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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

In spite of some early signs of a hardening attitude toward People's Republic of China (PRC) provocations in the South China Sea, the Trump administration thus far has not articulated a vision of how it intends to deal with what is, in many respects, the sorest spot in U.S.-Chinese relations. Hal Brands and Zack Cooper, in "Getting Serious about Strategy in the South China Sea," analyze the broad strategic options facing the United States and make the case that a carefully calibrated combination of deterrence and "offsetting" actions holds the most promise. They argue that the Chinese have shown some willingness to pull back if challenged sufficiently by the United States, and hence that such a strategy, in spite of obvious risks, is not bound to fail. Less clear is the extent to which the United States is prepared to jeopardize other aspects of its relationship with the PRC in order to follow through effectively on such a strategy. Hal Brands is the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies; Zack Cooper is the Senior Fellow for Asian Security at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

In "Antiaccess Warfare as Strategy: From Campaign Analyses to Assessment of Extrinsic Events," Sam J. Tangredi invites us to consider China's encroachments in the South China Sea, in effect, as antiaccess warfare at the strategic level. His argument thus nicely complements the article of Brands and Cooper. The United States, he argues, must broaden the currently fashionable concept of *antiaccess/area-denial* (A2/AD) beyond the military operational level to encompass other elements of national power, as well as to take into greater account the potential role of actions or events extrinsic to the theater in question. Doing so would require, he suggests, significant adjustments in decision-making mechanisms at the national level. A retired USN captain, Sam Tangredi is director of the newly created Institute for Future Warfare Studies at the Naval War College.

Kevin Rowlands provides an important reminder of the strategic importance of rivers in affording unique "access" to the land, particularly in older times or in areas where roads are lacking, such as Africa and Latin America. In "Riverine Warfare: Exploiting a Vital Maneuver Space," he offers an overview of riverine operations historically, from ancient Egypt through the American Civil War to recent conflicts in Vietnam, Iraq, and Colombia. Rowlands deplores the relative neglect of this history; the absence of sustained analysis of its particular features;

and, related to it, the transient nature of riverine forces, including those of the United States. Kevin Rowlands is a commander in the Royal Navy.

Ben Wan Beng Ho, in “The Aircraft Carrier in Indian Naval Doctrine,” offers perhaps the first close analysis of the role of India’s two (eventually to be three) light aircraft carriers in a notional war with Pakistan. Noting that these vessels suffer severely from what he calls the “small-deck carrier conundrum,” under which any significant projection of offensive power seriously reduces the ship’s defensive strength, he argues that the only sensible employment of such ships—at least at the outset of a conflict—would be securing the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) for vital Indian commercial traffic. He suggests that the Indian navy would be well advised to rethink the balance between investment in carriers and, especially, long-range cruise missiles that can hold at risk Pakistan’s developing A2/AD capabilities. Ben Ho is a senior analyst with the military studies program of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

Much can be learned from not-so-recent history about the challenges facing middle-rank naval powers such as India in a global environment of technological change and strategic uncertainty. In “From a Prestige Fleet to the Jeune École: French Naval Policy and Strategy under the Second Empire and the Early Third Republic (1852–1914),” Hugues Canuel surveys the history of the French navy’s struggle—and ultimate failure—to develop a realistic strategy and force structure to counter Britain’s global naval dominance. Hugues Canuel is a captain in the Royal Canadian Navy and director of programs at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto.

John Nash, in “Sea Power in the Peloponnesian War,” also uses history—in this case, ancient history—to illustrate enduring issues relating to the role of sea power in war and peace. While some scholars have tended to downplay the continuities between naval operations in the present era and those of classical Greek and Roman times, Nash argues that the Greeks featured in Thucydides’s famous history of the Peloponnesian War (late fifth century BCE) were quite conscious of such matters as the importance of command of the sea, control of SLOCs, and defense of trade and the role of fleets in diplomacy. John Nash, a reserve officer in the Royal Australian Navy, is a PhD candidate in classics at the Australian National University.

IF YOU VISIT US

Our editorial offices are located in Sims Hall, in the Naval War College Coasters Harbor Island complex, on the third floor, west wing (rooms W334, 335, 309). For building-security reasons, it would be necessary to meet you at the main entrance and escort you to our suite—give us a call ahead of time (401-841-2236).

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Robert Ayer, Managing Editor