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Into the Dark Water: The Story of Three Officers and PT-109

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M. Reichberg; and Immanuel Kant, by Brian Orend), the editors also include less prominent thinkers (Gratian, by Rory Cox; Christine de Pisan, by Cian O'Driscoll; and Francis Lieber, by Stephanie Carvin) whose ideas inspire and enrich the heritage of human flourishing in war and peace no less than those first mentioned but without receiving the fanfare they deserve.

Third, Brunstetter and O'Driscoll caveat their choice of authors with the acknowledgment that they confined their consideration of political analysts to the Western tradition, even though they recognize the influence of other religious and cultural traditions outside Europe and Christendom. The discovery of the New World in the Americas, the recovery of texts and translations by Jewish and Islamic scholars from classical antiquity, and the trade of goods and ideas along the legendary Silk Road generated an indelible imprint on the philosophy and practice of war.

Fourth, the chapter authors are aware that the twin perils of anachronism and antiquarianism easily might undermine the credibility and the timely importance of their project, so they aspire to avoid those problems. Whereas anachronism sacrifices the authenticity of the historical record for the sake of contemporary pragmatism, antiquarianism reduces the just war tradition to historical obscurity and irrelevance for the sake of scholarly minutiae. The editors aim for an integration of competent historical scholarship with modern adaptations that recognize the significance of both continuity and change in the just war tradition.

Not only do Brunstetter and O'Driscoll satisfy these four challenges in their volume; they also achieve a thematic coherence throughout the anthology by establishing standard criteria for the examination of each seminal thinker. Every chapter investigates the contexts, texts, tenets,

controversies, and enduring legacies of each historical figure, especially pertaining to the primary concepts of *jus ad bellum* (justice toward war), *jus in bello* (justice in war), and *jus post bellum* (justice after war). The editors highlight the divergence of methodologies among the historical approach (James Turner Johnson), the legalist perspective (Emmerich de Vattel), and the revisionist trend (Jeff McMahan).

The poignant conclusions drawn at the end of the book leave the reader wanting more commentary from these eminent scholars, and Brunstetter and O'Driscoll wisely caution that *Just War Thinkers* is not the stopping point but the start for further research. Unconventional in its choice of designated thinkers, diverse in its selection of subject-matter experts, visionary in its formulation of overarching themes, *Just War Thinkers* promises to inform, surprise, and awe the reader with the "intimation of possibilities" for *jus pax* (just peace) in the twenty-first century.

EDWARD ERWIN



Into the Dark Water: The Story of Three Officers and PT-109, by John J. Domagalski. Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2014. 288 pages. \$29.95.

Writing an entertaining and readable account of one of the most famous naval vessels of World War II is a challenging task. However, John Domagalski displays his considerable knowledge of naval history in this well-informed narrative exploring the short-lived career of *PT-109*. The book is told through the lens of the vessel's three commanding officers, and thus is organized in three parts.

The first ten chapters concentrate on the background and construction of small boats, the self-propelled torpedo, the

arrival of *PT-109* in the Pacific, and the early skirmishes near Guadalcanal and the Solomon Sea. This exposition includes the evacuation by patrol torpedo (PT) boat of MacArthur from the Philippines, the keel laying of the eighty-foot *PT-109* by Elco in Bayonne, New Jersey, and a basic description of the boat and its armament. Including a blueprint of the boat at this juncture would have helped the reader visualize the ship's vulnerability. The author personalizes the story when he introduces the two officers who would command *PT-109* before John F. Kennedy: Rollin E. Westholm and Bryant Larson, both from Minnesota. Westholm was named squadron commander as well as commanding officer of *PT-109*; Larson served as his executive officer and later was named commanding officer of *109*.

These early chapters relate the nocturnal combat operations wherein the PTs attempted to interdict Japan's "Tokyo Express" destroyer supply runs. The narrative of the PTs' operations as they patrolled, looking for the enemy, is written and researched extremely well. While the PTs were fast and maneuverable, they also had drawbacks, and crews constantly were learning new lessons from their combat mistakes. Larson recalled a December 1942 engagement in which *PT-44* was lost:

"[F]or some reason Frank [Freeland] chose a high speed attack, leaving behind the boat a tremendous phosphorescent wake that was like a searchlight pointing toward the boat. He never had a chance. . . . [F]rom the forty-four we learned two lessons—don't make a high speed night attack, and if you are hit, under fire, and dead in the water, get all hands off the boat before another salvo blows everyone to hell" (pp. 75–76).

