into starvation, Germany built a navy, which by its existence made such a blockade more, not less likely.⁴

At the fighting core of the fleets that clashed at Jutland were two capital ship types: the dreadnought battleship and the battlecruiser. Characterized by a

uniform big-gun main armament (of eleven-inch bore diameter or greater) and steam turbine propulsion, dreadnoughts—so named after the first of their type, Britain's HMS *Dreadnought* (1906)—were more powerful and faster than their predecessors, retroactively called pre-dreadnoughts. Nevertheless, the dreadnought was evolutionary rather than revolutionary, as the trend toward an all big-gun armament had been apparent in naval circles for some time. *Dreadnought* was, however, a game-changer in the Anglo-German arms race, and both sides soon built ever bigger and more expensive dreadnoughts. Tailored for action in the North Sea, where operational distances were short and frequent mist and fog dictated battles at shorter ranges, the German ships sacrificed range, firepower, and speed for superior protection. In fact, the first group of German dreadnoughts, the *Nassau* and *Helgoland* class, lacked turbine machinery. The British had bigger, longer ranged guns and higher speed, but the Germans had thicker armor and better watertight subdivision.⁵

An important offshoot of the dreadnought battleship was the battlecruiser. In common with the dreadnought, the British-pioneered battlecruiser possessed a uniform big-gun armament and turbine propulsion, but, as its name suggested, sacrificed the battleship's level of armor protection for speed. The British intended their battlecruisers to perform two main roles: to protect the far flung sealanes of their empire by hunting down enemy commerce raiders, and to act as heavy scouts and flank support for the battle fleet. Theoretically suited for either role, the British battlecruisers were fast enough to outrun anything they could not outgun. The Germans, meanwhile, intended their battlecruisers—which they called *Große Kreuzer*, or large cruisers—to function in the scouting role as well, but given their North Sea focus and numerical inferiority vis-à-vis Britain, also stipulated that the battlecruisers be able to stand in the line of battle. Therefore, the German ships retained heavy armor but sacrificed firepower for speed. The battlecruisers were striking warships, and were the darlings of both the press and prewar naval reviews.⁶

Admiral Tirpitz had viewed his battle fleet as a fulfillment of his so-called “risk theory” in naval strategy: the British would not incline towards war with Germany because of the High Seas Fleet's deterrence effect and the potential it had to upset Britain's maritime hegemony in a shooting war. Without a doubt, Britain's declaration of war on Germany in August 1914, in answer to the latter's invasion of Belgium, rendered this strategy moot. Instead of submitting to German naval parity in the prewar years, Britain, spearheaded by its dynamic First Sea Lord, Admiral John Fisher, had met the German building challenge head-on. As Europe tumbled towards war, the British won the naval arms race. While

the Royal Navy in 1914 could no longer claim a two-power standard—a battle fleet as large as the next two combined—as it had done during the Victorian era, it was still considerably larger than its German counterpart. Against twenty-two dreadnoughts and six battlecruisers, plus three battlecruisers abroad, of the British Grand Fleet, the German High Seas Fleet, as the second largest navy in the world in 1914, could muster fourteen dreadnoughts and three battlecruisers, with one battlecruiser in the Mediterranean. The British also out-built the Germans during the war, commissioning a further thirteen battleships and five battlecruisers during 1914–18, to Germany’s five and three, respectively. Lastly, Britain greatly outnumbered Germany in other types of vessels, including pre-dreadnoughts and flotilla craft—though not, eventually, in submarines.⁷

Given Britain’s implementation of a “distant” blockade and the relative disparity of naval forces, a curious standoff ensued over the North Sea when the war began. In a prewar moment of self-delusion, the German Navy had convinced itself that if war broke out the British would implement a more traditional, and aggressive, close-in blockade of the North Sea coast. It is perhaps easy to understand why the German leadership wished upon itself such a scenario. It would enable the High Seas Fleet to whittle away at the Royal Navy as it hung about obligingly near German bases and minefields, before finally meeting it in a climactic battle on equal terms. This was not the last time in naval history that one side expected an adversary, by necessity, to behave conveniently. The adversary, in this case, Britain, of course did no such thing.⁸

Great Britain held other advantages besides numbers and strategy—geography foremost among them. Any cursory look at a map of the North Sea makes it clear that the German Navy’s position was in a maritime cul-de-sac. The British had no need to implement a close blockade of Germany. By simply placing a patrol line across the northern North Sea between Norway and Scotland, and another at the entrance to the English Channel, all the Royal Navy had to do was to sit back and wait for the blockade to strangle the German economy. The Grand Fleet kept watch over the North Sea from its base at Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands, with its battlecruiser outriders based further south at Rosyth. The German position was unenviable. In the words of Professor Andrew Lambert, the High Seas Fleet had “no ability to get off the tactical battle space and win a campaign.”⁹

From the German Navy’s viewpoint, the situation was intolerable, especially when the army, Germany’s senior service, was sacrificing its young men in the hundreds of thousands. To say that the Imperial Navy labored under an inferiority complex would be an understatement. In three previous wars—two

against Denmark and one against France—the navy had been unable to prevent the enemy from blockading the German coastline at will. This rankled the navy's officer corps. The plan remained to whittle away at the Grand Fleet, by isolating and destroying portions of it in carefully sprung ambushes. A tall order for a numerically inferior fleet under any circumstances, in the confined conditions of the North Sea it might well prove impossible. Nevertheless, the navy had to try. Honor demanded it.¹⁰

To make a difficult situation worse, Wilhelm, as supreme commander of the German Navy, was reluctant to risk his prestigious warships in action. By the end of 1914, the British had also broken the German naval code from captured signals books, and could intercept and decode German wireless messages. Unbeknownst to the Germans—who continued transmitting compromised, long-winded wireless messages to the end of the war—this rendered any chances of successfully ambushing British fleet units highly unlikely. The Germans were nevertheless fortunate, as will be seen, that the Royal Navy failed to take proper advantage of this intelligence windfall until after the Battle of Jutland. The Germans, for their part, could have made better use of their zeppelin airships as naval scouts, instead of sending them on terror raids against England.¹¹

Several smaller engagements between the British and German fleets preceded the great clash at Jutland. These were for the most part either inconclusive or German tactical defeats. The German warships outside the North Sea at the start of the war were, with few exceptions, swiftly hunted down. In the process, however, before its annihilation off the Falklands in December 1914, the German East Asia Squadron under Admiral Maximilian von Spee dealt the British their first real naval defeat in over a century, in November off Coronel in Chile. Meanwhile, the High Seas Fleet's forays into the North Sea brought about several actions. On 24 January 1915, German and British battlecruisers fought an engagement near Dogger Bank. The Germans were out to raid the British fishing fleet, with the British forewarned of the German sortie from decoded wireless messages. Although the Germans dealt significant damage to the British flagship, the battlecruiser *Lion* ("the splendid cat"), the numerically superior British succeeded in overtaking and sinking the armored cruiser SMS *Blücher* as the Germans withdrew.¹²

Nevertheless, though costly, Dogger Bank served as a valuable learning experience for the High Seas Fleet. The Germans implemented its lessons in time for Jutland, and this helped to increase the survivability of German ships. Besides the loss of *Blücher*, the battlecruiser *Seydlitz* very nearly blew up when a British hit started a powder fire that burned out both aft turrets, killing almost everyone

inside. Only the flooding of the aft magazines saved the ship. The Germans blamed poor ammunition handling procedures for the near disaster, and after Dogger Bank made efforts to improve safety by keeping flash doors closed and preventing the stockpiling of ammunition in the turret. The British, obsessed with the virtue of rapid gunnery, did not. Also foreshadowing the Battle of Jutland, the British badly muddled their tactical signaling, and the Germans were perhaps lucky to have escaped without further loss. To balance the German fleet's losses, the British during the same period lost a number of ships to U-boats and mines. The most significant was the mining of the dreadnought *Audacious* in October 1914.¹³

In the same period that the Grand Fleet had one commander—Admiral John Jellicoe—the High Seas Fleet had three. After the defeat at Dogger Bank, Wilhelm sacked Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl, replacing him with the cautious Admiral Hugo von Pohl. However, Pohl was terminally ill, and Admiral Reinhard Scheer replaced him in January 1916. Scheer, a fighter, convinced Wilhelm to permit him to use the fleet more aggressively, and with the Kaiser's approval, the admiral set out to seek battle with the Grand Fleet during 1916. It was no coincidence that the German Army was at the same time mounting a massive offensive against the French at Verdun. The navy needed to show it was doing its part for the war effort. This set the stage for the Battle of Jutland.¹⁴

The High Seas Fleet sortie which led to Jutland was actually Scheer's third attempt to draw out and ambush an inferior British force. Expectations were high as the German fleet raised anchor and steamed into the North Sea on the morning of 31 May 1916. Scheer's intention was to sweep north toward the southern coast of Norway, goading the British to send out a pursuit force—probably their battlecruisers under Vice Admiral David Beatty. A U-boat barrage off the British ports would first whittle away at the enemy force, after which the German battlecruisers—Rear Admiral Franz von Hipper commanding—steaming fifty miles ahead of the main force, would bait the remaining British south and onto the guns of Scheer's battleships.¹⁵

Unbeknownst to Scheer, the British Grand Fleet under Admiral Jellicoe—sailing onboard his flagship *Iron Duke*—had actually left Scapa Flow before the Germans left Wilhelmshaven. Radio intercepts forewarned Jellicoe that the Germans were up to something. The U-boat barrage, stationed off the British ports, also failed to pick off any of Jellicoe's ships, and all Scheer got out of his submariners were vague and contradictory contact reports, which told him nothing of the massive British force steaming down on him from the north-west. Already the German plan was unraveling, thanks largely to British foreknowledge of the

sortie. Sixteen dreadnoughts, six pre-dreadnoughts, five battlecruisers, eleven light cruisers, and sixty-one destroyers of the High Seas Fleet were about to face off against twenty-eight dreadnoughts, nine battlecruisers, eight armored cruisers, twenty-six light cruisers, and seventy-eight destroyers. Jellicoe placed Beatty's battlecruisers ahead of his main force, and it was the advance elements of Hipper's and Beatty's battlecruiser squadrons which first made contact on the afternoon of 31 May. Both sides' light units—sent to investigate a neutral Danish steamer—fell upon each other, exchanging the first shots of the Battle of Jutland. This chance meeting was probably fortunate for the Germans, as it did not give Jellicoe time to maneuver the Grand Fleet behind Scheer to cut him off from home before the battle began.¹⁶

Hipper and Beatty had faced off at Dogger Bank the year before, and there was an air of unfinished business between the two. Beatty, while aggressive and dashing, was unsuited to the discipline and technical skills required to command modern capital ships. Beatty belonged to an earlier age, and his cavalier manner permeated his command and would nearly spell disaster for both him and the Royal Navy. As soon as he spotted Hipper, Beatty swallowed the bait and raced south with his battlecruisers in pursuit. In the process, his lack of signaling left behind four brand new *Queen Elizabeth*-class fast battleships—"super-



Figure 1. SMS *Von der Tann*, Germany's first battlecruiser. At Jutland her gunfire destroyed HMS *Indefatigable*. Courtesy of www.history.navy.mil

dreadnoughts”—which Jellicoe had attached to his squadron. They eventually caught up with Beatty, but not before the Germans nearly destroyed him.¹⁷

The two sides' battlecruisers—six British to five German—raced south with Beatty trying to cut Hipper off from home, and Hipper, in accordance with the German plan, luring Beatty toward Scheer. Neither battlecruiser admiral was aware that the other side's battle fleet was out in full force. This first phase of the battle, the run south, was one of the German Navy's crowning moments, as its battlecruisers administered a dreadful lesson in accurate, high-speed gunnery to their British opposites. Beatty's six-to-five advantage in ships soon disappeared, as fire from *Von der Tann* sank *Indefatigable*, and that from *Derfflinger* and *Seydlitz* sank *Queen Mary*. The British ships blew up with the loss of nearly all their crews. Unlike the Germans who had learned from Dogger Bank, on the British battlecruisers, in an effort to shoot as fast as possible, the flash doors between turrets and magazines had been left open or removed with catastrophic results. Beatty's flagship *Lion* was also very hard hit, and would have suffered the same fate as *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary*, but unlike her compatriots her flash doors were in place. Naval historians have criticized the British battlecruiser concept ever since. While their lighter armor made them less resilient ships than their German counterparts, at Jutland their losses were due to improper ammunition handling procedures and the less stable British propellant, rather than any inherent flaws in their design. For what it was designed to be, the British battlecruiser was a basically sound concept. However, the German battlecruisers were able to absorb tremendous punishment and were better suited for the kind of slogging match into which the Battle of Jutland developed.¹⁸

The four *Queen Elizabeths*—*Barham*, *Valiant*, *Warspite*, and *Malaya*—which Beatty had left behind, came up just in time to save him. The British super-dreadnoughts, besides being well-armored, carried fifteen-inch guns; the German battlecruisers had guns no bigger than eleven or twelve inches, and while both sides scored hits, the Germans received the worst of it. As Beatty's light units, scouting ahead, signaled that the entire High Seas Fleet was bearing down on him, Beatty finally realized he had been drawn into a trap. Beatty swung his ships about and the second phase of the battle, the run north, began. With the roles now reversed, Beatty sought to draw not just Hipper, but Scheer's main force toward Jellicoe and the Grand Fleet.¹⁹

Jellicoe, however, received no useful information from Beatty and had only the vaguest idea of the German fleet's whereabouts. On the other hand, Scheer remained fixated on an imminent victory over an inferior British force, and had no idea Jellicoe was ahead of him. Showing an extraordinary talent for

organizational command, Jellicoe, the antithesis of Beatty, ordered the Grand Fleet's battleships, steaming southerly in six parallel columns, to reform into one continuous line-ahead formation heading east. By so doing, Jellicoe estimated that he would bring his broadside onto the Germans as they appeared out of the afternoon mist. The maneuver worked to perfection. The High Seas Fleet, in line-ahead with its battlecruisers in the van, suddenly discovered a line of muzzle flashes on the horizon, over five miles long. Jellicoe had accomplished the highest aspiration of any battleship admiral—that of “crossing the T.” Jellicoe could bring his entire broadside armament to bear on Scheer, who could only reply with the forward guns of his leading ships.²⁰

The British possessed overwhelming firepower superiority, and in this third and fourth phase of the battle, the main action, the High Seas Fleet received a thrashing from Jellicoe's ships, whose gunnery, unlike that of Beatty's, was as good as Hipper's battlecruisers. Nevertheless, the Germans, while losing a light cruiser, were still able to claim two older British armored cruisers, and another

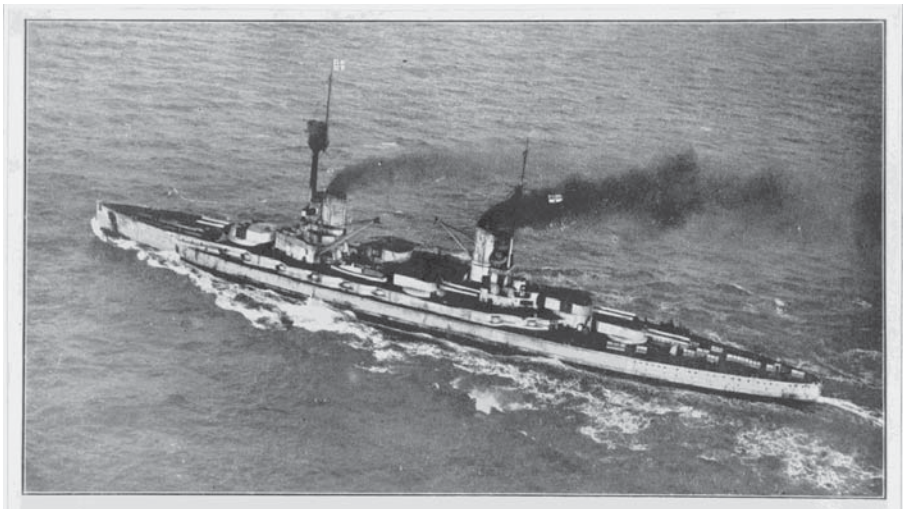


Figure 2. The *Kaiser*-class dreadnought SMS *Friedrich der Große*, Admiral Scheer's flagship at Jutland. Courtesy of www.history.navy.mil

battlecruiser, *Invincible*—once again lost to a magazine explosion. Scheer, onboard his flagship *Friedrich der Große*, quickly recovered his wits and ordered a maneuver that the Germans had practiced, and the Royal Navy had not and therefore did not expect: the *kehrtwendung*, or battle turn-away. By turning his ships in staggered succession, so that the rearmost ship became the foremost ship

in the line, Scheer reversed the course of the High Seas Fleet and within minutes disappeared back into the mist. The day was by now quite advanced and visibility, which had steadily deteriorated all afternoon, was diminishing. However, Jellicoe was maneuvering to cut the High Seas Fleet off from home. Knowing this, and thinking perhaps to slip north of Jellicoe and head for the Baltic, Scheer reversed course once again, but instead found Jellicoe crossing his T a second time.

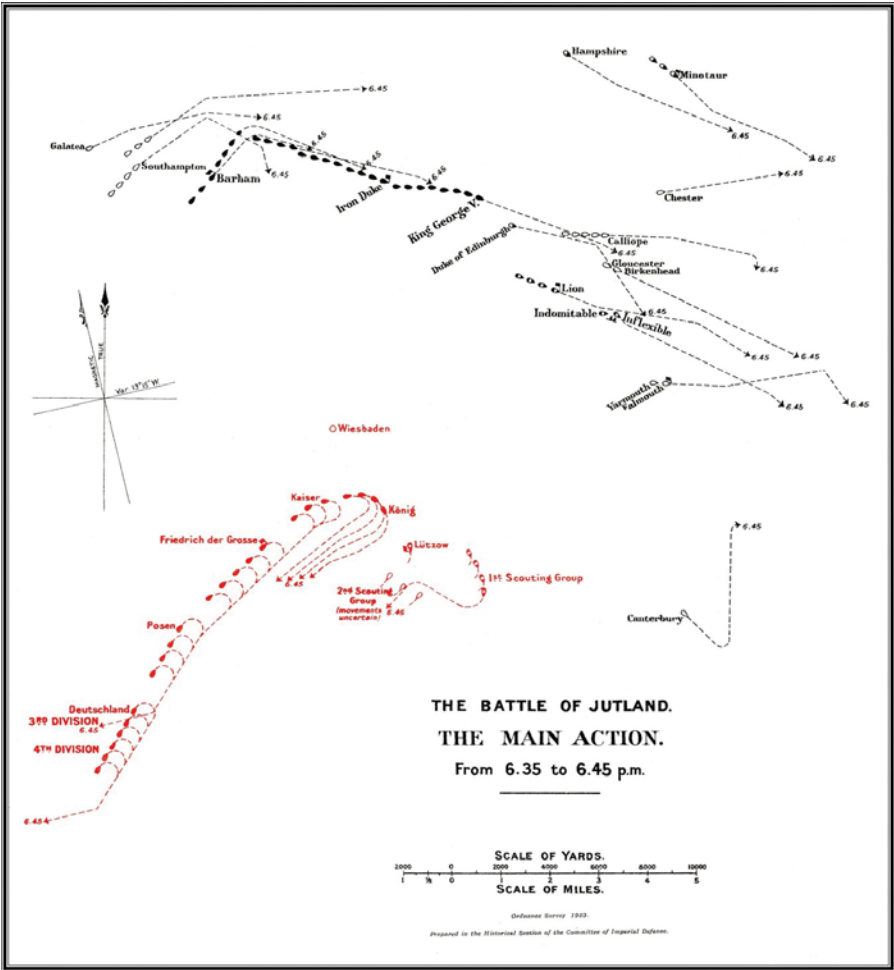


Figure 3. Chart showing the dispositions of the British and German fleets at the height of the battle, at the moment of Admiral Scheer’s first battle turn-away. Courtesy of www.naval-history.net

Scheer's decision to turn back toward the overwhelming fire of the British line was a dubious decision at best, and somewhat marred his otherwise effective tactical handling of the fleet. By now, the sun was setting, and the German ships were silhouetted against the western horizon, while the British ships were lost in the mist. Once again Scheer was pummeled by accurate British fire, performed a turn-away—more ragged this time—and disappeared from sight. To cover his retreat, Scheer ordered Hipper's battered battlecruisers and his light units, still in the van, to charge the enemy line. That the German battlecruisers were still afloat testified to the soundness of their design. Jellicoe's rearranging of the Grand Fleet, and Scheer's battle turn-aways, both accomplished under combat conditions without any collisions, also testified to both sides' flawless seamanship.²¹

Scheer undoubtedly knew that if the High Seas Fleet was still at sea when the sun came up on 1 June, it was doomed, and with it most likely the German Empire, whose North Sea and Baltic coast would be open to attack. The sacrificial charge of the light units and battlecruisers had forced Jellicoe to temporarily turn his ships away, to avoid waves of incoming German torpedoes. This gave Scheer some breathing room to consider his options. The overriding priority—for what had only a few hours before been a plan to cut off and destroy the British battlecruisers—was now survival. However, as night fell the High Seas Fleet had one last ace up its sleeve: it was a practiced night-fighting force; the Royal Navy was not. Jellicoe was reluctant to force a night engagement which would favor the numerically inferior Germans, so he elected instead to position the Grand Fleet for a daylight action the next morning. The British would finish what they had started when the sun came up, confident the Germans were well and truly trapped.²²

