

Newsletter Volume V, No. 2 Spring 2024

Editor's Remarks

The sixth annual WNHA Symposium held aboard the USS Midway Museum in San Diego was a success, featuring a casual mixer the night before and two days of eclectic topics from an accomplished array of researchers, authors, and naval historians. Next year's event will also be hosted by the Midway, but the date will occur somewhat earlier in the mid-winter, as noted below. This newsletter issue also contains Stephen McLaughlin's cogent analysis of the task confronting Imperial Russia's task of re-building and modernizing its shattered fleet between the Russo-Japanese War and the onset of the Great War in Europe. Additionally, commentary on the Symposium and a trio of book reviews made found within these pages. The Newsletter will shift to a quarterly format, and we look forward to more naval narratives in future issues.

2024 Symposium Thanks

"Thank you to all who made the 2024 Symposium a success!...and, all members need to attend next year." --WNHA President's Remarks

By Sam Tangredi

Each year a tremendous amount of voluntary effort and support from many dedicated people are required to organize and run the WNHA annual symposium. I have previously compared the activity involved to arranging and performing a concert with each instrument playing its unique part. A better analogy, however, might be that of a swim team; each swimmer knows where to start and where to finish, but it takes practice, skill and absolute dedication to get from start to finish in good time and with good form. And each individual effort adds to the overall score for the team. Not only are we very grateful to those who contributed their time and effort to the 2024 Symposium, but we are also grateful to every member (old or new) who attended or watched remotely.

This year we added a new event to the symposium weekend: a Friday night reception onboard the USS Midway Museum. Credit for the idea belongs to Board of Directors member Karl Zingheim. I confess that at first I wondered if members and friends would actually come to the reception. The practical

concern for our Board was whether attendance would justify the expenses involved—rather high for our small operating budget. The turnout was not huge—primarily, I believe, because as a new feature, word about it had not yet circulated to all the membership. But attendance was reasonable enough to try it again for the WNHA 2025 Symposium. And it was just plain fun for all who came! Please consider joining us next year on the Friday night before the symposium. A particularly inviting feature is the opportunity to meet and talk one-on-one with the symposium presenters/speakers. They are interesting people indeed.

Speaking (or writing) about attending...we have picked the dates for the 2025 Symposium. It will be on **Friday night** (the reception) **31 January, Saturday 1 February, and Sunday 2 February 2025**. Why so early next year? We schedule ourselves to be the weekend after the AFCEA/USNI WEST defense conference and exposition, which will be 28-30 January 2025. We do this to encourage those naval history-interested individuals who are going to visit San Diego for AFCEA/USNI WEST to stay and attend WNHA. This has resulted in attendance by staff members of the Naval Institute Press and *Naval History* magazine. More incentive for you to attend in person—if you have a story (commentary, article, book) you want to write, you can meet your future publisher!

Returning to the 2024 Symposium: with risk that I might forget some key contributors, I would like to recognize some specific groups and individuals whose efforts were critical in making it all happen. First is the USS Midway Museum and its new CEO, Terry Kraft, who provides our venue at no cost... and it is a tremendous venue having the “right stuff!” The USS Midway Museum has developed an extensive educational outreach effort, a category in which we are included. We proudly display our own on our Symposium program because they have indeed become partners in our endeavor. Thank you, Admiral Terry, the Midway Museum Board of Directors, and the entire Midway Museum team.

There are three individuals who made particularly large donations to fund the reception, refreshments, and other expenses: John Burt, Bill Heard, and Steve McLaughlin. Thank you, gentlemen, for your kindness. Two members of the USS Midway Museum deserve special notice: Karl Zingheim, the ship’s historian (and member of the WNHA Board of

Directors) naturally does all the liaison work between WNHA and the USS Midway Museum. Once again, Karl’s attention to detail was obvious throughout the Symposium. He’s the one who negotiates with the caterer and picks those great meals...always a Symposium highlight. Thank you, Karl. Also, Trevore Humphrey did great work with Zoom and the all the AV equipment. A school teacher, Trevore takes time off from work to support us. For that we are very grateful. Thank you again, Trevore.

Of course, we are also very grateful to all of our speakers and presenters. You are the program. Every presentation was a work of art.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Board of Directors: Vince O’Hara, Steve McLaughlin, Cynthia Watson, Carlos Rivera, Karl Zingheim, and John Burt. As I have often said, they are the brains behind WNHA; I’m just the figurehead. Let me single out the efforts of Board Member Carlos Rivera for his persistence in helping WNHA despite other critical requirements on his time and energy. Keep the faith, Carlos! And if I missed anyone else to thank, please remind me so I can do that in the next newsletter. With all the activity of AFCEA/USNI WEST and our Symposium, my memory banks get slightly overloaded.

Now...right now...jot or key in those dates: 31 January—2 February 2025. That’s an order! And please plan to attend.

Very respectfully, Sam.

WHNA's 2024 Symposium

February's gathering was the sixth symposium put on by the Association, held aboard the USS Midway Museum in San Diego. This year, fourteen presenters, both in-person and virtual, representing government organizations, colleges, and the private sector, discussed a disparate array of topics involving naval history and maritime affairs, in keeping with the WHNA tradition. After an evening mixer on the fantail of the Midway on Friday the 16th, the



WHNA President Sam Tangredi speaks at our Fantail Mixer on the Midway.

proceedings began promptly the following morning with a welcoming address by Association President Sam Tangredi which led to a long-distance keynote address from noted military historian Evan Mawdsley from Scotland. Evan encapsulated a sprawling topic on American and British perceptions of the naval conflict in World War II which set the standard for the rest of the symposium.

