

**S. 2. 2. THE SEA AND FOREIGN POLICY, FROM WWII TO TODAY**

**Chair: Karel Davids**

(VU Amsterdam)

## *Oceans of war and peace: The seafarer's ambiguous role as civilians*

**BJØRN TORE ROSENDAHL** (Centre for the History of Seafarers at War, ARKIVET Peace and Human Rights Centre)

### **Abstract**

The oceans have in centuries been used by ships to transport people and goods. Normally, the seafarers' job to ensure that the goods safely arrive at its destination is a civilian job. However, in times of war the seafarers' role as a civilian tends to be challenged, thus changing the relationship to others operating in the same oceans.

This paper investigates how the seafarers' role as civilians comes under pressure during war. The main case is the seafarers in the merchant fleets during World War II, the Norwegian in particular. The paper builds on some of the main results in Rosendahl's PhD thesis from 2017 which explores how seafarers' services in the merchant fleet were ensured in World War II. One of the thesis' main results is that the seafarers' civilian status came under pressure in various ways during the war and this contributed to an ambiguous Norwegian policy towards them. They were sometimes treated like "seafarers" and at other times like "war sailors". This is a constructed dual terminology, used to explore the complex and shifting relationship between normality and war and being a civilian or a military person. Norwegian authorities displayed this ambiguity explicitly during the war, by categorising the seafarers in separate columns in their internal statistics; neither as civilian work nor as a part of the military.

Even though the main focus is on the time of World War II, the paper aims to examine seafarers' role as civilians in war and war-like situations, in a longer perspective. From the use of so-called privateers in earlier centuries, to the arming of ships against pirates in today's shipping, the seafarer's role as pure civilians has been under pressure and become dubious. This types of shifting and uncertain relationship between actors in the oceans has resulted in extensive consequences – in particular to the seafarers themselves.

### **Keywords**

Civilian, World War II, merchant seafarers, Norway

### **Biography**

Bjørn Tore Rosendahl is a historian (PhD) and the academic leader of Centre for the History of Seafarers at War at ARKIVET Peace and Human Rights Centre, in Kristiansand, Norway. From 2005 to 2011 he was Education Manager at the same institution. Rosendahl finished his PhD at Agder University in 2018, with his thesis "Seafarers or war sailors? The ambiguities

of ensuring seafarers' services in times of war in the case of the Norwegian merchant fleet during the Second World War". In 2015, he published the book "Foreign seafarers remembered. Foreign seamen killed in service of the Norwegian Merchant fleet during the Second World War". In 2018 Rosendahl edited the anthology "Allied Seafarers in the Second World War". He also initiated a national online register of all the seafarers who served on Norwegians ships in World War II: [www.Krigsseilerregisteret.no](http://www.Krigsseilerregisteret.no). The government supported web site includes so far the personal profiles of appr. 60 000 seafarers.

# *Confrontation to Cooperation: Preventing Incidents at Sea*

DAVID WINKLER (United States Naval Academy)

## **Abstract**

During the Cold War the Soviet Navy challenged American dominance on the high seas – a situation being replicated in the present thanks to a growing Chinese Peoples’ Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). During the early Cold War period, some of the confrontation between American and Soviet maritime forces turned violent, resulting in deaths, lost aircraft, and damaged vessels. Diplomacy had negligible effect. Then in 1971, Soviet and American naval officers, sharing bonds inherent to mariners, put ideology aside and spoke frankly about the potential dangers associated with operating in close proximity on the world’s oceans and discussed measures to limit incidents that could have unfortunate consequences. As a result, in May 1972 the two nations signed an Incidents at Sea Agreement that established Navy-to-Navy channels to resolve issues stemming from these confrontations. In addition to opening communication channels to address incidents, the accord established behavioral norms for the opposing naval forces that served to minimize misinterpretations of intentions. No pointing of guns, overflights with open bomb bay, direction of searchlights at night are some of the behaviors that have been modified with telling effect. This agreement is still in effect and has served as a model for additional bilateral accords as well a framework in the Pacific and Indian Oceans involving the United States and China and other regional nations. In 2018, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) highlighted these various safety at sea arrangement at its Annual Security Review meeting and subsequent workshop. This presentation, drawn from my 2017 *Incidents at Sea: American Confrontation and Cooperation with Russia and China, 1945-2016* (Naval Institute Press), will chronicle this multi-national effort to deescalate open confrontation and the impacts of United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the definition of “High Seas” in the wake of allowing for nat

## **Keywords**

Peaceful Cooperation, Conflict Resolution, Crisis management

## **Biography**

Dr. David F. Winkler is the current Class of 1957 Chair of Naval Heritage at the U.S. Naval Academy. Previously, he served for over two decades as the Staff Historian at the Washington DC-based Naval Historical Foundation (NHF) having earned his Ph.D. from American University in 1998. He also holds an MA from Washington University and a BA from the Pennsylvania State University where he earned his commission as a naval officer through the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps. Having served as a Surface Warfare Officer on ships operat-

ing on all but the Arctic Ocean, Winkler would retire from the Naval Reserve at the rank of Commander. In addition to his Incident at Sea monograph, he has written *Amirs, Admirals and Desert Sailors* (2007) highlighting naval operations in the Persian Gulf and *Ready Now, Ready Then, Always Ready* (2014) discussing the history of the U.S. naval reserve. He is the editor of the NHF journal *Pull Together* and writes a monthly column for the Navy League's *Sea Power*.