

The Naval Route to the Abyss: The Anglo-German Naval Race 1895-1914 (Navy Records Society Publications)

By Matthew S. Seligmann, Frank Nägler

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The intense rivalry in battleship building that took place between Britain and Germany in the run up to the First World War is seen by many as the most totemic of all armaments races. Blamed by numerous commentators during the inter-war years as a major cause of the Great War, it has become emblematic of all that is wrong with international competitions in military strength. Yet, despite this notoriety, 'the Great Naval Race' has not received the attention that this elevated status would merit and it has never been examined from the viewpoint of both of its participants simultaneously and equally. This volume, which contains a comprehensive survey of the existing scholarship on this topic, both English-language and German, as well as important primary source materials from a range of archives in both Britain and Germany, fills this gap. By putting the actions of the British Admiralty side-by-side with those of its German counterparts, it enables the naval race to be viewed comparatively and thereby facilitates an understanding of how the two parties to this conflict interacted. By offering a comprehensive range of German documents in both their original text and in English translation, the book makes the German role in this conflict accessible to an English speaking audience for the first time. As such, it is an essential volume for any serious student of naval policy in the pre-First World War era.

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Editorial Review

Review

'This is a collection of immense value, both to researchers and to teachers. The documents offer rich insight into the making of an arms race over time and from each national perspective. They allow the reader to make sense of national pursuits of maritime force, set them in a comparative perspective, and view them as part of a broader process of a bilateral arms competition. In making a key set of documents covering each participating side easily accessible, the volume provides fresh food for new thought on British and German naval policies and their interaction. In short, The Naval Route into the Abyss is successful in its purpose of directing attention to the existence, complexity, and importance of the arms race and in offering a general narrative and framework of analysis.' Dirk Bonker, Trinity College of Arts and Sciences, Duke University, USA 'The Naval Route to the Abyss truly belongs on the reference shelf of every naval historian as a superb historiographical contribution to the understanding of the Anglo-German naval race. Its interpretative and editorial context and thorough, even elegant, documentary collection provide a valuable tool to historians seeking to study the causes of the Great War.' Military History '...this is a very useful volume that scholars will find invaluable for years to come. Highly recommended.' Christopherrbell.com 'This is a collection of immense value, both to researchers and to teachers. The documents offer rich insight into the making of an arms race over time and from each national perspective. ...this collection of documents offers fascinating insight into the dynamics of a maritime competition that was a key event in the politics of war and empire before World War I, and left its imprint on the direction of national politics and culture on both sides of the North Seas. Anyone seriously interested in the topic will be grateful to the editors for this fine volume.' H-Soz-u-Kult

About the Author

Dr Matthew S. Seligmann is Reader in History in the Department of Politics and History at Brunel University. Frank Nägler and Michael Epkenhans.

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