However, to the eternal disappointment of the Royal Navy, it was not to be. The High Seas Fleet gave Jellicoe the slip during the night, in the battle's fifth and final phase. Fighting his fleet through the destroyer flotillas stationed five miles astern of Jellicoe's battleships—which cost him the pre-dreadnought *Pommern*, victim of a British torpedo—Scheer broke clear to the east of the Grand Fleet, steamed south as fast as he could, and on the afternoon of 1 June was safely back in Wilhelmshaven with most of his ships. Mirroring earlier communication failures, Jellicoe's subordinate commanders, due partly—but not entirely—to German jamming, failed to report what was going on astern of the battle fleet during the night. Just as unfortunate for Jellicoe, crucial wireless intercepts, decoded by civilian cryptologists, regarding Scheer's intended route home—south-east to the Horn's Reef off Jutland, then south to Wilhelmshaven—were collected by the Admiralty but not passed on to the Grand Fleet commander. The Germans made what seemed a miraculous escape.²³

Hipper's flagship, the brand-new battlecruiser *Lützow*, was scuttled, and *Seydlitz* very nearly foundered, but through superhuman effort made it back to be taken into dockyard hands. The British failure to finish her off during the night, as she had limped impotently through their screen, was inexcusable. A number of other badly damaged German capital ships would take months to repair, longer than their British opposites. However, the High Seas Fleet had survived. The Kaiser crowed that the battle had broken the spirit of Trafalgar. In the final tally, the Germans lost one battlecruiser, one pre-dreadnought battleship, four light cruisers, and five destroyers. But they inflicted greater losses to the Grand Fleet:



Figure 4. The battlecruiser SMS *Seydlitz* had the distinction of being the most heavily damaged ship in the Battle of Jutland that did not sink. This is her limping toward Wilhelmshaven on 1 June 1916, with her forecastle nearly awash. Courtesy of www.history.navy.mil

three battlecruisers, four armored cruisers, and eight destroyers. The Germans lost 2,551 sailors, while the British lost 6,094.²⁴

Strategically speaking, Jutland had of course not broken the spirit of Trafalgar. The Royal Navy had been master of the seas on 30 May 1916, and was still so on 1 June. However, the Germans, as the first to make it ashore, were also the first in print. Germany rejoiced at the fleet's apparent success, and letters of

congratulations streamed in from every army division in the field. It only gradually dawned on the German in the street how little things had changed, as the continuing British blockade, and Germany's failure to implement effective rationing, made food and commodities ever scarcer. The result of this failure was the deadly "Turnip Winter" of 1916. If only measured in terms of tactical success, Jutland would have been the victory that German propaganda claimed. Operationally, the fact that the High Seas Fleet had merely survived made it a victory of sorts; the same way perhaps that the 1940 Dunkirk evacuation is celebrated in Britain. Defeat at Jutland would have been just as catastrophic for the Germans as for the British. The High Seas Fleet acquitted itself well, fought bravely—even heroically—and exhibited the highest levels of seamanship.²⁵

In Great Britain, on the other hand, there was bitter disappointment and recriminations. The British had been certain that any major engagement with the upstart Germans would end in a repeat of the decisive victory at Trafalgar in 1805. But the fact was that the British fleet had not fought a major naval war in over a century. The battle fleets that went to war in 1914 were untested weapons, and this explains some of the missed opportunities that robbed the Royal Navy of the complete victory it was expecting, and indeed had within its grasp. The High Seas Fleet had inferior firepower, and with its inferior German coal was several knots slower than the Grand Fleet. Jellicoe's trap failed largely due to poor communication from both his superiors at the Admiralty and his subordinate commanders. However, Jellicoe did not need to win the battle of Jutland; he just needed not to lose it. Unlike his predecessor of the Napoleonic Wars, Jellicoe was in no position to take liberties with his enemy, whose fleet was a finely tuned military machine. Beatty attempted to replicate Nelson's panache, and lost a third of his ships as a result. The German Navy of 1916 was not the Franco-Spanish fleet of 1805. Jellicoe, in sum, fought the battle he needed to fight. While perhaps unglamorous, it ensured that the British blockade could continue doing its job of winning the war.²⁶

Contrary to popular belief, Scheer did not insist after Jutland that the High Seas Fleet never again seek battle. In fact, he sortied the fleet two more times during 1916—in August and October—in order to follow up the partial success of Jutland, and once again using Hipper's battlecruisers as bait. While these failed to bring decisive results—during the August sortie the two fleets narrowly missed each other thanks to faulty intelligence—the High Seas Fleet maintained the initiative in the North Sea until the end of the year. It was the Grand Fleet, in fact, which grew more cautious, being concerned with the growing submarine threat and deducing—correctly—that it was unnecessary to answer German

provocations. During Scheer's October sortie, the British simply refused to come out.²⁷

The Battle of Jutland proved to the Germans that there was little hope of knocking Britain out of the war with surface forces alone. The High Seas Fleet had inflicted substantial casualties on the Grand Fleet, yet the outcome had not made a dent in the British blockade. The Germans clearly needed a less conventional solution. Therefore, as a direct result of Jutland, Germany in February 1917 unleashed an unrestricted submarine campaign on Allied as well as neutral vessels, to strangle Britain's trade and knock her out of the war. With the U-boats taking center stage, a curious volte-face occurred in Germany's war at sea. The U-boats were subordinated to the battle fleet at Jutland, but the role reversal at the end of 1916 saw the surface navy operating in support of submarine operations. This was nowhere better illustrated than during the High Seas Fleet's sixth and final sortie of the year in November, when Scheer brought out half the battle fleet to cover the rescue of two U-boats which had run aground off the Danish coast. Scheer justified endangering the Kaiser's capital ships for two tiny submarines with the argument that the U-boat had become such an important weapon for Germany that the battleships were worth risking. The same logic played out one year later off the Heligoland Bight, when German attempts to cover minesweepers—preparing the way for a U-boat sortie—led to the last engagement of the war between British and German capital ships. Three British battlecruisers faced off against two German dreadnoughts in an inconclusive skirmish.²⁸

Germany's implementation of unrestricted submarine warfare was an historic blunder. The military leadership had undertaken no serious analysis of its potential effects, and bought at face value the navy's estimate that monthly sinkings of 600,000 tons would knock Britain out of the war in five months. Instead, after grievous losses and a thorough scare, the British implemented convoying of merchant ships, which sharply reduced the U-boat threat by late 1917. Furthermore, sinkings of neutral ships proved the last straw for the United States. On 6 April 1917, she declared war on the German Empire. American participation brought enormous industrial potential and manpower reserves to the Allied cause, and guaranteed that if Germany could not win the war within one year, she would lose it.²⁹

Meanwhile, the numerical and qualitative gap between the Grand Fleet and High Seas Fleet continued to grow, as the British commissioned battleships at a pace the Germans could not match. By the end of 1916, despite their losses at Jutland, the British enjoyed a two-to-one superiority in capital ships. Furthermore,

eleven of the latest British ships carried fifteen-inch guns, against only one on the German side, the new fleet flagship *Bayern*. Shifting construction priorities from capital ships to U-boats left a number of units, like the *Mackensen*-class battlecruisers, uncompleted. Furthermore, the American declaration of war in April 1917 brought the United States Navy into the North Sea, and in December of that year a squadron of American dreadnoughts was attached to the Grand Fleet. Given this disparity, the High Seas Fleet's only realistic geostrategic role was as a "fleet-in-being," which by its presence kept the enemy away from the German coast. The High Seas Fleet may also have helped deter British schemes for a sortie into the Baltic. The cross-Baltic trade with Sweden represented one of Germany's most important wartime avenues of trade, and had the British closed this off it would have knocked Germany out of the war. It is reasonable to conclude that the High Seas Fleet's presence—and potential to cut off the British line of retreat—must in part have contributed to the Allies' decision to focus their efforts elsewhere, like the Dardanelles.³⁰

However effective the fleet-in-being may have been as a strategy, it did nothing to ameliorate the battle fleet's idleness. With inactivity came a reduced sense of status. The naval leadership invariably siphoned off promising junior officers to fill command slots in the rapidly expanding U-boat arm, leaving the battle fleet with the sweepings. This mediocre "middle management," in the words of historian Lawrence Sondhaus, further widened the already considerable social gulf that existed in Wilhelmine Germany between the common sailors and their officers. In August 1917, the first mutinies shook the High Seas Fleet, and although quickly and ruthlessly suppressed, they did not bode well for the future. Partly as a way to solve its morale crisis, the navy in September 1917 dispatched ten battleships and the battlecruiser *Moltke* to the Baltic to partake in *Albion*, an amphibious operation to secure the islands of Ösel, Dagö, and Moon in the Gulf of Riga, on the northern terminus of the Eastern Front with Russia. Its purpose was to secure the coastal flank of the land forces and put pressure on the Russian capital, Petrograd (St. Petersburg). Excepting an abortive German operation in 1915, the Baltic had been the purview of light units and submarines. The Russian Baltic Fleet, with four dreadnoughts and four pre-dreadnoughts, was absorbed with defending the Gulf of Finland and the capital as a fleet-in-being. In any case, as the tsarist state degenerated into revolution in March 1917, mutinies threw the Baltic Fleet into chaos, rendering it a largely ineffective force.³¹

Albion opened on 12 October, as the High Seas Fleet provided welcomed fire support for German troops storming ashore on Ösel from improvised landing craft. On the 17th, and coinciding with landings on Moon, the dreadnoughts *König*

and *Kronprinz* engaged the Russian armored cruiser *Bayan* and the pre-dreadnoughts *Slava* and *Grazhdanin* in the Battle of Moon Sound at the northern entrance to the Gulf of Riga. The German battleships wrecked *Slava*, which the Russians scuttled as *Bayan* and *Grazhdanin* withdrew. By 20 October, Ösel, Dagö, and Moon were in German hands. Mines badly damaged two dreadnoughts, but the operation was a clear-cut victory for the German Navy. Its success also had significant geopolitical implications. The German threat helped Vladimir Lenin consolidate his position in Petrograd and usher in the October Revolution, under the pretext of defending the capital. *Albion* was one of the great amphibious operations of World War I. After the war, the US Marine Corps used it as a case study in its preparations for a future conflict with Japan.³²

The battle fleet conducted two more sorties in the war's final year: one in the Baltic and one on the North Sea. During March and April 1918, the dreadnoughts *Westfalen*, *Rheinland*, and *Posen* covered the transport of an expeditionary force to newly-independent Finland, to assist the anti-communist White Finns against the Reds in their civil war. The Germans secured Helsinki for the Whites on 14 April, and the only major casualty occurred when *Rheinland* ran aground off the Finnish coast. The Germans towed her back to Kiel, but never repaired her. On 23 April—coinciding with the German Army's last-ditch spring offensives on the Western Front—the entire High Seas Fleet, minus the three dreadnoughts involved in the Finnish operation, sortied into the North Sea toward the Norwegian coast. Admiral Scheer sought to repeat on a larger scale an October 1917 convoy raid, in which two German light cruisers sank nine out of twelve merchant ships. This time, thanks to bad timing on the Germans' part, the fleet missed both an eastbound and a westbound convoy, and the sortie nearly ended in disaster when the battlecruiser *Moltke* shed one of her four propellers. A resulting runaway turbine caused massive engine damage and left her crippled off the Norwegian coast. While *Moltke* was struggling home, a prowling British submarine put a torpedo into the hapless ship, but despite it all, the battlecruiser managed to limp into Wilhelmshaven after a harrowing two-day journey. Although the raid was a fiasco, it is telling that the Germans managed to tow one of their capital ships clear across the North Sea under the nose of the Grand Fleet, through waters the Royal Navy was supposed to dominate.³³

Ultimately, the High Seas Fleet's scattered sorties did little to arrest the sailors' growing discontent, fueled by idleness, boredom, inadequate leadership, and food shortages on the home front. The influenza pandemic made its way

through the fleet in 1918, adding to the misery of the lower decks. The last straw came in October, as Germany's war effort crumbled. Scheer, now head of the naval high command ashore, with Hipper as fleet commander, devised a plan to send the High Seas Fleet on a "death or glory" mission toward the Thames Estuary for a final, gigantic showdown with the Royal Navy. Scheer and Hipper hoped that the fleet's sacrifice might secure favorable peace terms for the German Empire. However, few sailors were very keen on dying for a lost cause with the end of the war in sight, and as the ships prepared to sortie on 27 October, unrest began on the battlecruisers and quickly spread to the dreadnoughts. Within a few days, the High Seas Fleet had exploded in revolt, with the sailors setting up Soviets, or revolutionary committees. The mutineers hauled down the ships' imperial battle flags, replacing them with red flags of revolution; on the dreadnought *König* the sailors rushed the flagstaff and shot the captain and two officers as they tried to defend the battle flag. The sailor's mutiny spread to shore, and soon the German

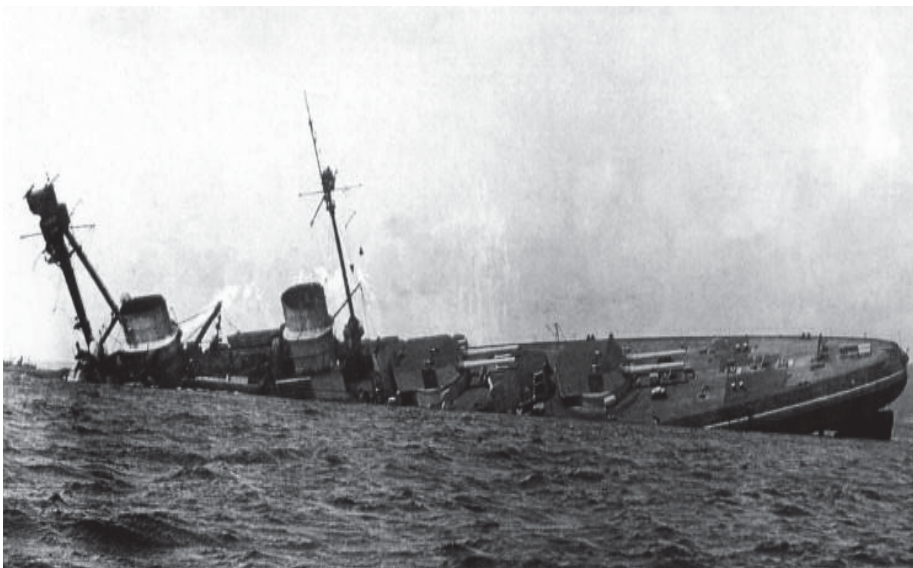


Figure 5. The end of the High Seas Fleet: the battlecruiser SMS *Derfflinger*, lead ship of her class, slips beneath the waves at Scapa Flow, scuttled along with the rest of the battle fleet on 21 June 1919. Courtesy of www.history.navy.mil

port cities were in upheaval. It was the final, indisputable sign that Imperial Germany was finished.³⁴

World War I ended with an armistice on 11 November 1918. Ten days later, the High Seas Fleet sailed into interment at Scapa Flow while the victorious

Allies debated its fate. As the High Seas Fleet approached the anchorage, a bombastic Admiral Beatty—now commander of the Grand Fleet—ordered the German ships to lower their battle flags and not to raise them again without permission. Beatty had no legal right to command the German ships to lower their flags, but Admiral Ludwig von Reuter, commanding the interned vessels, complied. However, seven months later, the High Seas Fleet raised its battle flags one last time, when on 21 June 1919, Reuter ordered the interned fleet to scuttle itself with flags flying, rather than see its ships distributed amongst the Allies. The Germans had carefully planned the action beforehand, leaving the British powerless to stop the process. As the German sailors abandoned their sinking ships and rowed ashore, British guards opened fire, killing nine unarmed men, including the captain of the dreadnought *Markgraf*. Fifteen of the High Seas Fleet's dreadnoughts and battlecruisers came to rest on the shallow, sandy bottom of Scapa Flow. The British were only able to beach the dreadnought *Baden*. It was the Imperial German Navy's last defiant act against the Royal Navy. Upon repatriation in January 1920, Germany hailed the returning sailors as heroes.³⁵

Winston Churchill famously remarked that Admiral John Jellicoe “could lose the war in an afternoon.”³⁶ The same was true of his German opposite Admiral Reinhard Scheer. Both sides risked losing the war at Jutland; neither side did, but the status quo continued to Britain's advantage and Germany's detriment. While underlying concern for Churchill's words contributed to the battle's indecisive outcome, Jutland nevertheless had tremendous ramifications for the German war effort. The unrestricted submarine campaign, which brought the United States into the war, was its direct offshoot. In 1916, the German Navy, through Admiral Scheer, tried its utmost to alter the balance of power in the North Sea with the battle fleet—a force on which the state had lavished vast sums of money before the war to build—but realized in the wake of Jutland that this force on its own could never hope to break Britain's domination. After 1916, the High Seas Fleet assumed a subordinate role in German naval strategy, as the U-boat fleet became the weapon on which the navy and military leadership pinned its hopes for victory. Nevertheless, the battle fleet continued to serve a variety of functions, including defending against a potential British war-winning campaign in the Baltic.³⁷ It remained a significant strategic force until October 1918, and one that the Allies always had to consider. In the end, the High Seas Fleet had a final unintended but decisive effect, as its sailors' mutiny precipitated the fall of the monarchy and the German Empire.

Notes

1. Mahan's book is available as a free download from Project Gutenberg. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (Project Gutenberg, 2004), accessed 7 April 2017, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/13529>.
2. Patrick J. Kelley, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), Kindle Loc. 1921–27, 3160–63; Lawrence Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea: A Naval History of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 10–11. As Kelley shows, Mahan, the navalist, failed to explain how maritime nations with small navies, such as Norway and the Netherlands, could nevertheless maintain a vibrant maritime commerce with large merchant fleets.
3. Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 8–9, 13, 15–17.
4. Kelly, *Tirpitz*, Loc. 477–86, 1355–62, 4187–91, 5698–5701.
5. Aidan Dodson, *The Kaiser's Battlefleet: German Capital Ships 1871–1918* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2016), 84–85; John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Random House, 1998), 280; Kelly, *Tirpitz*, Loc. 3087–3102, 3136–42; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 15–17.
6. Dodson, *Kaiser's Battlefleet*, 79–80; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 15–17; Gary Staff, *German Battlecruisers of World War One: Their Design, Construction and Operations* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2014), 137.
7. Dodson, *Kaiser's Battlefleet*, 7, 101; Kelley, *Tirpitz*, Loc. 2588–2607.
8. Kelly, *Tirpitz*, Loc. 3974–84, 4587–4600. The wishful nature of German prewar planning bears a resemblance to that of the Japanese Navy between the world wars.
9. Kelly, *Tirpitz*, Loc. 5644–47; Andrew Lambert, Lecture on the Battle of Jutland, 23 May 2016, accessed 11 April 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=l427CERpUgU.
10. Kelly, *Tirpitz*, Loc. 471–74, 509–12; Vincent P. O'Hara, W. David Dickson, and Richard Worth, *To Crown the Waves: The Great Navies of the First World War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2013), Kindle Loc. 1746–58; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 8–9.
11. Kelly, *Tirpitz*, Loc. 4839–45; O'Hara, Dickson, and Worth, *Crown the Waves*, Loc. 2772–85; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 120–21, 123. German complacency would resurface during World War II, when the British were once again able to break and read German wireless traffic—which the Germans had convinced themselves was totally secure.
12. Dodson, *Kaiser's Battlefleet*, 105–7; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 123–25. Imperial German warships carried the prefix SMS, for *Seine Majestät Schiff*—His Majesty's Ship. Armored cruisers (like *Blücher*) were to battlecruisers what pre-dreadnoughts were to dreadnoughts.
13. O'Hara, Dickson, and Worth, *Crown the Waves*, Loc. 2223–28; Staff, *German Battlecruisers*, 160–64.
14. Dodson, *Kaiser's Battlefleet*, 111, 114; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 127, 205.
15. Dodson, *Kaiser's Battlefleet*, 115; Staff, *German Battlecruisers*, 43–44.

16. Keegan, *First World War*, 292. Reinhard Scheer, *The German High Seas Fleet in the World War* (London: Cassell and Company, 1920), 136–41, accessed 21 April 2017, www.naval-history.net/WW1Book-Adm_Scheer-Germanys_High_Sea_Fleet.htm. See Scheer's memoirs for the German order of battle, including supporting U-boats and airships, and the names of commanders.

17. Nicholas Jellicoe, "The Battle of Jutland – Centenary Initiative," accessed 11 April 2017, www.jutland1916.com.

18. Keegan, *First World War*, 284; Staff, *German Battlecruisers*, 45–46, 171, 222.

19. R. A. Burt, *British Battleships of World War One* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 277, 281, 284–85; Scheer, *High Seas Fleet*, 142–43, accessed 21 April 2017. The *Queen Elizabeths* were the most powerful battleships of World War I, and went on to perform stellar service in World War II.

20. Jellicoe, "Battle of Jutland," accessed 11 April 2017; Lambert, Lecture, accessed 11 April 2017; Scheer, *High Seas Fleet*, 151–53, accessed 21 April 2017.

21. Jellicoe, "Battle of Jutland," accessed 11 April 2017; Keegan, *First World War*, 295; Scheer, *High Seas Fleet*, 153–58, accessed 21 April 2017; Staff, *German Battlecruisers*, 277. *Invincible* was the victim of combined fire from the battlecruisers *Lützow* and *Derfflinger*.

