

than campaign for) being a candidate for president, but soon showed lack of interest, asserting that the office is not difficult because it consisted mostly of executing the law.

Dewey went on to assert great influence in modernizing the Navy during the Theodore Roosevelt administration. Long before his death in 1917, he also predicted that an upcoming war would likely entangle the United States against Germany. His influential friend was Alfred Thayer Mahan, who regarded battleships as the preeminent weapon for any future war. Dewey, however, thought that leadership and an operational sense of how to combine daring with prudence was the key to success in battle. History has proven that Dewey, the distinguished senior admiral who was often depicted in his white naval uniform, was correct.

David Smith's *A New Force at Sea* is a carefully constructed scholarly work as well as a pleasurable read. It is a fast-moving, well-documented biography of a hero who has faded from consciousness somewhat because of the era in which he lived. The author successfully humanizes Dewey's sometimes complex character by relating his fondness for his dog "Bob," how he overcame hero worship that might have challenged an ordinary man, and his personal relationships, the loss of his first wife Susan Goodwin and a later marriage to Mildred "Millie" McLean Hazen that precipitated ugly religious prejudices. Smith clearly succeeds in telling the story of "The Rise of the American Navy," the book's subtitle. I highly recommend this fascinating work, which sheds fresh light upon a true naval hero from the late nineteenth century who made the United States into a two-ocean naval power.

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Mark Stille. *Japan's Indian Ocean Raid 1942: The Allies' Lowest Ebb*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Books, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2023. 96 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index. UK £16.99, Cdn \$33.00, US \$25.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-47285-418-6.

The sub-title of Mark Stille's latest book prepared for Osprey is indeed well chosen. The start of the Pacific War was a catalogue of disasters for the Americans, the British and the Dutch. Whatever might have gone wrong did go wrong and, combined with setbacks in the European Theatre in the same timeframe (through the late summer of 1942), it was an unmitigated series of setbacks, to put it mildly. The "incredible victory" at Midway stemmed the tide in June 1942, but the struggle remained on a knife's edge into early 1943. The episode Stille covers here is the raid in April 1942 by the Imperial

Japanese Navy into the Indian Ocean. The raid, designed to cover Imperial Japanese Army operations in Burma and to keep Britain on its back foot, largely succeeded and thereby contributed to the woeful catalogue of Allied naval and military defeats that characterised this period of the Second World War.

Stille has organised his account by examining first the commanders of both sides, noting motivations and intentions on the Japanese side, and the very mixed capacity of the British to meet the challenge. This is not to imply that the Japanese leadership was entirely sound. Indeed, both sides struggled throughout the raid to manage their side of the episode. From the Japanese perspective, the outcome was a disappointment in that the successes achieved were clearly anything but conclusive, with the British suffering significant but not catastrophic losses and the survival of the British Eastern Fleet. At the conclusion of the raid, Japanese attention immediately turned to the more significant task of eliminating the remnants of the American Pacific Fleet, which led to their crushing defeat at Midway.

The second part of the book explores the warships available to both sides for the Indian Ocean raid. The Japanese were better equipped, most notably with the five carriers of the Striking Force (although one was under repair), which were accompanied by a fast battleship squadron of four ships. The British fleet in the Indian Ocean was very much a ragtag collection of older ships unpractised at working together. Two modern carriers were assigned to the Pacific Fleet, although these were smaller than the Japanese carriers, as was a powerful but elderly battleship squadron. Stille concludes, rightly, that the Japanese were far better equipped for modern war in comparison with the British at this stage. Additionally, British intelligence and assessments of the IJN were inadequate and unrealistic (in common with Americans before Pearl Harbor). This section includes a detailed order of battle for the two sides in addition to the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the naval and air forces involved.

The subsequent parts examine the plans of both sides, covering Japanese offensive intentions regarding British shipping and naval forces in the Ceylon/Bay of Bengal operating areas, and British dispositions made necessary after the disasters in Malaya, the Dutch East Indies and initial defeats in Burma, as well as the conduct of operations during April 1942. Essentially, the raid went entirely in Japan's favour, with the British suffering losses of an obsolete carrier and two heavy cruisers, along with a number of lesser warships. As well, the Japanese successfully bombed targets in Ceylon and threatened the east coast of India. The objective of covering troop movements in Burma was entirely successful with the transport of troops to Rangoon. The subsequent campaign went to the borders of India itself. What was not successful was

securing the destruction of the British Eastern Fleet, which was largely due to weaknesses in Japanese aircraft search techniques combined with bad luck allowing the Royal Navy to escape as lightly as they did. It was a near run thing.

Stille is even-handed in his analysis of this episode, pointing out weaknesses in ships and their designs or capabilities, operational techniques, and leadership on both sides. Some of his judgements are perhaps overly harsh, such as his description of Vice Admiral Nagumo's handling of his carrier force as "incompetent" for example. This does not allow for the fact that there had been little opportunity to gain war experience in this, the fourth month of a carrier-oriented maritime war. Indeed, some of Vice Admiral Somerville's mistakes were similar in nature. Stille does, however, make an astute observation regarding Somerville's reckless actions in seeking to attack Nagumo's carrier force, following the RN doctrine of "offensive action" under virtually all circumstances. Somerville's decision in this regard can perhaps be blamed on criticism from Admiralty to Somerville when he was commanding Force H in the Mediterranean for a lack of "offensive spirit" against an Italian force. While it is certain that offensive action is desirable, there is a role for judgement. Throwing one's ships away in an entirely unequal contest is rarely justified. Surviving to husband resources and permitting their growth, reverting in due course to an aggressive posture, is strategically sensible. It is a fine distinction to be sure.

This is not an academic book and is not footnoted. It is a short account of the IJN's 1942 Indian Ocean incursion that, in common with all Osprey Book's productions, is lavishly illustrated with photos, paintings, and diagrams. The production quality is very high. A brief bibliography is provided that includes both older sources and more current ones, as well as a select number of primary sources (generally official accounts both British and Japanese). Overall, it provides an excellent introduction to the subject and will give all readers a succinct overview of the entire episode from the perspectives of both sides. I can recommend the book on that basis.

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Mark Stille. *The Battle of Leyte Gulf: A New History of the World's Largest Sea Battle*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2023. 320 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, bibliography, notes, index. US \$30.00, UK£25.00, CDN \$40.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-4728-5175-8. (E-book available.)