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Power in the Pacific: The Origins of Naval Arms Limitation, 1914-1922

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of his profession and earned the affection and admiration of a whole generation." The method of psychohistory has failed—if indeed Chalfont ever applied it—and we are left with as good an answer as we may expect history to provide: "... the hour had come and so had the man. The situation was one which needed a Montgomery."

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Dingman, Roger. *Power in the Pacific: The Origins of Naval Arms Limitation, 1914-1922*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976. 318pp.

Professor Dingman's thesis is that after the First World War, American, British, and Japanese politicians recognized that peacetime naval policy was not principally a matter of strategy or diplomacy, or even of economics, but that it was essentially an internal affair, a question of domestic politics. He supports this thesis by taking a close look at the developments in America, Britain, and Japan which led to the Washington Conference and the naval disarmament treaty of 1922. From this study of what he calls "the politics of national defense" of the three great naval powers, Professor Dingman has arrived at a general truth about arms control which he believes is as relevant today as it was some 50 years ago. Above all else, he concludes, "arms limitation by international agreement depends ... on careful, constantly changing, and correct estimates of the domestic risks and opportunities it presents to one's own leaders and to their prospective partners." This is a highly instructive insight, although (as I shall explain later) I have some reservations about its universal validity.

In his preface Professor Dingman tells us that when he began this work, as a Harvard doctoral dissertation, he expected to be writing diplomatic history.

He set out to discover why Japan and

the United States (to which he later added Great Britain) so suddenly turned away from their mounting naval rivalries after the First World War, to conclude a far-reaching agreement for the limitation of naval armaments at Washington in 1922. He found, to his surprise, that to answer this question he had to move out of diplomacy into the realm of domestic political decisions which determined national defense policies. Professor Dingman notes, for example how in the spring of 1921 Japanese Prime Minister Hara's preoccupation with the political implications of the Crown Prince's engagement made him reluctant to take positions on other issues, while British Prime Minister Lloyd George's preoccupation with Irish negotiations later that same year clearly affected his attitude towards the Washington Conference. Similarly, he reveals how personal political motives—his desire to succeed where Woodrow Wilson had failed, and his need to prove that the generally low estimates of his capacity were wrong—impelled President Harding to work hard and effectively for genuine naval disarmament.

From his extensive research, most notably into the official and other records in Tokyo, London, and Washington, Professor Dingman has produced a compact and carefully structured work which he insists is neither diplomatic nor naval history, but rather "a study in comparative history." As comparative history, the author's work is clear and systematic. The book's three sections deal first with the First World War, then the policy drift in 1919-1920, and finally the new policies of 1921-1922. Each section contains a separate chapter on American, British, and Japanese policy in the period. Although this arrangement somewhat breaks the continuity, it does permit the author to compare and contrast naval policy developments in each country in each period. The chapters on Japan are especially valuable, since the author's

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Japanese facility has allowed him to make full use of sources in that language. There is, in fact, not much else available in English on Japanese naval policy in this period, except for some sections of Ian Nish's excellent *Alliance in Decline*. Since a great deal of work has already been done on British and American naval policy at this time, the author's work here contributes more that is new in interpretation than in information. While this book will not make Harold and Margaret Sprout's classic *Toward a New Order of Sea Power* obsolete, Professor Dingman's sources are richer than those which were available in 1940. In their treatment of the American origins of the Washington naval treaties the Sprouts also emphasized the importance of domestic politics, which they analyzed principally from press opinion and congressional debates.

Professor Dingman's comparative approach and his focus on domestic politics make his work an important contribution to the study of international arms limitation. His approach provides a new perspective for viewing previous strategic and diplomatic studies of the period, and he is persuasive in contending that domestic political considerations were central to the formation of the naval policies which brought the United States, Great Britain and Japan to their agreements at the Washington Conference. Nevertheless, an important economic reality underlay these political considerations. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War all three of the great naval powers suffered sharp recessions, which brought public pressure for the reduction of defense expenditures. Moreover, it must be remembered that the Washington naval limitation treaty came at a time when the governments and navies of the great naval powers all generally expected a long period of peace. The British Cabinet's famous "Ten Year Rule" of August 1919 which stipulated

that the service departments should draft their estimates "on the assumption that the British Empire would not be engaged in any great war during the next ten years," was only the most obvious example of this attitude. When governments and navies begin to fear that war is approaching, as they did in the 1930's, they behave very differently. It is then, and not in postwar periods like the 1920's—or the 1970's—that questions of strategic planning, weapons technologies, diplomatic balance, and economic power all assume a new importance and urgency in the politics of national defense.

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Dixon, Norman F. *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*. New York: Basic Books, 1976. 447pp.

Ah, what a treat! What a delight to carry through the passageways of the Pentagon. What a military show stopper! The full sweep of Parkinsonian reaction is evident from passersby before the dust jacket gives way to page 1. What makes the potential reader so nervous about this book? Can it be the title? Can it be something even subtler? Can it possibly even remotely be the hint of criticism? Actually, British psychologist Norman Dixon tenders us the gentle surprise. This is a serious book, with a serious message, and a wealth of historical and organizational data to backstop the author's thesis: Military disasters, short of random chance, follow a pattern based on social psychology and bureaucratic traits, thus, on the one hand individuals may be bred to military life, but these very same men (and now women) may not be suited at all to the standards of military greatness. A dilemma, you say? Not at all. The first lesson learned is that Dixon is as much speaking of any major hierarchy and, certainly, watching bureaucracy on the Potomac as it goes