

vessels during wartime. It is regrettable that similar works are not available for the other nations that operated merchant vessels during both world wars; such works would resolve many problems and questions that naval and maritime enthusiasts encounter when trying to ascertain commercial fleet losses.

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Jaap R. Bruijn, Ronald Prud'homme van Reine, Rolof van Hövell tot Westerflieer (eds.). *De Ruyter: Dutch Admiral*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Karwansaray BV, www.karwansaraypublishers.com, 2011. 280 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, notes, indices. Euro €55,00, cloth; ISBN 978-9-90258-03-0.

The authors and press have produced a fascinating book about one of the leading naval commanders of the seventeenth century. De Ruyter, according to the chapters by Davies and Probst (about the view of him in England and Denmark, respectively), attracted respect from enemies and allies during and after his career. That makes him a fitting subject for a book in Karwansaray BV's "Protagonists of History in International Perspective" series.

De Ruyter's career spanned three continents (Europe, Africa and North America) and numerous wars in the mid-1600s. He is the Dutch equivalent of Nelson, although holding more senior rank. Given flag rank by a provincial admiralty, De Ruyter quickly found his services required as fleet commander and as a diplomat representing Dutch interests in Europe and North Africa. His death in defeat in 1676 off Sicily during the United Provinces' dramatic conflict with France scarcely marred his national and international reputation.

The book reflects the role of the United Provinces' near-monopolistic role in shipping goods throughout Europe, and the need to undertake naval action to protect that trade and eventually its very territory. The international array of subject matter experts has drawn on diverse collections of primary and secondary sources, reflecting the multiple aspects of De Ruyter's career. The chapters on the Dutch republic's naval achievements (in terms of force size and structure) by Glete and Hattendorf will prove a hearty corrective to those obsessed by the prowess of absolutist states. For those teaching about early modern Europe, this one volume provides a sound ground in Dutch maritime and naval affairs. Naval historians will find the Hattendorf description of changing Dutch tactics, and the chapter about the flag officers by Bruijn particularly interesting. Unlike Davies' analysis of British views of De Ruyter during his naval career, Probst's article on Danish perspectives of the admiral in Nordic wars has more of the flavour of operational history and far less about how Danes viewed him. Van Reine's chapters on the first biography of De Ruyter and on his contemporary portraits should attract cultural historians. Rather than reading the chapters in the order assigned by the editors, it may prove more useful to read Hattendorf's and Bruijn's second articles earlier, and the chapter on the biographer Gerard Brandt last. Commendably, the articles appropriately support the intent of the book – the parts create a comprehensive whole, unlike some collections of essays.

Although focused on a single individual, the volume ranges sufficiently to create a picture of the United Provinces in the mid-seventeenth century when it was a major European power. De Ruyter's varied life, illustrating many aspects of Dutch ascendancy, allowed the book to start the publisher's series. With the exception of not sailing to the East Indies, De Ruyter's

maritime and naval activities supported Dutch commercial and military efforts throughout the period. He epitomizes his country's wide-ranging interests and illustrates its willingness to promote competent individuals, as opposed to only those with aristocratic lineage. In the matter of his promotion from maritime to naval service, and then to the highest rank of the latter, he exemplifies the ethos of his allies, the republican De Witt brothers. As several authors observe that alliance may have earned him the lesser command in the secondary Mediterranean theater following the Orangist coup d'état in 1672.

The book has many positive aspects, and one large negative one. It contains sufficient maps to guide the reader through De Ruyter's geographically wide-spread career. It has a lavish number of appropriate colour illustrations, which reflects the United Provinces' importance as an artistic and publishing centre during the period. Unlike most history books, the graphic design of each page has received careful consideration. Consequently, the notes, which would have marred their appearance, appear at the end of the volume. Unfortunately, the book only has a select bibliography, which, given the wealth of sources and the otherwise costly production of the book, seems like a misguided attempt at savings. Marshaling the sources as a truly accumulated whole would not only have reflected the wide-ranging nature of De Ruyter's life, but would have also mirrored the equally diverse activities of the Dutch. Presumably, to accommodate the illustrations and to enhance the book's visual presence, it has triple-width margins. That feature added to the use of heavy clay-based paper (doubtless chosen to allow better reproduction of the images), makes the book heavy and awkward to hold, despite its relative brevity. Readers should consider using a table or book-rest to prevent

physical discomfort.

One hopes that De Ruyter will not be the only naval figure chosen by the publisher for this series. The visual and scholastic quality of the publication, which is accessible to undergraduates and valuable to scholars, should lead anyone interested in early modern maritime and naval affairs, as well as culture to consult this fine book.

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James C. Bussert and Bruce A. Ellerman. *People's Liberation Army Navy. Combat Systems Technology, 1949-2010*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, www.nip.org, 2011. xxi + 228 pp., illustrations, tables, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. US \$36.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-59114-080-1. (Distributed in the UK by Casemate Publishing, www.casematepublishing.co.uk, £23.50)

In recent months, the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has become the focus of major international attention as the spear point of what believe to be the Beijing regime's growing regional bellicosity. Barely veiled references abound to similarities between the PLAN and the aggressive Imperial Japanese Navy of a century ago which eventually required a world war to subdue. How good is the PLAN and how aggressively might it be employed?

Bussert and Ellerman confront these questions directly and offer fascinating answers based on exhaustive research and professional lifetimes immersed in combat systems technology. The result is a work that, however difficult its subject, is absolutely essential reading for military, diplomatic and academic communities here and abroad, and for those who simply harbour an interest in the growth of Chinese power and ambition.