

2001

Maritime Supremacy and the Opening of the Western Mind: Naval Campaigns That Shaped the Modern World, 1588–1782

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Recommended Citation

Wilson, Andrew G. and Padfield, Peter (2001) "Maritime Supremacy and the Opening of the Western Mind: Naval Campaigns That Shaped the Modern World, 1588–1782," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 54 : No. 2 , Article 23.
Available at: <http://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol54/iss2/23>

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While Jones made no truly significant, long-lasting contribution to the U.S. Navy, his career personified the times. He was a contemporary of better-known Isaac Hull, Oliver Hazard Perry, Matthew F. Maury, and John Dahlgren, and like them he contributed to the evolution of the American navy. He was a hero of the War of 1812, introduced innovations as an inspector and superintendent of ordnance, carried the Stars and Stripes to Hawaii in the 1820s, and helped to incorporate California into the United States. Yet Jones was not an atypical commander of his day; he was a striking personality in an age in which individual temperaments helped shape the Navy.

Gene A. Smith does a masterful job in chronicling the life of Thomas ap Catesby Jones, from his appointment as a midshipman in 1805 to his court-martial in 1850 on charges that included fraud against the United States, libel, neglect of duty, and oppression. The court found him guilty and suspended him for five years. Today's standards for court-martial were not applied to the Jones case; it is doubtful that due process and rules of evidence were followed. Attitudes about naval discipline were changing, but unfortunately, Jones had not changed with them. He was probably convicted because of his past behavior as an old-fashioned tyrant, making him a useful example with which to enforce new attitudes concerning shipboard discipline. Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years before the Mast* and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, among others, had so changed public perception that attitudes such as those of Jones were no longer acceptable. In a sense, one might liken the 1840s and 1850s to the 1980s and 1990s, where attitudes of acceptable behavior changed, and those who did not change along with them

eventually paid the consequences. The earlier era dealt with naval disciplinary methods such as flogging, while the more recent attitude change concerned male behavior and sexual harassment.

Although the book is well researched and documented, it may be somewhat difficult to follow for those unfamiliar with the geography. For example, the actions of Jones in the War of 1812 and around New Orleans and the Hawaiian Islands in the 1820s would have been easier to follow if maps had been provided. I could easily follow the discussion concerning Monterey and California only because I live there.

Beyond the life of Jones, the book describes well the mores, attitudes, and practices of the era. For example, career patterns of naval officers; the relationship between private, financial, and military affairs; ambivalence toward slavery; the chaos created by the California gold rush; and many other apparently disconnected topics are presented in a natural and informative manner.

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Padfield, Peter. *Maritime Supremacy and the Opening of the Western Mind: Naval Campaigns That Shaped the Modern World, 1588–1782*. New York: Overlook Press, 2000. 340pp. \$35

“Maritime supremacy is the key which unlocks most, if not all, large questions of modern history, certainly the puzzle of how and why we—the Western democracies—are as we are. We are the heirs of maritime supremacy.” So begins the argument of naval historian Peter Padfield’s latest work. Like Nelson, Padfield is prone to bold acts, and in this

case, it is his thesis. Beginning with a look at the Spanish Armada of 1588, Padfield leads the reader through several pivotal naval battles, including The Downs (1639), Beachy Head (1690), Quiberon Bay (1759), and the American Revolution's naval campaigns. He contends that these battles not only were critical from a tactical or strategic standpoint but played a long-term role in the development and political, economic, and social lives of the countries involved. Put simply, maritime power and success lead to such liberty as has been enjoyed by the Western democracies over the recent centuries. "Our faith in democracy, personal freedoms and human 'rights,' and other comforting prescriptions of the humanist liberal credo, stem from the supremacy of maritime over territorial power."

Drawing primarily upon published materials, the author builds a strong argument for the relationship between naval and maritime power and the success of such liberal democratic states as the Dutch United Provinces, England, and the United States.

