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From Mahan to Pearl Harbor: The Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States

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programs, especially in contrast to the substantial amount of work scholars and policy analysts have produced in recent years on Chinese military modernization and its implications for regional security. Bernard Cole's *Taiwan's Security: History and Prospects*, which provides a comprehensive and well-written assessment of recent developments in Taiwan's defense establishment, represents an important step in filling this gap.

In this work, Cole—a respected China scholar who served in the U.S. Navy for thirty years and is now professor of international history at the National War College—examines the changes currently under way in Taiwan's armed forces and defense bureaucracy. The main purpose of Cole's thorough and well-researched study is to assess changes in Taiwan's defense posture and their implications for the island's security. After presenting a brief history of Taiwan's military and an overview of the Chinese military threat, Cole explains that Taiwan in recent years has been unwilling to increase the level of resources devoted to its own military capabilities. Although Taiwan is reorganizing its defense bureaucracy and its military is professional and well trained, the growing asymmetry in defense spending between Taiwan and China is resulting in a rapid erosion of Taiwan's long-standing qualitative edge over the Chinese military. Indeed, Cole argues quite persuasively that the cross-strait military balance is tipping toward China as a result of Taiwan's relatively modest response to the growing security challenge represented by the acceleration of Chinese military modernization. Consequently, Taiwan cannot defend itself on its own and may not even be

able to hold out until the U.S. military could intervene decisively.

Cole also includes a brief discussion of the factors underlying Taiwan's unwillingness to do more to counter China's growing military capability. He argues, first, that many officials in Taiwan believe Chinese military threats lack credibility and, second, that decision makers in Taipei are convinced that the United States would come to Taiwan's assistance even if they turn out to have underestimated China's willingness to use force. According to Cole, the U.S. decision to send two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region during the 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis not only convinced Beijing that attacking Taiwan would likely result in American military intervention but also led Taipei to the same conclusion. Given the assumptions that China lacks the willingness to use force and that U.S. intervention is virtually assured in the unlikely event of a cross-strait conflict, many politicians in Taiwan conclude that the island does not really need to invest its own scarce resources in defense. In all, *Taiwan's Security* makes an important contribution to scholarship and policy analysis by providing a readable and informative assessment of a previously understudied aspect of the U.S.-China-Taiwan relationship.

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Asada, Sadao. *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor: The Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2006. 385pp. \$36.95

Sea power analysts surveying the “rise” of China commonly compare this emerging Asian titan to imperial Germany, whose unification upset the European great-power concert ushered in after Waterloo, and for good reason. Naval enthusiasts like Kaiser Wilhelm II and Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, their imaginations fired by the works of Alfred Thayer Mahan, hurled Germany into naval competition with Great Britain, the dominant naval power of the day, with fateful results. References to Mahan are now routine among Chinese strategic thinkers. Will China’s Mahanians prod Beijing onto a similar path to sea power, and will similar results ensue?

Along comes Sadao Asada, an emeritus professor at Japan’s Doshisha University. Asada’s masterful book *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor* reminds us that Asian maritime history also offers compelling lessons on how the rise of a new sea power, in this case imperial Japan, can disturb a settled nautical equilibrium. In effect, the book is an intellectual history of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN). As the title suggests, the book traces the influence of Mahanian theory on Japanese naval thinkers in the decades after *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* appeared in 1890.

Asada attributes the IJN’s use and misuse of Mahan to a combination of factors—bureaucratic rivalry between the army and the navy, groupthink within the naval hierarchy, and an abdication of leadership by senior officials, to name three. By the onset of World War II, the navy had convinced itself that war with the United States was fated and that Japan could overcome America’s overwhelming material superiority

by cultivating a warrior ethos in the ranks. Perversely, IJN leaders disregarded key aspects of Mahanian theory, in particular the material foundations of sea power, as they contemplated Mahanian naval warfare in the Pacific.

From Mahan to Pearl Harbor makes an ideal companion to David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie’s *Kaigun*, which reviews the strategies, tactics, and technologies deployed by the IJN between the service’s inception in Meiji Japan and the outbreak of World War II. Jon Tetsuro Sumida’s *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command*, a spirited defense of Mahan against his detractors, would make a useful supplement and counterpoint to Asada’s analysis.

Asada’s account is not impervious to criticism. First, linking deeds with words and words with thoughts is no simple matter for historians. His many references to Japanese officers, say, “echoing” Mahan or acting out of “Mahanian navalism” invite critics to quibble. The author establishes that many Japanese mariners were reared on Mahan, but how do we know they were acting on Mahanian precepts *on some particular occasion* if they did not say so? Second, Mahan was prone less to “stark racism” than to the clash-of-civilizations rhetoric that dominated fin de siècle Americans’ views of Asia.

Still, these are minor faults in an invaluable work. Will China, like imperial Japan, succumb to Mahanian determinism? How should America respond? These are questions worth pondering, and *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor* makes a good place to start.

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