David Kohnen, part of an unofficial delegation from the U.S. Naval War College, called the audience's attention to how even the subject of naval history was fraught with turmoil within the War College over the years, and that its stewardship should never be taken for granted.



Naval War College Professor David Kohnen issues a call for action to preserve naval history.

Denise Rucker Krepp from the Naval History and Heritage Command then presented a concise and informative discourse on the expanding roles women have come to play inside the U.S. Navy over the last two centuries.



The NHHC's Denise Rucker Krepp presents on women in the Navy.

After lunchtime refreshments, War College Professor Emeritus Bud Cole stepped up to provide insight into taking a career's worth of naval experience and transforming it into enticing fiction for the reading public. In one of the more intriguing segments of the day, Chris Perry, Historian of the Canadian Navy, presented some lacuna on obscure, and often absurd, aspects of naval operations off Canada's Pacific Coast in the early months of World War I from his home office.

Renowned Pacific War author Trent Hone tapped into his expertise to explain his interpretation of how uncertainty and chance applied to naval battles and campaigns in World War II by focusing on the strange Battle of the Komandorski Islands.



Trent Hone holds forth on chance in naval warfare.

This was followed by British military specialist Brian Walter's interpretation of the contributions the Fleet Air Arm made to tactical strikes against Japan in the closing weeks of the war.

The second day's session commenced with famed naval historian Andrew Lambert's broadcast from Britain on Sir Julian Corbett and how Britain waged war at sea. Then, quite fittingly considering the venue, the Naval War College's Kevin Delamer took to the podium to discuss his own experiences as a helicopter pilot flying from the Midway during the Desert Storm campaign in 1990-91.

Afterwards, he graciously donated his flight gear to the Museum.



Midway flier Kevin Delamer recounts his Desert Storm experience.

The day's subject matter changed with retired Rear Admiral Mike McDevitt's presentation on the rapid growth and capacity of the People's Republic of China's naval forces up to the present time. This set the tone for the National War College's Tom Duffy and his discourse on international coordination with anti-piracy off Somalia between 2008-12, and little-known aspects of maritime law in dealing with seizures and disruption of shipping outside of wartime.



Our attendees take a momentary break from the presentations in the Midway classroom.

Bracketing Tom's segment which followed the lunch break, though, were a pair of other topics that reside outside the conventional realm of naval history, but were nonetheless demonstrations of the diverse interests that are a feature of the WNHA. The first was a photographic and live demonstration by Karl Zingheim of how scale modelling can be employed to relate naval history through accurate diorama

depictions. The other was wargame designer Jon Southard's narrative on how naval wargames are conceived and perfected for the commercial market through the examples of producing successful aircraft carrier battle simulations that balance realism with easy-of-play.

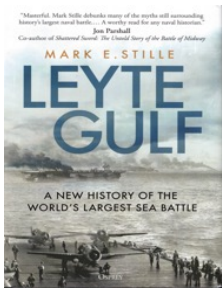
Concluding the eclectic array of dissertations was the Naval War College's, and WNHA's own, Sam Tangredi's quest for the truth about the Knight's Templar's ships in the Crusades. Sam has a direct lineal connection to the Knight's Templars, so this not-so-ancient history tour offered a personal touch as well as an exotic glimpse of a neglected naval subject.



Sam Tangredi thanking our audience at the conclusion of the symposium.

This year's symposium highlighted many thought-provoking and informative presentations in keeping with the WHNA's charter. We look forward to next winter and a return to the Midway for the seventh gathering of naval history professionals and enthusiasts from around the world the share our common interest in naval history.

Book Reviews



Leyte Gulf: A New History of the World's Largest Sea Battle.

Mark Stille. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2023. 320 pp. Notes. Biblio. Index. Images. Maps. Photos. \$30.00.

Reviewed by John D. Burt

Mark Stille has made himself a serious go-to author on the Pacific War. His books on the U.S. Navy and Japanese Imperial Navy are excellent overviews. His most recent book, *Leyte Gulf: A New History of the World's Largest Sea Battle* is a close examination of that epic battle and provides some very thought-provoking commentary. I was not expecting that, given the work he had done on Osprey's Campaign series offerings on Leyte Gulf (Vol. 1: *The Battles of the Sibuyan Sea and Samar*, and Vol. 2: *Surigao Strait and Cape Engano*.) These latter two books are excellent campaign discussions, while his new book really dives into analysis.

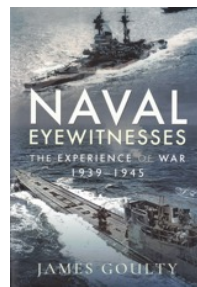
Apart from the excellent narrative of the actual battle, what sets this book apart comes from what came before and what should have happened.

Stille spends a good part of the book discussing the air attack on Formosa that preceded the Leyte landing. Those carrier raids triggered the initial Japanese response to the situation that combined land and carrier-born aircraft against Halsey's carriers—some 860 aircraft. The four-day battle which saw Halsey's fliers commit some 1,300 sorties against the Formosa airfields and their defenders. For a loss of 76 aircraft, the U.S. claimed 655 enemy planes destroyed. The Japanese admitted to nearly 500 losses but also claimed they had sunk eleven U.S.

carriers—not the two they actually damaged. The battles over Formosa, on Stille's analysis, made the battle off Leyte a foregone conclusion, both from the U.S. side, with the near elimination of the Japanese air contingent, but from the Japanese side, who—probably—discounted some of the claims, but accepted enough to send the fleet into action.

