Post-war Japan as a Sea Power: Imperial Legacy, Wartime Experience and the Making of a Navy

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The only bright light was the submarine offensive, which, for a while at least, looked as though it might threaten the British trade security. Once the allies recognized the threat, their subsequent mastery over the sea gave them all the options they needed to maintain an unpredictable and intolerable pressure over their adversary, an advantage that could only lead to one outcome.

In summary, this is not a book for the casual-interest reader. It will, however, suit those who have a background in the basics of the period and in maritime warfare generally, and who wish to know more. Dr. Friedman’s research credentials are impeccable, and the huge amount of factual detail he has unearthed will be sure to delight many. While not definitive in any individual theme area, there is nothing comparable in either depth or scope out there, and for this reason, if no other, this book is likely to become a standard work on the naval aspects of the Great War.

ANGUS ROSS


The Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) is one of the world’s most powerful naval forces. As Alessio Patalano points out in his new history of the JMSDF, Post-war Japan as a Sea Power, its surface force is twice the size of that of the Royal Navy’s, and Japan has three times as many submarines as France. However, the JMSDF has been the focus of surprisingly little writing by international historians. In fact, prior to Patalano’s welcome contribution, only three English-language books have been dedicated to the subject: Jim Auer’s The Postwar Rearmament of Japanese Maritime Forces, 1941–1971 (Praeger, 1973); James Wolley’s Japan’s Navy: Politics and Paradox, 1971–2000 (Lynne Rienner, 2000); and Euan Graham’s Japan’s Sea Lane Security, 1940–2004 (Routledge, 2005).

Post-war Japan as a Sea Power is particularly important because it offers unique insight into JMSDF history by exploring its organizational and cultural identity. Patalano investigates the extent to which the modern JMSDF draws on the experience and culture of its predecessor, the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), through access to previously unavailable archival materials, specifically records from the service’s education system, recruitment data, and internal JMSDF guidance documents such as the New Instructions issued by each incoming chief of staff from 1961 to 2012. On top of this bedrock of archival research, Patalano, a professor at King’s College London who averages several months a year in Japan, took advantage of his well-developed relationships with JMSDF officers of all ranks to conduct both focused interviews and group surveys. Patalano’s extensive research reveals how heavily the IJN legacy influences the structure, role, and strategic outlook of the JMSDF.

When Japan sought to establish a maritime security force in the aftermath of World War II, its leaders studied the IJN—both its dramatic rise and catastrophic defeat. Patalano explains that the founders of the JMSDF, many of them IJN veterans, determined that the prewar navy had been plagued by its narrow professional focus. They concluded that IJN leaders and planners had
failed to match naval strategy to national security requirements. The result was an impressive fleet designed to defeat another major navy rapidly in blue-water action, when a more flexible force capable of securing and defending vital maritime interests might have served Japan better. The force structure and mentality of the IJN led to dramatic success for Japan in the early stages of World War II, but those gains could not be sustained, and Japan's poorly guarded sea lines of communication became a vulnerability that American submarines exploited to decimate Japan's merchant marine and undermine the Japanese economy.

As a direct result of this experience, writes Patalano, the founders of the JMSDF sought to ensure that Japan's new navy would have a broad, maritime focus rather than a narrow naval one, and that new generations of naval leaders would anchor their maritime strategies in Japan's national policy objectives. These leaders also worked to make the JMSDF immune to the internal rivalries that wrecked the IJN in the 1930s by centralizing the JMSDF's command functions under a single Maritime Staff Office reporting to a single chief of maritime staff firmly under the control of civilian bureaucrats. The JMSDF's study of the IJN's failure to secure its sea lines of communication during World War II influenced the prioritization of sea-lane defense during the Cold War. Additionally, interservice rivalries that weakened the efforts of the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy during World War II were addressed postwar by the consolidation of initial officer training to foster interservice cooperation and camaraderie. Yet the IJN is more than a mere cautionary tale—its esprit de corps and traditions live on in the modern JMSDF: Patalano's outstanding work falters only when the author attempts to explain the JMSDF's current tactics as a function of its IJN heritage. While the IJN's influence on the JMSDF is undeniably proven by the book's analysis, the links between the JMSDF's identity and its tactics are not clearly traced. It is the reviewers' experience and assessment that JMSDF tactics are generally either adopted directly from the United States or the product of analytical efforts to maximize the effectiveness of the force's combat systems vis-à-vis perceived threats. While it is logical that culture and identity elements are strong influences on those analytical processes, Patalano's argument lacks tangible examples to delineate this connection clearly. The link between JMSDF strategic culture and IJN heritage is clear, but the relationship between the IJN and modern JMSDF tactics is tenuous.

Well articulated, broad in scope, and drawing on sources not previously accessed by Western researchers, Patalano's work delves into previously unexplored territory essential to making sense of Japanese decision making in the maritime domain. Given rapidly developing events in East Asian waters, Post-war Japan as a Sea Power deserves attention from anyone seeking to understand maritime affairs in the Asia-Pacific.

CARLOS ROSENDE AND JOHN BRADFORD

Oliver, Dave. Against the Tide: Rickover’s Leadership Principles and the Rise of the Nuclear Navy. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2014. 178pp. $27.95

Hyman Rickover almost single-handedly delivered nuclear power to the United