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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

Chinese island-building and related activities in the South China Sea continue to foster instability in the region and to pose a major challenge to the United States and its friends and allies there. In a speech delivered recently at Chatham House in London, Peter A. Dutton spells out the implications of these developments and makes the case that they are altering in a fundamental way the strategic environment of Southeast Asia. Peter Dutton is director of the China Maritime Studies Institute at the Naval War College.

In “Panning for Gold: Assessing Chinese Maritime Strategy from Primary Sources,” Ryan D. Martinson provides a valuable service to researchers attempting to make sense of the vast and growing body of Chinese-language publications relating to naval and maritime strategy. Cautioning that it may be a mistake to presume too much strategic purpose and coherence in the activities of the many Chinese government agencies and officials with responsibilities in this area, he argues that important insights nevertheless can be gleaned from this literature by weighing carefully the relative authoritativeness of authors and the institutions with which they are associated. Ryan Martinson is a research associate of the China Maritime Studies Institute.

There seems to be no clear end in sight to the “long war” in the Middle East that has engaged this country for the last fifteen years. It is all the more important that the United States improve its ability to assess the changing fortunes of conflict and make timely adjustments to its military strategy and operations. In “Strategic Assessment and Adaptation: Reassessing the Afghanistan Surge Decision,” Francis G. Hoffman offers a careful analysis of the shortcomings of our current approach to the admittedly difficult art of assessment, with particular emphasis on the need for a sharper focus on the strategic level and factors such as domestic politics and other international players. Frank Hoffman is a research analyst with the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University.

Zinaida Bechná and Bradley A. Thayer address an aspect of the Chinese challenge to fundamental American interests today that has been seriously neglected. In “NATO’s New Role: The Alliance’s Response to a Rising China,” they warn that the United States cannot expect its NATO partners to stand shoulder to shoulder with it in opposing China’s newfound willingness to upset the strategic status quo in East Asia. Europeans do not perceive China as a military threat to themselves

and are eager to do business with the People's Republic, while China very likely sees opportunities to play off the allies against us. Bechná and Thayer argue persuasively that the United States needs to make a concerted effort to strengthen NATO's commitment to the norms of the liberal international order and to enlist the alliance proactively to deter Chinese adventurism in the region.

In "The Destruction of Convoy PQ17: 27 June–10 July 1942," Milan Vego analyzes a largely forgotten naval battle of World War II that took place off the coast of northern Norway. The devastating German attack on a convoy of Allied merchant ships carrying arms to the Soviet Union via the Barents Sea caused the suspension of these operations for several months, with potentially dire consequences for the larger war effort against the Nazis. Milan Vego is professor of joint military operations at the Naval War College.

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