The other part of Stille's analysis rests with what the Japanese should have done, given the situation. The *Sho-1* plan called for the Fleet to strike the Americans before they landed, which required them to find the U.S. ships well ahead of the actual landing. They did not. And when they did try to strike, five days after the landings had occurred, their ability to stop the invasion was not possible; too many men were already ashore and too much supply had already been landed with them. At that point, the Japanese should have revised their plans instead of continuing an operation that had already failed. Stille believes they should have targeted action off Luzon in January 1945 when their carrier air strength had been built back and the Japanese Army had a much better defensive situation than on Leyte, which become isolated quickly.

It is always nice when a knowledgeable writer goes beyond the narrative and gives food for thought. Stille does this very well. Add really detailed Orders of Battle, a summary table of what happened to the IJN ships involved, and an extensive note and bibliography section, and you have an outstanding addition to the World War II Pacific historiography.



Naval Eyewitnesses: The Experience of War, 1939-1945.

James Goult. Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2022. 264 pp. Notes. Biblio. Index. Photos. \$50.00.

Reviewed by John D. Burt

James Goulty has written several “eyewitness” type books and is very good at selecting memoirs and adding additional facts that put those memoirs into better context. His latest, *Naval Eyewitnesses: The Experience of War, 1939-1945* follows the same pattern and, if anything, is more about *how* the British Royal Navy fought in its various aspects, than about the memoirs.

Goulty breaks up his narrative into either type of ships (carriers and battleships through destroyers and submarines), types of activities (anti-submarine warfare, convoys, amphibious operations), or internal workings (discipline). In each he gives you a close look at the environment the sailors were serving in to allow a better understanding of what they went through mentions in the memoirs selected.

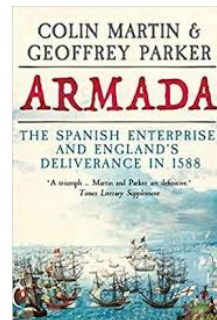
As an example, his discussion of the difference between submarines service and battleship service, he comments on how the size of the ships makes such a difference, where the larger ship had “class distinctions” between officers and sailors which had effects on the ship’s morale while on the smaller ships, everyone knew everyone else which tied the officers and enlisted men together as a single team. One of the other aspects discussed was the difference between “regular” Royal Navy and “Hostilities Only” Navy; the latter had more of a tendency to disagree with Navy “traditions” than the former who were in it for life.

One of the best chapters in the book was on amphibious operations, which was planned and coordinated by a separate Combined Operations organization in the Admiralty. The chapter covered “tip and run” commando raids through large scale assaults like Dieppe (Operation Jubilee) through Madagascar (Operation Ironclad), Sicily (Operation Husky), and Normandy (Operation Overlord). Goulty gives an excellent discussion of the various landing craft designs that the Allies used, something that many of the histories of the various operations do not really discuss; but having a Landing Ship Tank (LST) officer comments about the ship being “all ballast tanks and weight and big flat-bottom whales” (page 148) provides a vivid image of what he served on. Not surprisingly, a large portion of this chapter contained discussions stemming from the Overlord landings, but it was nice to see smaller operations, like Ironclad, also

mentioned.

On the topic of discipline and morale (Chapter 6), Goulty digs into daily life aspects in the Navy. He defines a “happy” ship as one “where there was good morale, an effective workman-like ship’s company, plus a sense of fair disciplinary system” (page 168). Moral was a function of confidence in the officers and mates, mail from home, plus the ability to take leaves, either shore leave (short time off ship) or home leave (longer periods away.) The chapter also delves into how sailors found distractions onboard during quiet times, such as the deck hockey played “with utmost ferocity” on the quarterdeck of the battleship HMS *Warspite*.

I liked the mix of information and memoirs that Goulty uses. Despite my deep dive into Royal Navy activities in the Mediterranean, I still learned a good deal about the Navy, which will always get a high recommendation from me. Along with an excellent bibliography to follow up on operations or full memoirs, *Naval Eyewitnesses* is an excellent addition to anyone’s British Royal Navy library.



Armada: The Spanish Enterprise and England's Deliverance in 1588.

Colin Martin & Geoffrey Parker. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022. 718 pp. Notes. Biblio. Index. Images. Maps. Photos. \$40.00.

Reviewed by Captain Sam J. Tangredi, USN (Ret.)

Its 400th anniversary in 1988 saw quite a number of histories of the Spanish Armada published. Among the very best was Colin Martin and Geoffrey Parker’s *The Spanish Armada* – nicely flowing narrative, excellent and appropriate photos of paintings, contemporary maps and artifacts, all in 296 pages of a slightly oversized book. A unique aspect included was new information derived from underwater archeological investigations of the Spanish wrecks off the coast of Scotland and Ireland. Several of the expeditions were led by Colin Martin.

In 2022, Martin and Parker took the earlier narrative and expanded it to 718 pages in an obvious effort

to publish the “definitive book” on the subject. Since their academic careers have circled around scholarly study of the Spanish Armada (and its archeology), the attempt is certainly appropriate. Unfortunately, for readers who love history but are not professional scholars, the 1988 edition remains the superior book.

The new 2022 *Armada* retains at its core the original well-written text, but surrounds it with an accretion of additional information from primary sources that unbalances, rather than improves the original narrative. That is not to say that the additions are not accurate, informative, and useful as a starting point for those who wish to research some of the subtopics in greater depth. Underwater archeology of the Armada wrecks gets a chapter all its own, including a history of the archeology efforts themselves. From the scholar’s point of view, the new volume is the more inclusive book. Additional attractive illustrations are also included, now all in color.

However, the new words don’t quite match the more elegant style of the embedded original text... not quite the same as combining Hemmingway with Homer, but enough of a difference to make the reader wonder if the book simultaneously points to two different conclusions.