Part 2 of the book consists of six chapters. John Kennedy was one of the volunteers recruited by Lieutenant John D. Bulkeley,

famous for his PT boat evacuation of MacArthur from the Philippines. Bulkeley recruited those sailors who "want[ed] to get into a scrap without delay and who had plenty of guts" (p. 126). Referencing Kennedy's letters to his parents, operational accounts, and related books, Domagalski skillfully weaves together the last few months of *PT-109*'s service. His description of the boat's August 1943 final patrol explains that "the Battle of Blackett Strait was one of the most poorly executed boat operations in the South Pacific. Dogged by unsound operating procedures, poor judgement among division commanders, and possibly just plain bad luck, the Americans failed to score a single hit on two passes of the Tokyo Express" (p. 173).

Domagalski helpfully employs maps as aids in the combat narrative, as well as other graphics to identify the combatants. The manner in which the maps are referenced, however, is a bit difficult to follow. Nevertheless, the author does a credible job of putting the reader into the "fog of war" and portraying the difficulties involved in assessing the success of a PT patrol.

The third part of the book has three chapters plus an epilogue. It traces the three *PT-109* commanding officers' service after the loss of the boat and briefly recounts their postwar experiences. Kennedy's evolving perspective on the war is noted, especially after the loss of two crewmen, which may be the foundation for his war-related learning as president. Domagalski summarizes Westholm's impressive thirty-plus-year career in the Navy, which included destroyer division command, and Larson's postwar business career, during which he remained in the Naval Reserve. Through these accounts, the reader is reminded of the "Greatest Generation's" accomplishments, as well as what might have been in store for the other lives cut short. The

book's epilogue reminds the reader that the U.S. Navy has a continuing need for small, fast warships and daring sailors willing to operate them against larger opponents.

Readers will appreciate the way the author uses oral histories, letters, newspaper accounts, deck logs, military after-action reports, written recollections, and background books and articles to tell an engaging sea story. This historical narrative will satisfy World War II buffs, sailors, and casual-interest readers. It is a quick and enjoyable read. Military scholars might appreciate the focused examination of small boats. Domagalski deftly accomplishes his mission: to pay homage to the intrepid war-fighting spirit of the patrol boat and motor torpedo boat sailors of World War II.

EDWARD GILLEN



Active Defense: China's Military Strategy since 1949, by M. Taylor Fravel. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2019. 392 pages. \$35.

During the Cold War, naval professionals working to understand Soviet military doctrine could call on a well-developed body of literature. Authoritative Western academic studies covered everything from the Soviets' overall strategic design to their philosophy of troop leadership. Advanced students could call on textbooks from Soviet military colleges in translation. Taken together, these works were essential to understanding that the Soviet military viewed warfare through a philosophical lens fundamentally different from our own.

Today, professionals trying to understand the modern Chinese approach to warfare find comparatively meager fare. Western academic interest in the approaches taken by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to military strategy waned after the

Maoist era. In many key areas, primary sources are scarce—often passed from practitioner to practitioner rather than being widely available. While a few overview works exist, there has been little focused academic analysis of the basics of Chinese military science.

In that context, Taylor Fravel's volume on PRC military strategy represents a groundbreaking contribution to Chinese military studies. In *Active Defense*, Fravel analyzes the nine "strategic guidelines" the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has issued since 1949. Each strategic guideline provided Chinese forces with four key elements: an authoritative analysis of the Chinese strategic situation, an explanation of warfare in the present era, and direction for both force development and force employment. Three of these documents—those issued in 1956, 1980, and 1993—each represented a major shift in direction for the PLA. Rebutting those who see the PLA as isolated and insular, Fravel concludes that these three revisions were driven primarily by PLA perception of significant shifts in the conduct of modern warfare. While in each case the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) wrote the overall analysis of the strategic situation—which is, at its core, a political assessment—the other three component parts of each strategic guidance document represented military judgments. Fravel suggests that such fundamental reassessments are possible only when the party leadership is internally unified and thus able to delegate this kind of work to its military experts. Many Western readers, focused on CCP control of the PLA, will be surprised at this long-standing empowerment of the PLA military leadership to decide foundational operational issues.

The level of trust the party extends to the military leadership in strategy development is only one of a number of arguments