22. Jellicoe, "Battle of Jutland," accessed 11 April 2017; Scheer, *High Seas Fleet*, 159, accessed 21 April 2017.

23. Jellicoe, "Battle of Jutland," accessed 11 April 2017; Scheer, *High Seas Fleet*, 161–63, accessed 21 April 2017.

24. Keegan, *First World War*, 295; Lambert, Lecture, accessed 11 April 2017; Staff, *German Battlecruisers*, 173–75. *Seydlitz*, as a ruse de guerre, flew a British recognition signal as she passed through the Grand Fleet during the night.

25. Scheer, *High Seas Fleet*, 175–76, accessed 21 April 2017; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 227.

26. Dodson, *Kaiser's Battlefleet*, 128–29; O'Hara, Dickson, and Worth, *Crown the Waves*, Loc. 2507–11, 2746–54, 2783–87; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 126–27. German warships used superior imported Welsh coal stocks before the war.

27. Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 228–32.

28. Dodson, *Kaiser's Battlefleet*, 172; Scheer, *High Seas Fleet*, 168–69, 177–78, 191–94, accessed 21 April 2017; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 228, 232–33, 271. Concern for the big ships in these kinds of cover missions was not unfounded, as during the November operation a British submarine damaged the battleships *Kronprinz* and *Großer Kurfürst*.

29. O'Hara, Dickson, and Worth, *Crown the Waves*, Loc. 2401–19.

30. Lambert, Lecture, accessed 11 April 2017; O'Hara, Dickson, and Worth, *Crown the Waves*, Loc. 3471, 5876–81; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 239–40; Alfred von Tirpitz, *My Memoirs*, vol. II (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1919), 77–78, accessed 21 April 2017, www.naval-history.net/WW1Book-Adm_Tirpitz-Memoirs.htm. The British *Courageous*-class battlecruisers were designed with shallow drafts especially suited for Baltic operations, but were never used in their intended roles.

31. Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 278–79, 290–92; Staff, *German Battlecruisers*, 101.

32. Keegan, *First World War*, 365–67; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 295–96, 298–302.

33. Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 322–23, 331–33; Staff, *German Battlecruisers*, 102–6.

The October 1917 convoy raid, made by the minelaying light cruisers *Brummer* and *Bremse*, was one of the German surface fleet's most successful operations of World War I.

34. Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 341–46; Staff, *German Battlecruisers*, 191.

35. Dodson, *Kaiser's Battlefleet*, 141–42; Sondhaus, *Great War at Sea*, 348–49, 355–57.

36. Winston Churchill, quoted in Lambert, Lecture, accessed 11 April 2017.

37. Lambert, Lecture, accessed 11 April 2017. The British War Cabinet scrapped Admiral Fisher's Baltic plan in favor of Churchill's scheme to force the Dardanelles. An operation against the Turks was clearly seen, at the time, as the less risky alternative. It seems reasonable to conclude that part of what made Churchill's idea more attractive was the fact that, unlike Germany, Turkey was hardly a naval power, appearing to possess little with which to contest the Allies—her possession of the “ex-German” battlecruiser *Goeben* notwithstanding.

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Back Me or Sack Me

Roger Greezicki

The fall of Singapore and the loss of 130,000 men were as shocking to the British as the death of General Charles George Gordon at Khartoum was to an earlier generation. In the years following the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and before the outbreak of World War II, the Fortress of Singapore, known as the “Gibraltar of the East,” stood as a symbol of the power, might, and stability of the British Empire and Commonwealth. Unfortunately, the “Gibraltar of the East” was not an impregnable fortress but a castle in the air. The reasons for this state of affairs go back to 1919. In that year, the British government adopted the “Ten Year Rule,” which required the military to base their preparations and budget requests on the assumption that there would be no major war in the coming ten years. The rule was abandoned in November 1933, but during the period it was in place, the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Army were pared to the bone and the Royal Navy “was at all points deficient in the means to protect overseas communications and supplies, a duty which lay at the heart of Imperial defence policy.”¹ When Britain began to rearm, things went slowly because reduced defense orders from 1919-1933 seriously diminished the capacity of British industry to respond when greater quantities of equipment were wanted.² The Royal Navy also suffered from another problem, the abandonment of the Two Power Standard, a policy whereby the navy maintained sufficient strength to overcome the next two largest navies. The reductions and constraints imposed by the Washington Treaty of 1921 forced Great Britain to adopt a One Power Standard.³

The Washington Treaty gave the Royal Navy a forty percent margin of superiority over their likely enemy, Japan. British strategy dictated that in the event of hostilities with Japan, Great Britain intended to send her main fleet to Singapore. Only enough ships to secure the home waters would remain in Europe. Unfortunately, this strategy rested on two conditions, the first being the existence of a modern naval base at “Fortress Singapore.” The British never completed the modernization and expansion of the naval base at Singapore in spite of the fact that British strategy made a modern, secure, fortified base an absolute necessity.⁴ The problem was whether Singapore could truly be considered a fortress. Historian J. R. M. Butler observed, “If by a fortress is meant a strategic point naturally or artificially defended on all sides, then a fortress Singapore was not—in any of the senses mentioned. True, there were coast defenses at other points

than at the naval establishment, but it is perhaps safest to think of Singapore as a fortified base.”⁵

In the event of war with Japan, the British calculated Singapore would have to hold out thirty-eight days, later raised to ninety and, ultimately one hundred eighty, before the arrival of the main fleet. But the arrival of the fleet was predicated on its not being needed elsewhere. While in the 1920s Japan was the only likely enemy, by 1936, things had changed. As the Defence Requirement Committee put it: “It is a cardinal requirement of our national and Imperial security that our foreign policy should be so conducted as to avoid a possible development of a situation in which we might be confronted simultaneously with the hostility of Japan in the Far East, Germany in the West and any power on the main line of communication between the two.”⁶ When war came with Germany in 1939 and Italy in June 1940, it was clear there would be no main fleet sent to Singapore in the event of war with Japan.

In addition to the problems set out above, the Empire forces in Singapore suffered from other problems. Among them, an unrealistic grand strategy for defense, a totally inadequate Royal Air Force component, ineffective leadership from General Arthur Percival, dissension within the British chain of command, lack of equipment and training on the part of the army in Malaya, and poor pre-war planning and lack of coordination between the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy, the British Army and the British Indian Army in Malaya.

All of these things played their part in the British defeat in Malaya. This paper’s thesis is simply that responsibility for failing to mount an effective defense on the Muar River on the Malay Peninsula, which led directly to the siege and surrender of Singapore, belongs to General Archibald Wavell, at the time Supreme Commander of American, British, Dutch, and Australian forces (hereinafter “ABDA”). Wavell’s 9 January 1942 orders for the defense of Johore to Percival then commanding the army in Malaya, ensured the defeat of the troops on the Muar River line and led directly to the fall of Singapore. It is not contended that, except for Wavell’s intervention, Singapore would have been held. The author argues that Wavell’s intervention made a bad tactical and operational situation worse, and unhinged the ability of the forces in Johore to hold their positions and keep the Japanese away from Singapore.

The British Army is usually blamed for the Singapore debacle.⁷ However, the British government never intended that the British Army carry the primary burden of defending Singapore. In the period leading up to the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, the British put the primary burden of defending Singapore on the Royal Navy. The British believed that only by having a fleet large enough to

dominate the South China Sea could they “make it virtually impossible for the Japanese to disembark or supply a landing force on the Malay Peninsula or the Isthmus of Kra.”⁸ Unfortunately, by November 1941, the Royal Navy was so committed to the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and escorting convoys to the Soviet Union that it was impossible to send a large, balanced fleet to Singapore. In an effort to deter the Japanese from launching hostilities against Great Britain and the Empire, the Royal Navy sent two capital ships, H.M.S. *Renown* and H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* to Malaya.⁹

In the absence of a dominating naval presence, the primary defense burden was supposed to fall on the Royal Air Force (RAF). In expectation of receiving a large enough air force to defend Malaya, the British built three air fields near Kota Bharu and a landing field at Kahang, stocked with provisions, ammunition, and gasoline. The British engineers who sited these airfields did not consult the army authorities who had the responsibility for their defense and security.¹⁰ If the main burden of defense was to fall on the RAF, they would need the aircraft to carry out the task. The British Chiefs of Staff estimated the minimum number of aircraft needed to successfully defend Malaya was 336 modern aircraft but subsequent calculations caused them to raise the figure to 582.¹¹ When the war broke out, the Malaya Command had 158 aircraft such as Vildebeestes, Brewster Buffaloes, Blenheims, and Lockheed Hudsons, altogether a motley collection of aircraft, all either approaching obsolescence or already obsolete.¹²

The British Army in Malaya was not an impressive force. It was short of anti-tank weapons, anti-aircraft weapons, and artillery and possessed not a single tank for the whole of Malaya. On the eve of war, the army consisted of thirty-three mostly inadequately trained infantry battalions. In a study carried out in August 1941, the staff decided a minimum of forty-eight battalions and two tank regiments with complete supporting artillery were necessary to defend Malaya. The British never met these minimum requirements due to the decision of the Churchill government to send war materiel to the Soviet Union instead. Prepared lines of fortifications could have offset the weakness of the army. Percival refused to consider establishing prepared positions for the troops to occupy “because he thought it would be bad for morale.”¹³

The British High Command in Malaya lacked any sense of operational coordination as the commanders of the three services acted independently of each other. Air Chief-Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham was Commander-in-Chief Far East. On 1 November, his superiors notified him that Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall, a soldier with recent battle experience, would replace him.¹⁴ Pownall did not arrive in Singapore until 23 December and took effective command on 27

December; until then Brooke-Popham was expected to carry on as air commander. Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, an aggressive officer, led the navy but lacked recent experience at sea. Air Vice-Marshal C.W.H. Pulford, a competent enough officer, commanded the RAF but, due to his command being understrength, the RAF was unable to assume the major defensive role expected of it. This left the army.

The General Officer Commanding, Malaya was Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival who was a colorless, uninspiring man, quite unable to dominate events or impose his will on others.¹⁵ Percival's career was largely as a staff officer between the wars, although it must be noted that in World War I he led men quite capably and bravely and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.¹⁶ Percival's problem was a lack of experience in the area of operational command. Although Percival was a successful staff officer, it was not clear to the British high command that a good staff officer does not necessarily make a good commander.¹⁷ Percival's principal subordinates were unimpressive and contentious. Lieutenant-General Sir Lewis Heath commanded the 3rd Indian Corps consisting of the 9th and 11th Indian Divisions. Heath was the only one of Percival's commanders to have seen combat service so far. Heath's "relations with Percival were strained from the very beginning. Heath was senior to Percival in both age and experience and it cannot have been easy for him to serve as a subordinate."¹⁸ The 3rd Indian Corps was deployed in northern Malaya and would be the first unit to meet the Japanese. The final commander to consider is Major General Gordon Bennett, "a soldier suffering from extreme paranoia who was a rasping, bitter, sarcastic man, given to expressing his views with great freedom."¹⁹ The Australian Chief of Staff offered Percival the opportunity to rid himself of his troublesome subordinate but Percival elected to keep Bennett.²⁰ It was a fatal decision.

If the British high command did not inspire confidence, the same could not be said for the Japanese. General Tomoyuki Yamashita commanded the Japanese. He entered the army in 1908, served in a variety of positions, and attended the War College. He was regarded as an effective, aggressive officer who steadily advanced in rank.²¹ Yamashita took command of the 25th Army on 5 November 1941.²² His task was the capture of Singapore. It was critically important for the Japanese to secure the rubber and tin resources of Malaya to keep their war machine going.²³ In order to accomplish this, Yamashita was allocated the 3rd Air Group, comprising 459 modern aircraft superior to anything the British had in Malaya. The army component was to consist of a three tank regiments, engineers, heavy artillery, and three infantry divisions.²⁴

Yamashita invaded Malaya with the 5th Division commanded by Lieutenant-General Takuro Matsui. This highly mechanized unit and its

commander had seen extensive combat in China and underwent rigorous training for amphibious operations and jungle warfare on Formosa. Matsui had a reputation for being aggressive and competent.²⁵ Yamashita's former chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Reyna Mutaguchi, commanded the 18th Division. Mutaguchi was choleric and ambitious. He intended to make a famous name for himself. His 18th Division was less mechanized than Matsui's 5th Division, but it was still a formidable and experienced fighting force.²⁶ Yamashita knew both Matsui and Mutaguchi and worked well with each of them. Unfortunately, the same was not true of the third division commander, Lieutenant-General Takuma Nishimura, who commanded the Imperial Guards Division. Before World War II, the Japanese Army employed violence and murder to intimidate civilian governments into following policies the army favored. In 1932, eleven junior naval officers assassinated Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi, effectively ending civilian control of the military. Nishimura was president of the court that tried the assassins and ensured they received light sentences. Yamashita was critical of Nishimura's handling of the trial, which led to a long-standing grudge between the officers.

Nishimura was a commander of limited ability and gave his division little field training. In fact, when Yamashita saw the Guards Division on maneuvers, their performance horrified him and he ordered Nishimura to conduct intensive battle training for the division at once. Nishimura, however, did nothing in this direction. When his division embarked for the campaign, opinion among the Twenty-Fifth Army staff was that it was "unfit for combat."²⁷ With the exception of Nishimura's troops, Yamashita had under his command a well-trained, mission oriented force that was very capable of carrying out his orders while Percival had the most inexperienced and untrained units in Asia. The wartime expansion of the Indian army led to,

an extensive withdrawal of regular and experienced officers and men from existing units so as to provide a nucleus for newly-formed units—a process known as "milking." Not only were British Indian Army units destined for Malaya milked heavily before leaving India, but the milking process continued after arrival in Malaya.²⁸

In terms of training, the British and Australians were no better off.²⁹ They were not milked, but there was no realistic schedule for training the troops. Evidently, the British believed that the Japanese would not invade from December to March, the rainy season. The British were wrong.

The British had a plan to deal with Japanese landings at Khota Baru in Malaya and at Singora and Patani in Thailand. Called Operation Matador, this operational plan required the 3rd Indian Corps to dash into Thailand at least a day ahead of the Japanese landings, take up positions on the beaches, and repulse the Japanese. Major-General D. M. Murray-Lyon commanding the 11th Indian Division was prepared to launch Matador but received no orders to do so. The Commander-in-Chief of the Far East Command, Air Chief Marshal Robert Brooke-Popham decided to postpone Matador indefinitely, leaving the 11th Indian Division waiting for orders for ten hours. Finally, the 11th Indian Division learned that Matador was cancelled. The division was ordered back to Jitra.³⁰ Meanwhile, the Japanese began landing troops at Khota Baru on 8 December. Things began to go seriously wrong for the British.

By 11 December 1941, the RAF had suffered the loss of up to half the aircraft in the northern airfields. Air Vice-Marshal Pulford pulled his squadrons



Figure 1. Royal Engineers preparing to blow up a bridge near Kuala Lumpur during retreat. From the collections of the Imperial War Museums, UK.

back to Singapore.³¹ Because of this decision, the army would fight its battle without air cover. On 10 December, as a result of reports of a Japanese landing at Kuantan, Admiral Tom Phillips, commanding Force Z consisting of the *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*, sailed the fleet north to intercept the Japanese. The report of a Japanese landing proved to be false. Philips ordered Force Z to return to Singapore. Japanese aircraft attacked as he moved south. This resulted in the loss of *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*. Now the burden of defending Malaya fell squarely on the army.

The 11th Indian Division fell back to Jitra and began to prepare a defensive line. The “defences had not been completed when the War in the Far East broke out. Barbed-wire lines had to be erected and anti-tank mines laid—while all the time a steady downpour of rain flooded the shallow trenches and gun pits. Many of the field telephone cables were hurriedly laid across waterlogged ground and failed to work.”³² On 11 December, the Japanese began their drive down the Malay Peninsula. The 11th Indian Division was unable to hold the Jitra

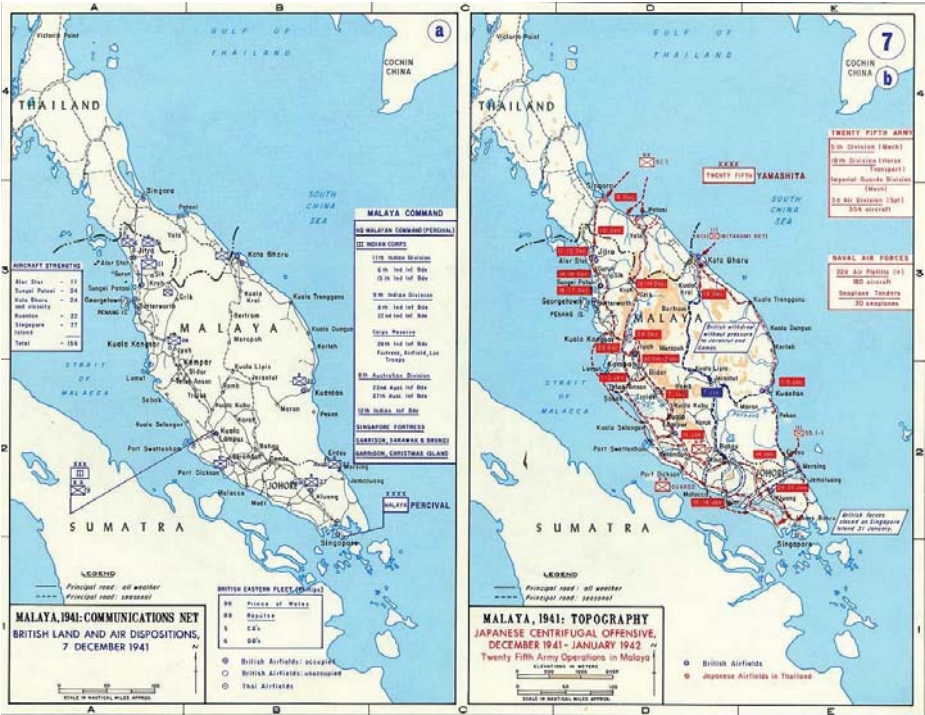


Figure 2. Pacific War—Malaya, 1941-1942. Pacific War maps of the United States Military Academy.

Line and on the night of 12-13 December, began to retreat. The Japanese used an operational technique called the driving charge aimed at maintaining the initiative and keeping the enemy off balance by continually advancing. As the British reeled back in confusion, the Japanese charged forward.³³

Yamashita was unhappy with the way events were going because the British were retreating down the Trunk Road, thereby avoiding the Japanese encirclement.³⁴ The British managed to halt their retreat long enough to form a line on the Slim River on 3 January 1942.³⁵ The British attempted to set up a defense in depth to halt or slow the Japanese. On 7 January, the Japanese struck at the Slim River position. They destroyed the fighting power of two brigades in a morning. For the British, it would be hard to imagine a more confused and mismanaged battle. As Japanese armor and infantry smashed forward, there was no coordination of artillery on the part of the British. There was no central direction for the British forces engaged. They were simply defeated piece meal.³⁶

Meanwhile, there were changes in the Allied High Command in Asia. General Archibald Wavell was appointed Supreme Commander of ABDA and was primarily responsible for the defense of the Dutch East Indies and Malaya. Wavell arrived in Singapore on 7 January to assess the situation. He did not like what he found. On the north side of Singapore Island, no fortifications were prepared because Percival told Wavell “fortifications are bad for morale.”³⁷ Wavell overruled Percival and ordered him to begin building fortifications at once. Then he went north to see for himself what was going on. He found the commanders of the 3rd Indian Corps dispirited and exhausted.³⁸ Wavell had found himself with two distinctly different subordinates:

Percival as a rule did not make a good first impression. He was quiet, reserved, thoughtful. His better qualities—a keen analytical mind, relentless work, devotion to duty, and a tendency not to panic—did not necessarily leap out at once. Major-General H. Gordon Bennett, g.o.c 8th Australian Division and commander of the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) in Malaya, did make a good first impression, at least on Wavell. Bennett was outspoken, charismatic, aggressive, and confident to the point of brashness. He dismissed the current situation as the result of errors made by Heath and of the weakness of his Indian units, complained that his fighting-fit Australian brigades were languishing while the battle was being lost, and insisted that he and his men knew exactly how

to stop the Japanese and would do so, given the chance. Bennett talked a good fight and stood out to Wavell as the only senior leader who seemed unaffected by the long retreat, with ideas about how to stop it, fresh troops, and a burning desire to get into the fight. In comparison, Percival seemed to be at a loss.³⁹

Wavell had clearly lost confidence in Percival. He did not, however, take the logical step of relieving him. Instead, after ordering a strategic withdraw to Johore, Wavell summoned Percival to a conference on 8 January and, without any discussion at all, handed Percival his orders.⁴⁰ A few days earlier, Gordon Bennett proposed that the 3rd Corps and the 8th Australian Division switch places, making the Australians responsible for defending the western part of Johore. Percival rejected this plan in favor of a defense in depth along the Muar River. Now, overruled by Wavell, instructed to implement a plan he had already rejected, and forced to entrust the execution to a contentious commander in whom he had no confidence, Percival truly had the worst of all worlds.⁴¹ The question remains why Wavell did not sack Percival, or in the face of such a monumental lack of confidence, why did not Percival ask to be relieved? There is no answer to these questions.⁴²

However, the die was cast and Gordon Bennett would have to fight the main battle for Singapore with the 45th Indian Brigade, a completely inexperienced unit, the 8th Australian Division, less one brigade in the east, and the 9th Indian Division. The 8th Australian's staff was to coordinate and control all forces in Johore, but this was too heavy a load for a divisional staff. The 18th British Division was due shortly so the Muar Line could expect reinforcements. Bennett was defending a line from Muar Segamat with inadequate forces. Bennett made his problem worse by spreading the 45th Indian Brigade too thinly and directing the Brigade to deploy infantry on both sides of the Muar River. The main force was concentrated in depth at Gemas and Segamat. In addition to having the Indian Brigade defending too long a front, Bennett simply did not trust

the Indians to fight aggressively, he insisted on their applying his tactics of active defence based on counterattacks rather than passively holding the river line. To ensure this, he directed the brigade to have both its two forward battalions place two rifle companies—nearly half their strength—north of the river to delay the enemy, the rest digging in on

the south bank of the river itself.⁴³

Bennett planned to fight the main battle of the campaign in Central Malaya and paid no attention to his weak left flank. On 13 January, Wavell and Percival visited Bennett's headquarters. Both men approved his dispositions.⁴⁴

On 14 January, the Japanese 5th Division began its attack. At first, things went rather well for the British. Bennett set an ambush for the Japanese at Gemas that cost the Japanese some eight hundred men. The casualties would have been higher but for two factors. First, the Royal Artillery could not supply fire support because the telephone line was not working. Second, Percival had altered Wavell's plan by substituting an inexperienced brigade for the 22nd Australian. Percival promised Bennett the 22nd Australian Brigade would join him as soon as possible.⁴⁵ When the Japanese came down the road to Gemas, the 22nd Brigade was still sitting on the east coast. Bennett's ambush temporarily halted the Japanese 5th Division. The British line appeared to have stabilized around the Muar-Segamat-Mersing Line. Unfortunately, for the British, catastrophe was just around the corner.

