

How Navies Fight: The U.S. Navy and Its Allies

Michael A. Palmer

Frank Uhlig Jr.

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book and the course is that of the C2 process (students would call this a “foot-stomper”), almost as counterpoint to the desire of many, especially Americans, to focus more centrally upon technologies. It is as if the author wishes us to heed Napoleon’s caution, “Woe to the commander who arrives on the field of battle with a system.”

After an initial look into the functions of command and the nature of warfare, the next five lessons gravitate around the C2 process, and the final four lessons focus on C4 systems. The book contains a chapter for each of the ten lessons, with a discussion, commentary on principal readings, and an annotated list of supplementary readings. The individual readings and the bibliography are each worth the price of the book; they encompass the very best in both historical and contemporary work. The currently fashionable “Information Warfare” appears to be absent, as well as (for the reason noted) intelligence and intelligence systems. Also, Snyder treats modelling, simulation, and wargaming only lightly. I would have included in the bibliography Wayne Hughes’ succinct and useful *Fleet Tactics*.

In summary, this is a book to come back to again and again, like a map through a confusing and uncertain territory. While it works better in helping the reader understand the nature of C2, rather than any specific system, that in itself is of more enduring value in this era of instant technological obsolescence. Most of all, the reader comes away appreciating that any discussion of command and control involves an inherent joining of commanders with systems and that such “man-in-the-loop”

conditions make a knowledge of history and human nature as important as of engineering physics.

JOHN R. WOOD
Captain, U.S. Navy

Uhlig, Frank, Jr. *How Navies Fight: The U.S. Navy and Its Allies*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1994. 455pp. \$34.95

Probably the best way to begin a review of Frank Uhlig’s book is to make clear to the reader what this book is not. It is not a chronologically balanced history of the U.S. Navy, nor is it an examination of policy, strategy, operations, or tactics. It is, however, and was meant to be, a review of the wartime history of the U.S. Navy and those of its various allies—the French in the American Revolution, the British during two world wars and the Falklands campaign, and the Israelis in 1973. Uhlig’s focus usually rests at the operational level, although he takes the reader up and down the chain of command as necessary and appropriate.

Uhlig’s aim is to set aside the debates about naval strategy and force structure, and use history to unveil the nature of the tasks the nation has called upon the Navy to perform in wartime. Uhlig asks simple and direct questions: How has the Navy actually fought during the last two hundred years? What lessons can be drawn from that experience? He concludes that there are five “ways of naval warfare that have shown themselves to be most robust, most resilient”: the “strategic” movement of forces, including land and air; the acquisition of

advanced bases; the landing of armies on enemy shores; blockade; and “the struggle for the mastery of the local sea.” As Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., notes in his foreword, Uhlig’s account reveals that campaigns are “ten percent about battles for mastery of the sea and 90 percent about unglamorous protection or denial of shipping.”

Too often throughout its history, the U.S. Navy has found itself facing crises without sufficient numbers of appropriate fighting platforms—a reality too often overlooked by historians enamored of policy and force-structure debates between navalists and anti-navalists, Mahanians and anti-Mahanians, etc. During one of the first Navy wars, the 1798–1801 Quasi-War against the French, the service discovered for the first, but not the last, time that it needed more small ships than it had on hand. The new, sleek, powerfully built super-frigates (the *Constitution*, *United States*, and *Constellation*) were wonderful ships but ill suited to many of the wartime demands faced by the service. The Navy needed small, quick ships, such as schooners and sloops, to run down weak, shallow-draft privateers and to escort the numerous convoys plying the Caribbean. In yet another quasi-war about two hundred years later, the 1987–1988 “tanker war” in the Persian Gulf against the Iranians, the Navy again found itself armed with powerful ships but lacking minehunters and other small platforms necessary to conduct some of the more critical green-water operations. Uhlig notes that when the reflagged Kuwaiti tanker *Bridgeton* struck an Iranian-laid mine in July 1987, the damaged ship

assumed “the duty of protecting her companions [the U.S. Navy escorts] who sailed humbly in her wake.”

