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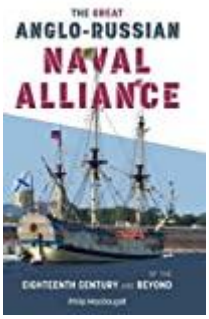
**Philip MacDougall.** *The Great Anglo-Russian Naval Alliance of the Eighteenth Century and Beyond.* Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2022. xv + 215 pp. $115.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78327-668-4.

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Great Britain is often credited with a central role in the building of Russia's early modern imperial navy, with many historians arguing that without Great Britain Russia would never have had the necessary technology and skills. Philip MacDougall, a British naval historian best known for his work on overseas facilities of major naval powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, seeks to challenge this narrative of a one-sided relationship between Britain and Russia. He does so by explaining how Russia provided Britain with vital naval stores that "represented the life-blood upon which Britain's ascendancy into world domination was founded" (p. xii). MacDougall argues that without naval stores from Russia, including fir, flax, tar, hemp, and bar iron, Britain would have had a significantly diminished maritime presence on the global seas. Thus, MacDougall traces what he terms the "Great Anglo-Russian Naval Alliance," beginning with the reign of Peter the Great (r. 1682-1725) and continuing until the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853 (p. xiii).

Though MacDougall makes clear that the term "alliance" is one that some historians may question because of brief moments of open hostility between Russia and Great Britain, he still convincingly establishes that the exchange of knowledge and trade in naval stores between the two empires remained intact even through tumultuous times. MacDougall contends that the partnership between Russia and Great Britain not only secured for Great Britain near unlimited supplies of raw materials but also helped Russia gain considerable income, access to Britain's advanced naval technology, skilled personnel, and the use of British naval facilities. This alliance was mutually beneficial and helped to change the geopolitics of the eighteenth century. The alliance came to an end only when Britain began to fear Russia's growing navy and became "concerned that through trade, the sharing of military technology and the nurturing of the Russian navy, a giant had been created" (p. xiv). It was these fears that brought an end to the Anglo-Russian partnership, helped by Britain's ability to find new suppliers for its naval stores.

Still, as MacDougall compellingly argues, the alliance between Britain and Russia was more mutually beneficial than historians might have once acknowledged, with Russia enhancing the rising strength of Britain's navy just as much as Britain helped Russia in return. His book is organized chronologically, moving through the different rulers in both Russia and Britain and their relationships with one another. Although a more substantial historiography would have helped to situate this book into the overarching narrative of Anglo-Russian relations, each chapter contains a brief synopsis of the major themes that the chapter highlights, which allows the reader to easily follow MacDougall's arguments. Each chapter also contains extensive data that details just how much Britain relied on Russian naval stores, even during periods of contention.

Chapters 1 through 4 detail the growth of the Russian navy under Tsar Peter I, especially as he established a friendship with England's William III. MacDougall begins with the story of how Peter originally traveled to England under the guise of Peter Mikhailov, where he learned more about shipbuilding and eventually befriended King William III. MacDougall explains that "for William III and his advisors, there seemed little danger in offering Russia this technical support" (p. 9). William also believed that Russia could provide vital help in Britain's own Nine Years' War. Thus, Peter not only became the first Russian sovereign to sail on salt water but also came home with a total of seven hundred officers, engineers, and artisans, as well as a yacht and ten other ships. Throughout these chapters, MacDougall explains the advantageous relationship between the two countries, even as England began to fear the growing power of Russia's navy. MacDougall uses such sources as Daniel Defoe's ***The Consolidator*** (1705) to show the shifts in popular opinion concerning the strength of Russia. As Defoe warned, helping the Russians might backfire and turn the great northern ally into an even greater rival. Even with tensions rising between England and Russia, however, trade did not falter, explains MacDougall, relying on empirical data of the rate and amount of trade between the two countries. Although, as MacDougall underlines, an official defensive alliance did not exist on paper, in actual deeds it did. Britain, therefore, not only helped to create the Russian navy but also continued to sustain its existence. In return, Britain's own navy was able to flourish.

Chapters 5 and 6 detail the navy under the empresses Catherine I, Anna Ioannovna, Elizabeth Petrovna, and Catherine II (Catherine the Great). Under these empresses, MacDougall shows, the Russian navy waxed and waned and tensions between Russia and England grew. Especially under Catherine the Great, there was "concern by the British government at the increasing influence and power of Russia" and this "does appear to have resulted in a tightening of controls over the departure to Russia of those artisans skilled in the manufacture of ordnance" (p. 113). MacDougall notes that, despite attempts to acquire naval stores from elsewhere, England was still heavily reliant on Russia for raw materials. In turn, England's supply of logistical support and technical aid helped Russia's own ability to manufacture better ships and weapons.

Chapters 7 through 10 explain the role of naval stores during various conflicts, most notably the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. MacDougall argues that regardless whether the Russian Empire was formally allied with Great Britain or taking an aggressive neutral stance, trade remained relatively uninterrupted. Indeed, MacDougall, perhaps ambitiously, posits that "the continuing link between the British and Russian economies, held fast by the naval stores trade that underpinned Britain's military-industrial complex, was the single most important factor in Napoleon's invasion of Russia and his ultimate defeat in 1814" (p. 165). MacDougall then outlines the decline of the alliance between Russia and Britain, stating that although "much could have been done to re-

pair that declining trade relationship during the immediate post-war period ... levels of distrust, on both sides, were standing in the way of such moves" (p. 189). Thus, because of rising senses of rivalry, the "alliance" between Great Britain and Russia, which helped to build both nations, dissolved.

MacDougall's use of primary sources and empirical data helps to support his claim that naval stores were of paramount importance to the growing British Empire and that Russia, in turn, gained from its alliance (whether officially or unofficially) with Britain. Scholars interested in military, political, or imperial histories will find that this book provides a strong challenge to current interpretations of the early modern alliance between Russia and Britain. MacDougall's work helps to invite new ways of thinking about alliances beyond formal political arrangements.