Commanding the Imperial Guards Division, General Nishimura was performing well for Yamashita. It must be admitted, whether or not the Guards were as well trained as they should have been, they conducted their operations up to this point with great élan. Now, discovering that the elements of the 45th Indian Brigade were on both sides of an unfordable river, the Japanese overran the two companies north of the river on 15 January without firing a shot.⁴⁶ Even worse, the 5th Imperial Guards Regiment crossed the Muar at dawn on 16 January and moved west with the intent of capturing Muar City.⁴⁷ Incredibly, neither Percival nor Bennett were aware that the inexperienced 45th Indian Brigade was contending with the entire Imperial Guards Division. Bennett was too occupied directing the Australians and Indians in their successful fighting retreat. Although the British succeeded in the center, the Japanese tore Bennett's left flank apart.

When Bennett learned of the disaster to his left flank, "He realized that his communications were threatened. He therefore sent the reserve battalion of the 27th Australian Brigade (2/29) from Gemas to Bakri. He did not however at the time grasp the seriousness of the situation."⁴⁸ Percival did not learn that the 45th Indian Brigade was in trouble until the afternoon of 16 January. For the British to regain the line on the Muar River, Percival needed immediate, effective action. It was not forthcoming. The Japanese surrounded the 45th Brigade and destroyed it battalion by battalion.⁴⁹ With the Japanese solidly on the south side of the Muar River, the British position collapsed. The defeat of the British was "pivotal in

the campaign. It was so rapid and so heavy that Malaya Command was unable to mount another prepared defence on the mainland.”⁵⁰ Nothing now remained but a retreat to Singapore Island where the garrison, under heavy Japanese attack, surrendered on 15 February 1942. The Japanese marched approximately eighty thousand men off into captivity. It was the largest mass surrender in the history of the British Army.

In analyzing the British conduct in Malaya that led to defeat, it is tempting to say simply that they did everything wrong and move on, but some analysis of the campaign is necessary. First, there was no army commander or staff for forces in Malaya. Percival was GOC Malaya but had too many other duties to function solely as an army commander. Second, Percival failed as a leader. He never took control of the situation and was unable to impose his will on his commanders. Percival did his best, but in the decisive battle for Malaya, Percival was required to implement “a plan imposed on him by Wavell, and [entrust] its execution to a subordinate in whom he lacked confidence.”⁵¹ Bennett was capable of talking a good fight but lacked the experience and the staff to carry out what Wavell wanted.

Wavell is perhaps the most culpable of the British commanders. He should have sacked Percival since he plainly had no confidence in him—he did not. Further, Wavell, knowing that Percival was lax in following orders, as seen by the issue of fortifying the north side of Singapore Island, did not see to it his orders were carried out. Historians will never know whether Wavell’s plan might have been better than Percival’s defense in depth idea. However, having issued orders for how the Battle for Johore was to be conducted, he should have ensured they were carried out—he did not.

When the Japanese struck, the situation in Malaya was probably beyond redemption. Untrained troops, lack of equipment, no air cover—the situation in Malaya was a defeat waiting to happen. The defeat did not need to turn into a catastrophe. It took Archibald Wavell to do that.

APPENDIX

The order issued to Percival by Wavell is reproduced in full in the official British recount of the War with Japan, *History of the Second World War: United Kingdom military series, War Against Japan, Volume 1: The Loss of Singapore*. It reads as follows:

- III Indian Corps, after delaying the enemy north of Kuala Lumpur for as long as possible, was to be withdrawn by rail and road into Johore, leaving only sufficient mobile rearguards to cover demolition schemes.
- 8th Australian Division (Less one brigade group which was to remain in the Mersing area) was to move immediately to the north-west frontier of Johore, and prepare to fight a defensive battle on the general line Segamat-Mount Ophir-mouth of the Muar River. The brigade group remaining in the Mersing area was to be moved to the same general line as soon as it could be relieved by troops from Singapore Island, but this could not be carried out until after the arrival of the 53rd Infantry Brigade.
- 9th Indian Division, made up of the freshest troops of the III Indian Corps and 45th Indian Infantry Brigade from Malacca, were to be placed under the command of 8th Australian Division and used in the southern portion of the position as indicated.
- III Indian Corps after withdrawal was to take over responsibility for the east and west coasts of Johore south of the line Mersing-Kluang-Batu Phat, thus leaving General Bennett free to fight a battle in north-western Johore. The III Indian Corps was to reorganize 11th Indian Division, and organize a general reserve from reinforcements as they arrived.

Notes

1. N. H. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy*, Volume 1: Rearmament Policy (London: HMSO, 1976), 79. For the Ten Year Rule see: 3-6, 55-64, 69-71.

2. Geoffrey Till, "Retrenchment Rethinking Revival 1919-1939" in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Royal Navy*, ed. J. R. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 325.

3. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy*, Vol. 1, 20-4.

4. *Ibid.*, 375-6.

5. J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy, Volume 2: September 1939-June 1941* (London: HMSO, 1957), 334-5.

6. Richard Overly with Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Road To War* (New York: Penguin Books,

1999), 85.

7. Anthony Beevor, *The Second World War* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2012), 254 for an account of issues and lack of cordial relations between the British commanders.

8. Basil Collier, *The War in the Far East 1941-1945* (New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1969), 107.

9. Ibid., 108. An aircraft carrier, H.M.S. *Indomitable* was supposed to accompany the ships but was damaged in a grounding at Kingston, Jamaica. See Arthur Swinson, *Defeat in Malaya* (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1970), 43.

10. Ibid., 108-9. See also Sir John Smyth, *Percival and the Tragedy of Singapore* (London: Macdonald & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 1971), 49-50

11. See: Smyth, *Percival*, 61, Collier, *Far East*, 108-9.

12. Collier, *Far East*, 108. For the types of aircraft available in Malaya see: James Leasor, *Singapore* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), 163. Leasor gives a figure of only 141 serviceable aircraft.

13. Beevor, *Second World War*, 262.

14. Ong Chit Chung, *Operation Matador* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2011), 226-7 is the fullest account of immediate pre-war planning by the British.

15. Keith Simpson, "Percival" in *Churchill's Generals* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 256-276. Simpson is the best account of Percival we have. He shows Percival's few strengths and is even handed in assessing the weaknesses. See particularly 264-8 dealing specifically with events in Malaya.

16. Ibid., 257-9.

17. Ibid., 259 for Alan Brooke's concern that "officers were being promoted to high command because they were proficient in staff work."

18. Ibid., 263.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 264.

21. The only biography of Yamashita is by A.J. Barker in Ballantine's *History of the Violent Century*. See A. J. Barker, *Yamashita* (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1973), 14-20 for his early career.

22. Arthur Swinson, *Defeat in Malaya* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 17.

23. James Leasor, *Singapore* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), 128-129. *Singapore* contains an excellent discussion of the tin and rubber trade.

24. Swinson, *Defeat* 19-20.

25. Ibid., 18-9. See also: Barker, *Yamashita* 48.

26. Ibid., 19. Barker, *Yamashita*, 48.

27. Ibid., 19.

28. Smyth, *Percival*, 86-7.

29. Ibid., 88-9.

30. Chung, *Matador*, 232-233; Swinson, *Defeat*, 53.

31. Swinson, *Defeat* 55.

32. Frank Owen, *The Fall of Singapore* (London: The Quality Book Club, 1960), 71.

33. Brian P. Farrell, *The Defence and Fall of Singapore* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Limited, 2006), 176-82.

34. Swinson, *Defeat*, 96.

35. S. Woodburn Kirby, *Singapore: The Chain of Disaster* (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1971), 176-178.

36. Farrell, *Defence and Fall*, 218-9. Farrell used the word “fiasco” to describe the British efforts. He isn’t wrong.

37. Brian P. Farrell, “The Dice Were Rather Heavily Loaded: Wavell and the Fall of Singapore In *Leadership and responsibility in the Second World War*, 208-111. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2004, 223-4.

38. Ibid., 223. “Wavell was briefed personally by Brigadier I.M. Stewart, recently elevated to temporary command of 12th Indian Brigade, the lead formation scattered by the Japanese tank assault. The exhausted Stewart made a poor impression on Wavell, provoking him to remark that it was one of the most incoherent reports that he had ever heard.” This was not calculated to give Wavell confidence in 3rd Corps ability to manage the situation.

39. Ibid., 224.

40. These are found in Appendix 1.

41. Simpson, *Percival*, 267. See also Smyth, *Percival* 263, wherein Percival disclaims all responsibility for Wavell’s plan.” Percival wrote to the official historian ‘On the evening of 8 January General Wavell, on his return from visiting my troops north of Kuala Lumpur, sent for me and dictated his own plan. I can take no responsibility for it.’”

42. This was not the first time Wavell retained a commander in whom he had no confidence. In April, 1941 in the Western Desert Wavell was very unhappy with General Neame yet refused to sack him with the same unhappy results. Ronald Lewin, *The Chief* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1980) 123-5.

43. Farrell, *Dice Were Heavily Loaded*, 226.

44. Ibid., 228. According to S. Woodburn Kirby in *The War Against Japan* Reprint (London: HMSO, 1957) 5 vols., vol. 1, 306, Percival, contrary to Wavell’s instructions used the 53rd British Brigade in place of the 22nd Australian. Evidently instructions to concentrate the Australian Division

were being ignored.

45. Farrell, *Defence and Fall*, 256-8.

46. Kirby, *Singapore*, 198-9.

47. Ibid., 199-200.

48. Ibid., 200.

49. Farrell, *Dice were heavily loaded*, 228.

50. Ibid., 229.

51. Simpson, *Percival*, 267.

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Brinkmanship between Great Powers: US and Russia

Erickson Huertas

The Cold War (1947-1991) included an air of antagonism and mutual distrust between the United States (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) (1922-1991). Spies betrayed their countries, and millions died in proxy wars. The struggle for dominance prompted massive propaganda campaigns, psychological warfare, nuclear, and technological competitions. This study first examines how the 1980's nuclear tension between the US and the USSR reached its zenith. It then identifies how the USSR reacted to President Ronald Reagan's (1981-1989) strategy of preparation for a preemptive attack, and further outlines the international implications of this brinkmanship. Suspicion and mistrust between the US and the successor state of the USSR, the Russian Federation, subsequently referred to as Russia, over their strategic intentions are increasingly threatening Western stability, international order, and the balance of power. It is evident that current tensions between the US and Russia closely parallel the circumstances of the Cold War era during the 1980s.

US-Russian Wargames

During the Cold War, the US and the USSR used the brink of nuclear confrontation to exert control. After World War II (WWII) (1939-1945), the growing expansion of the USSR pushed the US to adopt a new strategy aimed at stopping possible aggression. Initially, both sides, under the auspices of self-defense, used deterrence, coupled with the possibility of mutual destruction, as the only valid strategy to protect their interests. During the next decades, this strategy escalated. Before the 1980s, the US considered Soviet influence as an inevitable process in world affairs, but in January 1981, President Reagan switched to a more confrontational policy against the USSR. President Reagan wanted to contain Soviet influence in many regions. The Reagan administration implemented a series of clandestine wargame and psychological warfare operations, codenamed *Able Archer*, which inadvertently contributed to an increased hair-trigger tension with the USSR.

The intent behind President Reagan's strategy was to demonstrate the strength and efficiency of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to

Soviet Bloc aggression and prove how close NATO, led by the US, could approach Eastern Bloc countries, and by extension attack USSR critical areas, if necessary. Concurrently, the purpose of this program was to evoke a reaction and to keep the USSR guessing what might come next. The idea was not so much to signal US intentions to the Soviets as to probe for gaps and vulnerabilities in the USSR's early warning intelligence system.¹ By monitoring the Soviet response to an emergency, the US would gather invaluable information that included electronic communications, locations, units, and movements, among others.

According to Gen. Jack Chain, a former Strategic Air Command commander, sometimes the US would send bombers over the North Pole and USSR radars would click on. Other times fighter-bombers would probe their Asian or European periphery. During peak times, the operation would include several maneuvers in a week. They would come at irregular intervals to make the effect even more unsettling. Then, as quickly as the unannounced flights began, they would stop, only to begin again a few weeks later.²

Soon after the US implemented President Reagan's strategy, the USSR was convinced that the US was secretly preparing a preemptive attack in the form of a nuclear strike against the USSR. To combat this threat, in May 1981, the USSR ordered the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (KGB) (1954-1991), and the *Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye* (GRU) (1918-1992), often considered by Western intelligence agencies as two of the most effective intelligence-gathering organizations in the world,³ to implement Operation *Raketno-Yadernoye Napadenie*, (RYaN). Aimed at preventing the possible sudden outbreak of war by the enemy, Operation RYaN was possibly the largest peacetime intelligence-gathering operation in history.⁴

To preempt the US, the USSR used agents and recruited sources abroad to monitor early warning indications of US war planning and preparations. The USSR instructed East Germany's *Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung* (HVA) to help the GRU and the KGB with Operation RYaN. The HVA was a subdivision of the State Security Service, commonly known as the Stasi, and considered by German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, "as one of the most effective and repressive intelligence and secret police agencies in the world."⁵ West German counterintelligence authorities documented at least fifteen hundred recruitment attempts. The HVA asked those pitched for recruitment to report on weapons developments, troop strengths, mobilization plans, and alert procedures.⁶

One of the most valuable information sources of USSR's Operation RYaN was a US service member, Jeffrey Carney. In 1983, Carney worked in a top-secret Air Force-National Security Agency operation, eavesdropping on communications of Eastern Bloc countries at a covered facility disguised as part of Tempelhof Central Airport in West Berlin. US-NATO exercises amazed the HVA-recruited Carney, who thought President Reagan's strategy was an intentional, aggressive provocation of the USSR in a very sensitive area. "The resulting unintended consequences from *Able Archer* caused a colossal uptick in tension that frightened many, including Carney."⁷ On the other hand, the USSR's heightened alert caused high stress to US and NATO leaders. There was panic.

President Reagan, unaware of Operation RYaN, directed US-NATO *Able Archer 83*, possibly the best known of these exercises, which simulated a Defense Condition 1 scenario in which tensions escalated to a coordinated nuclear attack. "Declassified NATO and US Air Force documents have shown that *Able Archer 83* included significant new provocative features, which could have been misperceived by the Soviets as preparations for an actual strike."⁸ Concurrently, the US pursued a clandestine electronic warfare operation for an across-the-board assault on the USSR's command centers and military installations. "The project's starting point was the alleged discovery by U.S. intelligence of a vulnerability—not further identified—in the Soviet Union's high-frequency command-and-control communications that could be exploited to shut down (Aussschaltung) orders from the high command to its strategic missile forces, submarine fleet, and air forces."⁹

The project, codenamed *CANOPY WING*, was a highly-classified plan involving US personnel and equipment designed to disable USSR communication in the event of an attack. It was a fail-safe or contingency plan. "They characterize it as a US plan to launch a war of aggression that would make nuclear war winnable by rendering the Soviet Union incapable of launching a retaliatory strike."¹⁰ However, Carney provided detailed information to the HVA, that added credibility to *CANOPY WING*; therefore, the USSR knew about the US fail-safe secret strategy. Klaus Eichner, a former HVA intelligence officer, said that when the document reached his office, "we got goose bumps."¹¹

The USSR reacted to *Able Archer 83* and other exercises as an early indication of an attack, and moved their armed forces to an unprecedented level of alert, just as US-NATO predicted. On the other hand, the US-NATO exercises operated under the illusion that *CANOPY WING* was safe and that the USSR had no knowledge of their plans. The US did not realize that the USSR had gained knowledge of *CANOPY WING* until 1986 when the US government conducted a damage assessment after Carney's disappearance. Consequently, the US collected

inaccurate intelligence, which affected decision-making and courses of actions. President Reagan's aggressive strategy overlooked the possibility of an insider threat and the potential consequences of pushing the rules to the limit.

The attraction for both sides in employing covert actions was that it permitted them to apply a varying degree of pressure against the other. For both sides, influence activities, such as psychological warfare operations, disinformation, propaganda, and deception, allowed them to instigate and diminish the opposing entity's influence and reshape the global attitude towards their opponent. Both parties believed that fear and intimidation were necessary strategies for containment. These strategies pushed dangerous situations to the brink of military confrontation. Recent actions have reintroduced gamesmanship into US-Russia relations.

After WWII, differences in security interests between the US and the USSR set the stage for the Cold War. During this period, a form of political warfare characterized the USSR's strategy. "With roots in Leninist thinking, over generations the Soviets mastered a range of techniques known as *aktivnyye meropriyatiya*, or 'active measures,' ranging from simple propaganda and forgery to assassination, terrorism and everything in between. In the West, these politics by other means were simply referred to as 'dirty tricks'."¹² To counter this, the US immediately adopted similar strategies, and dirty tricks rapidly became covert operations and one of the most influential tools in foreign policy.

By the 1980s, both sides interpreted all defensive actions as offensive actions against the other. In short, during this period, both the US and the USSR employed manipulative and deceptive techniques to defend and advance their interests. As such, during this period, US newspaper reports described the Soviet superiority in the European theater as unstoppable, but in reality, food shortages hampered the communist-allied units.¹³ Conversely, the USSR promoted anti-US sentiment. Several of the false stories of the Cold War era continued to circulate with some credibility in certain parts of the world. For example, the Soviets claimed that a US government laboratory created Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.¹⁴

In the 1990s, after the collapse of the USSR, the international community struggled to make sense of a system that was increasingly multipolar, opaque, and unpredictable. Consequently, Russia's active measures decreased, but not for long. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Russian government began to show signs of discontent against their status in the international arena. Russia began to adopt those strategies employed during the Cold War.

Russia moved to reclaim the position that the USSR previously held as a

geopolitical power during the Cold War. As such, the Russian government began using its military power and reinvigorated presence in the international arena to protect its strategic interests in post-Cold War regional areas. Today's modern incarnations of active measures have greater range and speed. Enabled by technology and adapted for a globalized world, Russia uses information warfare as a new influential tool to further their objectives. "The Russian Federation is currently waging 'the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg . . . in history of information warfare,' pursuing a revanchist foreign policy considered by senior diplomatic and military leaders to be a tremendous security threat for both Europe and America."¹⁵

The Conduct of War: Gamesmanship over Syria

The first introduction to modern Russian propaganda and political action directed against the US took place during the Syrian Civil War (2011). In 2012, President Barack Obama made a statement that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's use of chemical weapons constituted a "red line." For a moment, there was a global impression that the US was on the brink of military intervention in Syria. One year later, various sources confirmed that the Syrian regime had used chemical weapons against civilians and rebel opposition, resulting in multiple deaths and injuries. However, Russia wanted to exert their influence to cause the US to overthink its position. Consequently, Russia voiced their opinion against US-NATO intervention in Syria, rejecting US alleged evidence, and accusing the US of escalating the Syrian Civil War to remove President al-Assad.

Eventually, Russia stated, "No one doubts that poison gas was used in Syria. But there is every reason to believe it was used not by the Syrian Army, but by opposition forces, to provoke intervention by their powerful foreign patrons, who would be siding with the fundamentalists."¹⁶ President Obama's "red line" statement provoked Russia to stand and react on behalf of President al-Assad's regime. Subsequently, Russia's reaction provoked and pushed the Obama administration to reevaluate its strategy; "Instead of ordering strikes immediately, the president wanted to pump the brakes and first go to Congress to ask for its authorization."¹⁷

As in the past, both sides wanted to defend their interests and gain an advantage over the other. While it is beneficial for each side if the other yields, the best course of action depends on what the other is doing or willing to do. In the end, the increased tensions and the credible threat of hostile action instigated collaboration reduced the potential for direct intervention, and prevented an

escalation of the conflict to more extreme levels between the US and Russia. Without a bomb dropped, the threat of force achieved an outcome far greater than military power itself: however, it developed the stage for further gamesmanship.

