

Laurentic (lost off Ireland with a treasure of gold bullion), the USS *Maine*, the Brassey's *Sunbeam*, *Westward Ho*, and many more. Some crafts that do not have attention shone their way in this book include the *Celtic* (later USS *Sachem*, built by Pusey & Jones), or the *Ballymena*, made famous by the song. These omissions are compensated for by coverage of great builders and designers such as George Lawley & Sons, Camper & Nicholson, Herreshoff Manufacturing, William Cramp & Sons, Babcock & Wilcox, Cox & Stevens, Burmeister-Wain, and Swan Hunter.

In the era of larger-than-life personalities and pocketbooks, the text is entertainingly laced with such celebrities as German Kaiser Wilhelm II, British King William IV, Viscount Guinness, Commodore Vanderbilt, King Umberto I of Italy, Winston Churchill, J. Pierpoint Morgan, the Marquess of Curzon, Francis Bacon, and Admiral Jellicoe, all of whom receive mention.

Before reading Dunn's account, many of us may not have been aware of the US First Patrol Squadron in European waters in World War I, much less that it was composed of US-built steam yachts. Thanks to Steve Dunn's persistence, research, and highly readable combination of text and image (in the Seaforth Publishing way) we are enjoyably brought up to speed. Bravo Dunn, and to those who served stoically and dangerously, seeking out, attacking and on several occasions sinking enemy U-boats, well done!

Eric Wiberg
Boston, Massachusetts

Elleman, Bruce A. *The ABCs of Cold War History: Anglo-America, Bloc Sovietique, China, 1919–1994*

First Hill Books, 2025

83 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index

ISBN 9781839992278 (softcover) US\$19.99; 9781839992285 (e-book)

US\$19.99

The ABCs of Cold War History puts China at the centre of the Cold War. At 69 pages and printed under a hybrid pay-to-publish model, *The ABCs* is located in the tradition of timely pamphlets that furnish readers with hefty ideas for the salon. The conceptual framework faces off continental powers that seek spheres of influence with superior armies versus maritime powers that seek trade with naval supremacy. The book concludes with “the fourteen-point strategy” for United States-China relations after 1949 and lessons learned for a US-China cold war (64–65). These ideas are relevant to anyone who thinks about the recent turn of the US National Security Strategy away from promoting global

free trade to claiming a hemispheric sphere of influence.

The ABCs sets out to argue that China was “the ultimate prize” in the Cold War of the USSR and US (1). On one side, the Anglo-American special relationship originated in the shared oceanic orientations of the US and United Kingdom after 1898 when the US pursued Pacific bases, Pacific sea lanes, and the Open Door policy with China. But the UK split from the US on China when the US did not support the Chinese Nationalists in 1925. At that time, the US was unaware that even as the Nationalists and USSR had agreed in the 1924 Sino-Soviet Treaty that Outer Mongolia was part of China, a secret protocol to the treaty recognized the Tsarist unequal treaties and made Outer Mongolia a Soviet protectorate. That secret protocol and other secret diplomacy led to Chiang Kai-Shek trading independence for Outer Mongolia in exchange for Soviet support of the Nationalists in the 1945 Sino-Soviet Treaty. At that time, the USSR and China were both pursuing “continental” strategies of seeking a sphere of influence at their edges. Later, after the Communists established the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the US used the two fronts of the PRC in the East and NATO in the West to pincer the USSR into decline. To execute this strategy, the US pressured the USSR and PRC into greater cooperation in order to strain the Sino-Soviet relationship until it broke. So, the US applied intense diplomatic and military pressures on China such as the 21-year strategic embargo of the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM) where a China Differential imposed harsher sanctions on the PRC than on other Soviet-aligned countries. After US-China relations normalized in 1979, the US reversed the differential sanctions, favoring China for dual-use technology transfer such as ship engines, aeronautic equipment, and electronics. However, even as this increased trade bolstered China against the USSR, it also accelerated China’s rising naval challenge to the US in the Western Pacific.

