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## The British Carrier Strike Fleet after 1945

Angus Ross

David Hobbs

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brought increased interaction with American warships, naval auxiliaries, and military aircraft, reminiscent of the Cold War. The United States and China signed the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA) in 1998, modeled after INCSEA. Winkler notes, however, that the MMCA lacks the level of trust established between the Soviet and American navies, and therefore has been less effective.

The high seas and contested littorals were the front line of U.S.-Soviet interaction during the Cold War. Winkler's book provides an intimate look at the development and execution of a landmark agreement between adversaries that provided a key mechanism for ensuring that their interaction at sea remained professional and kept the Cold War from becoming hot.

JAMES P. MCGRATH III



*The British Carrier Strike Fleet after 1945*, by David Hobbs. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015. 480 pages. \$59.95.

This work is the latest in a series of books from this author about Royal Navy aircraft carriers, and British carrier aviation in particular. It takes the story forward from where his last work on the British Pacific Fleet left us—in the misty waters of Tokyo Bay in September 1945. Hobbs shows how the ethos of naval strike warfare that had been developed and honed in the rigors of World War II survived the many and varied challenges that the postwar era threw at it. Most obviously, perhaps, it is a study of naval retrenchment under that most demanding of scenarios: demobilization after a world war coupled with a broader and ongoing

retreat from global preeminence. It is no surprise, then, that budgetary issues take center stage, but Hobbs manages to make his account much more than a mere litany of what might have been. He charts moments of gritty determination and ingenuity mixed with some unforgivable and almost criminal areas of waste and abuse—features that are certainly familiar to anyone involved in military planning. Above all, though, an unswerving belief from within the service about the value of its aviation has allowed the capability to be resurrected almost from the dead in recent years, in the form of two large carriers with real strike capability. This fact alone makes this book a compelling read.

It is difficult to imagine a more qualified individual than Hobbs to guide us through this story. After a thirty-year naval career as an aviator that spanned the last years of the “big deck” carriers, the “through-deck” cruiser era, and right up to the “renaissance” after the Falklands War, Hobbs capped this off with a period working in naval records and as the curator of the Fleet Air Arm Museum. This gave him almost unparalleled access to the necessary archival material, a resource he has used to great effect in this volume. The book is nothing short of exacting in its research.

That said, and although he tries valiantly to hide it, Hobbs clearly has a message he is anxious to communicate. It is, as he freely admits, “in part my own story” (p. vii). His thesis, which he openly reveals in the last few pages, is that Britain would have been better served had it continued to replace its strike carriers from the 1960s onward. While an understandable and legitimate viewpoint, it is just that—a viewpoint—and many will bemoan this lack of objectivity, particularly as the broader constraints

acting on the British government during this period are given scant attention. Equally, the work would have benefited from a deeper dive into the effectiveness of the military advice to the politicians, something that the loss of the service ministries in 1964 did little to improve.

Although broadly chronological, the book is perhaps best examined in terms of its three main themes: the carrier operations themselves, the ongoing innovations to overcome operating constraints, and the political considerations surrounding carrier acquisition. As explained above, the author is perhaps least successful with the last of these, where his experiences at the front line have tended to cloud his objectivity. Where, for example, is a balanced assessment of any opposing political constraints? Luckily, though, Hobbs is at his best with the other two, which makes the work valuable in its own right and tends to carry it through any shortcomings elsewhere. The day-to-day coverage of the main carrier operations is detailed but easy to follow and clearly fulfills the need to demonstrate the ongoing relevance of this capability to a maritime nation with global interests, such as Great Britain. Likewise, the coverage of the British innovations that have made carrier airpower the formidable asset it is today is comprehensive. The angled deck, the mirror landing aid, the steam catapult, the development of helicopter carriers, and the ski jump—all are given the prominence they deserve, along with some other ideas that were less successful.

In the end, the ongoing relevance of a discussion over the viability of carriers, particularly given the expense of the new *Ford* class and their perceived vulnerability to a new generation of antiship weapons, is sure to encourage a wide

interest in this book, particularly from within the U.S. Navy. This is a good thing, since many of the constraints that Great Britain had to face are essentially cyclical in nature and tend to recur in similar forms over time. In particular, though, I commend this book to the acquisition community, if only to gain an appreciation for how out of step with each other politicians and operators can become.

ANGUS ROSS



*The Law of War: A Detailed Assessment of the US Department of Defense Law of War Manual*, by William H. Boothby and Wolff Heintschel von Heinegg. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2018. 479 pages. \$150.

Perhaps no recent document published by the Department of Defense (DoD) has been more studied, reviewed, and criticized than its *Law of War Manual*. Initially released in June 2015, it already has received multiple updates. These updates occur partly because of the flurry of well-considered criticism from both academics and practitioners. However, no effort at reviewing the manual has been more exhaustive than this recently published book by two of Europe's most eminent international law scholars.

*The Law of War* represents a remarkable effort and should occupy a spot on the bookshelf of anyone seriously studying international law as it applies to military operations. However, readers also should be careful to understand what it is. It is not a traditional treatise on the law of war; rather, it is a deliberate—paragraph-by-paragraph—review of DoD's *Law of War Manual* and must be read alongside that document. Those readers lacking an existing