Russia could pressure President al-Assad to admit to having used chemical weapons. However, Russia's actions in Syria did not completely resolve the situation. President Obama agreed to use a diplomatic approach and vocalized his disapproval over President al-Assad's future. In the meantime, Russia gained confidence, remained adamant, and continued to support President al-Assad's regime, claiming that Syria's civil unrest was part of a western plot and a pattern to justify another regime change and control post-Soviet states. Subsequently, Russia vetoed the United Nations Security Council resolution that would have referred the conflict in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

As in the Cold War, the Syrian Civil War turned into an all-out proxy war between US and Russia, just like the Korean War (1950-1953), the Vietnam War (1955-1975), and the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989). Russia claimed that the US provided weapons and support to Al-Qaeda fighters and extremists of all stripes fighting with the opposition. "Insurgent commanders say that since Russia began air attacks in support of the Syrian government, they are receiving for the first-time bountiful supplies of powerful American-made anti-tank missiles."¹⁸ This type of indirect support was one of the defining aspects of global conflict during the Cold War, rendering proxy wars a safer way of exercising hostilities. The last decade reveals an authentic, but similar affinity between these periods. In November 2015, a Russian propaganda lyrical song came out:

Syria, my sister, your Russian brother will save you! details interviews with Syrians about the brutality of the Western-backed "extremists." It promotes the message that everyone in Syria fighting Assad is a monster who tortures and kills in most horrific ways. Images of innocent people, especially children, being blown up show blood and gore, and reinforce the message that there are no other alternatives to Assad—who himself is the only source of order and peace.¹⁹

In the past, preparing for war and competition led countries closer to the state at which war happens, increasing animosities, and by extension, the adoption of dangerous courses of actions and postures. Both the US and Russia felt threatened by each other's military power. Consequently, both sides responded aggressively to perceived efforts by the other to strengthen their position. However,

these interactions are only the tip of the iceberg of a much broader system of manipulation and influence activities. Russia's decision to protect Syria undermined US efforts to install a more favorable government and reintroduced absorption as a strategic option in gamesmanship.

Russian Absorption: Ukraine

Ukraine occupies a strategic geographic location in Eurasia. Government corruption has been prevalent, and Russia has historically dominated it. Before the events of late February 2014 in Ukraine, there was a general concern about Russia's recent actions toward the country, specifically after Ukraine in 1994 expressed interest to join NATO. Western policy—particularly the decision to support Kosovo's independence and the assurance given to Ukraine and Georgia that they would one day become NATO members—contributed to Russia's decision to protect their borders and by extension counter any neighboring threats, especially NATO.²⁰

More than a decade at war in Afghanistan distracted the US. Once again, Russia tested the waters. President Vladimir Putin believes, "There can be no superpower where weakness and poverty reign."²¹ Ukraine imports nearly eighty percent of its natural gas from Russia. Russia used this dependency as a tool to leverage and intimidate Ukraine. In more general terms, gas exports have led to substantial economic gains for Russia. The latter provoked global concerns when Russia cut off the supply of gas to Ukraine in 2005. Nevertheless, pipelines supplying Europe with Russian gas cut through Ukraine. The government of Ukraine countered Russia's actions by exploiting this vulnerability.

To counter this, Russia wished to level the terrain again to their advantage and cut a deal with Germany to install a series of pipelines that would connect to Europe through Germany and bypass Ukraine. In 2002, the US and the European Union (EU) immediately implemented a plan to diversify energy, called the Nabucco pipeline, designed to carry Azerbaijani gas. Eventually, Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, but the available evidence clearly suggests that the Russians had planned the invasion well in advance.²² Then in 2011, Russia made a stance against the US intentions to invade Syria. Subsequently, in 2014, Russia violated Ukrainian sovereignty by sending troops to Crimea.

As in the Cold War, Russia pushed dangerous security strategies that often involved forcing a situation until a disaster was imminent. These strategies become successful when the opponent is compelled to compromise and make concessions. On September 2014, the Organization for Security and Co-Operation

in Europe facilitated an agreement between Ukraine, Russia, and the Donetsk People's Republic, as a self-proclaimed state supported by Russia. The intent of the agreement was to create a 40-km buffer zone. Once all parties signed the agreement and agreed to abide by the truce, Ukrainian forces proceeded to withdraw from their 20-km buffer portion. Immediately afterward, Russian separatists simply occupied the abandoned territory instead of withdrawing from their 20-km buffer.

Russia challenged the international community through its actions in Syria and Ukraine. Russia's self-confidence and assertiveness increased, as well as their financial stability and military capabilities. Russia defended and protected strategic and geopolitical spaces of interest by using the nature of the international system and maintaining an imposing and stabilizing presence on Russia's border to prevent further Western inclusion.

International Arena

In international relations, there is no common international interest, but rather interactions between states motivated by their own self-interest. Realism, as it applies to international relations, explains that self-interest and self-preservation motivate individuals. Furthermore, by superimposing this pessimistic view of human nature, one can explain the conduct and behaviors of a state. The theory characterizes the international political system as anarchic, and neither authority nor rules exist. The primary interest of a state is survival, and for many states and their governments, the greatest threat to survival comes from a lack of security. Therefore, each state seeks to enhance their military capabilities, to protect and preserve their interest. The conundrum that emerges from this theory is that an increase in power can easily alarm and drive another state to enhance their security. This, in turn, creates a "security dilemma" making tensions, hostilities, conflicts, and wars inevitable. This suggests a nation's pro forma agenda will always consist of imposing their will on others.

On the other hand, the liberal school of thought gives shape to the notion of community among completely different states, all working together for a common goal of security and stability. Human nature often requires calamity to muster support for change, collaboration, and major new initiatives.²³ Contrary to the realist perspective, liberalism posits that anarchy is not inevitable, because, rules, laws, treaties, and agreements are possible under the idea of collectivity. Customs and laws can stimulate cooperation between states. For this reason, states will do what is best for their collective interest, and self-interest is secondary.

These two theories establish the international arena playground. From this perspective, international security becomes a source of manipulation, deception, negotiation, mediation, and consequently influential tools of international politics.

Agreements arise when the parties agree to a mutual objective. However, an agreement does not necessarily ensure security or prevent different parties from circumventing their obligations. Because naked self-interest lies behind cooperation,²⁴ each nation's strategic attention is based on extending their own power wherever possible. As such, in the past, the US and the USSR formed alliances of convenience. Prior to WWII, US-USSR relations were controversial due to the USSR's neutrality towards Nazi Germany (1933-1945). However, everything changed once Nazi Germany decided to expand their sphere of influence into the USSR. Two competing nations, the US and the USSR, came to an agreement to face a common enemy. Cooperation could be a source for self-preservation but is just a means to an end, not the primary objective.

In 1961, the US and USSR signed the Antarctic Treaty. A year later they were embroiled in the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) and the subsequent nuclear arms race. This worsened US-USSR relations. Mark Twain declared, "History does not repeat itself, but it does occasionally rhyme."²⁵ In 2014, the US and Russia agreed on an official number for intercontinental ballistic missiles launched in 2014, and the intent to continue to exchange telemetric information. A year later, everything changed.

President Putin said on 15 June 2015 that he plans to put 40 new intercontinental ballistic missiles into service this year. This followed a Pentagon announcement that it was 'poised' to deploy 5,000 NATO troops in Eastern European countries willing to deter Russian aggression. The US defense secretary has since confirmed that the US will 'temporarily station' heavy weaponry in the region. NATO has already staged military exercises in the Baltic States to signal military readiness, and reportedly plans more over the summer.²⁶

The difficulty of the international arena cannot be avoided. Governments tend to assume that states should not trust other states.²⁷ "As a result they try to take out insurance against real or possible threats, such as by arming themselves or entering into alliances."²⁸ However, the efforts to be safe can make others feel less safe, increasing tensions and the possibility of confrontation. Consequently, the

insecurity of a potential war keeps governments from cooperating sufficiently with each other. In the recent past, the US and Russia have agreed to defend against common terrorist threats. However, as in the Cold War, “any game that involves heavily armed proxies in an area of high international tension is fraught with risk.”²⁹ This is mainly because the tendency of opposite sides to defend their interests can instigate further hostilities, and result in an inability to neutralize real potential threats.

Soviet Ego

During the 1980s, the nuclear tension between the US and the USSR reached its zenith. Technological advantages became synonymous with security. The US commenced utilizing their sphere of influence to engage indirectly against the USSR, and vice versa. Both sides wanted to create a counterweight against the other. During the Cold War, Soviet bloc regions served as buffer states for USSR’s security. However, after the collapse of the USSR, with no Soviet power in the region, the EU grew stronger and expanded its unique ideals beyond the Berlin Wall (1961-1989). Post-Soviet states became eager to step out of the USSR’s shadow; they wanted autonomy and to be able to survive alone. The integration of these countries into Western ideology was intolerable to Russia; however, the country was weak and needed to regain the old Soviet ego.

The US was now in the center of the international structural system, and Russia was in the periphery. However, Russia intended to integrate itself back into the new world order, and it was widely assumed that democratic politics would quickly set Russia back on the road. For a period, Russia’s priorities included a total inclusion into the existing international system. “Even the issue of NATO membership for Russia was discussed with Western politicians, although it seems not to have been taken seriously.”³⁰ Shortly after that, Russia discovered that participating in this new world order did not guarantee their interests.

Following the collapse of the USSR, the US emerged as the single unipolar leader. Fearing that another great power would begin to act independently, as the USSR did after WWII; the international community became accustomed to the idea of the US as the main facilitator to democracy. “Without vigorous American participation, it is unlikely that the credibility and feasibility of international reactions to potential and actual outbreaks of fighting can continue to grow.”³¹ Consequently, in the 1990s, the concept of humanitarian intervention was first introduced, and by the end of the decade, this was employed as justification to enter a war against Iraq (1991) and later Yugoslavia (1998-1999). “A surge in

interventions took place after the Cold War ended, and then the inevitable morning-after reaction emerged against having overdone it, only to be followed by a renewed rise in interventions under the auspices of international organizations.”³²

In the past, USSR’s main objective was to weaken the US and sow discord among allies, especially NATO, and thus prepare the ground in case of a direct confrontation. It had the resources and capabilities for persuasion. However, after the collapse of the USSR, Russia only could object to Western policies, such as NATO enlargement and US-NATO humanitarian intervention in Kosovo. Russia was powerless to combat the US in the international arena. “The predominant Western assumption was that with time Russia would ‘come around’ and see the advantage of closer cooperation with the West.”³³ Concurrently, Russia observed that not everyone in the international community agreed with US policy toward Iraq, including France and Germany. Regardless, under the pretext of preemption, the US acted unilaterally, without the approval of the United Nations Security Council. After numerous unsuccessful attempts, Russia’s priorities changed from total inclusion into the existing international system, to a revanchist policy. A wish for greater security overcame its desire for international recognition. “Security is like oxygen—you tend not to notice it until you begin to lose it, but once that occurs there is nothing else that you will think about.”³⁴

Russia’s behavior was the combination of five factors. First, NATO enlarged its presence in post-Soviet controlled areas. NATO outlived its usefulness to counter the USSR’s expansion; however, after the collapse of the USSR, NATO strategy did not change or include Russia. Russia realized it became a second-class player in the international arena. Consequently, the Putin administration (2000-2007) redrew Russia’s government structure to strengthen Soviet power to effectively control Russia’s border.

Second, US interventionist foreign policy antagonized Russia. As such, Russia accused the US of intentionally removing Libyan president Muhamar Gaddafi in 2011. Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and other high-level Russian officials have often cited how they believed that the US overstepped the United Nations’s “no-fly zone” over Libya to overthrow the government of Libya.³⁵ Unilateral actions and military interventionism taken by US policy makers increased Russian frustration towards the inefficiency of the international system to resolve disputes collectively in a fair and peaceful manner.

According to Putin, 2013, US force has proved ineffective and pointless. Afghanistan is reeling, and no one can say what will happen after international forces withdraw. Libya is divided into

tribes and clans. In Iraq, the civil war continues, with dozens killed each day. In the United States, many draw an analogy between Iraq and Syria, and ask why their government would want to repeat recent mistakes.³⁶

Third, Russia realized that the collective interest of security is often manipulated into submission by the standard acceptable behavior of the stronger. As such, US interventionist foreign policy antagonized Russia's interests. On top of that, after thirty years, the US decided to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, and deployed a missile Defense system close to Russia's borders. The situation resembled the tension created by the Strategic Defense Initiative program (1983) during the Reagan administration. The USSR viewed it as an imminent threat. For Russia, this move reflected poorly on the validity of US intentions and the legitimacy of international laws and customs. Consequently, Russia broke away from the liberal idea of collectivity.

Fourth, Russia wished for greater security after the collapse of the USSR. In the international arena, security means preventing someone from attacking you by putting up a strong defense. The objective is to project political credibility. If you failed to defend your interests, other states could come to believe that there is a weakness. Therefore, other states need to believe that one is strongly motivated to defend its position through harm. If a state can project enough political credibility, it can probably get what it wants without confrontation. "Even for the most powerful governments, security has been a central preoccupation in their foreign policies, imposing great expense and often either serious harm or a real risk of it."³⁷

Lastly, the presence of the Soviet ego directed its actions. During the 1990s, the US grew stronger, and Russia's political power was weakened, not broken. The international community granted Russia privileged treatment mainly because of its realistic nuclear capabilities. However, Russia recognized the US could exploit its relative weakness. War is an instrument of power used by those involved in international politics. The ability to impose a will free of external authority represents autonomy. "Autonomy offers perhaps the ultimate appeal of power."³⁸ Consequently, Russia embarked on a wide series of reforms to promote a new and energized sphere of influence.

Modern Russia regained strength, and as during the Cold War, Russia became willing to engage and antagonize the US. They used Soviet-style active measures, including deception, economic and information warfare, power politics, and fear, as an element of modern Russian political warfare.³⁹ Russia pursued inherently dangerous strategies to secure their interests and exert control in post-

Soviet space to reduce the possibility for neighboring countries to join in an alliance with NATO. Economic interdependence became a reinvigorated powerful tool in power politics. They questioned US long-term interests and its use of military intervention.⁴⁰ Conversely, under the pretext it was protecting Russian citizens in that country, in 2008 Russia intervened in Georgia. In the process, they discovered the inability of the US to stop the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea. This demonstrated toughened gamesmanship and the weakness of the international community.

The Need for Brinkmanship

Throughout history, states such as ancient Greece (twelfth to ninth centuries BC) and the Trapezuntine Empire (1204-1461), believed that the conquest of territory was a necessary and fundamental factor to stimulate their economy, and by extension, their security. This concept became the conventional wisdom for states and military strategists. Imperialistic expansionism produced the first wave of globalization in which strong military states effectively extracted economic benefits from occupation for the purposes of controlling and maintaining a certain sense of security. The creation of buffer zones became crucial for both land and sea powers. By the twentieth-century, technological advantages and the globalization of production altered the traditional economic benefits of conquest, as well as security rivals.

The atomic bomb became the sovereign remedy for all potential threats. The USSR rapidly developed their research and weapons capability, and in 1949 conducted their first nuclear weapons test. However, the Geneva Convention (1949) established the responsibility to protect civilians in wartime periods, restricting the use of this type of weapon. Consequently, during the Korean War (1950-1953), unable to use the atomic bomb, the US refrained from using similar total war tactics employed in WWII that could force the USSR to participate directly in the war and transform a conflict into a third world war. Consequently, NATO emerged to maintain stability in Europe and counter the communist threat and military power of the USSR. For the USSR, the Warsaw Pact (1955-1991) provided a buffer zone to counterweight Western influence. Concurrently, both sides conducted their version of covert action by providing support to paramilitary forces. These actions and counteractions continued for the duration of the Cold War.

After the collapse of the USSR, the international community left behind the bipolar stability of the Cold War and replaced it with a unipolar leader. The

USSR and the Warsaw Pact no longer existed, but NATO continued integrating other armed forces into the Alliance. For Russia, this new global regime led by the US was unstable, compared to the bipolar system of the Cold War era. Military strategist Christopher Layne observed, “During the Cold War, the bipolar nature of the US-Soviet rivalry in Europe stabilized the superpower relationship by demarcating the continent into US and Soviet spheres of influence that delineated the vital interests of both superpowers. Each knew it courted disaster if it challenged the other’s sphere.”⁴¹ Therefore, the dynamic of international order needed to change back to the previous era of tension between the US and Russia. The insecurity of war is a dangerous tool, but a useful tool nonetheless.⁴²

States cannot operate as they did in the past, but they can still challenge the nature of the international system to develop their individual interests further. As in the Cold War, Russia demonstrated that under the pretext of security, preparing for war makes it more likely that war will occur. Subsequently, Russia’s behavior, securing the Crimean Peninsula and navy port, the recent increase in military spending, and frequent military exercises along the Russian-NATO borders—just as the US did during the 1980s—can be interpreted as acts of self-defense. Russian leaders wished to preserve their interests and reclaim their position as an influential power in world politics, which explains its behavior in the international arena.

Putin blamed himself for letting Gaddafi go, for not playing a strong role behind the scenes’ at the UN when the Western coalition was lobbying to be allowed to undertake the airstrikes that destroyed the regime. Putin believed that unless he got engaged Bashar would suffer the same fate—mutilated—and he’d see the destruction of his allies in Syria.⁴³

During the past decade, there has not been a conflict between two or more great powers, but an increase of small internal wars in which the US and Russia found each other on opposite sides. The Cold War and the collapse of the USSR changed the international system but did not create as much tension as Russian reintegration into the international arena. Russia believes they must now contain a megalomaniacal and arrogant US-NATO to prevent the spread of chaos. It appears that other states also fear US domination in the international arena. China and Russia consistently use their veto power and instigate disagreements. “Without the perception of benign intent, a unipolar leader’s intervention in regions beyond its own, especially those with substantial economic value, is likely to produce

incentives among the world's other major powers to balance against it.”⁴⁴

Russia, as any other strong nation, adheres to the global rule of law only when it suits its interests. The common denominator between liberalism and realism is that the notion of security is the product of the implementation of certain protective measures. Covert actions, war, and brinkmanship generate fear responses which can be used to influence the conduct of interactions in power politics. Consequently, security, stability and the insecurity of war become the primary instruments to provoke and influence change. But in the end, a nation will do what it deems necessary to protect its national security interests. Therefore, there is no doubt about the similarities between Cold War activities meant to degrade and deceive adversaries and today's events in Syria and Ukraine. This illustrates that Russian courses of action in the post-Cold War regional areas and the international arena have the potential to instigate further hostilities, animosities, and brinkmanship.

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37. Morgan, 2006, 1.
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39. Abrams, 2016, 1.
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The Airborne and Special Operations Museum

Museum Review

Jim Werbaneth

The Airborne and Special Operations Museum is not one of the largest military museums in the world, nor the most famous. Those would include the Imperial War Museum in London, the War Museum in Overloon, Netherlands, and the National Museum of the United States Air Force. Each requires at least a full day to tour intelligently, and the last in particular would require at least two days to see everything. Nor is the Airborne and Special Operations Museum similar to the small, specialized museums that dot United States Army bases, or the small regimental museums found in Britain and Canada. It ranks somewhere in between in terms of size and specialization, and takes perhaps two or three hours to see.



Figure 1. Entrance to museum and statue of General Hugh Shelton, photo by author.

In addition, unlike those smaller facilities and for that matter the National Museum of the United States Air Force, this one is not located on a military post. Rather than being located on Ft. Bragg, the home of both the Army's airborne and

special forces, it is about eight miles away, in downtown Fayetteville, North Carolina. It is extremely accessible, and does not just have more than adequate parking, but is literally next to the Fayetteville Amtrak station. Thus, there is as clear alternative to driving for the out of town visitor.

The museum offers a striking approach and entry to the visitor. The first part that one notices is the exterior memorial park, in front of the main entrance. This is dominated by two bronze statues; “Iron Mike,” just outside the door, represents a World War II enlisted paratrooper. A little further out, there is a statue of General Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1997 to 2001, wearing the beret of the 82nd Airborne Division. Of the two, Iron Mike is the more prominent, and something of a signature piece; the enlisted man gets pride of place. Surrounding them are stones commemorating the full range of Army airborne and special operations units going back to their early Second World War beginnings.

As the name and circle of stones indicate, this museum concentrates on the US Army’s airborne forces, and special operations. There is nothing about other services and their units, such as the Navy SEALs and Marine Raiders and “Para Marines,” nor the Central Intelligence Agency’s paramilitary arm; the focus here is on the Army. Its coverage, naturally, starts with parachute and glider infantry in World War II. Though they were far more likely to take landing craft into battle than parachutes, the early Rangers are also subjects of exhibits. However, the Airborne and Special Operations



Figure 2. “Iron Mike,” photo by author.

Museum does embrace the Office of Strategic Services, along with its Jedburgh units in Europe and Kachin Rangers in Burma, as well as Merrill's Marauders. The emphasis is on unconventional warfare, without the condition that the units jump out of airplanes, just as long as there is an Army connection.

At the same time, the museum gives recognition to one unit that pioneered aerial insertion, but not into combat. This was all-African American 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion. In a segregated Army in a similarly segregated America, they were not deployed overseas, and thus lack the prominence of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions. However, the battalion is of lasting influence, as it pioneered smoke jumping as a means of fighting forest fires started by Japanese balloon bombs.

