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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

In recent testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Peter A. Dutton of the Naval War College offered a timely and incisive analysis of the aims and tactics of China in its ongoing maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas. We take the liberty (with his permission, of course) of reproducing that testimony here. Professor Dutton emphasizes the sophisticated—indeed, sophisticated—strategy the Chinese have pursued in the international legal arena, so far with some apparent success. He believes that our allies in the region are anxious to see the United States take a greater leadership role on these issues. Peter Dutton, a former Judge Advocate General naval officer, is the director of the College's China Maritime Studies Institute.

The First World War, or the “Great War,” as it was initially known, broke out just one hundred years ago, in the summer of 1914. This cataclysmic struggle ended a century of almost undisturbed peace among the great European powers and changed the course of modern history in incalculable ways. It has been said that while history never repeats itself, it sometimes rhymes. The aggressive naval modernization currently being pursued by the People's Republic of China, clearly intended to challenge the long-standing naval preeminence of the United States, is more than reminiscent of the naval buildup championed by Kaiser Wilhelm of imperial Germany in the decades leading up to that war. John H. Maurer, in “Averting the Great War? Churchill's Naval Holiday,” recounts the bold (and much criticized) efforts of Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, to tamp down the costly and dangerous naval arms race with Germany through promoting a “holiday” on capital-ship construction by both powers. These advances were flatly rejected by the Germans. In spite of British pledges to match and exceed new German hull construction, the German leadership continued undeterred on the path to war, one they foolishly ignited (by the invasion of Belgium) in a way that would ensure the entry of Great Britain in the lists against them. In this light, it is sobering to contemplate the conclusions the current Chinese leadership are drawing from the unilateral building “holiday” the U.S. Navy seems to be facing for the foreseeable future. John Maurer is Alfred Thayer Mahan Professor of Sea Power and Grand Strategy at the Naval War College.

As the United States and the rest of the world become more accustomed to—if not more comfortable with—a growing Chinese maritime presence and

assertiveness, it is well to be reminded that China in the course of its long history has had only a very episodic engagement with the sea, in spite of its long and exposed sea frontier. Bernard Cole, in “The History of the Twenty-First-Century Chinese Navy,” provides a useful overview of what in retrospect is the very surprising neglect of the sea by the dynasts of ancient China as well as their modern successors. With the exception of the famous voyages of Admiral Zheng He to Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf, and East Africa in the fifteenth century (much celebrated by today’s Chinese leadership and a point of general national pride), China has shown little interest in projecting naval power much beyond its own territorial waters. The reasons for this appear to be a combination of preoccupation with external land threats, a relatively undeveloped overseas commerce, and the absence of external maritime threats, at least prior to the mid-nineteenth century. All of this, of course, has now changed. Yet the history of Chinese naval power in the twenty-first century remains largely to be written. We should be mindful that China’s maritime excursions in the past have been regularly short-circuited by such factors as internal turmoil, bureaucratic indifference, and foreign pressures. The United States and its allies would be wise to keep this in mind as they contemplate the future of their own naval and maritime capabilities.

In “A Theory of Naval Airpower,” Robert C. Rubel offers an original and compelling account of how one should think about naval aviation in the Navy of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Acknowledging that many naval officers remain allergic to anything that smacks of naval “doctrine,” Rubel contends that there are significant practical benefits to be derived from this exercise. He focuses in particular on the Navy’s need to clarify its requirement to maintain operational control of naval air assets in maritime environments in the face of Air Force efforts to capture all aviation under a single Joint Force Air Command Center headed by an Air Force officer. Captain Robert C. Rubel, USN (Ret.), a former naval aviator and frequent contributor to this journal, is the soon-to-depart dean of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies at the Naval War College, a position he has held for the last eight years. In that capacity he has provided, among other things, guidance and oversight to the Naval War College Press, helping to ensure that it continues to adhere to the high standards for which it has long been known. A collection of his essays, *Writing to Think: The Intellectual Journey of a Naval Career*, has recently been published by the Press as Newport Paper 41. We wish Barney fair winds and following seas.

Our next two offerings in this issue are something of a departure. Yedidia Ya’ari’s “The Littoral Arena: A Word of Caution,” reprints in essentially unaltered form an article originally published in the Spring 1995 issue of the *Review*. This prescient piece, by a then-serving admiral in the Israeli navy, was called to our attention

by Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., who provides a brief appreciation of its continuing—indeed, growing—relevance for the present.

In “Reinventing the Drone, Reinventing the Navy: 1919–1939,” Angelina Long Callahan opens a fascinating window into the interwar development of drone technology in the U.S. Navy, especially the contributions of the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, D.C. With a glance at the current state of play in this dynamic area today, she draws a number of lessons from this episode, one of continuing relevance to the present. Finally, in “Future Mine Countermeasures: No Easy Solution,” Martin Schwartz provides a careful analysis of another little-discussed aspect of naval warfare that is of growing concern to the United States as well as its NATO allies. Commander Schwartz currently serves in the German Navy.

NEWPORT PAPER 41, BY DEAN “BARNEY” RUBEL

In his introduction to our newest (and forty-first) Newport Paper monograph, *Writing to Think: The Intellectual Journey of a Naval Career*, Captain Robert C. “Barney” Rubel writes, “The articles in this Newport Paper are a selection of those that I have published (all but one of them) over the years in various publications. I did not write them to ‘get published’; I wrote them because I am a true extrovert—I have to talk, or write, in order to think.” A complete collection of the writings of Captain Rubel, who will be retiring this summer as Dean of Naval Warfare Studies here at the Naval War College, would have made a long volume indeed—and his continuing flow of new work would have made it incomplete before its appearance. This monograph is available in PDF form on the Naval War College Press website (at www.usnwc.edu/press, “Newport Papers”) and in print by request, while supplies last, from the editorial office.

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 (841-2236).