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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

For a nation to come to grips in a serious way with its own military history is never easy, particularly after a disastrous defeat (although victory is not without its own challenges). It is all the more impressive, then, that the modern German navy has institutionalized the study of its own history in a manner that bears testimony to the best traditions of German scholarship. In “German Navies from 1848 to 2016: Their Development and Courses from Confrontation to Cooperation,” Werner Rahn provides an authoritative overview of the German navy, from its rise in imperial times, through its role in the two world wars of the last century, to its reconstitution after the defeat of Hitler and the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany. In a period when major-power naval conflict once again has become thinkable, it is well to be reminded of the strategic importance of naval power—and of the gross blunders nations can make in wielding it. Perhaps the most telling insight he offers from the German experience is the navy’s failure to take sufficient account of the severe geographical limitations it faced. In this, as in other respects, there may be lessons here for a rising maritime China. Werner Rahn, a retired captain in the German navy and former director of the German Armed Forces Military History Research Office, was awarded the Hattendorf Prize for Distinguished Original Research in Maritime History by the Naval War College in 2016.

In the contemporary strategic environment, the most urgent challenge is not so much the threat of traditional major-power war as it is the aggressive use of nontraditional measures short of war by revisionist powers such as China and Russia. In “The New Time and Space: Dimensions of a Maritime Defense Strategy,” Tomohisa Takei argues that status quo powers such as Japan and the United States must be resolute in resisting these measures, stressing the importance of concerted multinational responses. Admiral Tomohisa Takei (Ret.), a former chief of staff of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force, is currently a professor and distinguished international fellow at the Naval War College.

In “Rebuilding the Ukrainian Navy,” Deborah Sanders reviews the challenges facing Ukraine in reconstituting its naval forces following the devastating losses Russia inflicted on them in the course of its occupation of Crimea in 2014. She does so in the context of Russia’s ongoing proxy war in Ukraine’s eastern provinces, and notes in particular the threat this poses to the important port of

Mariupol. She argues that, given the desperate condition of the Ukrainian economy, for the foreseeable future the rebuilding effort should be limited to creating a “mosquito fleet” for coastal defense. Deborah Sanders is a reader in defense and security studies at King’s College London.

Perhaps in part because it had no very clear winner or loser, the War of 1812 has received relatively little attention in either British or American military historiography, particularly at the operational or campaign level. Kevin D. McCranie, in “Confronting Uncertainty with Decentralized Command: British Naval Decision Making at the Outbreak of the War of 1812,” makes the case that this neglect is unwarranted. At first sight, this history seems to lack contemporary relevance, given the poor communications available to maritime forces during that early period; but this assumes that today’s instantaneous electronic communications will not be subject to serious degradation at the outset of hostilities between major powers. Kevin McCranie is a professor in the Strategy and Policy Department at the Naval War College.

In “Money, Motivation, and Terrorism: Rewards-for-Information Programs,” Christopher M. Ford addresses the neglected subject of the efficacy of the long-standing U.S. government programs that generate information on terrorist activities by offering monetary rewards, using as a historical case study the very successful program the British instituted during the Malayan Emergency. He argues that much more attention needs to be given to the impact of such rewards on the particular situation and expectations of the recipients. Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Ford, USA, is currently a military professor at the Stockton Center for the Study of International Law at the Naval War College.

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