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The Free Sea: The American Fight for Freedom of Navigation

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The Free Sea: The American Fight for Freedom of Navigation, by James Kraska and Raul Pedrozo. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018. 416 pages. \$39.95.

For most of its 235 years of independent existence, the United States has been a continental power. The period when it can be viewed reasonably as a maritime power ended during the Civil War, although admittedly its maritime roots stretch back far into the colonial era. It is therefore remarkable that it should have remained a strong defender of the freedom of the seas without interruption from its origins to the present day. James Kraska and Raul Pedrozo, two writers and legal advocates well known for their robust defense of that freedom, have written a history explaining the main events that have driven generations of policy makers to support what may be regarded as America's oldest and most consistently held foreign policy objective, and why that support remains vital today.

That consistency, however, hides shifting motivations. In the decades following independence, trade was essential if the United States was to survive. Wars were fought with France (the Quasi-War), with Barbary, and with Britain to defend America's right as a neutral to trade with whomever it pleased.

Kraska and Pedrozo move without comment from 1812 to 1914, jumping a near century of momentous change. For America, trade, once a necessity for survival, became the key to vast wealth. U.S. goods carried in U.S. ships fanned out across the world's oceans. Irritations with Britain persisted—entirely to be expected between competitors—but then so did episodes of cooperation. The

main reason why Americans were free to trade globally was the Royal Navy's enforcement of Pax Britannica and Britain's adoption of free trade in 1846. However, Britain's agreement to the Declaration of Paris in 1856 had possibly the most significant effect on U.S. shipping and the U.S. Navy. In it, Britain surrendered its asserted right to institute paper blockades of enemy ports and search neutral shipping for contraband—that is to say, for goods that Britain defined as being of use to an enemy in wartime. The result of this agreement was to turn the naval order of the oceans on its head.

Neutral states, instead of combining to limit British naval power—a very risky undertaking—now had Britain on their side. The United States, having built its navy on the twin pillars of coastal defense and *guerre de course*, was stripped of its main strategic weapon. A decade later, following the Civil War—during which Confederate privateers had driven much of America's merchant navy to seek the protection of the British flag—the nation turned its commercial attention away from the sea. It was never to return, as the nation looked instead to the vast, endless acres west of the Mississippi and the creation of an industrial heartland beyond the Appalachians. Yet it is never wise to say never in politics or history.

The real target of Kraska and Pedrozo's book is contemporary China, which, after it emerged from its own civil war in 1949, decided to become a maritime power. By this it meant a power capable of exploiting every economic and political advantage the sea offered. Although its progress was hindered by the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) and other upheavals, it continued to inch toward its goal. Now it is advancing its agenda rapidly, on multiple fronts.

The United States, after the American Civil War, took a different course, abandoning its maritime heritage and replacing it with a naval form of the militarism that was gaining ground in Germany, the other rising industrial power, by adopting the battle fleet theories of Mahan, Luce, Fiske, and others. It was a turn that served the Navy well for most of what remained of the twentieth century, as the service used its vastly superior material resources to overwhelm its symmetrical opponents. In the process, *freedom of the sea*, particularly after 1945—the period from which the authors draw most of their examples—ceased to be about trade, becoming rather about the freedom of naval forces to go where they needed to project power.

China presents a different challenge. Germany, Japan, and Soviet Russia were all economic autarkies; China is the opposite. It now has the world's second-largest economy and is the largest trading power; it uses its growing navy as just one of a set of political, diplomatic, industrial, technological, informational, and legal tools to advance its interests.

Kraska and Pedrozo have looked at the legal challenge with a gimlet eye. They have provided not only an invaluable description of the threat China presents to the U.S. Navy but a guide to legal ripostes to Chinese behavior that can be implemented now. They have written a handbook for action and a historical justification that all officials working on China must read.

Their analysis and the prescription it generates must, however, be read in context. Like Britain in Paris in 1856, we need the vision, flexibility, and guile to win all nations with maritime interests over to our side. We need to be their champion, as Woodrow

Wilson purported to be in 1918, when he made freedom of the seas one of his Fourteen Points. More than that we need to begin thinking and acting like a maritime nation again. Maybe then we can stay one step ahead of China at sea.

MARTIN N. MURPHY



Maritime Strategies for the XXI Century: The Contribution of Admiral Castex, by Lars Wedin. Paris: Nuvis, 2016. 233 pages. \$30.

It is a matter of interest when an author is willing to break out some of the older volumes on maritime strategy and reexamine them in the light of current concerns, attempting to determine whether some nugget of interest has been passed over inadvertently. Lars Wedin's *Maritime Strategies for the XXI Century: The Contribution of Admiral Castex* is such a work. Wedin examines the writings of French admiral Raoul Castex (1878–1968) for their applicability in creating maritime strategies for the present millennium. This is not an easy task. Castex was a voluminous writer throughout his naval career, authoring five books on strategic theory; two additional volumes of collected articles were compiled posthumously. As a naval officer serving on escort ships during the First World War, Castex had the practical experience of observing what actually worked—above and beyond what any academician might propose. Following that conflict, Castex appreciated the opportunities that technological advances in aircraft and submarines might provide to the future naval commander. Given his lengthy naval career, wartime experience, and attentiveness to technological