The author makes a persuasive case, since, after all, fighting is what navies are supposed to do; but the author’s near-total focus on warfighting all but ignores yet another military reality—that navies operate far more during peacetime than in war. During the years of the Cold War, the U.S. Navy was involved in active operation in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf, for nearly fifteen years; notwithstanding, the vast majority of the Navy’s post-World War II vessels have already gone, or will eventually go, to the scrap heap without ever having fired a shot in anger. What conclusions would we reach if we posed Uhlig’s question somewhat differently: How have navies actually been used, in *peace and war*, during the last two hundred years? Might not such an approach reveal that the wartime problems of the Navy were related to its having been constituted as much, or maybe even more, for a peacetime role than for war? A minesweeper may have been a more valuable asset than a carrier off Wonsan in 1950 or in the Persian Gulf in 1987–1988; but during the long intervening decades of peace, which platform proved more valuable for day-to-day operations?

How Navies Fight is an important work, written by a man who knows more naval history and more naval historians than anyone has a right to know. Uhlig has produced a thought-provoking work that not only challenges the conventional wisdom but, perhaps more importantly, demonstrates the value of history. Two hundred years

ago, the navalists and antinavalists responsible for shaping American policy had little history to review. Policy makers in the fast approaching twenty-first century will have no such excuse, thanks to the efforts of such historians as Frank Uhlig.

MICHAEL A. PALMER
East Carolina University
Greenville, North Carolina

Terzibaschitsch, Stefan. *Submarines of the U.S. Navy*. New York: Sterling, 1993. 216pp. \$45

What can I say! I have somehow established a reputation for being an "objective zealot," as my friend, shipmate, and mentor Jerry Holland calls me, regarding U.S. tradeoffs between "expensive" nukes and "cheap" diesel-electrics. The publisher's "blurb" implies that this book held the answer to my downsizing the Navy and the dilemma about what to build or keep. My initial reaction was that this was going to be just another "diesel boats forever" diatribe that many like my sometimes misinformed friend Norman Polmar might find entrancing. I was mistaken. Although I rate the publisher's "flyer" at 0.1 on a scale of 10, I must admit this book does have value: it contains a totally objective compilation of the specifications and characteristics of *all* nonnuclear U.S. submarines.

It was serendipitous that the book arrived in the mail just as I was struggling to obtain credible reference material regarding post-World War II U.S. exploitation of German V-1 "buzz bomb" cruise missile technology

through such programs as the Loon and the subsequent Regulus. What would surely have resulted in many days of dull and dreary research became a twenty-minute affair in the comfort of my office, as I easily tracked the progress of the V-1 through Loon, *Cusk*, *Barbero*, *Carbonero*, *Tunny*, and Regulus I and II, *Growler*, and *Grayback*. If these names mean little to you, yet you allege to understand the U.S. Submarine Force, then you need this book on your reference shelf. The photographs and silhouettes are superb, and although I can remember seeing most of the material elsewhere, what is a unique characteristic of the work is the facility with which one can trace all of the mostly postwar alterations and modifications to individual units.

The credibility of a favorable report is enhanced by finding something wrong with the product. I found a couple of things, neither the fault of the author. Across the front and back of the jacket is a series of four copies of Bu-Ships-like blueprints (plan and longitudinal views) of *Tang*-class submarines that are still marked CONFIDENTIAL but recently declassified. These drawings are like those that I and others used to study for submarine qualification. The last of them, at least in my copy of the book, "section through platform deck," has a "holiday," a blank or white smudge, through Main Ballast Tanks 4A and 4B and the forward end of the engine room. Also, on page 188, the silhouette of "*Flying Fish* as an AGSS, with sonar equipment around the conning tower," has been double-printed and is out of registration by about an eighth of an inch.