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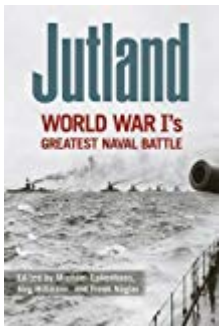

Frank Nägler, Jörg Hillmann, Michael Epkenhans, eds.. *Jutland: World War I's Greatest Naval Battle.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015. 412 pp. $50.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8131-6605-6.

Reviewed by Douglas Peifer

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

In recognition of the ninetieth anniversary of the Battle of Jutland, the German Military History Research Office in Potsdam (since renamed the Center for Military History and the Social Sciences) organized a conference in 2006 examining the largest naval battle of World War I, known in Britain as the Battle of Jutland and in Germany as the *Skagerrakschlacht.* The battle pitted Germany's High Seas Fleet, aggregating 100 warships of various sizes and 45,000 sailors, against Britain's larger Grand Fleet, composed of 151 warships and 60,000 men. Powerful, heavily armored, all-big-gun dreadnought battleships (Britain 28, Germany 16) and more lightly armored, faster, all-big-gun battle cruisers (Britain 9, Germany 5) constituted the mainstay of both fleets, with these monsters capable of hurling 15-inch shells to a range of 20,000 yards. The conference brought together a host of leading German and British naval historians, with Werner Rahn, Michael Salewski, Michael Epkenhans, Nicholas Rodger, Andrew Lambert, and Eric Grove participating alongside the next generation of naval historians. Epkenhans, Hillmann, and Nägler gathered together the best papers, publishing them as an edited work entitled *Skagerrakschlacht: Vorgeschichte--Ereignis--Verarbeitung* (2009). Anticipating that the centennial of the battle will draw attention once more to the momentous clash, the editors have worked with the University Press of Kentucky to make this fine collection available in an English translation.

As is the case with most edited, multi-author volumes, this collection contains a mixed offering of overviews, macro-analyses, and more detailed, specific studies of various aspects of the battle. Nicholas Rodger's overview of Anglo-German naval rivalries in the half century preceding the First World War immediately captures the reader's attention. Rodger makes clear that as late as 1902, Britain's attention was focused on the threat posed by Russia, with Germany "well down" its list of potential enemies. The Fisher revolution, far from focusing on Germany and the threat posed by the Tirpitz Plan, initially concentrated on countering the technical challenges posed by

new concepts and technologies associated with the ***jeune école***, such as cruiser warfare, attacks by torpedo boats, and mine warfare. The Admiralty only gradually began to focus on Germany, with Britain's development of the ***Dreadnought***, of turbine engines, and of new 15-inch guns posing major difficulties to the Tirpitz Plan but doing so as "unforeseen consequences of a scheme which had never been directed at Germany at all" (p. 15). Rodger's essay sets the stage for the subsequent contributions, familiarizing readers with the interaction between rapid technological change and a strategic picture in flux.

Frank Nägler focuses more tightly on German operational and strategic plans prior to World War I. Nägler, co-editor of a recent documentary collection entitled ***The Naval Race to the Abyss: Anglo-German Naval Race*** (2015), certainly knows his material. His essay provides a detailed explanation for the strategic and operational rationale behind the German building program. Nägler discusses Tirpitz's concept of exerting diplomatic leverage on Britain via the construction of a ***Risikoflotte*** (Risk Fleet) that might not be able to defeat Britain's Grand Fleet but might cause enough damage to put Britain's overall command of the sea in peril. Nägler then delves into German operational concepts, noting how the fleet that Germany was constructing was designed for combat within one hundred nautical miles of Heligoland, with the hope that German submarines, mines, and torpedo craft would whittle down the British fleet prior to the decisive clash. While Nägler's detailed discussions of the operational plans of the German Imperial Admiralty Staff prior to the First World War will appeal to the naval specialist, one wishes that Nägler had put more emphasis on the fundamental disconnect between German strategic goals, force development, and operational plans. Nägler's assertion that World War I should not serve as an argument against Tirpitz' concept of a Risk Fleet seems puzzling to say the least. As for his detailed analysis of the operational concepts of German commanders on the eve of the war, one would have hoped for a stronger critique of plans fundamentally at odds with the realities of geography, British naval predominance, and mounting evidence that the British were contemplating enforcing a distant blockade rather than playing into Germany's hand by challenging the High Seas Fleet off the coast of Germany.

