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The Missing Chapter. Seapower and the Baltic Sea. Review of Admiral James Stavridis, USN (Ret.) (2017) *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of the World's Oceans*. New York: Penguin Press

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Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of the World's Oceans is a book that everyone should read. The author, retired U.S. Navy Admiral James Stavridis, is well known beyond naval and maritime circles. Following a long and distinguished naval career, the pinnacle of which included serving as the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO¹, he was selected as the Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, a position he still holds today.

It is apparent that Stavridis is passionate about the three interrelated disciplines that intersect throughout the work, which are captured in the title, and that have defined his extraordinary expertise as a naval historian, geopolitical strategist and, perhaps most importantly, sailor. The historical background discussed in each chapter leaves you yearning to learn more. The geopolitical implications and recommendations for the future of American seapower² are well reasoned and insightful. By making the narrative personal in relaying his extensive professional experiences and deep involvement in the subject matter as a sailor and a senior operational leader and military diplomat, everything is tied together.

Stavridis deftly deals with the oceans and four seas– the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian and Arctic and the Mediterranean, South China, Caribbean and “Outlaw”, respectively – each with their own chapter. From the outset, the interconnected nature of the one body of salt water that connects the economies of all nations is stressed – “the sea is one” (p. 2).

He starts with the Pacific, the “mother of all oceans”. In this chapter, he highlights the historical and economic reasons why the U.S. Navy has, since the Second World War, had a majority of its forces in the Pacific. This is particularly true if you include the U.S. Navy’s presence in the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the Horn of Africa as connected to the broader Indo-Asia-Pacific region, a term that is now included in U.S. strategic documents.³

From the Eurocentric perspective, the second chapter on the Atlantic and the fourth chapter on the Mediterranean Sea highlight why a “pivot” or “rebalance” to the Pacific is not likely to change the U.S. Navy’s continued involvement in the first ocean and seas it sailed on its homeland’s front lawn. In addition

1 See Stavridis (2014) for an insightful personal account of the book author’s experiences as the first U.S. Navy Admiral Supreme Allied Commander of NATO.

2 Throughout this review, “seapower” is used to refer to maritime forces and capabilities and a nation that possesses seapower. See the later discussion.

3 For example, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (U.S. Department of Defence, U.S. Navy, 2015).

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to NATO commitments, Americans' cultural and economic ties to Europe, like to the Pacific, are not only historic but also current.

Stavridis provides a similar treatment in the remaining chapters, including a well-constructed discussion on the importance of a balanced and proactive approach to the Arctic. The chapter on the "outlaw sea" is perhaps the most intriguing from two broader perspectives that are not really addressed in the book. These perspectives can be summed up with two questions: "What is seapower?" and "What is a navy?"

In Stavridis' reckoning, the outlaw sea is all the parts of the one sea that are not governed for one reason or another. Threats to maritime security proliferate in ungoverned seas: piracy, terrorism, illegal fishing, smuggling of goods and people and environmental damage. The cause could be that there is no responsible government, as the case of piracy off coast of Somalia in the Horn of Africa illustrates (p. 276). An equally likely reason is ineffective or inadequate maritime forces that are not capable of executing the naval or constabulary operations necessary to ensure a country's maritime security. For most nations, this is not something that can be accomplished alone – ensuring maritime security, particularly from state-on-state threats to that security, requires cooperation with neighbours, allies and partners.

Policing the outlaw sea is not strictly a naval mission. In fact, the majority of maritime security threats highlighted in the chapter on the outlaw sea are best accomplished by what naval military professionals would call a "coast guard". The U.S. is currently the world's strongest sea power because of the sum of all of its sea services, uniformed and civilian, including the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Marines, the U.S. Merchant Marine, the Maritime Administration, and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. This needs to be acknowledged in order to find global solutions to the outlaw sea and other challenges identified in the book.