Therein is the second element that causes the book to list to one side. The philosophy of historiography and attitude of academic historians have changed in the 34 years since the original edition. Gone is the traditional focus on epic, individual person-centered history, and certainly any default Anglo-European bias. The focus is now on human social development, and in an effort to appear inclusive and unbiased, previous ‘heroes’ (or perhaps ‘winners’) are currently portrayed as a lot less heroic and previous ‘villains’ (or perhaps ‘losers’) are portrayed a lot more sympathetically (with a handful of definite exceptions). The new text is not untouched by this change in fashion.

Martin and Parker do retain the individual person approach with the Armada commander, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, as *the* central figure. However, they now find virtues and interpret the results of his decisions and actions in a way that would make most naval strategists scratch their heads. Their tilt is towards Spain with begrudging respect for the naval competence of the English, a tilt that was not particularly evident in their original version.

In past histories, Medina Sidonia has been treated as mostly incompetent, perhaps even to an unfair degree. In the new Martin and Parker version, he comes across as foresighted and perhaps even

heroic, since he does manage to get the unwieldy Armada fleet from Spain into the English Channel and brings about 60 of the 130 vessels (a 54% loss) back to Spain following the absolutely unsuccessful expedition. Meanwhile, all the blame is dumped on Medina Sidonia’s primary naval advisor, Diego Flores. He may deserve much of it, but he wasn’t in command. Throughout the voyage, Medina Sidonia’s captains made no effort to hide the fact that they thought him incompetent, which is why order dissolved once the Armada was attacked by English fireships while at anchor off Calais and Gravelines.

Strategists might point out that the Armada failed to achieve every strategic objective and orders set for it; it failed to grapple and destroy the England fleet, it failed to establish a beachhead in England with its mass of professional soldiers, it failed to find a secure port in the Netherlands, and, most importantly, failed to escort the Duke of Parma’s huge army across the channel. In other words, it failed to achieve what most historians (including Martin and Parker in a chapter entitled “If the Armada Had Landed”) assess as the likely defeat of the poorly-trained English levies and conquest of England, or at the very least, replacement of the soon-to-lose-her-head Elizabeth I by a vengeful Catholic monarch determined to burn Protestant heretics.

Thus, from the strategic perspective, it is hard to see the same virtues and wise decisions as do Martin and Parker. Meanwhile the authors fault the English fleet for not destroying the larger-in-tonnage Armada and only achieving a “stalemate” (their word for it). Stalemate? The English fleet achieved their exact objective. The Armada achieved none.

In their effort to defuse the myths that “belittle Spain’s effort,” the authors – perhaps without direct intent – belittle the English fleet and the outcome. Defeat of the Armada was profound; it ‘evolutionized’ naval warfare from boarding and grappling to (almost) all artillery combat.

Part of the tilt is the result of relying primarily on official Spanish records, of which Geoffrey Parker is one of the first English speakers to translate and research extensively. The problem is that these official records are vastly greater than those of the English – one of reasons being that King Phillip II of Spain preferred reports rather than being briefed in person, and sent out almost 100 letters a day, asking for details and giving inevitably too-late orders. In contrast, Elizabeth I preferred to consult in private and the English records cited are mostly from accountants: numbers of ships requisitioned, amount of supplies purchased, number of cannonballs expended, etc.

More balance could have been achieved if Martin and Parker included more of two other sources of contemporary records: those of the Dutch Republic and

the plethora of first hand memoirs of the English participants (Howard, Drake and others – including lesser ranking sailors) published after the events. Yes, those memoirs are absolutely biased, but they do give insights to events and decision-making in way that can't be captured by official records. One of the best books on the Armada that does exactly that – with an almost melodious narrative – is Alexander McKee's *From Merciless Invaders: An Eye-witness Account of the Spanish Armada* published in 1963. McKee was a journalist rather than academic scholar, and historians have learned more since 1963, but also including that approach in *Armada* would help create a more definitive work.

Those readers deeply interested in the Spanish Armada and have read other interpretations should definitely buy Martin and Parkers new *Armada*. It is encyclopedic concerning the Spanish viewpoint. But if your interest is a bit lighter, you should seek out a used copy of their 1988 version.

Navigating Uncharted Waters: The Russian Naval General Staff, 1906-1914

by Stephen McLaughlin

In the autumn of 1905, as Russia teetered on the brink of revolutionary chaos, Tsar Nicholas II issued the October Manifesto, by which he reluctantly promised to establish an elected legislature, the State Duma. This inaugurated what one historian has called Russia's "demi-semi-quasi constitutional monarchy."ⁱ Although the tsar and his ministers retained broad powers, the Duma did have two powerful tools at its disposal – no law could come into force without its approval, and it could approve or reject any new state expenditures.

If the Duma represented reform at the highest level of government, the founding of the Naval General Staff (the NGS) represented reform in the more limited context of the Naval Ministry. The disastrous war with Japan in 1904–1905 had revealed the navy's weaknesses – in particular, that it lacked both a plan for fighting a war in the Far East and the facilities needed to support a war there.ⁱⁱ These failings culminated in the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905, which was not merely a disaster, but a humiliation as well.

This humiliation led one young reform-minded officer, Lieutenant A.N. Shcheglov, to write a long memorandum entitled "The Importance and Work of a Naval General Staff on the Basis of the Experience of the Russo-Japanese War."ⁱⁱⁱ After some bureaucratic maneuvering, Shcheglov's memo was brought to the attention of the tsar, who endorsed the concept, and on 7 May 1906 the Naval General Staff came into existence.^{iv} Its purpose was simple: fix all the problems revealed by the war with Japan. It would prepare war plans, which would form the basis for shipbuilding programs and for the "preparation of the potential theater of military operations" – that is, providing the fleet with the support facilities needed to fight a war in a given region.^v

For the first years of their existence, the Duma and the NGS did not get along well. At issue was the reconstruction of the Baltic Fleet. Russia's economy had been badly disrupted by the war with Japan and the suppression of revolutionary disturbances, so the majority of Duma deputies wanted to cut spending on the navy in order to devote as much money as possible to reequipping the army. Not surprisingly,

the army agreed, as did the Ministry of Finances.^{vi} These institutions pressed for an inexpensive and purely defensive force in the Baltic made up of torpedo boats and submarines.