The ABCs says that it is about US policy for the USSR and China, but that is an imperfect fit with its actual content since its scope and evidence is often broader than that topic (2). The Anglo-American and Bloc soviétique chapters show the critical but once-unknown influence of secret diplomacy on Sino-Soviet relations thanks to the Diplomatic Archives in Taipei (Wai Jiao Dang An) and especially 76 pages of notes by Nationalist Diplomat Victor Hoo about negotiations for the 1945 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. The Russian-language evidence comes especially from prints by *Isvestiia*, *Pravda*, the Comintern, and other presses. Documentation of the Chinese Communists is thinner, usually coming from US and UK government documents (except 34n30). It draws from the archives of every US president from Truman to George H.W. Bush, except Kennedy, plus US State Department and UK

Foreign Office records. Seminars could study how *The ABCs* argues that the very centrality of China to the US national interest meant that US kept its plans for China secret, making China seem less important to the US than it actually was (39, 48–50).

The work could have been more impactful by engaging in more argument. The sea-power/land-power concept was not actually central to the body chapters (68n8). Those chapters mentioned sea denial, blockades, ports, island chains, and embargos here and there but did not make sea power an organizing principle and did not reconcile the land-power concept with *The ABCs*' moments when its evidence does not fit that thesis well, such as when land-power USSR militarized Port Arthur and the port of Darien and took offshore islands that enabled blockades, or when land-power China projected naval power from bases in the Paracel Islands to reclaim a Southeast Asian sphere of influence. *The ABCs* rarely sets out how it adds to or differs from other writers (e.g., 68n8). I would ask if this tendency to shrink from argument relates to three patterns in the citations and bibliography: first, the cited literature comes almost entirely from before 2011 instead of recent publications; second, there are 14 instances where the book cites primary source as cited in other secondary sources instead of citing the primary sources themselves, which is a convention that shows how the historian assessed the evidence in its context and that enables the reader to do the same; and third, the author references himself far more than any other scholar thanks to 17 footnotes to his own publications instead of other influences or antagonists. I assert that this is too much self-citation.

I found that *The ABCs* claimed more than it finally argued. It states that its top line is that China was the prize in the Cold War, but the way it argues that is to stake the start of the Cold War in 1919 and then to show that China was “a” prize for the US, UK, Japan, and USSR until 1949 and “the” prize *for the US* after that. It does not directly address counter-arguments that the Cold War was centrally about any region of the world other than China: just one sentence touches on decolonization (15), and nationalism and self-determination are considered only for China and not as worldwide movements. Even though the sea-power thesis is that trade is fundamental to US grand strategy and the fountainhead for the spectacular wealth and influence of the postwar international liberal order, the only economic institution that appears is COCOM. Furthermore, Japan appears in the argument at some times but not at other times. For instance, *The ABCs* calls the Cold War, Sino-Japanese War, and Chinese Civil War “three ‘nested wars’” without acknowledging or engaging the interpretation that the Sino-Japanese War was the start of the Second World War in Asia (25). Addressing objections such as these is for a

longer book that costs more.

The print edition hits a student-friendly price at the cost of some quality. Signs of this trade-off show up in the production value. More developmental editing could have adjusted the thesis to the argument and smoothed out the detours to the nineteenth century. The 10 photographs in the body of the text would have benefited from gaining permission to use proper publication-quality images. Seven photos are excerpts from archival documents that crop out the context of the rest of the page, meaning they are effectively block quotations that have not been transcribed, paraphrased, and quoted judiciously. Three of the five maps are either pixelated or reproduced too small to be legible. These signs and others – such as é missing from *soviétique* in the title and a title that makes the book sound like a primer when it is not – signal that the publisher prioritized accessibility and speedy printing over spit and polish.

Stephen P. Hay
Ottawa, Ontario

**Ferguson, Bill. *c/o Cunard House, 88 Leadenhall Street, London EC3*
*Whittles Publishing, 2025***

xiv + 193pp., illustrations

ISBN 9781849955829 (softcover) £18.99, US\$24.95

In recent years a good number of mariners' memoirs have been published, and Bill Ferguson's new book is another addition to this genre. From the perspective of the professional maritime historian these books are mainly source material for research within the field of social maritime history, and this book is not an exception. While it obviously does not contribute much to the field of analytical maritime history, it does provide an interesting take on how an individual mariner personally experienced work and life in the British maritime industries and therefore is a relevant source for a thematic field otherwise often exclusively depending on oral history work or reports from outsiders to the industry.

Like with all such reports, it needs to be understood that the book is mainly a reflection on the experiences of one single mariner, and fellow mariners might have put emphasis on completely different aspects. Consequently, it might be argued that for any professional maritime historian the value of this particular book might be limited, but that reading this book together with other comparable books will allow readers to extract a picture that can be understood as representative. In addition, it might be asked why books like this are written, published, sold, and read, and the answer to this question might be