

Book Reviews

At War in Distant Waters: British Colonial Defense in the Great War, by Phillip G. Pattee, Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2013, 273 pages, maps, ISBN 978-1-61251-194-8 (hard cover)

Reviewed by Brian K. Wentzell

Phillip Pattee has revisited the issue of the naval strategy of Great Britain and Germany leading up to and including World War One. In preparing this work, the author has conducted extensive research as is evidenced by the extensive endnotes and bibliography found in the book. The resulting text is a detailed explanation of British naval strategy that was centred on the protection of trade routes connecting the homeland, colonies and trading partners. The strategy recognized the risk of Britain's dependency on the overseas sourcing of raw materials and food to sustain its population and industry.

The Germans understood the importance of overseas trade to the British and set about to disrupt the flow by creating a fleet of battleships and cruisers, supplemented by armed merchant cruisers taken up from trade. The submarine was also recognized as a crucial weapon, however, U-boat commanders were not very discrete when it came to picking targets, and frequently neutral ships, their cargos and citizens were subject to attack. As the United States was a neutral state until late in the war, the German Navy's indiscriminate attacks risked provoking American entry into the war. And, indeed, unrestricted submarine warfare eventually brought the United States into the conflict.

Pattee points out that despite the attempts to cut trade lines, there were officers in the Royal Navy and the German Navy that still thought the North Sea was the main battle ground for their naval fleets. For each navy there was the concern that the other would attack their homeland through coastal bombardment, mining, raiding and even invasion. Although there was no invasion there was bombardment, the setting of minefields and some raiding. However, the consummate meeting of the respective battle fleets at Jutland in 1916 did not create the massive knockout desired by either protagonist. The real war was the trade war in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Australia, New Zealand and India played significant roles in neutralizing the German Pacific and East African colonies. Their actions, under British guidance, destroyed the logistics and communications systems upon which

German commerce raiders relied. Aggressive Royal Navy actions against German colliers and errant neutral countries that turned blind eyes to German refueling and repair work further hobbled the commerce raiders.

By 1917 the only dangerous German commerce raiders were U-boats. However, the resumption of submarine warfare was too late to turn the tide of battle in favour of Germany. Furthermore, the number of new cargo ships built finally outpaced the number of allied ships lost and the entry of the United States Navy increased the available anti-submarine forces substantially.

The result was that the flow of raw materials, war supplies and other goods was sufficient to sustain the British population and war effort. At the same time, the flow of German-bound cargo through neutral countries was reduced. The allied armies were better supplied and thus enabled to turn the land war against the invader.

This book will provide a good base for further investigation by those interested in reconsidering maritime strategy and the role of navies in peace and war. In today's interconnected global economy, the protection of trade routes is as important as it was in earlier times. The right of free passage in international waters is crucial and navies are an important instrument to guarantee that right.

In conclusion, I recommend this book as a useful reference for inquiry into the strategy and role of navies in past, current and future times. 🍷

The Accidental Admiral: A Sailor Takes Command at NATO, by Admiral James Stavridis, US Navy (Retired), Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2014, 244 pages, \$USD 32.95 (soft cover), ISBN 978-1-61251-704-9

Reviewed by Colonel P.J. Williams

To this day, the author of this book remains the only naval officer to hold the appointment of NATO's Supreme Allied Commander (SACEUR), a post which since General Dwight Eisenhower first held it in 1951, has been reserved for a US officer. The fact that Admiral Stavridis broke that mold is not the 'accident' referred to in the title: indeed it really refers to his entire naval career, as his original intent had been to serve only a short time in the navy before leaving to start law school. He later changed his mind and thus in this work we are treated to an account of his time as SACEUR from July 2009 to May 2013, a period encompassing conflicts in Libya, Afghanistan and numerous other crises.

The person who serves as SACEUR is in fact 'double-hatted' and also serves as Commander US European Command, reporting to the US Secretary of Defense. Thus the position of SACEUR comes with inherent challenges as the incumbent has to juggle both his NATO and his US responsibilities. This means that it is necessary to fend off the views from some quarters within the alliance that he's too deferential to his homeland while also dealing with possible concerns within the US government that he's effectively 'gone native' and is leaning too far toward the NATO camp. In any case, Stavridis appears to have navigated such challenges rather well, serving for almost four years in post, much longer than most.

He came to this senior NATO post after having served as Commander US Southern Command and after a distinguished career as a naval officer and an author of some renown in his own right, having frequently published articles for the *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, as well as an account of his time as a warship's commanding officer.¹

The author's aim in writing this highly readable account, and one which is highly appropriate for someone who led a coalition of almost 30 states, is to demonstrate that multilateralism rather than unilateralism is the best guarantor of success in tackling the crises of today's diverse world. Certainly he was faced with a myriad of challenges on taking over as SACEUR, as evidenced by what he saw as his three key priorities:

- in Afghanistan, gain momentum against the insurgency while also transition security responsibility to the Afghans;
- reduce NATO's footprint in Kosovo from 15,000 to under a third of that number; and
- combat piracy, particularly in the Indian Ocean, against Somali opponents.

The book is divided into two thematic lines. In the first part, the author covers key parts of his area of responsibility geographically, and so there are individual chapters devoted to Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Russia, Israel (which unlike the majority of the Middle East is not within the US Central Command area) and the Balkans.

