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Vincent P. O'Hara, W. David Dickson, and Richard Worth, eds., *To Crown the Waves: The Great Navies of the First World War*. Annapolis: Naval Inst. Press, 2013. Pp. ix, 349. ISBN 978-1-61251-082-8.

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The editors of *To Crown the Waves* have now covered the navies of both world wars<sup>1</sup> in volumes of similar format. All the important First World War navies—Austro-Hungarian, French, German, British, Italian, Russian, and American—have chapters sharing a common organization of elements, including background, structure, ways of war, and war experience and evolution. Subheadings comprise surface warfare, submarine operations, mission/function, and infrastructure, among others topics (2-3). Two lesser navies—the Japanese and Ottoman—share a single chapter. Eleven specialist authors examine not only the actual events of the First World War, but the doctrines, training, manpower, and aspects of building and sustaining the navies. The structural uniformity of the chapters facilitates “easy reference and comparison” and also ensures that previously neglected areas of naval history and of the war itself are addressed.

This approach usefully broadens the long-standing conventional narrative, which places the Royal Navy and the Imperial German Navy at the center of the conflict and charts their peaks and valleys. This master storyline starts with the German outbreak and the British blockade, then follows the actions of SMS *Emden*, SMS *Goeben*, and SMS *Breslau*; next come the Falkland Islands, Dogger Bank, and the *Lusitania*, followed by a lingering look at Jutland, before a turn to unrestricted submarine warfare, the entry of the United States, and the ultimate Allied victory in the first battle of the Atlantic. This narrative has yielded much useful scholarship over the years, particularly on the Royal Navy, but has left other parts of the naval war in the shadows.

While *To Crown the Waves* does not altogether correct this imbalance, it does remind readers of all the *other* relevant theaters of the naval war: the Adriatic, the Pacific, the Baltic, and elsewhere beyond the North Sea or Atlantic Ocean. Thus, for example, Zvonimir Freivogel writes of the effectiveness of the Austro-Hungarian Navy in “retaining control over Austrian coastal waters, preventing enemy landings, chasing superior French forces from the Adriatic, deterring allied battleship squadrons from entering this coastal sea, attacking Italian coastal cities and targets in Montenegro and Albania, supporting Austro-Hungarian army forces and aircraft in their operations, and enabling German and Austrian submarines to operate in the Mediterranean” (50). This is just one of the book’s typically enlightening assessments of a neglected theater of naval operations.

The consistent structure and focus across the book’s chapters mitigate the disunity common to edited volumes with multiple contributors. Though the content of the essays of course varies, their consistent structure helps the reader form a unified transnational picture of the war. A substantial concluding synoptic essay drawing together the lessons of the discrete chapters would have improved what is already a very good book; the existing conclusion does not attempt such an admittedly herculean task.

In short, the volume works as a whole and not merely as an amalgam of disparate chapters. The high quality throughout has been ensured by the recruitment of country-specific experts to write each essay. Their fluency in the relevant native languages is critical, nowhere more so than for Austria-Hungary and Russia. Too many military and naval histories are written almost exclusively from English-language sources, thus marginalizing the viewpoints of non-Anglophone countries and reinforcing the myopic *fable convenue* I sketched above.

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1. See their *On Seas Contested: The Seven Great Navies of the Second World War* (Annapolis: Naval Inst Pr, 2010).

The book's greatest flaw is that it offers neither a reasonable framework of citations nor a discussion of the historiography of the several target navies. The endnotes and small chapter bibliographies give no real sense of the authors' engagement with the existing scholarly literature. As a consequence, readers are left to fathom for themselves the terms of the vigorous historical debates that began even before the guns stopped firing in 1918.

Still, the essays in *To Crown the Waves* perceptively examine the navies large and small, noticed and neglected, analyzed and avoided, that played significant roles in the course of World War I. In so doing, they go beyond the venerable traditional narrative with its too narrow concentration on particular ships and encounters. That alone makes the book worthwhile reading for both interested amateurs and professional scholars.