Michael Epkenhans captures the disconnect between German naval objectives, means, and operations in his superb essay on the German Imperial Navy during the period 1914-15. As Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl, commander of Germany's High Seas Fleet at the start of the war admitted in 1920, "The entire prewar training of the fleet up to then--our tactics, our maneuvers, and of course our shipbuilding policy all the way down to the details of ship construction--was based on the idea of a decisive battle within or directly near the German Bight.... [This was] a strategic error" (p. 121). Epkenhans unpacks the essential dilemma facing the German navy over the course of 1914 and 1915 as it became apparent that Britain had no intention of jeopardizing its strategic command of the Atlantic, the upper North Sea, and world commerce by engaging the German High Seas Fleet in the Bight. Thoughtful, incisive, and informed, Epkenhans's contribution ties a discussion of German operations to the strategic situation, noting the contradiction between guidance that precluded recklessness and the desire to come to grips with the British navy under favorable circumstances. As for the command structure of the German Imperial Navy, Epkenhans notes that it mirrored that of the empire itself in its chaotic, polycratic organization.

The essays by James Goldrick and Andrew Lambert focus on the Royal Navy before and during the first years of World War I. Goldrick's essay explores the mechanics of shifting from a peacetime posture to a war footing. Important but often overlooked issues, such as equipment maintenance, manning shortcomings, watch rotations,

crew exhaustion, and leave policies are explored, providing a deckplate perspective of the challenges that officers and crew faced with the onset of war. Lambert shifts the focus back to the operational and strategic level. He examines the strategic concepts of Admiral John ("Jacky") Fisher, First Sea Lord, in particular Fisher's visions of projecting British seapower into the Baltic. Lambert maintains that Fisher's concept was not as rash or ill-conceived as often portrayed, but reflected a careful consideration of how to accelerate the gradual effects of Britain's distant blockade. Fisher had no intention of pushing the Grand Fleet into the Baltic, but instead was constructing suitable vessels for operations in the Baltic once the Grand Fleet had established its dominance over the High Seas Fleet. The Dardanelles operation and Churchill's amateurism delayed and sidetracked the concept, with Lambert suggests that Fisher's Baltic venture was feasible. Given that German torpedo craft, submarines, aircraft and light forces would have contested the Baltic, one wonders whether this contention stands up to scrutiny.

The centerpiece to this edited collection is undoubtedly Werner Rahn's contribution, "The Battle of Jutland from the German Perspective." Coming in at 140 pages, or roughly four times the length of most of the other essays, Rahn's piece provides a precise, stage by stage description of the battle itself. Drawing upon German sources as well as British, Rahn's essay is masterful as he takes the reader through the various stages of the battle, from the first contact between German torpedo boats and British cruisers sent to inspect a Danish freighter to the battle between Vice Admiral David Beatty and Admiral Franz von Hipper's battle cruisers to the race to the north as Beatty attempted to draw the German High Seas Fleet into contact with Sir John Jellicoe's Grand Fleet. The narrative then describes the situation as seen from both sides, explaining how and why Jellicoe failed to destroy his adversary as tactical decisions and the onset of darkness allowed the Germans to escape. Rahn's careful analysis of the battle--supported by ten maps illustrating the position of the fleets and important units at various stages of the battle and two tables summarizing the size, composition, and respective losses of both sides--allows the reader to make sense of a battle marked by confusion, poor communications, and the fog and friction of naval battle before the advent of radar. In addition, Rahn appends nine primary documents to his analysis, ranging from operational orders to eyewitness accounts to post-action reports on tactical lessons learned. Rahn's essay by itself makes this volume an essential reference work for anyone interested in the battle.

