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Phillip G. Pattee, *At War in Distant Waters: British Colonial Defense in the Great War*. Annapolis: Naval Inst. Press, 2013. Pp. xi, 273. ISBN 978-1-61251-194-8.

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Historians of World War I commonly consider Britain's overseas expeditions against German colonies a sideshow, designed either to enlarge the British Empire or to gain bargaining chips in later negotiations and irrelevant to the larger war of attrition being fought on the Western Front. In *At War in Distant Waters*, retired US Navy submarine officer Phillip Pattee (US Army Command and General Staff College) makes a compelling case that these combined military and naval operations were in fact a vital part of a larger mission to protect British trade from German commerce raiders. Britain's longtime dependence on overseas trade made this mission essential to the protection of the home islands from invasion: without its world-wide trade connections, Britain might well have lost the war of attrition to Germany.

Pattee analyzes Britain's motives and actions through the process used by modern military strategists, examining its strategic situation, its definition of goals, and its planning and execution of policies to achieve those goals. The resulting study goes beyond naval operations to consider the foundations of British naval power and its relation to foreign policy-making in London.

The author first presents evidence of Britain's reliance on the free flow of global commerce for its physical and economic well-being. Such trade provided not only inexpensive food and raw materials but also profits for the service sector, from finance to shipping to insurance—a key to Britain's overall prosperity and balance of payments in the period.<sup>1</sup> The Royal Navy's extensive system of bases astride crucial shipping lanes throughout the British Empire secured this global trade. But under Kaiser Wilhelm II, Germany's new *Weltpolitik* strategy in the late nineteenth century, with its emphasis on gaining colonies and building a navy, threatened British interests. The new German High Seas Fleet might bombard or assist an invasion of the home islands. Additional colonies would provide bases to support fast German merchant ships, which could be converted to armed commerce raiders. All of this would enable Germany to disrupt British shipping and communications in time of war. Pattee notes that the worries voiced by British ministers planning for a possible war show that Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, the author of Germany's naval building program, was essentially correct in his "risk theory." Tirpitz had estimated that the High Seas Fleet would force Britain to divide its naval forces between protecting the British Isles and safeguarding overseas trade, leaving one or the other vulnerable to devastating attacks.

Having assessed their situation, British planners altered their foreign policy and military posture in the years before 1914 to deal with Germany, which they now considered their primary enemy. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and diplomatic agreements with France, Russia, and the United States alleviated potential conflicts. The Admiralty created a new intelligence system to track and avoid threats to merchant ships. The Cabinet planned for a national guarantee insurance system to encourage private shipping in wartime. Without such a guarantee, merchant ships might not risk sailing, thereby depriving Britain of badly needed goods and supplies.

Pattee explains that when Britain declared war in August 1914, the Royal Navy was indeed stretched thin, barely able to manage its three major tasks: maintaining a superior fleet in home waters, blockading Germany, and coping with attacks on British shipping by German commerce raiders. By November 1914, it was painfully clear that new measures were needed and British policy-makers wisely looked abroad: "London expanded the war into the German colonies to sap commerce raiders' logistic support and aid the navy in protecting the vital arteries that brought in Britain's food and raw materials" (127). Far from coveting

1. See, e.g., P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism 1688-2000*, 2nd ed. (NY: Longman, 2002).

German territory, the British government simply wanted to prevent its enemy from waging a naval war against commerce by seizing German ports and coaling facilities, wireless stations, and submarine telegraph cables. The overseas expeditions to take German colonies—coordinated by the Admiralty—were intended to secure command of the seas, not more colonies.

British expeditions put German logistics and communications bases in the colonies out of business. Again, Pattee, thinking broadly about how Britain achieved its strategic objectives, establishes that diplomacy and an astute use of allies were as instrumental as the superiority of the Royal Navy itself. French forces assisted in the taking of Cameroon, Japanese forces took Tsingtao, and Dominion forces participated in operations in the Pacific and Southwest Africa. Diplomacy remained indispensable even after the taking of Germany's colonial hubs, because its navy could still use ports in neutral countries, including the United States, which Britain could not attack. British diplomatic pressure on neutrals effectively ended Germany's war against Britain's global trade. As Pattee notes, combined military and naval actions, allied operations, and diplomacy all figured in Britain's comprehensive strategy to protect its trade at the lowest possible cost.

Offensive expeditions outside of Europe were thus central to Britain's war effort, helping to sustain its war of attrition against Germany. Stymied in its efforts at commerce raiding and facing its own severe shortages caused by the British blockade, the German government decided it must resort to unrestricted submarine warfare to force its enemy to seek peace. But this ultimately aided Britain, since German submarine tactics brought the United States and its decisively abundant resources into the war.

Tapping a variety of archival and published primary sources, Pattee details a carefully conceived, frugally executed, highly effective British wartime strategy to protect its commercial lifelines. He rightly lays a new and deserved stress on the missions against German colonies as central to British thinking about what the nation needed to survive—and win—a protracted war. His analysis of evidence regarding this strategy also allows him to take stances on some long-standing controversies about British policies and practices in World War I. As to why the British government chose to join the war against Germany, rather than remaining neutral, Pattee argues that it fought to preserve the traditional balance of European power: "The same policy had guided British actions for more than a century, and once again did so in 1914 when Germany threatened Belgium and France" (104). Pattee contends that ordering the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet to engage the German High Seas Fleet in a push to win the naval war would have posed too much risk for too little reward. Both Berlin and London, he writes, considered an attack on shipping lanes to be Germany's best chance to strike a "lethal blow" against Britain (129). British policy-makers therefore wisely avoided battle in the North Sea and concentrated on crushing the German threat to shipping worldwide.

Pattee tells a thorough and clearly organized story of foreign policy and a thoughtful strategy to protect British trade during World War I. He argues convincingly that the naval missions to German colonies were decisive in the preservation of a trade network critical to Britain's survival. He does a valuable service by clarifying how naval intelligence and operations, the use of Dominion and allied forces, government insurance guarantees for shipping, and persuasive diplomacy with neutral countries together achieved Britain's goals and protected its interests. Sharp strategic judgments at home won the "War in Distant Waters."