The NGS argued that even a purely defensive Baltic Fleet had to be built around a core of modern battleships, and the 1910 maneuvers supported this view. Despite elaborate mine defenses and a strong force of destroyers and torpedo boats, the Baltic Fleet was unable to stop the "enemy," envisioned as a combined German-Swedish naval force, from carrying out amphibious landings in the rear of the Russian army's front line.^{vii} In fact the fleet couldn't even delay the enemy for the twelve to fourteen days that it would take the army to mobilize for the defense of St. Petersburg.^{viii} The debate over what sort of fleet to build raged for several years.^{ix} Despite support from the tsar, the opponents of increased naval spending managed to block funding for any new battleships in 1908, 1909 and 1910, although in 1909 the navy did manage to lay down four Baltic dreadnoughts thanks to a loophole in the budget laws.^x

So by the summer of 1910 the situation was at an impasse. The Duma was determined to block funding for battleships, but without battleships, the defenses devised by the NGS were incapable of stopping an enemy fleet in the Baltic. Yet within the span of less than two years this impasse had been decisively broken. To the surprise of many contemporary observers the Duma would willingly fund an enormous shipbuilding program of Baltic capital ships. Even more surprisingly, the navy's leadership would be so confident of its defenses that it planned to send the bulk of the Baltic Fleet to the Mediterranean. Historians have been puzzled by this turn of events, one even suggesting that the Russian naval leadership had "lost touch with reality."^{xi} The fact was, however, that political, economic and naval realities were the foundation for these changes.

The first inkling of the coming changes came in a revised assessment of Britain's commitment to the Franco-Russian alliance. Up until 1910 all of the naval war plans had assumed that Britain would remain neutral in the event of a general European war, and there was even some residual fear that Britain might be an enemy.^{xii} But in an analysis dating to late 1910, the NGS took note of the recent intensification of the Anglo-German naval rivalry, as well as Britain's firm anti-German position in the various crises that plagued the era. This led the NGS to believe that Britain would indeed come into the war as an ally of France and Russia. Faced with the British threat in the North Sea, Germany would be able to send only

“second-class forces” against Russia, and as a result, “the relative weight of our naval forces in the Baltic Sea is changed considerably to our advantage.”^{xiii}

Another factor leading to an improved outlook for the Russian navy in the Baltic was the creation of the “Maritime Fortress of the Emperor Peter the Great.” This was a complex of coast batteries embracing not only the entrance to the Gulf of Finland but also the Estonian port of Reval (today Tallinn), which would be greatly expanded and become the Baltic Fleet’s main base.^{xiv} Slated for completion in 1916, the fortress was to incorporate no less than twenty 14-inch guns, four 12-inch guns, eight 8-inch guns and a variety of lesser calibers. These guns would cover deep minefields, creating a huge “mine-artillery position” that would present a formidable obstacle to an enemy force trying to penetrate into the Gulf. To the NGS, it seemed that this fortress complex, combined with the downgrading of the German threat, would provide an adequate defense in the Baltic.

Meanwhile, a new threat was forcing the Duma to re-evaluate its anti-battleship stance. Here economics was the key factor. By 1910, Russia was finally emerging from its post-war recession; its war debts had been paid off, the first signs of an industrial boom were becoming apparent, and the empire’s balance of trade was favorable.^{xv} But that favorable trade balance depended on the export of southern Russia’s grain through the Turkish Straits – that is, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. It was Russia’s grain exports from the Black Sea that paid for the manufactured goods that flowed into the empire through the Baltic.^{xvi} The Duma’s members were well aware of this; more than 40% of the deputies were substantial landowners.^{xvii} Other members derived a portion of their wealth, directly or indirectly, from the grain trade.

The Duma therefore found it disquieting in 1910 when rumors that Turkey was shopping for dreadnoughts began reaching St. Petersburg. Countering the Turkish plans created a particularly thorny problem. International agreements permitted only Turkish warships to pass through the Straits in peacetime, so any new construction program for the Black Sea Fleet had to rely on Russia’s own Black Sea shipyards. But Russian shipyards were notorious for their long building times.^{xviii} So if Turkey purchased battleships abroad, they would arrive before Russia could build matching ships in the Black Sea. And if Turkey chose to use its newfound naval superiority to close the Straits to Russian exports, there would be little that Russia could do about it.

This was a deeply disturbing scenario to many of Russia’s leaders, both in the government and the Duma. Nor were these worries restricted to the nationalists of the center and right-wing parties; even some liberals, who believed that economic development was the key to political reform, saw potential dangers to their program if Turkey dominated the Black Sea.

Oddly, the one organization in St. Petersburg that seemed unconcerned by the rumors of Turkish naval plans was the navy. As the chief of the NGS, Admiral A.A. Ebergard wrote, “If, in addition to the Baltic dreadnoughts, we have the funds for a few more ships of this type, they should be built in the Baltic and not in the Black Sea.”^{xix} One historian has suggested that the navy was trying “to shirk responsibility for coping with the Turks,”^{xx} but from the Naval General Staff’s perspective the Black Sea was simply the wrong place to build battleships. The navy’s ultimate goal was a “free-ranging naval force,” that is, a high-seas fleet that would be unconstrained by defensive tasks, free to go wherever in the world Russia’s interests required.^{xxi} Battleships locked up in the Black Sea by international treaty obviously could not form such a force.