The success of these maritime nations was and is based on the principles so well outlined by Alfred Thayer Mahan. Control of the sea is a two-stage issue—control of trade, and naval protection of that trade. Padfield reminds the reader that during the period of royal absolutism only a state with a strong merchant class could be a true maritime power, and only a strong merchant class could enable a kingdom or state to finance and operate successfully naval fleets—"by far the greatest industrial-bureaucratic organizations of the time." The result of the merchant influence was a decline in royal prerogative. Fleets cost money, and the merchants had the money; as a result,

merchants gained an increasing role in official decision-making circles. Along with the rise of the merchant class in the early modern states came a rise in the belief of political and social freedoms. According to Padfield, "Liberty has always been the pride and rallying cry of powers enjoying maritime supremacy."

Beginning with the United Provinces, Padfield contends that their maritime power, along with their fairly urban nature, created "the first mass market in intellectual and artistic properties." Padfield states further that in essence the seventeenth-century Dutch burghers "produced a prototype of late-twentieth-century Western civilization." In short, the Dutch were the "harbingers of the modern West." With the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, the mantle of maritime greatness passed to England.

These are strong assertions. However, as Padfield outlines it in *Maritime Supremacy*, his thesis that maritime supremacy and the "opening of the western mind" are inseparably linked is convincing.

If there is a shortcoming to *Maritime Supremacy*, it is in the naval history used to illustrate Padfield's points. Although his descriptions of these famous naval engagements are interesting, there is entirely too much detail. This section of the work could be an entire book by itself, without the discussion of Western freedoms and democracy. The naval battles within the work represent simply the author's canvas, whereas his focal point is the thesis concerning the relationship between maritime power and the development of the liberal democratic state. This reviewer's suggestion is to ignore the battle minutiae and enjoy the argument. With its brief glossary of nautical terminology, bibliography of the leading secondary literature concerning the subject,

and decent annotation, this work will make a welcome addition to the library of the naval specialist, professor, and armchair admiral alike.

Today's naval powers operate in a global theater. Padfield's research not only demonstrates the origins of this global maritime arena but reinforces the importance of maintaining a nation's maritime heritage, diversity, and power. The book's dust jacket calls the United States of America the "ultimate successor" to this maritime past. If the United States is to maintain the position Padfield claims its maritime history has granted it, then its naval leadership—if not its citizenry—should be reading this work, to understand the past and prepare for the future.

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Gibson, Andrew, and Arthur Donovan. *The Abandoned Ocean: A History of United States Maritime Policy*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2000. 362pp. \$39.95

The Abandoned Ocean has been published at an opportune time in the history of the U.S. merchant marine. The latter half of the twentieth century has seen the flags of the traditional maritime nations of Europe and the United States almost disappear from the sea. The fleets of developed nations operated under national regulation. Competing with shipping lines under foreign registry that paid minimal registry fees in lieu of national taxes, employed cheaper crews, and obtained and maintained their ships at fluctuating world market prices rather than in conformance to engineering and safety standards, the merchant fleets of developed nations were increasingly at a

disadvantage. When the Western European shipping lines found they were unable to operate their vessels under existing national regulations, many legislatures eased those standards by allowing the formation of international registries that established conditions similar to those of their competitors. Some countries, such as France and Great Britain, established ship registries in their colonies that provided similar competitive conditions.

The Abandoned Ocean is a historical study of American shipping policy over the past two hundred years. It was drafted in the hope that it would help future maritime policy makers to understand better the competitive environment that exists today.

As might be expected, given the academic background of its authors, the book will be equally valuable to students of maritime affairs. It is a case study of the strategic, economic, and political issues that have influenced American policy makers at the highest level from the colonial period. Readers are provided with the essential facts about what has, and what has not, been beneficial to U.S. maritime industry. They may draw their own conclusions.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, "Free Trade and American Enterprise," addresses the years 1600 to 1914, the period of the greatest growth of the American merchant marine, and of its steep decline following the Civil War. The second part, "War-Impelled Industries," guides the reader from 1914 to 1960, discussing the issues that gave rise to the great merchant fleets of both world wars, and the New Deal legislation culminating in the Merchant Marine Act of 1936. The third part, "The Approaching