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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

The recent emergence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a maritime power with global reach is less a natural evolution than a willed project. Because much about top-level Chinese decision making is opaque, American and other Western observers have a tendency to resort to mirror imaging to try to understand it. And yet in some ways the Chinese can be surprisingly open about their intentions. This is particularly true of the maritime realm. As Liza Tobin demonstrates in "Underway: Beijing's Strategy to Build China into a Maritime Great Power," a wealth of official documents exists that can be used to trace the increasing focus and emphasis over the last several decades on the maritime dimension of Chinese national strategy. Perhaps her most fundamental point is that the (now-doctrinal) notion of China as a "maritime great power" is about much more than naval power; it also has important economic and psychological aspects. The United States clearly has not faced up to the full implications of this comprehensive challenge—including China's stated ambition to be the greatest global maritime power by 2049. Liza Tobin is a China analyst at U.S. Pacific Command.

There has been considerable discussion of late regarding whether a U.S.-China war is inevitable in the coming years. Some commentators have argued that the United States has a viable option for countering Chinese aggrandizement with little use of actual force: a distant blockade of oil shipments to China. Gabriel Collins, in "A Maritime Oil Blockade against China: Tactically Tempting but Strategically Flawed," argues that China has an array of measures it plausibly could take to defeat such a blockade, and that they could have very undesirable second-order effects. Gabriel Collins is a fellow at the Baker Institute Center for Energy Studies at Rice University.

A final China-related piece explores the rationales underlying the PRC's vehement objections to the deployment in South Korea of an American ballistic-missile-defense system intended to counter a potential missile strike on that country by the North Koreans. In "Rockets' Red Glare: Why Does China Oppose THAAD in South Korea, and What Does It Mean for U.S. Policy?," Robert C. Watts IV calls attention to the outsize role that the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system has assumed in the diplomacy of the Korean Peninsula. He is properly skeptical of Chinese claims that the system threatens to ignite a new

arms race on the peninsula and that it destabilizes the U.S.-PRC nuclear balance, and suggests that Chinese opposition has more to do with concern over the system's potential to solidify the trilateral South Korean–U.S.–Japanese alliance. Commander Watts is a surface warfare officer in the U.S. Navy.

In “Mission Command in a Future Naval Combat Environment,” Robert C. Rubel addresses an issue that has taken on new salience as the U.S. Navy rediscovers the challenge of high-end war fighting at sea. The emerging concept of “distributed lethality” raises fundamental questions concerning the conduct of future naval warfare as a networked enterprise, especially given the increasing electronic threat to communications at sea. The author argues that these questions need to be approached in terms of the three fundamental modes of naval combat: *structured battle*, *melee*, and *sniping*. Robert C. Rubel is the former dean of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies at the Naval War College.

Recently, the College has increased its focus on Russia through the creation of a Russia Maritime Studies Institute, paralleling its established China Maritime Studies Institute. “‘Sea of Peace’ or Sea of War: Russian Maritime Hybrid Warfare in the Baltic Sea,” by Martin Murphy and Gary Schaub Jr., more than makes the case for intensified interest in the Russian challenge to the West—indeed, to the entire liberal international order. They argue that the United States and its NATO allies, while increasingly concerned about deterring or defeating Russian so-called hybrid warfare on the land frontier of the Baltic States, have not paid sufficient attention to potential threats from the sea, citing, for example, possible cyber attacks against ships and port facilities or the severing of critical undersea communication cables. Martin Murphy is a fellow at the Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies at King's College London; Gary Schaub Jr. is a senior researcher at the Centre for Military Studies at the University of Copenhagen.

Further reflection on the growing importance of the Baltic Sea region in the context of continuing Russian threats and provocations is provided in Don Thieme's commentary piece, “The Baltic, Poland, and President Trump's Warsaw Declaration.” Thieme, a retired U.S. Marine officer and former naval and Marine attaché with service in London and Warsaw, explicates the message of the president's underreported and underanalyzed speech of July 2017 in relation to the fraught German-Russian-Polish historical relationship.

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