In *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of the World's Oceans*, the eponymous open-form compound word "sea power" is used in two senses: naval strength delivered from the sea and as a descriptive noun for a state that has this naval strength. Both of these definitions, and particularly the former, are often identified instead by the closed-form compound noun "seapower". The use of both of these synonymous words in other naval and maritime scholarship normally refers to much more than just naval strength; it is the sum of all of a nation's maritime capability (Till, 2013). Whether you call it seapower or sea power, the combined effect of all of these capabilities – naval, constabulary, maritime administration, oceanographic research, shipping industries, etc. – is what is needed to bring law and order to the ungoverned outlaw sea.⁴

For smaller states, and in particular really small nations, such as those that rim the Baltic Sea, separating maritime security capability and naval capability when we discuss seapower and navies can hinder their development of the maritime force that they need to be. Such a force (whether you call it navy, coast guard, border guard or a combination of the three) needs to protect their own nation's maritime boundaries and waters and may also need to deploy some of those capabilities to meet cooperative commitments to their allies, partners and neighbours.

What of the Baltic Sea in this book? While the Black Sea only gets a couple of pages in *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of the World's Oceans* as a "tributary sea" of the Mediterranean Sea (pp. 130, 155), the Baltic Sea is not mentioned at all. Both the Baltic Sea and Black Sea are locally critical for the economies and territorial integrity of the countries that border them. They are also key geopolitical boundaries and hotspots between the European Union and NATO on one hand and the revisionist and competitive (as opposed to cooperative) Russia on the other hand.

The lack of significant discussion about the Baltic Sea and minimal discussion about the Black Sea limit most of the geostrategic treatment of Russia to its significant interests in the Arctic (pp. 247, 261). Notwithstanding the occasional NATO naval presence, sea power of both seas could be Russia. This is not an issue so long as the status quo suits Russia's purpose. It did not in 2008 when it used its Black Sea Fleet to conduct naval and amphibious operations against Georgia, destroying its small navy and port facilities

⁴ See *The Anarchic Sea: Maritime Security in the 21st Century* by Sloggett (2013) for a good treatment of the many dimensions of maritime security.

and essentially blockading the nation until the ceasefire was announced. NATO seapower was absent. Generating sufficient seapower to respond to future provocations in defence of NATO allies and partners in both seas will draw the alliance into naval conflict to restore international law if Russia is not deterred from future mischievous military or maritime activities to disrupt these seas. In a previous work, *The Accidental Admiral: A Sailor Takes Command at NATO* (Stavridis, 2014, ch. 8), Stavridis provides keen insight into the challenges that Russia poses to the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the Baltic Sea Region. Perhaps a chapter on potential “contested seas” would have been able to address this and similar local geopolitical maritime situations.⁵

The final section of *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of the World’s Oceans*, like those of his previous works (Stavridis, 2014; Stavridis and Ancell, 2017), provides an extensive and well-thought-out list of sources and recommended fiction and nonfiction readings to further investigate maritime history and geopolitics (p. 347).

In summary, using his experience on and around every ocean as a sailor and military diplomat to establish authenticity, Stavridis describes key maritime geopolitical attributes and important historical maritime and naval nations and events that have shaped the maritime domain. He accurately identifies most major current geopolitical challenges. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he makes insightful and keen recommendations for future U.S.’s naval strategy and policy in order to promote global geopolitical and economic stability. Although it reads as primarily written for an American audience, all practitioners, politicians, strategists, academics and those with a general interest in naval affairs and the geopolitics of the world’s oceans will be well served by reading it.

Readers will have to look elsewhere for the missing chapter on small contested seas – like the Baltic Sea – as in the past, the littorals of smaller nations are where American naval power is most likely to be drawn to and tested. The same is true for those wanting a deeper discussion on how all the elements of seapower are necessary for a nation’s broader maritime security. Maritime and naval experts concerned with nations on the periphery of the large oceans will have to glean what they can from *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of the World’s Oceans* in order to endeavour to build a maritime security strategy that will make their coastal states, no matter the size, sea powers of “the one sea” in their own right.

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⁵ See “The Value of the Freedom of the Seas” by Combes (2013) for a discussion of a theoretical framework that places the world’s oceans and seas into four types: mature, contested, ungoverned and transitional.