

2015

From the Editors

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Recommended Citation

Lord, Carnes (2015) "From the Editors," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 68 : No. 4 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol68/iss4/2>

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FROM THE EDITORS

Israel and the United States have both been routinely subject to severe international criticism for the conduct of their respective militaries in irregular combat. But the Israeli case is unique in important respects. Israel has had to face foes who not only regularly flout generally accepted laws of war, but do so as part of a larger strategy of political warfare designed to discredit Israel in the eyes of an international public that is already disposed to be hostile to the Jewish state. In “Israeli Targeting: A Legal Appraisal,” Major John J. Merriam, USA, and Michael N. Schmitt provide an assessment of Israeli policy and behavior in relation to the restrictions on targeting embodied in the law of armed conflict. Based on an extensive review of internal Israeli documents and interviews with senior Israeli officials, the authors conclude that the doctrines and practice of Israel’s military track closely with those of the American military and are in fact eminently defensible. Professor Schmitt and Major Merriam are the director and associate director, respectively, of the Stockton Center for the Study of International Law at the Naval War College. (The previously posted electronic version of this article has generated considerable discussion, which can be accessed by searching for “Schmitt Israel Targeting.”)

It is fair to say that serious questioning of the future role of aircraft carriers within the U.S. Navy has increased significantly over the last several years. In “Connecting the Dots: Capital Ships, the Littoral, Command of the Sea, and the World Order,” Robert C. Rubel places these debates within a larger framework by raising the issue of whether the idea of the capital ship itself is not becoming obsolescent in an operational environment increasingly dominated by long-range missiles and precision sensors. Rubel makes the underappreciated point that our habit of speaking of capital-ship-intensive fleets as “blue-water” navies obscures the fact that most capital-ship-centered battles throughout history have in fact occurred in the littorals, and that it is precisely here that the weight of land-based air and missile defenses and sensors tells most heavily against aircraft carriers. Further, he explores the far-reaching implications of capital-ship obsolescence for traditional notions such as command of the sea and protection of the global commons. In all of this, Rubel carries on the fundamental reflections on the nature of contemporary sea power that have appeared over the last decade and beyond in

these pages as well as in the collected volume *Writing to Think: The Intellectual Journey of a Naval Career* (Newport Paper 41). Captain Rubel, USN (Ret.), is the former dean of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies at the Naval War College.

China's ongoing effort to reclaim and fortify islands in the South China Sea raises the most fundamental questions concerning its strategic intentions with respect to its immediate neighbors as well as the global maritime commons. It also provides an important context for understanding the strategic logic behind China's massive buildup of naval and maritime capability in recent years. A conspicuous element of that buildup has been China's acquisition of its first aircraft carrier and its apparent commitment to building at least four additional ships of this class. In "China's Aircraft Carrier Program: Drivers, Developments, Implications," Andrew Scobell, Michael McMahon, and Cortez A. Cooper III assess the motives behind China's acquisition and overhaul of the ex-Soviet vessel *Varyag* (now *Liaoning*) and its eventual decision to commit the nation to a serious program of carrier construction. While intangible motives such as national prestige no doubt have played a role, the authors believe the overriding strategic logic of the People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN's) evolution into a blue-water navy has been the decisive factor.

It is well to be reminded that the United States does not have a monopoly on theorizing about sea power. In "A General Review of the History of China's Sea-Power Theory Development," Zhang Wei provides a succinct overview of Chinese views of sea power from their initial encounter with Western navies and naval theorists in the nineteenth century through China's definitive break with its traditional "continentalist" orientation in the 1990s and the rapid expansion of its naval and maritime ambitions and capabilities over the last decade and more. The author of this article, which was originally published in Chinese in July 2012, Senior Captain Zhang Wei, PLAN, is a researcher at the People's Liberation Army Naval Research Institute.

In this connection, it is fitting that this issue concludes with a long-overdue tribute to a man who has a claim to be the author of the first book ever published on naval strategy. In "Fernando Oliveira's *Art of War at Sea* (1555): A Pioneering Treatise on Naval Strategy," Luis Nuno Sardinha Monteiro provides a brief introduction to this forgotten figure whose work had the misfortune of never being translated from his native Portuguese (an English version is currently in preparation). Unlike most military treatises of the early modern centuries, this work rises above the merely tactical and operational levels of naval warfare and sounds a number of surprisingly Mahanian themes. Commander Monteiro is an officer in the Portuguese Navy.

Finally, with this issue, the “editors” of this column are reduced from two to one, with the retirement of Pelham (“Pel”) Boyer after twenty-four years of service as managing editor of the *Naval War College Review*, as well as the Naval War College Press as a whole. Originally a U.S. naval intelligence officer with Russian language expertise, Pel assumed this position with very little prior preparation. He has been very largely responsible for establishing and maintaining the high standards of editorial production and design that have become a hallmark of this journal and of our various book and monograph series. His attention to the many details of his job has been extraordinary, his editorial skill and judgment unflinching, and his dedication to the mission remarkable. Not least, in his personal relationships he has ever been the gentleman. We wish Pel fair winds and following seas.

IF YOU VISIT US

Our editorial offices are now 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).