The museum's stories continue into the Cold War. The Korean War is not widely remembered for its airborne operations, but there is an exhibit of a drop by the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team north of Pyongyang. Yet surprisingly, there is nothing about its actual commitment to battle, when transports lifted it to Kimpo Airfield after the Inchon landings.



Figure 3. World War II exhibit, with a 75mm pack howitzer in front of a Waco glider. Photo by author.

Other actions of the Cold War figure more prominently than one might expect. One is the 1965 civil war in the Dominican Republic, in which Marines and the 82nd Airborne Division intervened. This episode is largely forgotten today in the United States, lost in the glare of events in Southeast Asia, but the Airborne and

Special Operations Museum commemorates it.

Understandably, Vietnam receives a great deal of attention. While there was but one significant parachute drop, this war witnessed the first large-scale helicopter-borne airmobile operations. Additionally, the new emphasis on counterinsurgency coincided with the maturity of the Special Forces, and their patronage by John F. Kennedy. As one would expect, the museum spotlights the Green Berets; interestingly, one exhibit employs photographs published in a glowing, almost propagandistic, article in *National Geographic*. It also addresses units that one might not expect, especially the “Red Hat” advisers embedded with the South Vietnamese army, including its own elite airborne and ranger units.

The post-Vietnam seventies were an era in which American military power was, arguably, at its Cold War nadir, something that the museum’s exhibits recognize, at least implicitly. At the same time, there is recognition of the rebuilding that began then, including the reestablishment of the Ranger battalions as elite, airborne light infantry. Further, there are exhibits on Delta Force, starting with the abortive raid on Iran to rescue the American embassy hostages in April 1980 and, thirteen years later, the “Black Hawk Down” battle in Mogadishu, Somalia, in which Delta and Rangers both fought. One of the ironies of the museum, owing perhaps to the secretiveness of Delta and the other quiet professionals of the United States Army’s special operators, is that some of the more prominent events commemorated are defeats. Undoubtedly, there are victories and successes still classified and not yet ready for open history.

The Airborne and Special Operations Museum’s coverage extends into Panama, Grenada, Desert Storm then the much longer and controversial conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The last two might not get all the attention that they deserve, perhaps due to their ongoing nature, still-classified events, as well as controversy. Yet they are covered to a significant degree.

One of the more striking and maybe questionable elements is the way that the museum addresses the individuals who were key to the formation of the Army’s airborne and special operations forces. There are no obvious inaccuracies, but they tend to be curiously incomplete at times. For example, Matthew B. Ridgway is rightfully profiled for his role in leading the 82nd Airborne Division and XVIII Airborne Corps in World War II, but that is where his story stops. There is no mention of how he later reversed the fortunes of the American and United Nations forces under his command in the Korean War, nor his subsequent service as Army Chief of Staff. Similarly, there is a short biography and youthful picture of William R. Peers, who led OSS agents in Burma and China in World War II. There is no mention though of a later and significant service, when he held

both divisional and corps-level commands in Vietnam. One of his greatest contributions was heading the Peers Commission that investigated the lessons of the My Lai Massacre, and it too is ignored.

In the main, the museum's exhibits rely on smaller artifacts, such as weapons and uniforms. It does incorporate some larger items into very good effective full-scale dioramas, with historically dressed and equipped mannequins. Some museums get this wrong; the figures in the fortress of Eben Emael in Belgium are an assortment of multi-ethnic, long-haired men with seventies facial hair, looking as though they were looted from a Sears store on its last legs. Those in Fayetteville meet higher standards of craftsmanship and historical appearance. The largest setup centers on the largest item in the museum, a Waco glider, and portrays the night landings in Normandy. One of the most effective shows Rangers in Panama in 1989, operating with an M551 Sheridan airborne reconnaissance tank on a city street. Another portrays Delta Force operators on an AH-6 "Little Bird" helicopter in Mogadishu.

The overall atmosphere of the museum is subdued and muted with some prominent exceptions. These include the urban, desert, and mountain environments of Panama, Iraq and Afghanistan especially. Nonetheless, the main approach of the design is on understatement. Also, while much is included in a building that is moderately-sized, none of it seems cramped. Instead, it is well planned and laid out very effectively, with a logical, chronological flow.

The Airborne and Special Operations Museum is not the most imposing military museum in the world, no more than it is the most famous, nor is it likely to be the main destination for any vacation, even by the most historically minded traveler. It is more probably a side trip for someone in the Raleigh-Durham-Fayetteville area, or just passing through. Regardless, it is worthy recognition of America's sky soldiers and quiet professionals.

The Airborne and Special Operations Museum is located at 100 Bragg Blvd., Fayetteville, NC 28301. Its website is at <https://www.asomf.org/>.

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Aidan Dodson. *The Kaiser's Battlefleet: German Capital Ships 1871–1918*.
Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2016.

Book Review

Tormod B. Engvig

In *The Kaiser's Battlefleet*, Aidan Dodson—an Egyptologist by trade, but also an expert on late nineteenth and early twentieth century naval history—charts the development of the Imperial German Navy's capital ships from the end of the Franco-Prussian War until the end of World War I. During this period, the *Kaiserliche Marine* experienced a meteoric rise from a small coastal defense force to the world's second largest navy, only to then virtually disappear as a fighting force in 1919. Dodson's work is organized into two main parts: the first part, comprising nine chapters arranged chronologically, traces the development of Germany's capital ships from her first ironclad, the British-built *Arminius*, to the last theoretical battleship designs issued as the Second Reich crumbled in 1918. The second part is a detailed, *Jane's Fighting Ships*-style list of the vessels in question, replete with illustrations showing armor layout and general appearance, including modifications, as some of these ships were in service for several decades or more. Appendices listing main armaments, trial performance results, and order of battle are also included. The term "capital ship" in this book encompasses not only those ships classified as *Linienenschiffe* (lit. ships of the line, or battleships in English), but also the *Große Kreuzer* (lit. large cruisers, called armoured or battlecruisers in the English-speaking navies), many of which were actually larger than contemporary battleships, and served vital functions as fleet scouts and foreign-station flagships.

The book's main strength is in its ability to place German capital ship development in historical context. This makes *The Kaiser's Battlefleet* more than just a technical encyclopedia of the Second Reich's battleships. While indeed delving into great technical detail, Dodson maintains a sense of perspective throughout the narrative. Of particular relevance is his comparative analysis between German and British naval developments. Germany aspired to rival Great Britain's naval mastery in the period under study and German ships were, by the turn of the century, constructed in anticipation—or in answer—to developments across the North Sea. In its ability to combine a detailed technical chronology, data, and illustrations with context and comparative analysis, *The Kaiser's Battlefleet* will be difficult to match as an English-language source on the Imperial German Navy. It is of particular interest that the book's focus is not only on the

Dreadnought epoch (1906 onward) and World War I (1914–1918), but also the earlier period in Imperial German naval development. This span of thirty years saw the foundation of the Fleet Laws (which set the stage for massive naval expansion) and the rapid development of warships from ironclad, steam-and-sail hybrids into



Figure 1. SMS *Brandenburg*, Imperial Germany's first oceangoing pre-dreadnought battleship. Courtesy of www.history.navy.mil.

turreted, steam-powered battleships.

The Imperial German Navy was created when the German states consolidated into one political entity after Prussia's victory against France in 1871. In the decades that followed, the navy expanded greatly as naval technology moved at dizzying speed, with ships rendered obsolete by the time they were completed. By 1890, the German Navy had its first oceanic, turreted, steam-powered battleships on the stocks (the *Brandenburg* class), and moved gradually to eclipse the French Navy as the second largest in the world, and to become the Royal Navy's preeminent rival. The launch of HMS *Dreadnought* in 1906 largely reset the naval arms race as she made all battleships and large cruisers that had gone

before her obsolete. As the two naval rivals frantically set about outbuilding one another in Dreadnoughts and Dreadnought-type large cruisers (battlecruisers), Germany tried to keep up but Britain managed to stay just out of reach. The Dreadnought arms race ultimately soured Anglo-German relations and helped precipitate the outbreak of World War I by isolating Germany politically.

The book makes it clear that German capital ship design gravitated toward a philosophy that prioritized armor protection and rate of fire over gun range and caliber. This was because of fiscal constraints, and in due part to the belief—understandable, but later proven false—that the weather and visibility in the North Sea dictated battles at shorter ranges. The result, from the 1890s onward, was a fleet whose ships possessed firepower inferior to their Royal Navy counterparts, yet also tended to be more resilient. This was especially the case with Germany's later generation of large cruisers (SMS *Von der Tann* onward), illustrated by their ability to withstand more punishment than their British battlecruiser opposites at the Battle of Jutland (31 May–1 June 1916). Nevertheless, the ever more expensive naval arms race with Great Britain soon found Germany on the losing end.

By the start of World War I, Germany possessed a Dreadnought battlefleet that, while second largest in the world, was still numerically inferior to the Royal Navy by a ratio of 1.6 to 1—a margin large enough that it could never hope to challenge the British in an all-out fleet battle. The slight German tactical advantage of better protection was of little help against an enemy who possessed overwhelming firepower superiority. At Jutland, the Germans tried to isolate and destroy a portion of the British Grand Fleet. Although fought with great skill and courage, the ploy failed and the German Navy was never able to repeat the attempt. The last two years of the war saw the imperial battlefleet relegated to a subordinate tactical role, while Germany pinned her hopes on the U-boat arm to knock Britain out of the conflict—effectively turning Mahanian prewar assumptions about naval strategy on their head.

As Dodson indicates in the introduction, Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz—considered along with Kaiser Wilhelm II the father of the German Navy—saw the *Kaiserliche Marine* not so much as a weapon for actually fighting the British as a geopolitical instrument to keep Britain from fighting Germany. Tirpitz's prewar "risk theory" (that Britain would not risk war for fear of losing so much of her navy that her control of the seas would be jeopardized) proved in the end a chimera, but that is with the benefit of hindsight. Not unlike nuclear weapons ownership in the post-1945 world, a nation in 1900 could hardly call itself a great power if it did not possess a battleship fleet. Capital ships were instruments of political leverage as much as military tools. Germany, as an ascendant great power

in the early twentieth century, could arguably not, given the values of the time, afford to forego a powerful navy if it wanted to be taken seriously. Whatever the motivator, the baleful consequence of this perceived need for battleships was a

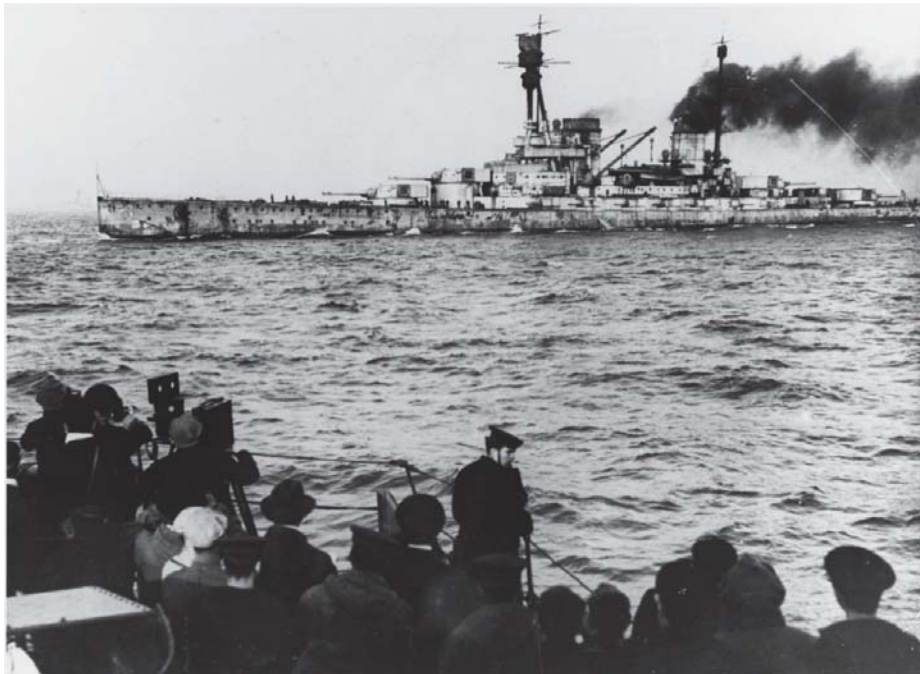


Figure 2. The last of Imperial Germany's large cruisers, SMS *Hindenburg*, steams into internment in 1918, observed closely by British sailors. Courtesy of www.history.navy.mil.

hideously expensive naval arms race that Germany eventually lost.

Further complicating matters was Wilhelm's restructuring, in 1899, of naval administration along the lines of the German Army. This decentralized the admiralty into three parts—the Oberkommando (High Command), Reichs-Marine-Amt (Naval Office), and Marine-Kabinett (Naval Cabinet)—leaving the Kaiser with ultimate authority over naval issues. Sole military power in the hands of a single man—one of mercurial temperament and mediocre intellect—did not bode well for the Second Reich. It is reasonable to surmise that the resources lavished on the German battlefleet were better used elsewhere. Nevertheless, instead of adopting the Anglo-centric view that Germany, unlike Britain, had no reason or “right” by its geographic position to build an oceanic navy, Dodson illustrates how the Germans pursued a naval program to rival Britain that in the end failed. It is

necessary to view these circumstances with a balanced perspective through the lens of those who lived it. The fact that Germany's enemies could blockade her into starvation during wartime seemed to be a convincing argument for a powerful battlefleet.

In sum, *The Kaiser's Battlefleet* is a valuable addition to the literature on the Imperial German Navy, its building race with Great Britain, and World War I. Its timing is probably no accident, as the last few years have seen a surge in literature on the Great War and related topics for the centenary. As an English-language text, it complements Gary Staff's monograph on Germany's Dreadnought-type large cruisers, as well as Patrick Kelly's biography of Admiral Tirpitz. The book itself has a nice finish and is comprehensively illustrated. On the other hand, the text is riddled with typos. This reflects poorly on the author, as well as the proofreaders, editors, and publisher. However, these flaws, while irritating, do not detract from the overall narrative, which does a fine job placing German capital ship development in proper historical context. Ultimately, Dodson's book remains a specialist work and, alongside its contextual analysis, has a heavy emphasis on technical data. Thus, it will appeal mostly to naval historians, World War I researchers, wargamers, and dedicated warship buffs.

Notes

1. Aidan Dodson, *The Kaiser's Battlefleet: German Capital Ships 1871–1918* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2016), 22–23, 37–39.

2. Ibid., 45, 79–80.

3. Ibid., 101, 172.

4. Ibid., 7, 51.

5. Ibid., 11, 35–36.

6. Patrick J. Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Gary Staff, *German Battlecruisers of World War One: Their Design, Construction and Operations* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014).

William March. *Company K*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989.

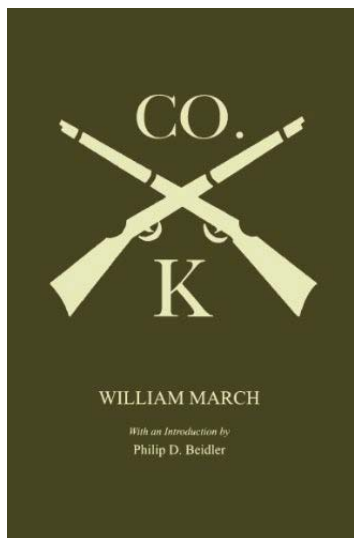
Book Review

Jeff Ballard

Company K is the most significant work of historical literature to come out of America's Great War experience. The book includes one-hundred thirteen chapters. The chapters are anecdotal first-person accounts of life in the American Expeditionary Force, which the United States sent to France in 1918. Members of the fictitious United States Marine Corps Rifle Company "K" tell each story, and their character's name is the title of each chapter. Each narrative is a fragment of one Marine's experience, with no single chapter telling the complete story of any one rifleman. Many Marines appear in second-person as a different Marine narrates his account of a shared event. The intertwined story lines are never fully resolved, adding to each story's suspenseful character.

The book begins after the war has ended with Private Joseph Delany presenting his wife with a manuscript he has written about his infantry company's experience in France. The next six chapters sample the motivations for each Marine's enlistment. Logically, the book concludes with six chapters that survey of how each Marine's wartime experience shaped the remainder of his life. The intervening one hundred chapters describe how the Marines lost their innocence and humanity in wartime through theft, desertion, murder, suicide, fratricide, body mutilation, and insanity with callous brutality. Additionally, they describe the horrors of war and death or mutilation by bayonet, bullet, gas, and shrapnel. More disturbing are stories told from the viewpoint of the dead.

Even those accounts that express a Marine's humanity are tinged with irony, like that of Private Phillip Wadsworth who loses his virginity only to be court-martialed and sentenced to a labor battalion for contracting a venereal disease. Another episode describes Private Colin Wiltsee's beautiful vision of Christ ascending to Heaven, just as the reader realizes that Wiltsee is dead.



Loss, hardship, and the randomness of mass-produced death in the First World War form the thematic center of *Company K*. The daily monotony endured by the Marines sharply contrasts with the horrors of combat. March does not romanticize the actions of the Americans or the Germans. The descriptions of modern warfare are violent and obscene. The experiences March's characters describe are universal to men in combat regardless of the age—fright, despair, bravery, and sacrifice.

Although *Company K* is a work of fiction, it adds substantially to the historian's understanding of a soldier's life in combat, regardless of era. Every character one would expect to find in a war story is present in the book. March provides honest descriptions of incompetent officers and fatherly sergeants, slackers, wound-prone privates, and innocents caught in the most lurid moments of their lives.

The book draws heavily on the author's personal experience. William March participated in the Meuse-Argonne offensive, Belleau Wood, St. Mihiel, and Blanc Mont campaigns. Roy S. Simmonds, March's chief biographer, unearthed a number of facts about the author and offered them as evidence that the stories told in *Company K* are not entirely fictitious, but based on fact. For example, Simmonds believes that March's own experience is the basis for the story of Private Manuel Burt. Burt stabbed a young German Soldier in the mouth with his bayonet and killed him. Later, the ghostly visitations from the young German soldier drive him insane. After the war, and until his death, March suffered from "hysterical conditions related to both his throat and eyes."¹

Just as likely autobiographical, was the murder of the twenty-two German prisoners ordered by Captain Terence Matlock. March contrasts Private Walter Drury, the only Marine who refused to participate in the massacre and who runs away only to be court martialed for desertion, with the blind obedience of Corporal Clarence Foster. The latter justified the killing by saying he read in the paper the Allied propaganda that "[Germans] burn churches and dash out the brains of babies."² Private Everett Qualls felt such guilt over the execution he believed that the blight on his family farm was God's retribution for his acts and committed suicide. Private William Nugent, whose description of the massacre includes seemingly random proclamations of his hatred for "preachers" and "cops," killed a policeman after returning home and died in the electric chair. Simmonds also claims that the character of Private Joseph Delaney likely represents March. After the war, Delaney presents a chronicle of his wartime experience to his wife. Her suggestion to "take out the part about shooting the prisoners" is probably a criticism of editors who considered the manuscript for publication.³

Company K was written by William Edward Campbell (1893-1954) under the pseudonym William March. It was initially serialized in magazines from 1930 to 1932, before being published in January 1933. The 1989 printing, reviewed here, contains an introduction by Philip D. Beidler, Professor of English at the University of Alabama and author of *Rewriting America: Vietnam Authors in their Generation*. Readers, new to *Company K*, any of March's other works, or the genre of historical fiction, will appreciate the insights in Beidler's updated introduction. However, modern readers, like this reviewer, used to the storytelling tradition where plots are resolved by the story's end, will be bothered by March's linear, rather than circular narratives.

March fought in France during World War I and served courageously with the Fifth Marine Regiment until the Armistice in 1918. He earned the French Croix de Guerre, the Distinguished Service Cross, and the Navy Cross for his valor during operations in the Blanc Mont region 3-4 October 1918. *Company K* does not mention the historical events that earned March the Distinguished Service Cross, our nation's highest medal for valor after the Congressional Medal of Honor. This omission further attests to March's understatement of his own heroism.

Beidler observes that *Company K* was "written by a man who had been to war, who had clearly seen his share of the worst of it, who had somehow survived, and who had committed himself afterward to the new bravery of sense-making embodied in the creation of major literary art."⁴ Other critics have compared *Company K* to Erich Maria Remarque's classic anti-war novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*. However, Simmonds maintains that because March based the content on real-life events, readers should not view it as an anti-war novel but "as an affirmation of life."⁵

The opening page of the narrative March anticipates the reader's question: why are the stories told in *Company K* relevant a century or more after the war it depicts? Through Delaney, March's alter ego, he muses: "I have finished my book at last, but I wonder if I have done what I set out to do? This book started out to be a record of my own company, but I do not want it to be that, now."⁶ In fact, March has told the story of every soldier, in every company, in every war, past, present, and future and so doing laid bare the nature of war itself.

Notes

1. William March, *Company K*: with an introduction by Philip D. Beidler (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), xii.

2. *Ibid.*, 127.

3. Roy S. Simmonds, *William March: An Annotated Checklist*, 1st ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 190-192.

