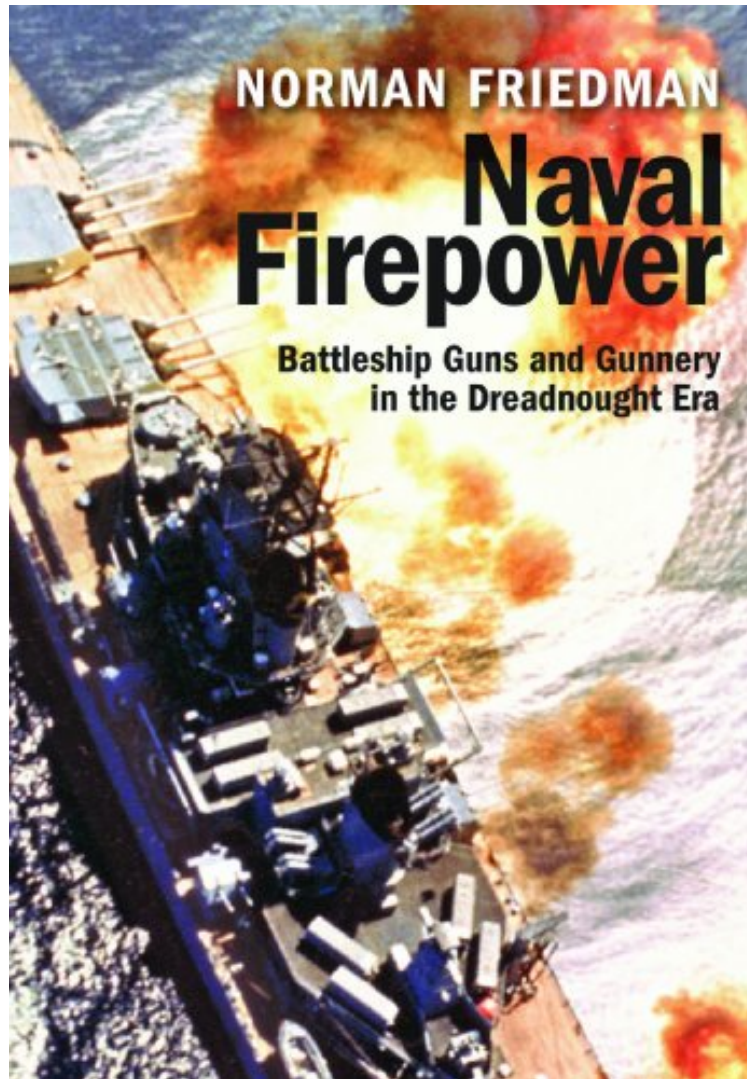


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Naval Firepower: Battleship Guns and Gunnery in the Dreadnought Era

Norman Friedman

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Really interesting book but the print is very small. ...By T NiklesReally interesting book but the print is very small. If you have trouble reading due to your eyes, this is not the book for you.12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Historians and wargamers of a simulationist

inclination

By K. Deines This isn't a book for casual readers. A person has to have a genuine interest in the history of 20th century naval warfare to get through this, or a similarly strong interest in applied mathematics and early computing. The book provides documentation on practices in several navies, describing the sometimes vast differences in how they perceived the gunnery problem, the tools and techniques they developed, and the influences that had on tactics, ship design, and crew training and communications. A number of different analog calculators and computers (mechanical and electromechanical) are described and depicted, in both the theory behind their design and their operation. Changes in sensors (optical and radio) are also included, and how more and more data--like roll, pitch and yaw for the firing ship, wind, curvature of the planet, etc.) was integrated into the creation of an actionable dataset to aim and fire the battery. While some recollection of vector operations and calculus might be useful in recreating some of the theory (for which Friedman provides a few equations), it isn't necessary. A pair of bookmarks for your place in the text and the corresponding spot in the endnotes will prove more useful. There is a nice bibliography at the end, as well as a reasonably good index. The general tenor of the writing is academic, but not overwhelmingly so. If you are expecting big pretty pictures and small words, this isn't a book you would appreciate. If you want a fairly thorough introduction into the subject of naval gunnery as it evolved over a ~50 year timespan, I think this is an excellent source.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. The incredible development of naval gunfire in the 20th century

By Paolo Capoferro I've enjoyed the book and found it inspiring. During the big battleship era, from the last decade of the 19th century an incredible development of the technical means of hitting a moving target from a rolling and yawing ship occurred. Up to the end of the 19th century ships were expected to hit their adversary at close range. During the battle of Jutland in 1916, under sometimes difficult conditions the two opposing fleets were hitting each other at range of more than 10,000 feet; during second world war some navies expected to open fire under favorable conditions more than 30 kilometers away. I've been fascinated by 20th century battleships since a boy and have an extensive collection of books dedicated to the "dreadnoughts". The subject of this book, the technical means of controlling naval gunnery, is usually not covered in other books the main reasons being because it is highly technical matter and because the various navies at the time kept their systems secret and hence poorly documented. The book is packed with information, not only in the text but also in the picture captions and the notes at the end of the book. I found the text not always easy. It is not meant for a casual reading and assumes previous knowledge from the reader not only about dreadnought design and naval history but also a technical understanding of the different aspects of the naval gunnery problem: geometry of the engagement and relative motion of ships, advance calculation, range-finding, spotting, data transmitting, etc.). Furthermore the technical solutions adopted by the navies are sometimes only sketched. However it could not be differently in a volume that covers 50 years of development and operation for Royal Navy, the USN, the German, French, Italian and Russian Navies. As I have started the book from the beginning and worked my way to the notes at the end of the book, while very fascinated by the subject, I had a feeling that some of the technical details were not right. I decided to go back to the beginning and read it again. I must say that several details fell into the right place after this second time. While I find the way Mr. Friedman writes is not always the clearest and easiest (I noticed this fact also reading some of his design histories) I'm happy to give 5 stars: the effort spent in getting into the subject is at the end very rewarding. I recommend this book, to those having a knowledge of 20th century naval history and not afraid to get into the technical details.

For more than half a century the big gun was the arbiter of naval power, but it was useless if it could not hit the target fast and hard enough to prevent the enemy doing the same. Because the naval gun platform was itself in motion, finding a 'firing solution' was a significant problem made all the more difficult when gun sizes increased and fighting ranges lengthened and seemingly minor issues like wind velocity had to be factored in. To speed up the process and eliminate human error, navies sought a reliable mechanical calculation. This heavily illustrated book outlines for the first time in layman's terms the complex subject of fire-control, as it dominated battleship and cruiser design from before World War I to the end of the dreadnought era. Covering the directors, range-finders, and electro-mechanical computers invented to solve the problems, America's leading naval analyst explains not only how the technology shaped (and was shaped by) the tactics involved, but analyses their effectiveness in battle. His examination of the controversy surrounding Jutland and the relative merits of competing fire-control systems draws conclusions that will surprise many readers. He also reassesses many other major gun actions, such as the battles between the Royal Navy and the Bismarck and the US Navy actions in the Solomons and at Surigao Strait. All major navies are covered, and the story concludes at the end of World War II with the impact of radar. This is a book that everyone with a more than passing interest in twentieth-century warships will want to read, and nobody professionally involved with naval history can afford to miss.

About the Author NORMAN FRIEDMAN is one of the most prominent naval analysts in the United States. The most recent of more than twenty major books, is a very well received study of British destroyers and frigates.