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Peter Padfield *Maritime Dominion and the Triumph of the Free World; Naval Campaigns that Shaped the Modern World, 1852 – 2001* John Murray £30.

This is the final volume of a trilogy. As a whole they are ambitious and vastly enjoyable, detailed and yet wide-ranging. All three of the volumes are based on the same thesis: that maritime domination is the key determinant of great power status, and that those powers that have exercised it have provided for their citizens a greater level of personal freedom and prosperity, particularly through the adoption of democracy, in contrast to the continental powers who have moved towards great power status through the adoption of totalitarianism, whether, in the twentieth century, communist or fascist. The first volume described the rise of the Dutch in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and their defeat by the British in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Volume two described and analysed the defeat by the British of their continental rival, France, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and Britain's emergence in the 19<sup>th</sup> as the only world power. This final volume takes the story on to its logical conclusion with the defeat of the German challenge of the twentieth century and the passing of the baton on to the USA.

In its set piece descriptions of a number of key battles Padfield is at his best. Certainly the description of the battle of Midway is outstanding as is his description of Jutland. His analysis of the defeat of the Japanese carrier fleet at Midway is among the most enthralling accounts I have ever read. The dilemmas of the admirals on both sides are exactly stated and the influence of chance is shown to be decisive. While one may disagree with the occasional detail or emphasis, these set pieces are excellent. I might quibble over the emphasis on the capture of U110, important though that was in the winning of the Battle of the Atlantic, in favour of other factors.

However, there are other factors that sadly work against the success of this book. Firstly, there is a fundamental flaw in its structure: it effectively finishes in 1945. The Allied victory in 1945 is reached on page 296 and the book finishes on page 318. The final chapter entitled "The Cold War and After" is a very curious mixture, part a Green eco-manifesto, along with an anti-EEC diatribe. There is a place for these, and it is not here. Rather an analysis of the naval aspects of the Cold War, including the Korean War, would have been fascinating, and an analysis of the US Navy's view of its functions, along with an account of the Falklands War, which amazingly does not even feature. Secondly, Padfield admits that he does not understand Japan, which does not fit into his basic thesis: maritime trading nations and their links with democracy and empires. This is explained by Padfield by demonising Emperor Hirohito as a warlord in the same manner as the Kaiser of the Second Reich. His main source for this is Bergamini's 1971 volume Japan's *Imperial Conspiracy*, which most historians now take with a considerable pinch of salt. Thirdly his analysis of the Grand Fleet's gunnery at Jutland, and the whole issue of gunnery in the period, relies overmuch on the work of Sumida. He rejects what most modern historians now accept as the more definitive work by Brooks. While this is still a matter of controversy, few now accept Sumida's theories wholly, and most tend to accept Brooks' view, which Padfield specifically rejects as "badly organised".

One may argue with Padfield over when it is considered the "baton changed" from the Royal Navy to the US Navy. He claims that it is only in 1945 with final victory over the Japanese. Personally I would claim an earlier date, maybe the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* in December 1941, or 1942 when it became painfully obvious to the Admiralty that



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they could no longer fight a three enemy war, and effectively ordered Somerville commanding the Eastern Fleet not to fight the Japanese, but to remain a fleet in being. But this is simply a matter of personal interpretation.

I take no pleasure in saying that this is a deeply flawed book. There are parts of it that are brilliant, the descriptions of set pieces in particular. Nor do I fundamentally disagree with the overall thesis of the trilogy: the advantages of the maritime power over the continental power and their links respectively to democratic and totalitarian regimes. However, the flaws in this final volume make this a disappointing book, particularly when it could have been so good.

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