4. March, xii.

5. Simmonds, 192.

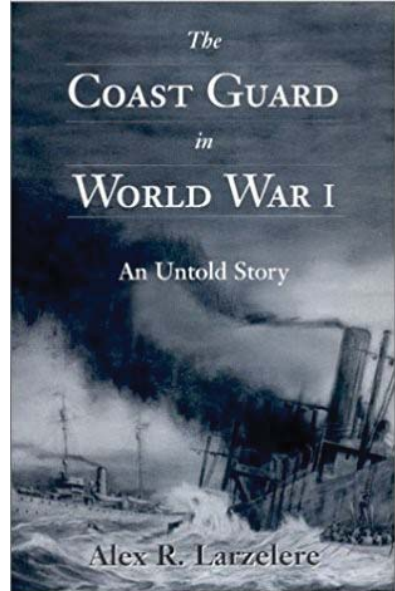
6. March, 13.

Alex R. Larzelere. *The Coast Guard in World War I: An Untold Story*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003.

Book Review

Chris Booth

Battle weary soldiers, covered in dirt and shell shocked from the rigors of early twentieth century trench warfare are most likely the first image that comes to mind of the combatants of World War I. This is not an unfair picture to draw, as it is estimated that approximately ten million military combatants were killed during the conflict, the majority of whom died while fighting on land. However, it is definitely unfair to ignore the vast contributions that the Coast Guard made throughout the war. In his book, *The Coast Guard in World War I: An Untold Story*, author Alex Larzelere encapsulated all of the heroic and dangerous missions that the smallest military branch accomplished during the war. Larzelere has completed a masterful task in his in-depth accounting of all Coast Guard related activities, and this book is a solid starting point for anyone interested in learning more about the actions of the Coast Guard in this conflict.



Larzelere has broken down the Coast Guard's involvement in World War I into descriptions of the missions it completed throughout the conflict. By leaving no detail out, even the smallest actions have been accounted for in this book. Although this does weigh the book down at times, the commitment to giving credit for every event in which a Coast Guard member was involved demonstrates not only the author's vast dedication to research for this project, but also the sheer number of roles in which Coast Guard members acted. For instance, the author states, "at the time of mobilization in 1917, the U.S. Coast Guard had a fleet of twenty-three active cruising cutters and twenty-one harbor cutters" (p. 11). Larzelere goes well beyond this summary statement, as he carefully annotates the actions and missions of each cutter throughout the course of the war.

Cutters were not the only platform that the Coast Guard utilized during World War I, however, and Larzelere includes chapters on the roles that other units played as well. Larzelere spent much time detailing the oftentimes tedious, sometimes lonely, and regularly dangerous life of a surfman at a rescue station. Information is given on all three types of outfits at the time “life-saving stations, lifeboat stations, and houses of refuge” (p. 156), ranging from how the men went about the more difficult tasks of saving lives in peril to the more mundane, such as how the men were instructed to not bring reading material to their lookout watches. Larzelere also went to great effort to ensure that he included the newly minted aviation sector of the Coast Guard in his book. Despite being a brand new addition to the service, aviation was a part of the Coast Guard during WWI. Larzelere incorporated the actions of the first aviators in the Coast Guard, detailing their training, the record setting flight of First Lieutenant Elmer Stone (senior pilot who crossed the Atlantic Ocean on 27 June, 1919), and the anti-submarine missions that they flew off the American and French coastlines.

Most significant are the events or activities that the Coast Guardsmen practiced during World War I that the men and women in the service today still execute. Larzelere writes of the men that “served as vessel inspectors for the Fourth and Seventh Naval Districts” (p. 222), a passage that clearly shows that the marine inspectors in the Coast Guard today are still practicing the same craft a century later. The author also goes into detail on how life was for men on a Coast Guard cutter and troop transports (crewed by Coast Guardsmen). He included a letter from a Coast Guardsman who was underway. It stated, “Fortunately we had no cooties, but cockroaches were a common pet and a popular pastime was racing between these sociable little insects” (p. 68). This illustrates how much the service has improved over the decades. Finally, it is interesting to see how some of the traditions utilized during WWI are still in use today. For example, men that served at surf stations had to pass a rigorous swimming test with elements such as “swim [ing] 50 yards dressed, with shoes, trousers, and coat, and then remove the clothing in the water, without touching bottom” (p. 159)—a test that is still administered to aspiring officers to this date.

In conclusion, Alex Larzelere’s book *The Coast Guard in World War I: An Untold Story* does an admirable job of detailing the brave and patriotic actions that Coast Guardsmen participated in throughout the conflict. Many men gave their lives during this war while serving in the Coast Guard, and the author’s inclusion of how the service had to fight for survival, and not be absorbed by the U.S. Navy serves as a stark reminder of the branch’s uniqueness. Overall, this book is not reserved for historians, but should instead be read by anyone who desires to know

more about the smallest branch of the U.S. military and how it contributed during WWI. The Coast Guard has deserved a book like this for decades, and it is refreshing to see that someone so passionate on the subject has delivered such a fine product.

Byron Farwell. *The Great War in Africa: 1914-1918*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1986.

Book Review

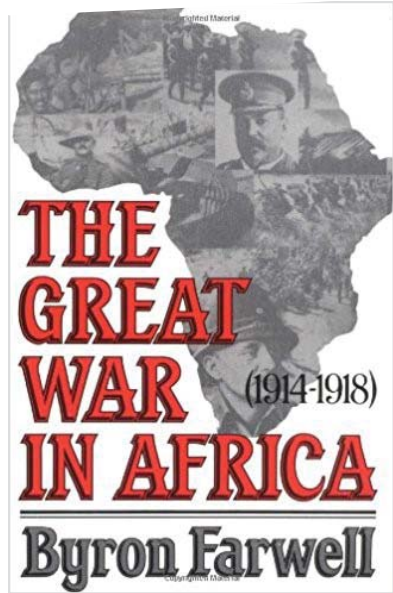
Bill Hanson

This reviewer was recently gifted Byron Farwell's *The Great War in Africa: 1914-1918*, and it has turned out to be an in-depth but eminently readable account of a little-known period of the history of modern warfare. Of course, the colonial wars were a decided backwater during World War I, which is why this set of campaigns is only dimly remembered—if at all.

Even so, and even though the reader will find little to connect this area of conflict to the larger World War, there are some good lessons to be taken. Further, an astute reader will see many potential connections to the post-World War II period of decolonization and to the current situation in sub-Saharan Africa. Although this work does not have the sweep of David Fromkin's *A Peace to End All Peace* or Peter Hopkirk's *The Great Game*, like those books, it does show how action occurring well away from the center of attention can have lasting effects on subsequent events.

In many ways, Farwell points out how the war in Africa was the antithesis of the Great War in Europe. Instead of the industrial slaughter on the Western Front, where the sheer weight of metal thrown downrange might be the decisive factor, this was war on a more personal level. While logistics is supremely important in warfare, the vast distances and sparse infrastructure in the region made the possession of towns and railway lines far less important than things like local knowledge, the ability to get along with the local tribes, and the number of native bearers to carry equipment and supplies. At the start of the 1917 campaign in German East Africa, the British commander, Major General Sir Arthur Hoskins, had conquered all the major towns, held all the railways, but was not able to run the German forces to ground—a situation that has become all too familiar today.

For Farwell, the most sympathetic commander is the German Major



General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, who fought a brilliant Fabian-style campaign. In many ways, his dedication to keep a “force in being” will remind readers of George Washington’s campaign against the British. Lettow-Vorbeck, a soldier’s soldier, overcame great weaknesses in terms of numbers of troops and equipment, along with conflict with his political superior, to constantly bloody the British (and later, Belgian and Portuguese) while maintaining his force intact, in high spirits, and constantly on the move. British commander Jan Smuts does not come off nearly so well in Farwell’s eyes and he makes much at the end of the fact that Lettow-Vorbeck was the only undefeated German general of World War I.

As the conflict in Africa was an afterthought, support from the major European powers for that theater was fitful. Farwell points out the war in Africa was seen as a diversion and both sides were careful not to divert too much force from the main event—and tried to make the other side divert more forces away from Europe. Accordingly, this was very much a war of improvisations and of colorful characters. This reviewer’s favorite was the pilot who drank a quart of liquor every day—so much so that on the infrequent days he did not drink, his observer refused to fly with him as his hands shook too much.

The feats of improvisation were truly heroic. The sinking of the German cruiser *Königsberg* required the British to tow two monitors all the way from Europe to the southeast coast of Africa, as they were the only ships that could mount heavy enough guns while still being able to penetrate into the Rufigi Delta where the *Königsberg* lay holed up. For you movie fans, Peter R. Hunt based the movie, *Shout at the Devil* on this campaign. The British destroyed the *Königsberg* in a strange, slow-motion battle, but the Germans took the guns and supplies from the ship, and they along with the crew were used to good effect by Lettow-Vorbeck throughout the war. In another incident, the Germans hauled two steamers overland for thousands of miles for use in Lake Tanganyika. The Germans, sometimes beyond the end of their supply lines, were able to create more than sixty *ersatz* items to replace critical supplies. Farwell is at his best here, painting both the action and the colorful cast of characters with vivid strokes.

At the same time, Farwell is unsparing of the players—he portrays them, warts and all, along with the sometimes-vicious infighting on each side. Farwell draws from many primary sources, including the personal accounts of the key participants, and deftly draws material from diaries and letters to illuminate the character of the conflict. Toward the end of the book, the key factor in the conflict for both sides became disease. The casualties from disease versus casualties from combat ratio is truly appalling—sometimes exceeding 1000:1. Further, by 1918, the influenza pandemic struck the region, exacerbating an already dire situation.

Many units that started with hundreds or thousands of men fell to less than one hundred (and often, less than fifty) combat effectives.

In sum, this book will be a good addition to those wishing to get a more complete picture of the Great War—but it is perhaps more useful as an introduction to combat in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as a source for lessons in irregular or insurgent conflicts. The reader will see many parallels to other campaigns. For example, the constant British attempts to bring Lettow-Vorbeck's forces to a set-piece battle, along with Lettow-Vorbeck's rebuff of those efforts, reminds this reviewer of nothing so much as Bernard Fall's description of the French trying to bring Giap to heel in *Street Without Joy*. In all, this is a solid and entertaining account that will provide ample food for thought for those interested in this little-remarked, but fascinating chapter of history.

Karl-Heinz Frieser, ed. *Germany and the Second World War: Volume VIII: The Eastern Front 1943-1944: The War in the East and on the Neighbouring Fronts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

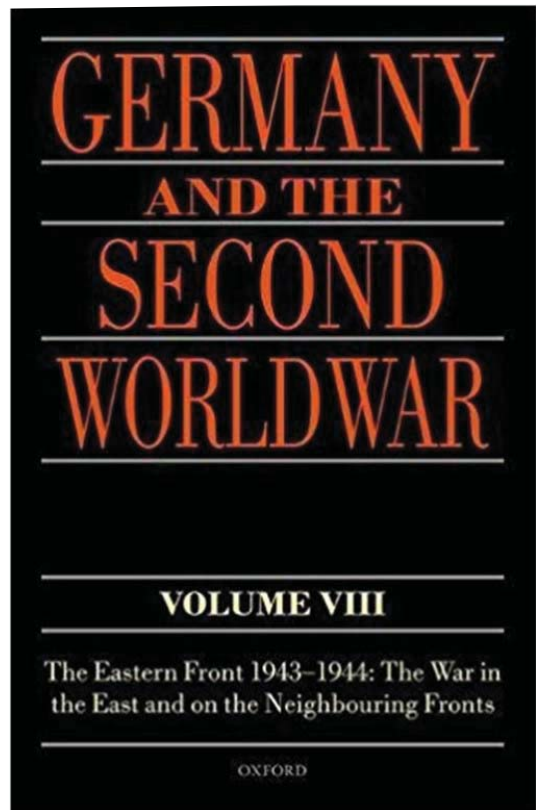
Book Review

Robert Smith, PhD

Germany and the Second World War: Volume VIII: The Eastern Front 1943-1944: The War in the East and on the Neighbouring Fronts edited by Karl-Heinz Frieser is the newest volume of the official German History of World War Two from the Oxford University Press. Without reservation, this work is without peer in its treatment of the Russo-German War, commonly known as the War in the East for the period of 1943-1944. Having read approximately half the volumes in the series to date, one of the first things this reviewer noted is that the proofing and overall accuracy of the footnotes has vastly improved. The editors at Oxford ensured this volume was not to be plagued with some of

the spelling errors that Volume IV and IV/ I suffered from post translation. Better still for the reader are some subtle—and not so subtle—stylistic changes in the writing. In this case, the historians write less like old school historians and instead use argumentative conventions and an almost conversational tone that really bring the crippling strategic and operational dilemmas faced by the Third Reich to life.

The historians very ably lay out the cruel choices facing Hitler after the conclusion of the debacle of the summer 1942 campaign that culminated in the



surrender of the 6th Army at Stalingrad. The debate over what to do, and the thinking behind it is laid out with just enough consideration to the dangers pressing in from the other fronts, notably the defeats in the Battle of the Atlantic, Tunisgrad, or the loss of North Africa and the strategic cul-de-sac of the around-the-clock bombing of the Third Reich. The authors lay out methodically and clearly the ugly issue of what does one do when the only elements you have going for you are the benefit of interior lines and a still tactically superior army. These immutable facts lead directly to the Battle of Kursk, the last time the Germans were able to mount a summer offensive.

Kursk. Kursk was supposedly the largest tank battle in history. Allegedly as it has come down through popular military history, Kursk was the swan song of the German armored fist, the rock where the panzers in the East smashed up against that changed forever the fortunes of war—except the authors here show that was not true. A battle where tanks rammed each other at the Village of Prokhorovka and fired at near point blank range . . . except all of that is a bit distorted to some degree or another. The authors of this volume dispel surgically many of the myths surrounding this battle. In doing so, they note the why and how the myths arose, as these myths conveniently served the political and personal ends of the Soviets and Germans. The book takes to task a number of other authors and works in the public domain for their errors or simply erroneous conclusions. To a degree that is hard to fully assess, these authors did have a window of opportunity of the use of the Soviet archives in one of those periods of “thaw” with Russia. However, much of their material is a hard review of the surviving German archives and some solid analytical work on operational readiness and battle reports. The conclusion is astounding, leading the reader to understand much of what passes for shared knowledge and the history of the Battle of Kursk is simply wrong.

Part IV, The Swing of the Pendulum: The Withdrawal of the Eastern Front from Summer 1943 to Summer 1944 is in a word simply grim reading. The scope of the fighting and the resultant casualties boggles the western mind. The authors use several themes to good effect here such as Hitler’s “Attack or Perish” mantra, that building fallback defensive lines led to the collapse of morale in WW I, so therefore such a thought was anathema. Nearly as good as the analysis of Kursk is the catastrophe of German arms known as the Destruction of Army Group Centre. The overarching commentary of how the politicization of much of the Army leadership, turning it into an instrument of National Socialism, meant that leaders like Field Marshall Ernst Busch were elevated to command due to their political reliability, which in turn led to this defeat that serves as a model on how not to fight a defensive battle.

The collapse of Army Group Centre in the Soviet Offensive Operation Bagration was the greatest defeat in the history of German Arms. The picture painted here is of two armies that are now mirror images in some way of how they stood in June 1941. The German Army is now the one facing de-motorization, with an overreliance on horse motive power and marching, whereas the Soviets, due to American Lend-Lease, have a fleet of trucks. The German Third Armored Army in the summer of 1944 had NO tanks . . . but did have sixty thousand horses. Moreover, the German Luftwaffe was a chimera of itself on the East Front, having been deployed to defend the airspace over the Third Reich. In this defeat, the Soviet thirst for revenge begins that would continue for most of the rest of the war. At the Bobruisk Citadel, the Soviets slaughtered five thousand wounded soldiers of the German Ninth Army. They summarily shot prisoners who were unable to keep up on the marches to the Soviet transit camps. But as the authors note, the large public display of German prisoners marched past the Kremlin in the summer of 1944, a flagrant abuse of international law in terms of treatment of prisoners of war, probably saved the lives of many as the Soviet authorities knew “the Boss” wanted the largest number possible on display. Woven through is the recurring theme of how the Soviet troops treated the captured countrymen accompanying the Germans, the paramilitary auxiliaries and women, mutilating and defiling them.

The authors neatly detail the Soviet failure to break into Warsaw describing the generally unknown German defensive successes by their superior use of operational armor art in Poland in the autumn of 1944. The authors also note there were more than several opportunities for the Soviets to go bold and for broke, with little in the way of German forces to stop them from running riot. Instead, the Soviets chose to be more methodical in their efforts, ensuring, though, a higher body count for all concerned as the struggle continued. Although not brought up by the authors, it is this reviewer’s opinion that the shock and reversal suffered by Stalin at Warsaw in 1920 at the hands of the Polish Army was always in the back of his mind. Why overreach and perhaps suffer a defeat that would embarrass “the Boss” (as Stalin was known), when you could simply expend lives and grind the Germans down?

The chapters on Greece, Yugoslavia, Finland and the shedding of the Allies of the Third Reich: Italy, Slovakia, and Romania perhaps requires a little more knowledge on these satellite areas to full follow the story line. It was a section of the book that could have used more maps to help the reader follow the action in the Balkans. Some of the other lesser story lines, though, are easier to follow, such as the isolation and battles of Army Group Courland, formerly Army Group North. However, the historians again savage an accepted myth that this area

needed to be held for use as a testing bed for the new Type XXI U-Boat. Instead, Army Group Courland, and Hitler's obsession with the establishment of fortresses was that after defeating the invasion in the West, these locales would be utilized first to stabilize the front and then launch new offensives against the Soviets to turn the war in Germany's favor on the East Front. Of course as the authors note, "Hitler's troops would no longer counter the rapidly superior Soviet forces by active operational manoeuvres but would defend passively and let themselves be slaughtered in the killing fields of 'fortified places'"(p. 445).

The battles in Hungary and the Dukla Pass region truly get their due here as well. Hungary became the focal point for the Third Reich's survival. It was all about oil. The US Army Air Force's bombing strikes on the Ploesti oil fields and refineries, and then their subsequent capture by the Soviets meant Germany's last remaining oil was in Hungary. Most of Germany's major efforts offensively in 1944-45 on the East Front were to protect this last remaining source of crude. It is why, as the authors note, most of Germany's panzers were in Hungary, and not protecting the Vistula and in effect, Berlin. Without this oil, Germany stopped and the war in effect was over.

Be aware though, this is a huge work of over 1,250 pages. But sources? It is richly annotated and the bibliography contains a number of new works this historian was unaware of on the topics presented herein. One can spend several hours perusing the back of the book to gain new sources for areas of interest for a period of the war that gets overlooked by western readers. It is not an overreach to call this volume magisterial solely for its treatment of the Battle of Kursk, but it continues to relentlessly impress and captivate the reader. For any serious student of World War Two and those of the Russo-German War of 1941-1945, this is a must read.

John Grehan. *The Charge of the Light Brigade: History's Most Famous Cavalry Charge Told Through Eye Witness Accounts, Newspaper Reports, Memoirs and Diaries (Voices from the Past)*. Yorkshire: Frontline, 2017.

Book Review

Michael R. Majerczyk

During the Battle of Balaklava on 25 October 1854, the British Light Brigade, for no apparent tactical reason, galloped into a heavily defended Russian position, and fell under cannon fire from three sides. John Grehan explores the Charge of the Light Brigade through numerous primary sources such as Queen Victoria's letters, letters from soldiers, correspondence, and dispatches from the Crimean War. He forgoes paraphrasing. As such, there are numerous long quotes, fifteen in the first chapter, and it may appear that Grehan is quoting his way through the book. Though cumbersome at times, most of these long quotes are from primary sources and introduced in a way that maintains the narrative. It is clear from the beginning of the book that Grehan's intended audiences are those with an understanding of the Crimean War and the famous Charge of the Light Brigade. For example, of the thirteen chapters, the reader must wait until the second chapter before Grehan discusses the background of the Crimean War. Nevertheless, due in large part to a well argued introduction, the text maintains the reader's interest. Furthermore, chapter one contains much information on the "Purchase System," whereby British officers bought their commissions and rank, rather than gained them by merit (p. 5). The British reinstated the system in response to Oliver Cromwell. After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, military men no longer controlled the Army. Rather, wealthy landowners, with nothing to gain from revolution, filled the senior ranks of the military. In this way, the army became part of the upper class with shared interests (p. 5). As much as it secured Britain from a military revolution, it diminished its readiness for war because the Army's senior officers had bought their rank and had little or no experience in matters of war. "Out of fifteen regiments of cavalry and twenty-six of infantry which we have here [in Flanders], twenty-one are commanded literally by boys or idiots" (p. 5).

Such was the situation for Britain during the 1850s and it is from this world that the main characters evolved, including James Henry Somerset, first Baron Raglan, James Thomas Brudenell, seventh Earl of Cardigan, and George Bingham, third Earl of Lucan. Raglan, served as military secretary for Sir Author

Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington. During the Battle of Waterloo, he suffered a terrible injury to his right arm. He removed himself from the action to seek medical attention and a surgeon sawed his arm off below the shoulder. He never made a sound. Of toughness, there is no doubt. However, he never commanded forces in battle. Nevertheless, Army headquarters, with Queen Victoria's approval, appointed him Commander-in-Chief (p. 8). Lucan had not seen action for twenty-five years yet he commanded the cavalry. He was the type of person that believed he was always in the right regardless of evidence to the contrary. Perhaps that is one of the reasons Cardigan despised him. Cardigan, through backchannels of the purchase system, commanded the prestigious Light Brigade. Surrounded by scandals involving women, he nonetheless despised Lucan because he believed Lucan mistreated his sister. Not only was Cardigan Lucan's subordinate, he was also his hated brother-in-law! Though Raglan preferred to separate the two men and made this known to the Duke of Newcastle, the Secretary of State for War, the appointments stood (p. 10).