However, in August 1910 an exasperated Prime Minister P.A. Stolypin wrote to navy minister Admiral S.A. Voevodskii in an imperative tone:

...the Russian Government... cannot remain a spectator to such a significant strengthening of Turkey’s naval power, which reduces us to a subordinate position and even a dangerous one for our whole Black Sea coast. Obviously, it is necessary for us to set to work most urgently on measures which can equalize our military position on the Black Sea with the projected growth of the Turkish fleet.^{xxii}

Reluctantly spurred to action, the NGS drew up a shipbuilding program for the Black Sea Fleet that included three dreadnoughts.^{xxiii} The program was quickly approved by the Council of Ministers, the tsar, and, in May 1911, by the Duma. Its rapid passage owed something to improved relations between the legislature and the Naval Ministry, which was now under a new minister, Admiral I.K. Grigorovich, who “turned out to be a vigorous leader ... who soon won the Duma’s high regard.”^{xxiv} Despite the legislature’s growing esteem for Grigorovich, however, it was the threat of Turkish naval superiority in the Black Sea that ensured the passage of the measure.^{xxv}

Events soon validated Russian concerns for its grain trade. The Italo-Turkish War (September 1911 to

October 1912) led to two interruptions in Russian grain exports, including a halt of several weeks in April-May 1912 that caused large-scale economic disruption.^{xxvi} After these events the Duma needed no further convincing of the need for a strong battle fleet in the Black Sea.

But despite the Duma's interest on the Black Sea Fleet, the navy still hankered for a "free-ranging naval force." The NGS drafted a construction program for the Baltic Fleet that included four 32,000-ton battlecruisers, four light cruisers, 36 destroyers and twelve submarines; the price-tag was more than four hundred million rubles, to be spread over five years.^{xxvii} This was intended as the first installment of a twenty-year "Law on the Imperial Russian Fleet" modeled on Tirpitz's successful legislative program in Germany; it envisioned a Baltic Fleet of no less than thirty capital ships by 1930, as well as a force of fifteen battleships in the Black Sea.^{xxviii}

The problem was convincing the Duma to vote for an expensive program of capital ship construction for the Baltic, rather than the Black Sea. Grigorovich was an astute politician, and he realized that the NGS was a powerful tool not only for drawing up war-plans and shipbuilding programs, but for lobbying the Duma as well. As one historian has noted, the NGS officers provided "effective propaganda" for the navy.^{xxix} That propaganda was directed toward one goal: to educate the Duma deputies - who were notoriously ignorant of military affairs^{xxx} - on the importance of sea power. P.N. Miliukov, one of the leaders of the liberal (and oppositionist) Kadet party, acknowledged the role of the NGS, noting how its "young naval officers came directly to us with reports on the necessity of strengthening the navy."^{xxxi}

The keynote of the Naval General Staff's campaign was laid out in an "explanatory memorandum" that accompanied the bill; after outlining the navy's historic role in expanding the Russian empire, the memo went on to point out that

It must be kept in mind that the majority of issues connected with the Black Sea and the Near East^{xxxii} will be determined in the Baltic theater.... The support of our historic interests in the Near East at the current time depends to a considerable degree on our naval power in the Baltic Sea.^{xxxiii}

The lobbying efforts of the NGS proved remarkably successful - the Duma approved the measure on 19 June 1912 by overwhelming majority of 228 votes for versus 71 against.^{xxxiv} Certainly, the explanatory memo's explicit linkage of the Baltic Fleet to the Near Eastern question played an important role in that

success.

A noteworthy feature of the memorandum is that it does not specify exactly how the "issues connected with the Black Sea and the Near East" would be "determined in the Baltic theater," whether by generally reinforcing Russia's position as a great power, or by some form of direct intervention. That ambiguity may well have been deliberate, a ploy to avoid alarming the Duma with the prospect of risky adventures in distant seas. But that was precisely what the NGS was planning. As the NGS noted in a report to Admiral Grigorovich dated 7 November 1913,

it would be irrational to build a fleet for sums exceeding a billion rubles merely for the protection of the coasts of the Gulf of Finland against a landing by two German corps, a landing that is very problematic from the point of view of serious strategic calculations.^{xxxv}

The NGS had already determined a far more "rational" prospective theater of operations for the "free-ranging naval force" approved by the Duma. In July 1912 - only a few weeks after the Baltic shipbuilding program had been approved - Admiral Prince A.A. Liven, the new chief of the NGS, requested French approval for basing ships from the Baltic Fleet at Bizerta, Tunisia, at some time in the future, an intention confirmed by Liven's successor, Admiral A.I. Rusin, in June 1914.^{xxxvi} Rusin mentioned that the Russian force might include 30,000-ton, 28-knot "battleships" - characteristics matching those of the Baltic Fleet's *Izmail* class battlecruisers, which had been laid down under the 1912 program.

