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## The Naval War in the Mediterranean 1914-1918

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## 128 Naval War College Review

participants at the naval conferences when the French and British were at odds over submarines and the Americans and British confronted each other on cruisers.

Without volunteering evidence other than an item from the *New York Times* in 1945 and rumors noted by Ambassador Joseph C. Grew in his diary of 1933, Hyde claims that beginning with a naval base at Truk in 1930, the Japanese built fortifications in the Mandated Islands that cost the lives of thousands of young Americans during World War II. In April 1955, 10 years after Japan's surrender, Thomas Wilds published a very factual report in the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* in which he stated that Japan had scrupulously observed her nonfortification agreements until about 1934, the year she gave notice of her intent to abrogate the naval treaties. For five years thereafter, the Imperial Navy undertook harbor, airfield, and other development useful for either civilian or military purposes. Apparently, Japan began to build strictly military facilities in the islands only about two years before Pearl Harbor.

The author also denounces Japan for refusing entry to U.S. naval ships into the Mandated Islands in alleged violation of the American-Japanese Commercial Treaty of 1911, which was extended to include the islands in a bilateral agreement between the United States and Japan in 1922. The 1911 treaty did permit free entry of American ships into Japanese ports that were open to foreign commerce. For a good part of the interwar

period, Japan agreed to permit American naval ships to visit ports in the Mandates that she herself had opened, but she did not agree that American naval ships could freely call at any island or atoll that the United States for its own purposes might select. Hyde suggests that the Mandates problem could have been resolved in 1935 by a surgical strike to relieve Japan of the islands on the grounds that she had stolen them from the League of Nations!

The author insists that he would approve arms control agreements providing they satisfy four requirements: that all types of "strategic" weapons be limited, that the agreements be verifiable, that they be verified, and that they be subject to review and updating at periodic intervals. To demonstrate his acceptance of arms control, he commends the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817 by which the boundary between the United States and Canada has been demilitarized for over 160 years. That agreement today would not meet Hyde's four basic requirements.

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Halpern, Paul G. *The Naval War in the Mediterranean 1914-1918*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987. 631pp. \$29.95

Historians of the war at sea from 1914-1918 traditionally focus on the activities of the major belligerents,

on the high drama of Anglo-German fleet actions and on the 1917 convoy crisis. This pattern has left its imprint on general works of the war as well. Much of our understanding of the lesser theaters and the smaller navies has been shaped by the condescending—if not downright contemptuous—contemporary opinions of the larger navies. Arguably, British and German disdain for “less aggressive” and “less efficient” allies has skewed the whole historiography. Happily we now have a powerful corrective in the form of Halpern’s excellent work.

The strength and importance of Halpern’s account of the Mediterranean naval war transcend clichéd superlatives. Building on his previous work on the prewar years, the present book is a definitive single volume account of the war years based on exhaustive research not only in British, German and American archives but, more importantly, in French, Italian and Austro-Hungarian archives as well. Not surprisingly, what emerges is a strikingly different picture than we have had of the stress and strain of war in those narrow seas. With considerable skill and remarkable clarity Halpern reviews the strategic, tactical and technological impediments to “decisive” naval activity in the Mediterranean from 1914 to 1918. For example, his discussion of the Austro-Hungarian dilemma over sending aid first to the *Goeben* and then to the Turks in the Dardenelles is a deft presentation of the constraints imposed by coal-fired

warships dependent upon bases and faced with the new threats from mines, submarines, long-range gunfire and aerial reconnaissance. Far from lacking the aggressive spirit, the Mediterranean fleets were virtually crippled by it in the same way that the search for a decisive battle under favorable circumstances inhibited the Anglo-German fleets. For example, in true Mahanist style the Italians held their battlefleet in readiness for the decisive naval battle which, after they switched camps in 1915, the vastly outnumbered Austrians would not chance.

As Halpern points out, the confined nature of Mediterranean sea routes, the constant danger from new weapons and the overwhelming strength of the Entente Powers quickly reduced naval action to that between small ships and to jockeying for postwar positions. As a work on the broader issues of Mediterranean geopolitics, this is a hard source to beat. But making sense of the area’s rivalries is only one strong suit in a book which is laced with them. Halpern’s tightly packed pages of text and notes contain a whole world of names, events, and historical problems new to us: a marvellous potion for scholars who have watched more familiar fields undergo continuous microscopic dissection. And despite this surfeit of newness, Halpern had to shorten his final manuscript for publication. Clearly, much of what fell by the wayside was context and, perhaps understandably, the book makes

## 130 Naval War College Review

little effort to set the story into the already familiar pattern of the war.

It is tempting to label Halpern "The Marder of the Med," itself no mean accolade and one which does invite some comparisons. Both clearly have produced work of consummate scholarship. Marder gave us his in smaller packages, and he enjoyed the benefits of a much clearer and more limited focus. Halpern could have benefited from these advantages, but that was clearly impossible. Perhaps for that reason Halpern lacks the easy familiarity with his subject, the colorful character sketches and the pithy judgements which were so much a part of Marder's work. Marder, of course, enjoyed the tremendous advantage of being able to interview many of the principal actors in his drama. Halpern, writing a generation later, could not be so fortunate. If it is true that he fails to breathe life into his story in the same way Marder did, Halpern can be credited for the clarity and candor of his style. Whatever the subtle differences in approach and writing, there is little to choose between them.

Halpern fits well into the new wave of historians who seek to fill that enormous void in the historiography of the First World War we have come to describe euphemistically as "peripheral theaters." With this book he has plugged a huge hole, and all scholars and students interested in naval history generally, and the First World War owe Professor Halpern an enormous debt of

gratitude. It will doubtless be some time before the impact of his scholarship is felt in general accounts of the war, but there can be little doubt that that impact will be profound.

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Pack, James. *The Man Who Burned the White House, Admiral Sir George Cockburn*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987. 288pp. \$21.95

This is history imitating art. A young boy from a "good" family joins the navy on the eve of the Napoleonic Wars. He serves well in every post to which he is assigned and is rewarded with rapid promotion. This is George Cockburn (or is it Horatio Hornblower?). What Pack has given us in this biography is the life of a man in which there is virtually no fault, no sin and no blame. Pack has mined the papers of Cockburn and come up with pure ore; no imperfections here.

Pack's one dimensional view of Cockburn may well be the result of confining so much of his research to the Cockburn papers alone. Aside from that treasure he seems to have paid little attention to other unpublished sources. The result is that we see the world through the prism of Sir George Cockburn, not always, one might suggest, an entirely undistorted view. In dealing with the War of 1812, however, and Cockburn's attack on Washington (the