



Post-war Japan As a Sea Power: Imperial Legacy, Wartime Experience and the Making of a Navy by Alessio Patalano.

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The notion of a postwar “pacifist” Japan blurs the fact that it possesses one of the most sophisticated and well funded militaries in the world. Of its three major services, the navy (Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, or JMSDF) is the most advanced and most vital to national security; it is sometimes called the “senior service” and the nation’s “first line of defense.” With 50,800 personnel, 124 ships, and 334 aircraft, it is the world’s sixth largest navy by size, after those of the United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom, and India. Its capabilities exceed what its nominal size suggests. The navy’s prominence has increased substantially in the last few decades, largely due to the recent expansion of Japanese territorial waters from only 12 nautical miles (22 kilometers) to its current 200-nmi (370.4-km) exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Not till 1982, in fact, did the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea recognize such a zone. Consequently, Japan controls an area of almost 4.5 million square kilometers—the eighth largest EEZ in the world and more than twelve times larger than the nation’s land territories.

This development has involved Japan in disputes with all its Asian neighbors, which are invariably resource-hungry and mostly export-oriented. The waters in their vicinity are vital routes for the importation of raw materials, the transportation of exports, and the securing of natural resources. The growing regional consciousness of the future value of the seas has reawakened dormant territorial disputes between Japan and China in particular (over the Senkaku or Diaoyu islands) and to a lesser extent South Korea (over the Takeshima or Dokdo islets). Heightened tensions or, worse, open conflict between these nations would first involve their navies. No wonder, then, that the involved countries have invested heavily in their naval forces; in short, a naval arms race is now underway in East Asia. China is leading Japan, but even South Korea, with the world’s eighth largest navy, tries to keep pace.

While Japan has not engaged openly in any armed conflict in East Asia for the last seventy years, the recent disputes pose a genuine threat to regional stability. In fact, the constitutional reforms currently in motion in Japan regarding the use of military force overseas are rapidly removing legal and psychological barriers to deployment of its navy. Despite the status of Japan’s naval forces in regional affairs, they have received relatively little attention in academia. The few books on the subject in English and other Western languages are mostly outdated. All of this makes Alessio Patalano’s sophisticated, well sourced *Post-war Japan As a Sea Power* a very welcome addition to the literature.

Patalano (King’s College, London) is the leading non-Japanese specialist on postwar Japanese naval affairs. His new book describes the rise of the JMSDF (*Kaijō Jieitai* or *Kaiji*) as a direct offspring and legitimate heir of the once mighty Imperial Japanese Navy (*Teikoku Kaigun*)—a true blue-water fleet that vied for supremacy in the Pacific and Indian Oceans from the early twentieth century until 1945. More specifically, the author writes, “the success of the JMSDF in articulating its role as a tool of statecraft within a national maritime strategy rested on its ability to re-examine the imperial experience and the wartime defeat” (5). He supports this thesis with interviews with past and present JMSDF per-

sonnel, archival sources, and relevant secondary materials in Japanese and other languages, including English. He is careful to stress the differences between Japan's postwar and prewar naval forces.

Chapter 1, "Japanese Sea Power," lucidly presents the book's core argument. Chapter 2, "Ethos and Traditions," provides a general background on the rise of the Imperial Japanese navy. The third chapter, "History and Memory," offers a novel perspective on the persistent "imperial tradition" in postwar Japan and the people who promoted it. Chapter 4, "Experience and Legacy," discusses JMSDF's values and ethos with particular attention to its Naval Academy in Etajima. The fifth chapter, "Ethos and Propaganda," analyses the images of the JMSDF both within the service and among the general public, and the propaganda used to shape opinion. The sixth chapter, "Strategy and Policy," concerns the evolution of the strategic initiatives and general policies of the Japanese state and the JMSDF. Chapter 7 examines "Doctrine and Capabilities," stressing the attempt to build a well ordered and unified navy based for decades on the personnel, but not necessarily the ideology of the Imperial Navy. Among other things, it shows that, until the 1980s, the JMSDF's leading figures were, without exception, pre-1945 graduates of the Etajima Academy. In the eighth and final chapter, "Conclusions," Patalano identifies a continuous Japanese naval tradition:

The strong relationship that the JMSDF entertained and continues to entertain with the imperial past too presents challenges for the navy of today. The continuity in the navy's mission throughout the Cold War created an environment that allowed the JMSDF to devise a career structure favorable to its organizational priorities.... In the post-Cold War era, however, the navy's inner cohesiveness and personnel management have not eliminated risk or prevented misconducts.... In terms of fleet, the need to balance the procurement of new capabilities to increase strategic lift and ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] while retaining a cutting-edge ASW [anti-submarine warfare] core against tighter budgets entailed sacrifices in other areas. (161-62)

Patalano answers many questions about the present-day Japanese navy, but not all of them. Readers may be disappointed that he omits the more mundane aspects of this service, its gradual buildup since the early 1950s, its present equipment, its strengths and weaknesses, and its plans and capacities in the event of open conflict with China. To be sure, Patalano states at the outset that "This book is about history" (2), but when does this history end? Indeed, another problem is the book's chronological scope. Since its focus is on the period up to 2004, it barely mentions such recent dramatic developments as the construction of four large *Hyūga*- and *Izumo*-class warships. These light and mid-size "helicopter destroyers," the largest warships Japan has built since World War II, are plausible platforms for vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) or short takeoff and vertical landing (STOVL) aircraft like the F-35B Lightning II. I hope Patalano will go on to study and analyze additional, more up-to-date elements of Japan's postwar naval forces, for example, its little known coast guard.

All in all, *Post-war Japan as a Sea Power* is a consequential and timely contribution to our understanding of postwar Japan's military and naval thought and traditions. It offers a discerning analysis of the JMSDF's policies, ethos, doctrine, and strategy vis-à-vis the pre-1945 Imperial Navy. More importantly, by elegantly revealing a society that has not yet completely cut its ties with its militaristic tradition, Alessio Patalano has deciphered the political and social transformation inside today's Japan and astutely hinted at future developments in the East Asian region as a whole.