While the NGS planned its grand plans, the political status of the Turkish Straits remained unsettled. In late 1913 the appointment of German General Limon von Sanders to command the Turkish First Corps, based near Constantinople, led to yet another crisis.^{xxxvii} The thought of a German commanding the troops stationed closest to the Turkish capital and the Bosphorus was extremely disconcerting. In response Naval Minister Grigorovich considered sending all four of the Baltic Fleet's *Sevastopol* class dreadnoughts to the Mediterranean upon their completion, placing them "at the disposal" of the Black Sea Fleet's commander.^{xxxviii} This was in line with an NGS proposal made in November, which recommended that,

...as the guiding idea of all our military-naval preparations in the near future, the general strategic concept [should be] the preparation of our Baltic and Black Sea fleets for operations not only

in defense of our coasts, but also for active joint operations in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, in order to secure in any circumstances Russia's maritime route from the Black [Sea] to the Aegean Sea.^{xxxix}

The report went on to state that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs insisted

...on the concentration of all our military-naval forces in the Black [Sea] and Mediterranean Sea, since this would give Russia a weightier voice in the final resolution of the "Eastern Question."^{xl}

This report, which Grigorovich approved, formed the basis for a report presented to the tsar in December 1913. It envisioned creating naval forces capable of "obtaining mastery of the sea in the Constantinople Channel [i.e., the Turkish Straits] and the waters adjacent to them" by 1919.^{xli} In their estimation, this would require not only a Black Sea Fleet of eight dreadnoughts, but also the dispatch to the Mediterranean of the entire projected dreadnought strength of the Baltic Fleet – four *Sevastopol* class battleships then completing, four *Izmail* class battlecruisers then under construction, and a further brigade of four battleships yet to be laid down. The tsar approved the report on 12 January 1914.

There remained the crucial question of where to base these ships; although base rights at Bizerta had already been obtained from the French, this port was a long way from the Dardanelles. Therefore the Russians started pressing the British for a naval convention, hoping to obtain "an agreement for our vessels to use English ports in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea as bases."^{xlii} A powerful Russian squadron in the Eastern Mediterranean could in peacetime be used to coerce the Turks into policies favorable to Russia. And in the event of a general war, the same squadron could be used as a lever to achieve Russia's ultimate aim in the region – possession of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles.^{xliii}

To summarize, then, the NGS assumed that the Germans would have to concentrate the bulk of their naval forces in the North Sea to face the British, leaving only second-line units for the Baltic. Therefore, the maritime defense of St. Petersburg could be entrusted to the fortress complex, the minefields, and older ships. The modern capital ships of the Baltic Fleet could therefore form a "free-ranging naval force" that could be sent wherever imperial policy demanded – most immediately, to the Mediterranean, where it would help ensure Russia's freedom of trade through the Turkish Straits.^{xliv} The

NGS was able to convince the Duma to approve the massive Baltic shipbuilding program by linking it explicitly to the resolution of Russia's goals in the Turkish Straits.

The onset of the First World War led to the collapse of the Naval General Staff's grand plans for a high-seas fleet of powerful dreadnoughts – and ultimately to the collapse of the Russian empire itself. This put an end to an interesting experiment that found two of imperial Russia's reforming institutions – the Naval General Staff and Russia's first elected legislature, the Duma – moving from antagonism to co-operation. V.N. Kokovtsov, prime minister in 1912 when the Baltic Fleet construction program was passed, observed how

These young officers speedily won for themselves and the ministry they represented the favor of the Duma by their splendid work on all matters submitted to it, by intelligently defending these matters in the Duma [defense] committee, and by readily adapting themselves to the moods of the Duma and its prominent representatives in the Committee for National Defense.^{xlv}

The officers of the NGS were learning how to operate effectively in a new semi-constitutional environment, where gaining the approval of elected representatives was as important as winning the tsar's support. In the process, both the NGS and the Duma were truly navigating uncharted waters.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my friend Sergei Vinogradov for much of the material used in the writing of this article. My wife, Jan Torbet, provided invaluable editorial assistance, as she has on so many other projects, as well as encouragement and support.

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ⁱ Gleason, *Alexander Guchkov and the End of the Russian Empire*, 23.

ⁱⁱ The failings of Russian naval administration before and during the war are described in Dotsenko, Dotsenko and Mironov, *Voennomorskaiia strategiia Rossii*, 118–122.

ⁱⁱⁱ Shcheglov's memorandum is available online at www.sistematima.narod.ru/Texts/Cheglov/1905a/a_Cheglov1905_annot1.htm, accessed on 12 August 2011.

^{iv} Shcheglov's version of events can be found in "Predislovie k materialam istorii Morskogo general'nogo shtaba." After the Russian revolution Shcheglov went into exile abroad, where his role in founding the NGS occasioned some controversy; see, for example, his letter to the editor, *Morskoi zhurnal* (Prague), no. 6/7, 1928, 17–20 (available online at <http://www.archive.org/details/morskoizhurnalse008800>). Some former officers apparently felt much of the credit for the NGS's founding belonged to A.V. Kolchak, the moving force behind the St. Petersburg Naval Circle. However, M.I. Smirnov, a long-time friend of Kolchak, does not credit Kolchak, saying that "One of the young officers [of the Naval Circle – presumably Shcheglov] worked out a scheme for the establishment of a Naval General Staff" (Smirnov, "Admiral Kolchak," 376).

^v Dotsenko, Dotsenko and Mironov, *Voennomorskaiia strategiia Rossii*, 113–117, provide extracts from the orders establishing the NGS and its responsibilities.

^{vi} For the general background of the governmental reforms, with particular emphasis on their role in military policy and programs, see Walz, "State Defense and Russian Politics Under the Last Tsar," 17–23, 28–56. For the opposition of the Duma, army and Ministry of Finances to large-scale naval construction, see (among other works) Walz, "State Defense..." 80–87, 111–113, 223–224; Podsoblyayev, "The Russian Naval General Staff and the Evolution of Naval Policy," 43–44, 51–53; Perrins, "The Council for State Defence 1905-1909," 388–390.