Figure 1. *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, by Richard Caton Woodville, 1854.

Though the book does touch on other battles during the Crimean War, such as the Battle of Alma and the Siege of Sevastopol, the Battle of Balaclava makes up the heart of the book. Of this battle, Grehan focuses on three elements—the 93rd Highlanders, the Charge of the Heavy Brigade, and the Charge of the

Light Brigade. The five hundred-fifty men of the 93rd Highlanders that held firm in the face of two thousand Russian cavalry begins the action in earnest (p. 96). Lieutenant Colonel George Ainslie formed the 93rd only two ranks deep. The reporter for the *The Times*, William Russell, recognized as the first modern war correspondent, described the scene from a heightened vantage point. "The ground flies beneath their horses' feet; gathering speed at every stride, they dash towards that thin red streak topped with a line of steel" (p. 94). Later the "thin red streak" evolved into "the thin red line" and to this day describes courage in the face of impossible odds. The 93rd Highlanders readily repelled the first four hundred cavalry to charge on them and the Russian Cavalry turned their attention to the Heavy Brigade.

Due to the topography of the North Valley, vineyards and orchards the Heavy Brigade, numbering eight hundred, did not see the two thousand Russian Cavalry until they were five hundred yards away. It was General James Scarlett's aide, Major Alexander Elliot, that alerted him to the Russian Cavalry. As such, he ordered an immediate uphill charge and repulsed the Russian cavalry (p. 98-99).

Indeed, the continuous long quotes are distracting at the beginning of the book but they are of much interest when the Battle of Balaclava begins. Operational reports, soldiers who were members of the 93rd Highlanders, the Heavy and Light Brigade tell their stories with all the shades of humanity. Fear, pride, respect, and duty are all present in their accounts. For example, Hector McPherson, a member of the 93rd Highlanders wrote, "We declared that we would die to a man rather than not maintain the position assigned to us" (p. 94). An anonymous sergeant from the Heavy Brigade wrote to his parents from the hospital in Scutari, "At one time I was surrounded with about ten Cossacks, and with the assistance of my long sword (which is the only thing you can depend upon with those Cassocks), I got clear of them, with two wounds in my head and one in my right hand, all saber cuts" (p. 104).

The Charge of the Light Brigade followed that of the Heavy Brigade and the intensity of the action increases. Here Grehan begins describing the charge by addressing the great controversy surrounding it. The controversy centers around what Raglan's orders were. For example, whether Raglan's last order complemented his previous orders or if each was a stand-alone order. General Airey set down Raglan's last order, it reads,

Lord Raglan wishes the cavalry to advance rapidly to the front-
follow the enemy and try to prevent the enemy carrying away the
guns - Troop of Horse Artillery may accompany - French cavalry is

on your left - R. Airey
Immediate (p. 113)

Captain Lewis Nolan, who became the first to fall in the charge, galloped down from the Sapouné Heights to deliver both Raglan's written and verbal orders to Lucan. None of this made sense to Lucan except "immediate" and "rapidly." It is with this in mind that Lucan ordered Cardigan to charge the Light Brigade, formed in two lines, into the heart of the Russian Army. Again, Grehan, quoting primary sources allows the reader to feel the tension, fear, and horror members of the Light Brigade endured. For example, "A shot came over the hill and dropped on the neck of the horse of a man named Gowens. The shot cut off the head as cleanly as with a knife. The horse stood still for a moment, and then dropped. Gowens got on a spare horse running by, and in a few minutes this horse's head was also shot clean away" (p. 139). The same thing was happening to the soldiers! The action here is intense. The Light Brigade charged three quarters of a mile down the North Valley while cannon fire from three sides assailed it. That of the Don Cossack battery came from directly in front and crossfire fire on their left and right fell from batteries on Fedioukine Hills and Causeway Heights. The Don Cossack battery directly in front and crossfire fire on their left and right from batteries on Fedioukine and Causeway heights. Upon reaching the Don Cossack battery and engaging the artillerymen, "they had no chance with us, and we cut them down like ninepins" (p. 152), they had to return the way they had come through cannon fire on both flanks!

Though the narrative told through eyewitness accounts is dramatic, the book does not include a map of the battlefield. Thus, readers will do well to familiarize themselves with the relative topography of the battlefield. The Sapouné Heights where Raglan viewed the battle and gave orders, the Fedoukine Hills and Casuseway Heights and their relationship to the North Valley are central to the story. Grehan does provide photographs of the battlefield taken during his fieldwork. From them it is clear the terrain posed obstacles or gave the advantage depending on which position one held. Nevertheless, they do not give an overview of the battlefield.

The Light Brigade—670 strong at the onset of the charge—lost 271 men (p. 178). Though spectacular, the charge destroyed the Light Brigade and for no tactical advantage. Someone had to answer for this blunder. The controversy over who was responsible was lively as well, again Grehan provides correspondences from Lucan, Raglan, and Cardigan to Army High Command and it is quite entertaining to witness the political positioning that took place.

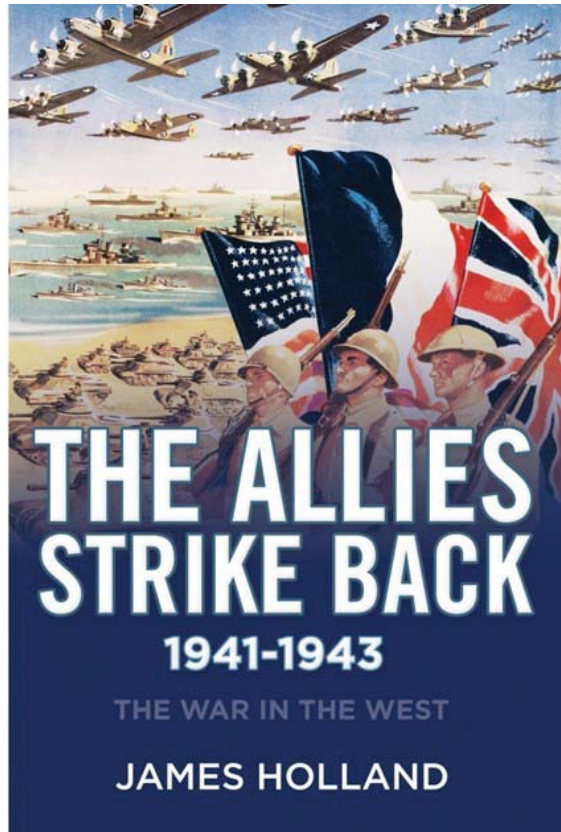
The Charge of the Light Brigade was spectacular in the same way it was unnecessary. The sheer audacity of it prompted Stefan Kozhukhov of the Russian 12th Artillery Brigade to take note. “With a sort of brave despair, these mad daredevils flowed back along the path they had forced open, and not one of them, wounded or not, laid down his arms” (p. 155). As much as it is the heroism, the controversy that surrounds the event keeps the story relevant. Though Grehan makes his thoughts clear, his many block quotations allows readers to examine the evidence for themselves and come to their own conclusions. In addition, there are many reference notes and the bibliography is extensive. If one is new to the famous charge, a little additional research, mostly concerning topography, will enhance the read. For those well versed in the story, Grehan’s book provides access to the many primary sources that surrounds the Charge of the Light Brigade.

James Holland. *The Allies Strike Back 1941-1943: The War in the West*, Volume Two. New York: Grove Press, 2017.

Book Review

Robert Smith, PhD

Just what the world needs, another book on World War Two serving as an anthology of sorts. Bookshelves and Amazon are littered with single to multi-volume works that if not turgid, offer little new in the way of scholarship or interest. The publicity for James Holland's *The War in the West* World War Two trilogy boasted that it is "the second world war as you've never read it before." Well, for many it will be just that. It is without reservation that this reviewer can say that Holland's works actually do meet this stringent test of "does the world need another such work." It is indeed needed and wanted—especially if it is the trilogy that James Holland is currently



writing. Holland's newest work *The Allies Strike Back* is that rare World War Two anthology that is indeed a page turner. The first volume, *The Rise of Germany, 1939-1941: The War in the West* was a very pleasant surprise indeed. This reviewer first became acquainted with Holland after reading his book, *The Battle of Britain: Five Months that Changed the World*. That was a more than pleasant surprise as it was more than simply a polished retread of the shopworn story of the

Battle of Britain.

As in *The Battle of Britain*, what Holland excels at is combining great storytelling with good, solid research. Holland's narrative is interspersed with numerous first person accounts that never threaten to overwhelm the main themes. His brilliant selection of these participants shed new light on how the war impacted the individual, from the North Atlantic, to the steppes of Russia, or the North African battle plain. Holland has six pages of principal characters. This reviewer researched one of Holland's many characters, the French film actress Corinne Luchaire who was reputed to be beautiful, but was also a collaborator (as was Coco Chanel). After the war, the French executed her father for treason and sentenced her to the *dégradation nationale*, which revoked her political, civil, and professional rights. The Chicago Daily Tribune noted her death by "BEAUTY CALLED A QUISLING NO.1 DIES IN FRANCE." It is those types of character thumbnails that make this truly a worthy read—it is not just about the Rommel's of the war. It is entertaining, and unlike the first volume *War in the West*, which had some small factual issues, *The Allies Strike Back* does not readily suffer from that pain. However, there are some errors. For instance, Holland called the HMS *Repulse* a *Renown*-class battlecruiser a battleship in his discussion of its sinking on 10 December 1941. He referred to Henry Stimson as the US Secretary of State for War when he was the Secretary of War and claimed that Rommel took command of the Deutsche Panzerkorps in February 1942 when it was 1941. The reader will be more than pleasantly surprised at Holland's treatments of Operation Barbarossa and in general the Eastern Front. Any more than a casual student of history knows how much archival material there is to draw upon, and with the temporary opening of the Soviet World War Two archives, the amount of material became much richer. Holland's overall choices draw upon enough of the familiar to allow the casual reader to know where they are at in the war, but he goes beyond that for the more serious student.

Fairly or not, many informed readers judge new works on World War Two by new material, as time after time authors present the same images of American soldiers trudging up the beaches at Normandy on D-Day. It is difficult to think that the work is not going to be in essence a retread when the photographs and maps are yawn inducing for having been used seemingly infinitum in other works. Although the maps and diagrams chosen by Holland are in shades of gray and white primarily, they are of great interest. Some of his diagrams include the Luftwaffe Air Defense in the West, types of merchant vessels, the Murmansk convoy routes, and how ASDIC worked with the Hedgehog U-Boat weapon. Each one merits comments. The location of flying schools AND night-fighting schools

are noted on the Luftwaffe map while the merchant vessel diagram allows readers to see the ship in their mind based on the author's handy reference chart. The Murmansk convoy route shows the mean ice pack limits (a search of other books with such a map did not uncover similar features), while the ASDIC-Hedgehog diagram allows the reader to grasp how the two systems worked together to hunt and kill U-boats. Holland's judicious use of facts like noting that in 1942, the Germans had seventeen different tank guns in production, illustrates his sense of how an economy of scale haunted the Third Reich in the war of the factories.

Holland states in his introduction, "There is not, however the space . . . to give the War in the East the detailed attention it deserves." This might give a reader the mistaken impression that Holland then in essence deals with the Eastern Front in an abstract manner. Far from it as Holland gives more time to it than was expected. More importantly, Holland briefly goes down the Third Reich War of Annihilation path in theory with its infamous "Hunger Plan," with modern facts elaborated on in greater detail in the popular work *Ostkrieg* and the official German History of World War Two, *Germany and the Second World War: Volumes IV and IV/I, The Attack on the Soviet Union*. This is not the clean Deutsches Heer (German Army) fighting the good war against Asiatic Bolshevism to defend the west, a popular myth the Germans somewhat successfully "sold."

What will really sell readers on the book, though, is the author's command of the newer facts. It is an established fact that to motorize the Heer for the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Third Reich stripped conquered Europe of its vehicles. By the end of 1940, France, the most motorized nation in Europe, was down to eight percent of its prewar vehicles. Context matters and Holland provides that repeatedly, such as letting readers know that the Heer was invading the Soviet Union—which was ten times larger than France was—with an Army that was only slightly larger. However, the book contains some European and British colloquialisms that might throw a reader off, such as the use of the term "metalled roads" (unsurfaced), or worth a "punt" (bet). Field Marschall Erhard Milch, often portrayed as a buffoon and out of his league, readers learn was the only senior commander who, when Operation Barbarossa was finally given the green light, ordered new woolen underwear, fur boots, and sheepskins for Luftwaffe personnel. If anything, a recurrent theme of Holland's is how well the Luftwaffe performed during the course of the war despite never getting an operational pause to catch its breath. Few readers realize that during the epic Battle of Moscow in 1941 thirty percent of Soviet tanks were British. Holland rightfully spans the European-centric view of the German military and its civilian leadership for its conduct of the Battle of the Atlantic. Holland goes into some detail that a U-Boat had been

successfully developed that could run underwater all the time, powered by hydrogen peroxide. This was a war game-changer, but the “Naval Staff demurred. The costs were too high; it might mean interrupting current U-boat production; and there was unease about its safety,”—this despite the fact that Allied airpower was now becoming a major factor in limiting U-boat operations.

Holland tells readers “Moscow was never bombed by anything close to a mass raid.” That is true within the context of what Germany would later endure from the RAF and the USAAF, but on 21 July 1941, the Germans bombed Moscow with 195 planes. His assertion that the “fully mechanized forces of the Deutsche Afrikakorps would have been worth its weight in gold on the Eastern Front” is perhaps an overstated claim. Military history gamers always consider that tantalizing “what if,” but invariably reach the conclusion that the vastness of the Eastern Front would have swallowed up the Afrikakorps in a way to make it moot. His argument that Japan needed to strike for the resources of the Far East (true), the best of which lay in the hands of the British (true), the US (?), and the Dutch (true) is perhaps off in its inclusion of the Philippines for resources.

Holland pays just enough attention to some of the war’s less glamorous aspects like the war of the factories, from American production snafus to the evacuation of much of the Soviet heavy industry in advance of the German Army. He talks not only strategy, but also about culmination points in terms of Clausewitz. He even mentions that the refrain of the common German soldier “If the Fuhrer only knew,” a shield of sorts for Hitler, was lost once he took over command of the Eastern Front.

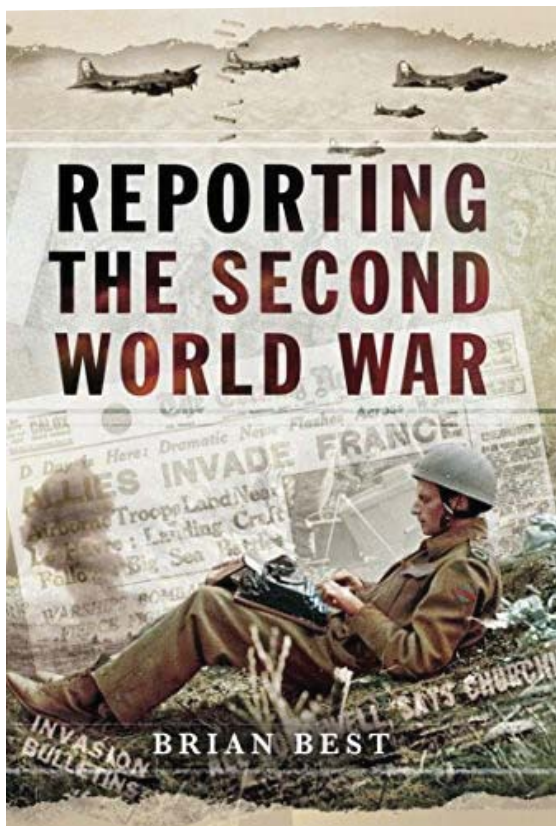
Without question, Holland’s writing style is among the more engaging out there, drawing the jaded World War Two reader into this work. There is little question that both his narrative skills and his research are both top-notch. The real treat for the both the casual reader as well as acolyte of World War Two history is Holland’s astute eye for building new facts and analysis into a fresh revisionism of World War Two history that has had times almost approached insufferably unassailable myth. For readers who like fresh history with an abundance of new facts, this book should merit high consideration.

Brian Best. *Reporting the Second World War*. Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword, 2015.

Book Review

Tormod B. Engvig

In *Reporting the Second World War*, author Brian Best conveys the World War II experience through the words of British Commonwealth and American war correspondents. Best divides his book into sixteen chapters, arranged partly chronologically and partly thematically, and dealing with a certain front or aspect of the war. Laudably, the book begins with and includes the Spanish Civil War, where a number of World War II correspondents first gained exposure. In addition, the book includes the correspondents' experiences in theaters like Finland and Burma. Best also includes some information on the Pacific War, as well as a



chapter dedicated to propaganda and press censorship. Nevertheless, the book's emphasis is on the war in Western Europe and the Mediterranean Basin—theaters which heavily featured Western Allied correspondents.

Best suggests that World War I and World War II correspondents were different breeds. According to Best, in Britain's case, her Great War correspondents, primarily middle-aged men, returned home in 1918 with badly tarnished reputations. Having had very little access to the fighting front, their

apparent readiness to embrace the heavily censored official view caused bitter resentment from soldiers and civilians alike, as proof of upper-echelon incompetence and the gritty details of the suffering in the trenches came out. The generation that set out to cover the second global conflict was generally much younger and more energetic than that of World War I and included a number of women. Its combination of youth and idealism helped set the stage for what was arguably the “golden age” of war reporting (p.vi-vii).

Compared to their Great War forerunners—and immeasurably helped by their governments’ more enlightened view on war reporting—Western World War II correspondents gained an unprecedented level of access to the fighting front, on land, sea, and in the air. Correspondents shared bivouacs with soldiers. In Burma, several correspondents followed the famous Chindit raiders on their deep penetration operations into the jungle behind Japanese lines. One correspondent, an experienced skier, joined white-clad Finnish troops as they ambushed Red Army formations during the 1939–40 Winter War. A number of other correspondents went on bombing raids and sailed on naval vessels in the heat of battle. Inevitably, their dedication to their profession cost some of them their lives. Accidents, artillery, and small arms fire claimed their fair share, while others went down in the planes they flew. One British correspondent, Bernard Gray, was even lost aboard the submarine HMS *Urge*, sunk by a mine in the Mediterranean. Their narratives are some of the most colorful first-person accounts of World War II. Without a doubt, posterity owes these brave war correspondents much for their insight into the war, despite the often heavy hand of government censors (p. 22–23, 67, 115–17).

Best uses an “in their own words” approach to convey the magisterial narratives of the war’s most famous reporting personalities, many who went on to become household names. Some of these include Edward Murrow, Ernie Pyle, Walter Cronkite, Richard Dimbleby, Ian Morrison, Martha Gellhorn, Virginia Cowles, and Edward Kennedy, to name a few. Kennedy gained notoriety for violating the thirty-six-hour news embargo on the German surrender in May 1945, and it is because of this the Western world, to this day, commemorates VE (Victory in Europe) Day on 8 May, while in the former Soviet Union it is commemorated on 9 May. Famous photographers like Gerda Taro, an early casualty who was killed while covering the Spanish Civil War, and Robert Capa, who immortalized the American-sector landings on D-Day, are also included. Ernest Hemingway’s penchant for bizarre behavior is amply demonstrated, and while it seems that Best, at times, has it out for the iconic American writer, this author cannot fault his assessment of Hemingway as a rather undignified personality (p.205–6, 220).

Best's book, with its focus on the war in Western Europe and the Mediterranean Basin, does come with one caveat. Noticeably absent are any serious references to the Eastern Front—it is compressed into a chapter with the early Pacific War and covers only three and a half pages. There is nothing on the German-Soviet war between 1942 and the Battle of Berlin in 1945. Equally absent is anything dealing with Allied Soviet war correspondents. The book's scope is comparably narrow and Anglo-American centric, and thus overemphasizes peripheral theaters like the Western Desert (important though this campaign was for Great Britain and Fascist Italy). Best ignores the writings of high-profile Soviet war correspondents like Vasily Grossman or Ilya Ehrenburg. There are other criticisms, including a fair share of typos, which, sadly, appear to be the norm for the publisher Pen and Sword/Seaforth. In setting the historical scene for the correspondents' vibrant narratives, the book is also factually imprecise. For example, Best's suggestion that Nazi Germany's last-ditch Ardennes Offensive in December 1944 was conducted by just two divisions is a rather significant understatement—Operation *Wacht am Rhein*, as the German offensive was codenamed, was conducted by no less than three field armies. This is not a crippling oversight, as Best's book is first and foremost about the narratives and experiences of war correspondents, but for readers not well-versed in World War II such errors can cause confusion (p.187).

There are other books available on the lives and experiences of Western Allied World War II correspondents. Some examples include *Reporting War* by Ray Moseley, *The War Beat, Europe* by Steven Casey, *Ernie Pyle's War* by James Tobin, and *Assignment to Hell* by Timothy Gay. None of the aforementioned books, however, cover the sheer number of British Commonwealth and American correspondents—160 plus—the way that Best manages to do, although at just over 200 pages his coverage of each correspondent is fairly superficial. In conclusion, while Best's anemic coverage of the Eastern Front may find its share of criticisms, for what it is clearly intended to be—a book on Western Allied war correspondents—*Reporting the Second World War* succeeds in building a vivid narrative of their experiences, and is a welcome addition to the voluminous literature on World War II.