

ro Ozawa and Matome Ugaki (among many others) are profiled to a more limited degree.

The closing battles of the Pacific War have become iconic; the renowned assaults in Manila, Luzon, Leyte, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. The enemy fought with skill, initiative, persistence and at times, a seemingly inhuman lack of fear, in actions Toll graphically describes in blood-stained detail. Perhaps most chilling are his exceptionally vivid accounts of the horrors and destruction from the fire-bombing and the atom bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Most noteworthy are the many background stories. Among them are tales about the effectiveness of the American submarine fleet, the initial and sometimes ongoing problems with defective torpedoes, and aggressive submariner heroes like Dudley W. "Mush" Morton, Richard H. O'Kane and Slade Cutter. Then there were the men who flew high above the fray, employing their new, gargantuan weapon, the B-29s, flying out of tiny Pacific island bases. It was General LeMay who decided that instead of using his huge aircraft to bomb in the standard high-altitude way, they could come in fast and low and drop incendiary explosives to obliterate largely wooden Japanese cities like Tokyo. After the war, LeMay stated that if the Allies had lost the war, he likely would have been tried as a war criminal. The detailed story of the preparation of the B-29 atom bomb missions and their results was particularly engrossing. And then there are cameo appearances by young draftees, several of whom who went on to make their mark in literature and medicine, such as James Michener and Dr. Lewis Thomas. Perhaps the most chilling and simultaneously fascinating concept was the rise of kamikazes. Famously known as suicidal aircraft pilots, kamikaze forces were also

found in miniature submarines, swift boats and as swimmers carrying a variety of explosives devices. The aircraft were the first guided one-way missiles, a devastating weapon used to fight and inflict maximum damage, but these suicide weapons required a psychological reset of the normal human survival instinct. Perhaps not unexpectedly, such tactics evolved in a warrior and civilian society and wore thin in the final days of the war.

Other fascinating side-stories involved the use and subjugation of the media during war time, devastating typhoons that preyed upon Halsey's Pacific fleet, and the varied terrain that posed challenges for various island landings as well as the subsequent building of vital airfields. Also, there was the central part that logistics played in a vast and diverse Pacific theatre and the massive Russian troop entry into the Pacific War just prior to its ending. After conquest, the author looks back upon the after-effects of an occupation of a defeated, once-proud nation and upon those who fought on both sides.

Finally, *Twilight of the Gods*, the final panel of a literary triptych, is a tour de force of writing that puts the close of the Second World War in the Pacific into a mesmerizing perspective narrated by a master maritime historian. This fairly long but extremely rewarding book should not be missed.

Louis Arthur Norton  
West Simsbury, Connecticut

Brian E. Walter. *The Longest Campaign: Britain's Maritime Struggle in the Atlantic and Northwest Europe, 1939-1945*. Oxford, UK: Casemate Publishing, www.casematepublishing.co.uk, 2020. xix+332 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, indices. UK £25.00, US \$34.95, cloth;

ISBN 978-1-61200-856-1. (E-book available.)

In *The Longest Campaign*, retired U.S. Army officer Brian E. Walter leverages an impressive amount of statistical research into a broad perspective on Britain's Second World War maritime confrontation with Germany. The author argues that this approach reveals the supreme importance of the European naval conflict to the Allied victory in the wider war. Simultaneously, it also asserts that the Royal Navy continued to serve as the bedrock of British power throughout this conflict.

Walter's quest for a broader perspective on the European naval war is anchored solidly in what he identifies as the three main tenets of Britain's maritime strategy: the securing of seaborne communications, the containment and destruction of all German shipping (blockade), and the transport and supply of the British Army. While these are simple ideas at a glance, their pursuit requires the author to trace *all* aspects of the Royal Navy's activities between 1939 and 1945. Thus, while games of cat-and-mouse with marauding German capital ships and U-Boat wolf packs take centre stage in this narrative, as one might expect, they are a far cry from the dominant actors we typically see in scholarship of this nature. Naval mining operations, amphibious raids, and coastal shipping campaigns each parade across *The Longest Campaign's* pages with robust supporting performances that combine to form a much more complete and satisfying snapshot of *everything* taking place off the north-west coast of Europe during this six-year period.

While a thorough exploration of Allied and Axis naval activities in the Atlantic and off European shores has been adequate for most studies of this

theatre, Walter's assertion of the primacy of this particular contest requires something more. This he delivers by augmenting his story with the concurrent activities Britain's Royal Air Force and Army. For example, the dire state of the British Army following its successful yet ruinous evacuation from Dunkirk in mid-1940—a significant naval action in and of itself—dramatically escalated invasion fears on the part of the British government. While this fear was somewhat unfounded, owing to the poor state of German preparedness for such an endeavour throughout most of that year, Walter is able to systematically show that RN naval losses off Norway combined with the fog of war to radically alter British strategic planning. The result was a string of British naval decisions and operations that are often explored only in isolation: the diversion of badly-needed convoy escort vessels to invasion defense, the attack on the French fleet at Mers el Kébir, and concentrated attacks on coastal shipping along the French channel coast. While often criticized for other reasons, these activities ultimately left the attainment of air supremacy as Germany's only option for a possible invasion of Britain. Although many of these logical deductions aren't necessarily new, together they prove critical to the reader's ability to see the naval story as one part of an integrated whole.

What truly sets Brian Walter's work apart from the numerous other volumes on the European maritime theatre of the Second World War is his exhaustive exploration of British archival records in the pursuit of his goal. This is clearly evident with every campaign and individual action he explores; participating vessels, aircraft, and other equipment are thoroughly described, losses meticulously tabulated, and outcomes extensively explored from the political

down to the tactical level. Occasionally overbaked (paragraphs containing long lists of individual U-Boats lost in specific months may have fit better as a footnote, for example), Walter's style generally flows well and his narrative is both engrossing and easy to follow. Ultimately, the author's work culminates with a statistical analysis of the ledger compiled from all the actions throughout the book. Titled "The Reckoning," the book's final chapter lays bare the grand scale of the resources committed to its titular struggle, revealing German naval losses comparable to those suffered by all powers participating in the Pacific War and the Mediterranean *combined*. In this titanic collision, Walter estimates that the Royal Navy achieved an impressive combat tonnage exchange rate of 4.8 to 1 in its favour.

Much of the information contained within *The Longest Campaign* is not explicitly new or newly discovered. What is unique about Walter's approach is his perspective and the analysis that it makes possible. The author has clearly done his homework; the result is a narrative that is both thorough and convincing. While some may contest the overall argument for how fundamentally critical this campaign was, such an attempt would require a similar degree of statistical analysis at a minimum. Overall, *The Longest Campaign* is an impressive piece of work that is recommended to the scholar and maritime history enthusiast alike.

Tyler A. Pitrof  
Baltimore, Maryland