^{vii} The Russian army's concern about enemy spoiling attacks disrupting its mobilization dated back to the 1880s, although at that time the method of attack was seen as massive cavalry raids (Rich, *The Tsar's Colonels*, 175).

viii Emelin and Koziurenok, “N.O. fon Essen, A.V. Kolchak, i razrabotka programmy usilennogo sudostroeniia Baltiiskogo flota,” 31.

ix For a summary of the debate, see Podsobliaev, “Kakoi flot nuzhen Russii?”

x McLaughlin, *Russian and Soviet Battleships*, 193–194.

xi Fox, “The Eastern Question in Russian Politics,” 269.

xii Petrov, *Podgotovka Rossii k Mirovoi voine na more*, 107–108.

xiii Emelin and Koziurenok, “N.O. fon Essen, A.V. Kolchak, i razrabotka programmy usilennogo sudostroeniia Baltiiskogo flota,” 32. About a year later the Russian army came to a similar conclusion regarding Britain’s likelihood of entering a future war against Germany; see Menning, “Pieces of the Puzzle,” 790–791.

xiv The major work on the Maritime Fortress of the Emperor Peter the Great is Amir Khanov, *Morskaia krepost’ Imperatora Petra Velikogo*, from which the following details are taken.

xv Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour*, 184–185; Gatrell, *Government and Industry*, 140; Vinogradov, *Polednie ispoliny Rossiiskogo imperatorskogo flota*, 40–45.

xvi Spring, “Russian Foreign Policy, Economic Interests and the Straits Question,” 210.

xvii Pinchuk, *The Octobrists in the Third Duma*, 29. Walz, “State Defense and Russian Politics Under the Last Tsar,” 38, indicates that nearly 50% of the Third Duma was of the landed nobility.

xviii In November 1913 the Minister of Foreign Affairs estimated that, if Turkey ordered dreadnoughts in Britain or Germany, they would be ready in two years, whereas ships built in Russia would take three years; a more likely ratio would be three years for British- or German-built ships versus four years for a Russian-built one. See Zakher, “Konstantinopol’ i proliv,” vol. 7 (1924), 32.

xix Shmelev, “A.V. Kolchak i vozrozhdenie russkogo flota,” 146.

xx Bobroff, *Roads to Glory*, 18.

xxi Petrov, *Pogotovka Rossii k Mirovoi voine na more*, 114; Podsoblyaev, “The Russian Naval General Staff and the Evolution of Naval Policy,” 43.

xxii Bobroff, *Roads to Glory*, 18.

xxiii Vinogradov, *Lineinyi korabl’ “Imperatritsa Mariia,”* 6–7.

xxiv Walz, “State Defense and Russian Politics Under the Last Tsar,” 89–91, 225; Grigorovich’s memoirs provide only very general information on his relations with the Duma; see his *Vospominaniia byvshego morskogo ministra*.

xxv Waltz, “State Defense and Russian Politics Under the Last Tsar,” 225.

xxvi Spring, “Russian Foreign Policy, Economic Interests and the Straits Question,” 211–214; Smith, *The Russian Struggle for Power*, 64; Bobroff, *Roads to Glory*, 32

xxvii Petrov, *Podgotovka Rossii k Mirovoi voine na more*, 140, 151; Shatsillo, *Ot Portsmutskogo mira k Pervoi mirovoi voine*, Table No. 2, 355.

xxviii Vinogradov, *Polednie ispoliny Rossiiskogo imperatorskogo flota*, 31–37.

xxix Walz, “State Defense and Russian Politics Under the Last Tsar,” 226.

xxx Fuller, *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia*, 230.

xxxi Miliukov, *Political Memoirs 1905–1917*, 215.

xxxii At this time, the term “Near East” included the Balkan Peninsula.

xxxiii Savinkin, ed., *Voenno-morskaia ideia Rossii*, 208–209. A complete translation of the 1912 naval program’s “explanatory memorandum,” which differs slightly from my translation, can be found in the report of the British naval attaché in St. Petersburg, Captain Grenfell, dated 22 June 1912 (The National Archives, Kew, London, FO 371/1470, ff. 40–42; this is also available in Bourne and Watt, editors, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, I:A:6:248–250).

xxxiv Halpern, *The Mediterranean Naval Situation*, 298.

xxxv Liven to Grigorovich, 7/21 November 1913, quoted in Zakher, “Konstantinopol’ i proliv,” no. 6, 67.

xxxvi Halpern, *Mediterranean Naval Situation*, 307–308.

xxxvii Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War*, 161.

xxxviii Emelin and Koziurenok, eds., “Sostoianie Baltiiskogo flota vyzyvaet ser’eznye opaseniia...,” 51–52.

^{xxxix} Zakher, “Konstantinopol’ i prolivy,” *Krasnyi arkhiv*, vol. 6, p. 68.

^{xl} Zakher, “Konstantinopol’ i prolivy,” *Krasnyi arkhiv*, vol. 6, p. 69.

^{xli} Extracts from this report can be found in Zakher, “Konstantinopol’ i prolivy,” *Krasnyi arkhiv*, vol. 7, 35–37. See also Shatsillo, *Russkii imperializm i razvitie flota*, 157–158 and Vinogradov, *Polednie ispoliny Rossiiskogo imperatorskogo flota*, 37–38.

^{xlii} Minutes of a joint conference of the Naval General Staff and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 13/26 May 1914, quoted in Pokrovskii, editor, *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia v epokhu imperializma*, 98–99; quote from 99.

^{xliii} That the navy – and the Foreign Ministry – hoped for eventual possession of the Turkish Straits is clear from the documents quoted in Zakher,

^{xliv} Vinogradov, *Polednie ispoliny Rossiiskogo imperatorskogo flota*, 218.

^{xlv} Kokovtsov, *Out of My Past*, 219.

