

is appropriate for this particular official history. *History of the Chief of Naval Operations* is a large book, running to nearly 600 pages of main text. Accompanying photographs of the individual CNOs, plus tables and diagrams provide some respite from the dense narrative, which is divided by bolded headings. A very useful index appears at the end. The book is recommended for readers interested in the history of administration and planning within the US Navy. Take advantage of the free text-searchable PDF download available on the Naval History and Heritage Command website.

Chris Madsen

North Vancouver, British Columbia

**Angus Konstam and Edouard A. Groult (illustrator).** *German High Seas Fleet 1914-18: The Kaiser's challenge to the Royal Navy.* Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com), 2023. 80 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, index. UK £15.99, US \$23.00, CAN \$31.00; ISBN 978-1-4728-5647-0 (softcover), ISBN 978-1-4728—5645-6 (Ebook), 978-1-4728-5644-9 (PDF).

Imperial Germany's High Seas Fleet (*Hochseeflotte*), which Winston Churchill derisively called the Luxury Fleet, failed to reach its full potential during the First World War. It had been built up under the tutelage of Kaiser Wilhelm II and Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz to secure Imperial Germany's colonial possessions and its "place in the sun." The *Kaiserliche Marine* overtook France as the second ranking navy in Europe behind Great Britain's Royal Navy and, with introduction of the revolutionary dreadnought battleship, the two navies tried to outbuild the other in a naval arms race. Navies of the time were heavily influenced by Alfred Thayer Mahan, who stressed the importance of the decisive battle. Maneuvering for this blowout battle proved elusive in the war, the closest being the Battle of Jutland/Skagerrak. The naval war settled into a Royal Navy blockade to cut off vital resources and supply to Imperial Germany and a counter-campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare by the *Kaiserliche Marine* to do the same against Great Britain. Angus Konstam, a former naval officer and curator of the Royal Armouries turned historian, authors the second contribution in Osprey's Fleet series focused on the ships, organization, and operations of the German High Seas Fleet. Edouard Groult, a London-based illustrator and graphics designer, provides commissioned original artwork in colour.

The book follows the standard format for Osprey's new Fleet series at 80 pages in length with four unnumbered sections, a list of further reading, and an index. Black and white photographs and colour reproductions of oil paintings

by Claus Bergen accompany the text. Tables give detailed information on changes to the fleet over time and its organization. Diagrams and plots for specific movements, tactics, and actions, some rendered three dimensionally, appear alongside explanatory shaded textual boxes. Shaded textual boxes are also used with the commissioned artwork for further background and context behind the topic represented. The combination of historical narrative and visually appealing content is really the signature feature of the Osprey series. The book organizes and simplifies the information into an easily digestible format.

The German High Seas Fleet was predicated on Tirpitz's Risk Theory, which held that Imperial Germany's navy did not seek a war with the Royal Navy but had to be strong and capable enough to deter one or pose a necessary risk should fighting occur. Unfortunately for Imperial Germany, alliances with Japan and France allowed Great Britain to concentrate its naval strength in the North Sea into the Grand Fleet which, combined with a naval construction programme that outstripped German shipbuilding, conferred a more or less permanent advantage over the German High Seas Fleet. The only way that calculation could be changed was if the Germans inflicted serious losses on the Grand Fleet either through a major engagement or attrition. Neither side seemed willing to take the risk for the most part and adopted cautious strategies throughout the war.

On the whole, German ships were better armoured and protected, a bit under-gunned with good fire control and optics, and were lacking in speed compared to British counterparts. Command was exercised by a commander-in-chief reporting to a higher navy command and ultimately Kaiser Wilhelm himself, within the limitations of communications and intelligence at the time. In terms of logistics, the German High Seas Fleet was essentially short-legged, operating from a full-service main base at Wilhelmshaven facing the North Sea and various advance bases. The Kiel Canal connected the Baltic Sea and another naval base at Kiel with additional services and facilities for maintenance and refits.

The last parts of the book are devoted to analysis of the German High Seas Fleet in combat and to naval battles of significance. The Battle of Heligoland Blight in August 1914 resulted in the loss of three German light cruisers. Scouting groups were sent to bombard Hartlepool, Scarborough, and Whitby and lay mines off the coast later in the year. At Dogger Bank on 25 January 1915, a running fight between battlecruisers saw the armoured cruiser *Blücher* sunk and the rest of the German squadron able to get away only a little mauled and bruised, the larger British fleet not taking the bait to come out in force. That was not the case at the Battle of Jutland/Skagerrak on 31 May 1916, when the two fleets clashed in the closest thing to a decisive battle at sea in

the First World War. After a series of engagements between battlecruisers and detached battleships, the two opposing columns of dreadnoughts bore down on each other, the Germans finding themselves in a disadvantageous tactical position because the British were “crossing the T,” which allowed them to fire full broadsides with all guns while not under the full weight of opposing fire. Sensing a trap, the German Admiral Reinhard von Scheer ordered the High Seas Fleet to turn away that put distance between them and the Grand Fleet while the battlecruisers and torpedo boats attacked in mass as cover. The German High Seas Fleet survived to remain a fleet in being but never really sortied again in force. The naval war instead shifted to submarines on the German side in 1917 and 1918. Maintenance of the German High Seas Fleet in a state of readiness until the end of the war tied up scarce personnel and material resources, and finally, in the face of defeat and starvation, German sailors mutinied in 1918.

This offering in Osprey’s Fleet series provides a very readable and visually pleasing primer on the German High Seas Fleet. A number of key battles are highlighted in text and graphics. The affordable book is recommended for readers interested in First World War naval operations, German naval developments pre-1918, and as a naval history reference source for wargaming and scale modelling.

Chris Madsen

North Vancouver, British Columbia

**Xiaobing Li. *China’s New Navy: The Evolution of PLAN from the People’s Revolution to a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cold War*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, [www.usni.org](http://www.usni.org), 2023. xv+285 pp., maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$34.95, hardcover; ISBN 978-1-68247-775-5.**

The People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), like China itself, has been an enigma for western scholars and analysts. Today, it is the largest navy in the world by number of ships, and is steadily growing to match China’s ambitions as a regional and global power. Tensions over Taiwan and territorial disputes in adjoining waters demonstrate China’s willingness to employ maritime and military power to back up diplomacy and policy, even when the United States, with its technically advanced and globally deployable fleets, draws a line in the sand. Since its official founding on 23 April 1949, the PLAN has evolved from a modest riverine and coastal naval force of cast-off warships into a balanced navy suited to a great power with nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, and a multitude of missile-carrying surface ships. Indeed, the United States Navy (USN) considers the PLAN a worthy rival and potential enemy in terms of