

1975

Book Reviews

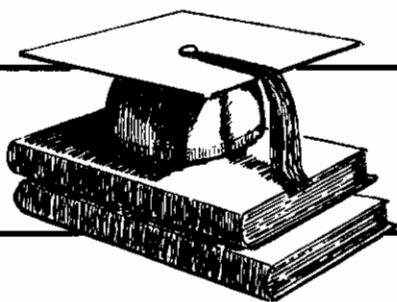
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Recommended Citation

War College, The U.S. Naval (1975) "Book Reviews," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 28 : No. 1 , Article 9.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol28/iss1/9>

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PROFESSIONAL READING

Bauer, K. Jack. *The Mexican War, 1846-1848*. New York: Macmillan, 1974. 399p.

Mr. Bauer's new book is a credible addition to the Macmillan "Wars of the United States" series under the general editorship of Louis Morton. It finds itself in good company among the several excellent volumes already published and adds to the luster of that series with merits of its own. But it has the quality, not unique in this series, of being a clear product of the Vietnam era.

In discussing his own splendid volume on *The American Way of War*, Russell Weigley has admitted that the experience of American involvement in Vietnam helped remold his attitude toward writing about Americans at war. Likewise, Mr. Bauer writes in the present volume that "The story of the application of . . . force by James K. Polk, like that of America's recent experience in Vietnam, depicts the dangers inherent in the application of graduated force." And "As in Vietnam, much of the diplomatic story of the conflict swirls around failure of the efforts of the American government to initiate negotiations to bring the war to a close."

The analogies thus implied between American involvement in Mexico and American involvement in Vietnam are at least partly the product of the oft repeated homily that each generation writes its own history and sees the past through eyes made newly aware of the meaning of that past by its own

experiences. For Bauer, Vietnam provided the background against which the events of 1846-48 assumed new clarity. The analogies are compelling.

For example, Mr. Bauer scores President Polk because he refused to take seriously Mexican sensibilities. When Mexican authorities explicitly asked that a Commissioner be sent to negotiate the border dispute, Polk sent instead a Minister, John Slidell, a terminological distinction which implied that normal diplomatic relations had resumed. Polk and Slidell could not understand the importance of the distinction and assumed that Mexican suggestions for a clarification were nothing more than stall tactics. The administration, in short, underestimated and misunderstood the potential enemy. The relationship of this attitude to American actions in Vietnam is unmistakable.

The author also criticizes Polk for listening principally to advice that he wanted to hear, that is, which confirmed opinions he already held, while rejecting unwanted advice. Both consul John Black and Minister John Slidell optimistically reported to Washington that the Mexicans could be convinced to conclude an agreement short of war. But while the Mexicans wanted to avoid war if possible, the national pride of the Mexican people would not tolerate any administration which appeared to surrender to the gringos. Neither Polk nor Slidell had any sympathy for the domestic political problems of the Mexican Government and assumed bad faith when the negotiations failed to

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materialize. As in Vietnam, the advisers can be blamed for not being more direct with the administration, and the administration can be criticized for not encouraging a more objective and realistic appraisal.

The most interesting analogy, however, is in Bauer's description of how Polk led the United States into war in the first place. Polk ordered the Texas occupation army of Gen. Zachary Taylor to the northern bank of the Rio Grande ostensibly to protect Texas against a possible invasion from Mexico. But the land between the Rio Grande and the Nueces, some hundred miles to the north, was disputed territory—no man's land. In fact, John Slidell had been sent to Mexico City precisely to discuss a possible settlement of the disputed boundary. Mexicans in Matamoros considered Taylor to be belligerent and mounted an effort to drive him back. The attempt was unsuccessful, but it gave the Polk administration the *cause celebre* it needed. Declaring that American blood had been shed on American soil, Polk asked for a declaration of war. Cleverly, he tied the declaration to the appropriations bill for the support of Taylor's little army. Antiwar Congressmen were caught on the dilemma of either refusing to support Americans already in the field or voting for war. They voted for war. They were fully aware, however, that they had been duped. Bauer quotes one Whig Congressman who said,

... we have been brought into this war by the weakness or wickedness of our prest. and his cabinet, and while we must all stand by the country right or wrong it is grievous to know that when we pray "God defend the right" our prayers are not for our own country.

Finally, the Polk administration was guilty of entering upon war without a clear strategy. The President "expected to win the desired peace without a

major military effort." When that expectation proved unrealistic, Polk ordered that the military effort be increased until finally, unexpectedly, the United States found itself in a full-fledged war. Again the reflection of Vietnam is implicit in Bauer's analysis.

Despite the omnipresence of these analogies, Bauer's new book is more than an editorial on Vietnam. It is a fully documented and comprehensive study of the Mexican War. But the quality which gives this history its unique character is its perspective, a perspective grounded firmly in South-east Asia.

PROFESSOR CRAIG SYMONDS
Naval War College

Doumani, George A. *Ocean Wealth: Policy and Potential*. Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden, 1973. 285p.

