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Naval Policy between the Wars, Vol. 2, The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939

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the response of the United States to Asian rebellion against imperialism from 1945 to 1953. This response is examined in the cases of Indonesia, Indochina, Korea and China in those years. The conclusion is that the response was "... to assume the exhausted and irrelevant burden of the white man's rule. ..." Tragedy makes its appearance in the book's closing lines, a quotation from an irreverent Marine Corps' ditty from the Hungnam battle:

"So put back your pack on
The next stop is Saigon."

Put starkly, this thesis has an apparent sequence and coherence. Put in Mr. Rose's almost seductive prose, it seems to have persuasion and power. Examined closely, it may be all a bit too easy.

Mr. Rose is a historian in the State Department and as such his emphasis is on the diplomatic documents, largely from the American side in keeping with his purpose of writing "... an American, not an Asian history and one sharply limited in scope and scale." Both the documentation and the narrative seem to stop at 1950, not 1953, but the author could argue that after the Chinese intervention in Korea U.S. policies toward the People's Republic and toward the Vietnamese revolution were set, not to be changed until the Nixon visit in one case and the Carter administration's tentative resumption of contact in the other.

One large question nags, as it always does in any diplomatic history of American-East Asian relations—just how much difference could the United States realistically make in the working out of the problems of nationalism and social change in these land-bound, traditional societies on which Europeans had grafted a few urban centers, some technology and a smattering of Western ideas? This question was not asked in 1945—Shanghai was just to be raised up to the level of Kansas City, as one Senator put it. From this failure of

inquiry flows Mr. Rose's lively account of our preoccupation with Europe (Acheson claimed the French "blackmailed" us into support for Indochina), with domestic politics (who lost China?) and with the myth of monolithic communism (China as a Slavic Manchukuo). Now, when we think we have liquidated our costly failures, Mr. Rose gives us a good guide to how we now see the roots. One hopes we now also see the main question.

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Roskill, Stephen. *Naval Policy between the Wars, Vol. 2, The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1976. 525pp.

This magisterial and encyclopedic account describes in detail how British naval policy in the 1930's labored under the burdens of a climate of opinion engendered by attempts to achieve naval arms limitation and then disarmament, stringent budgets and widespread pacifism. As he did in the first volume of this authoritative series, Captain Roskill has reviewed thoroughly the extensive documentary evidence from which he quotes freely and at some length.

Whatever may have been its success at the time, the standards established by the 1922 Washington treaty limiting naval arms were soon eclipsed by differing perceptions of national needs and the criteria for establishing those needs, particularly between the Royal Navy and the U.S. Navy. If the 1927 Geneva Conference marked the nadir in relations between the United States and the United Kingdom, at least as far as naval matters go, the 1930 London Conference saw a remarkable improvement for which Captain Roskill graciously credits the tact and negotiating skill of Adm. William V. Pratt, USN. If any lesson is clear from this now largely neglected, but complex series of events it is the

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necessity to relate numbers, types and sizes of ships to specific and individual national requirements. Absolute standards are, therefore, all but impossible to achieve.

After 1930, disarmament and even arms limitation became increasingly irrelevant. Even so, it was not possible and perhaps it would not even have been prudent in the first years of the decade to embark on a major building program. Public opinion in Britain would not have tolerated it. In the United States the Vinson-Trammell Act of 1934 sought only to build up the U.S. Navy to treaty strength.

Conventional economic wisdom at the time required balanced and even reduced budgets. The 1931 Invergordon Mutiny was a dramatic and unequivocal reaction in the fleet to proposed pay cuts pursuant to what was seen as fiscal necessity. Roskill chronicles this unfortunate event and describes in detail how the Admiralty in London and the fleet commanders dealt with it.

Waning enthusiasm for arms limitation and the very real treaty obligations in force, along with fiscal stringency and a largely pacific public, were influences over which the Royal Navy had no control. Nevertheless, in these difficult circumstances, it did a creditable job in preparing for the war that became all but inevitable as the decade wore on. Roskill has almost unlimited praise and boundless admiration for the First Sea Lord, Adm. Sir Ernle Chatfield, to whom he ascribes the virtues of foresight, tenacity, professional competence and skill, and superb leadership. Chatfield's tenure shows that one man can indeed make a difference.

There are frequent and sometimes lengthy quotations from a multitude of documents, papers, reports and correspondence which many American readers may find tedious. Indeed this tendency to focus narrowly adds detail and thoroughness to this study, but at the price of slighting the broad context

in which British naval policy was created and executed, and without which that naval policy cannot be understood.

Captain Roskill frequently refers to parallel events in the U.S. Navy and in doing so he provides much useful comparison. The most dramatic example is the fate of naval aviation in the Royal and U.S. Navies. Following World War I the Royal Navy's air arm was placed under the R.A.F. This arrangement proved not only inefficient and unsatisfactory (at least to the navy) but it also gave rise to extensive interservice bickering. In the nick of time on the eve of World War II the Royal Navy finally obtained full control of its fleet air arm, but not land-based VP aircraft. However, thanks to the tireless and dedicated efforts of Rear Adm. William A. Moffett, aviation had become a permanent and integral part of the U.S. Navy by the time of his death in 1933. Roskill regrets the British did not follow the American example.

This solid, scholarly account makes one point abundantly clear: Despite the mammoth problems and difficulties of the 1930's, the Royal Navy was reasonably well prepared to fight World War II, which it fought well, thanks to the intangible, but crucial, human factors of confidence bred of a long tradition and the professional competence of the officers and men.

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Sheridan, James E. *China in Disintegration: The Republican Era in Chinese History, 1912-1949*. New York: The Free Press, 1975. 338pp

Jordon, Donald A. *The Northern Expedition: China's National Revolution of 1926-1928*. Honolulu: The University Presses of Hawaii, 1976. 341pp.

Both these books attempt to explain the failure of republican government