Following Rahn's essay on the Battle of Jutland from a German perspective is John Brooks's "Jutland: British Viewpoints." The editors chose to retitle Brooks's piece that had appeared in the German edition under the more accurate title, "Beatty and the Leadership of the Battle Cruiser Formation. Focusing on Beatty's handling of the battle cruisers, Brooks dives into the respective merits of the Dreyer Fire Control tables over the Argo Clock Mark IV as he takes on arguments by Arthur Marder, Stephen Roskill, and Jon Sumida that Beatty should be absolved of blame when it comes to poor British gunnery. Brooks squarely lays the blame on Beatty, concluding that Beatty was "too ready to criticize his commander in chief … [and] should himself bear a greater share of personal responsibility not only for the losses during the Run to the South, but also for the inconclusive outcome of the meeting between the battle fleets" (p. 292). Brooks asserts that Beatty's dispatches during the battle did not represent the situation as he knew it to be, and that after the war, Beatty went so far as to falsify a signature on a chart depicting track movements as he wanted them to be remembered.

General readers may feel out of their depth as Brooks ploughs through the respective merits of British gunnery control systems and tables, but

they will find Eric Grove's discussion of the memory of the Battle of Jutland in Britain accessible and informative. Grove describes how almost immediately after the battle, Beatty began to criticize Jellicoe's decisions during the battle, suggesting that Jellicoe had been too cautious and had victory slip through his hands. Appointed commander of the Grand Fleet at the end of 1916 and then First Sea Lord in 1919, Beatty sought to paint his actions in the best light while questioning those of his commander. Grove describes how Beatty suppressed an early historical study of the battle (the "Harper Record") and while not going as far as Brooks in claiming outright manipulation of the records, asserts that Beatty sought to make the publicly released records of the battle "utterly incomprehensible to the general public" (p. 299). Those interested in how individuals and institutions seek to shape the interpretation of the past will find Grove's account fascinating.

Jörg Hillmann and Jan Kindler likewise focus on the issue of remembrance and representation, focusing on the construction of the memory of the *Skagerrakschlacht* in Germany during and after the war. Hillmann's essay examines how the Imperial Navy sought to convince the German public that the battle had been a tremendous victory, focusing on the losses the Royal Navy had sustained rather than its continued dominance. Following Germany's defeat, the Reichsmarine was keen to avoid public discussions regarding Tirpitz's fleet building program and the utility of strong surface navy. It sought to latch on to the traditions of the Imperial Navy, and attempted to make May 31 ("*Skagerraktag*") into a national day of remembrance. As in Britain, the German navy leadership was keenly interested how the past was interpreted. Those who openly criticized Alfred von Tirpitz were silenced, Reinhard Scheer and Hipper were transformed into naval leaders of the first rank, and the public's attention was directed to the tactical prowess of the German navy at the Battle of Jutland rather than the battle's strategic outcome. Jan Kindler comes to a similar conclusion in his examination of how the battle was portrayed in film. Those interested in "strategic messaging," the relationship between militaries and film studios, and public memory will find Kindler's work most interesting. Given that the battle itself was not filmed or recorded, German studios had to recreate the battle on screen as best they could. Kindler examines the first efforts to do so during the war, the ambitious 1921 film ***Die Skagerrakschlach***t, and various films produced during the Third Reich on the topic of the German surface navy in the First World War.

The final contribution to the volume is an essay by one of the doyens of German naval history, Michael Salewski, on the topic "Ninety Years after Jutland." Salewski essay falls somewhat short, embarking on thought games and making connections that seem strained. His repeated references to the senselessness of the battle seem at odds with the careful explanations by Nägler, Lambert, and Rahn that explore what each side intended, while his references to Salamis, Lepanto, the Armada, and Trafalgar seem odd given the very real significance of these naval battles. Salewski's essay most probably made for a fine conference paper, stimulating discussion and debate among the participants. But as the bookend for an edited volume, Salewski's piece should have been updated or replaced when the English-language version was published in 2015.

As a whole, this edited volume on the Battle of Jutland will be welcome by those interested in naval history and the First World War. The work includes contributions by top German and British naval historians, ranging from senior scholars who have literally written much that we know about the Royal Navy and the German Imperial Navy, to a cadre of rising academics who will shape future interpretations of the past. The book includes a superb analysis of the battle itself, but does much more, exploring the context and prehistory of the battle, the struggle to establish its

narrative, and the interaction between strategy, tactics, politics, and technology.

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