The second part of the book consists of a series of chapters which provide a sort of after-action review of key aspects of military leadership and command which Admiral Stavridis had learned over the course of his career, as well as offering his thoughts on the future of NATO. The book also has five appendices, including one which is a reading list of works on strategy, leadership, history and other subjects which runs to some 21 pages. Interestingly, the list includes the novel *Dr Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak as

well as *The Castle* by Franz Kafka.

Admiral Stavridis writes in a very easygoing, almost folksy style that will no doubt appeal to the lay reader. Nevertheless, Stavridis is candid and revealing in his assessments, at the time of writing his book, of several issues which he had to deal with while serving as SACEUR. He notes, for example:

- it is too early to assess whether the campaign in Afghanistan was worth it, though he assesses the likelihood of success as 66%;
- the NATO intervention in Libya was an overall success, but not an unqualified one as almost half the alliance members did not participate in combat operations there;
- there is a 50-50 chance that Israel will launch a pre-emptive strike on Iranian nuclear capability; and
- in terms of dealing with Russia, Stavridis believes, *inter alia*, that it should be ejected from the G8, subject to further targeted sanctions, and that NATO should share intelligence with Ukraine and the United States should pause its military drawdown in Europe.

Readers hoping to see many laudatory references to our home and native land will be somewhat disappointed as references to Canada are but two: one is to acknowledge that we contributed fighters to the campaign in Libya, while the other describes a former Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) (whose name is misspelled as Naytncyk) as being, "a hearty guy built like an NFL fullback."²

Coalition warfare, whether based on established alliances such as NATO, or so-called coalitions of the willing like that against the Islamic State (ISIS) group, continue to be the order of the day and appear to be Canada's preferred method for sending forces off to what we rightly or wrongly call 'war' these days. This highly engaging account of one man's approach to this type of generalship (or more accurately the art of the admiral) is both timely and a very worthwhile read. 🇨🇦

Notes

1. James Stavridis, *Destroyer Captain: Lessons of a First Command* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008).
2. James Stavridis, *The Accidental Admiral: A Sailor Takes Command at NATO* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2014), p. 29.

A Two-Edged Sword: The Navy as an Instrument of Canadian Foreign Policy, by Nicholas Tracy, Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012, 476 pages, 35 black and white photos, bibliography, index, ISBN 978-0-77354-051-4

Reviewed by John Orr

A knowledgeable author with an extensive academic (and practical) knowledge of things maritime, Dr. Nicholas Tracy, Adjunct Professor of History at University of New Brunswick, has written a notable survey of the use of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) by the Canadian government "to manage its relationship with its powerful friends, Britain and the United States, and participate in naval actions that supported Canada, her allies, and the international community." Well researched and thoroughly referenced, the book won the 2012 John Lyman Book Award for Canadian Naval and Maritime History.

In the Introduction, Tracy lays out the taxonomy regarding the use of naval forces (including maritime forces such as the Canadian Coast Guard and maritime aviation) in the pursuit of national policy objectives. This goes well beyond the classic works of American naval theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan and British naval historian Sir Julian Corbett or even the more recent works of Ken Booth (the Booth Triangle). Tracy eventually elects to use the terms proposed by Sir James Cable in his study of gunboat diplomacy – especially the concept of 'purposeful force' which is defined as a military action that persuades a foreign government to change its policy.

Tracy does note, however, that such labels can be limiting, especially so in the Canadian context. He stresses that it is difficult to place too much reliance on strategic concepts rather than on concrete actions. To illustrate the point, he quotes Dr. R.J. Sutherland, Chief of Operational Research and who chaired the committee that wrote the 1963 Canadian Defence Budget Report, who stated in 1963 that "[i]t would be highly advantageous to discover a strategic rationale which would impart to Canada's defence programs a wholly Canadian character.

Unfortunately, such a rationale does not exist and one cannot be invented."

Taking a quick spin through the First and Second World Wars, Tracy examines in some detail the dynamic that led to the rapid expansion of the RCN in the post-Korean War era that became the first 'Golden Age' of the RCN. Interestingly, in assessing the navy's role in the Cuban Missile Crisis which ends this period, Tracy concludes that due to the complexity of the professional and social linkages established by the various interlocking NATO and Canada-US agreements, the government of Canada came perilously close to losing civilian control of the navy.

The period following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the RCN's participation in a number of operations in the Gulf and Indian Ocean loosely focused on the enforcement of sanctions against Iraq forms a significant portion of the book. Tracy's discussion of sanctions and their effectiveness benefits from his extensive study of the subject although, in this reviewer's opinion, this detracts somewhat from the overall discussion of the foreign policy aspects of the employment of the navy.

Tracy claims that in the 'coalitions of the willing,' the demands of network-centric warfare as practiced by the US Navy place increasing strain on Canada's ability to act independently as a sovereign power. As in the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Tracy surmises that this leads to a situation where once again civilian control is threatened although this time it was not interlocking command relationships but the demands of network-centric warfare that pose a challenge.

This book is recommended for the expert reader, although the preliminary chapters, concluding material and bibliography may be of interest to a more general audience. It should specifically be read by those in key positions in government who may be required to present options regarding the application of force and in particular the imposition of sanctions. As Tracy notes with some regret, it is doubtful that there are many in the various Canadian ministries who are knowledgeable in these matters. 🍷



HMCS *Fredericton* crosses the North Atlantic Ocean to participate in *Operation Reassurance*, 9 January 2016.

Credit: Corporal Anthony Chand,
Formation Imaging Services