The Law of the Sea Conference that met in Caracas this past summer gained considerable notoriety at its adjournment if only because, after 10 weeks of deliberations, the 5,000 delegates produced but one concrete result: to hold a subsequent meeting in 1975. What appeared to be massive inaction was in reality only the tip of a huge iceberg involving some of the knottiest and most difficult political, legal, institutional, and ecological problems compounded by burgeoning technology and world population, political and social aspirations, uncertain economic prospects, and certain economic rivalries.

For years the sea was the preserve of the navies and merchant marines of the world, valued primarily as a means of communication. This was more or less valid until about 1945 when the United States began a policy of asserting claim to oil deposits on the Continental Shelf. Since that time national claims over the surface and the seabed have been extended significantly.

Much of the literature relevant to changing conditions of the sea and the seabed is either too technical for the

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intelligent but nonspecialist reader, or it is widely scattered in a variety of journals. George Doumani of the Congressional Research Service in the Library of Congress, however, has produced a handbook which contains succinct but thorough presentations of the relevant data as well as political problems and policy considerations. The thrust of the book is decidedly interdisciplinary, which, along with its compilations, is perhaps its greatest virtue.

After discussing the geography and legal concepts of the Continental Shelf, Mr. Doumani shows how the seas and the seabed are now intrinsically valuable. He describes deposits on the seabed, what they are (building materials, phosphorite, manganese nodules, among others), and where they are (nearly ubiquitous). He also describes subsurface deposits of petroleum, sulphur, coal, salt, and potash.

In addition to mineral resources, the sea has always been a source of food. While he mentions fisheries as an important source of food, Mr. Doumani neglects to mention that unregulated overfishing can produce temporary if not permanent harm to the entire fish stock, and if fish prices on the New England coast are any indication, that time may be approaching, if it is not already here.

Technology has given mankind the means to use the resources of the seas and the seabed and economics has made it feasible. The problems of creating institutions, political processes, and legal norms remain. Mr. Doumani has skillfully shown a path through the political scientist's thickets of international nongovernmental organizations (the International Council of Scientific Unions), international intergovernmental organizations (UNESCO's Office of Oceanography, among others), and the United Nations activities. In this latter category he provides a good sketch of the General Assembly's actions, including establishment of the U.N. Seabed Committee and the Malta

Proposals for a seabed regime based on the concept that resources of the ocean deep should be used for the common heritage of mankind.

In the past few years the United States has taken a great interest in these questions, not only because they are important by themselves, but also because they are closely linked to our interest in freedom of navigation. Mr. Doumani in crisp prose and by useful wiring diagrams describes the National Council on Marine Resources and Engineering Development, which is chaired by the Vice President of the United States, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), an independent Federal agency. Significant congressional concern, as well as the imaginative proposals of Senator Claiborne Pell, are also described clearly and concisely. Finally, he summarizes President Nixon's 1970 proposals for a seabed regime.

The handbook itself takes only 115 pages. The balance of *Ocean Wealth*, another 162 pages, consists of useful and relevant appendixes, containing the texts of U.S. Public Laws, Presidential Proclamations and Executive Orders, U.N. Draft Resolutions, the Seabed Disarmament Treaty, in addition to useful tables of data.

Ocean Wealth provides the factual background necessary for a basic understanding of this enormously complex and novel series of problems presented by modern technology and aggravated by economics and politics.

B.M. SIMPSON, III
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy

Ellis, James E. and Moore, Robert M.
School for Soldiers: West Point and the Profession of Arms. New York: Oxford Press, 1974. 291p.

Avoiding the extremes of either diatribe or acclaim commonly employed by its critics and supporters, the authors have written a balanced and scholarly

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study of the U.S. Military Academy. When reduced to its essence, it is a study of many internal conflicts masked from public view by the military tactic of "presenting a common front"—hiding much, as cadet life is masked by the imposing barracks walls.

The conflict takes many forms, ranging from the inner turmoil of the new cadet laboring under the intense pressures of the Beast Barracks (surely the most intensive institutional socialization process of any American college) to the several generations-old pedagogical conflict between the proponents and opponents of academic change. The authors skillfully interweave the dialog of tenured professor/colonels who resist change—insisting that the proven methods of over 160 years are valid today—and the transient generals, majors, and captains who desire to see West Point "stay abreast of the times." Through it all, however, the reader will find an unreal but pervasive sense that the Academy's destiny is being guided by something that transcends the lives of the individuals involved, something to which these many conflicts are but fleeting things. The young man's agonies of adjustment will pass, as will those of his successor and his successor's successor. In like manner the debaters of change will pass, as will their successors. Through it all the institution alone will prevail. This impression is enhanced by the authors' frequent personification of the institution. "West Point has come to regard itself as both an undergraduate college with an academic program and as a professional school for Army officers with an essentially military mission." The winds of academic controversy barely ripple the ivy growing on the grey stone walls.

This pervading sense of institutional domination is the source, however, of another conflict, a conflict permeating the entire book, a conflict which, if not resolved, must surely weaken the mortar of those ancient walls. This is the

conflict of ideals, the anguish of which is plainly evident in every chapter. Duty, Honor, Country were very real ideals, clearly understood and totally accepted by such as Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, USMA, class of 1917. In the aftermath of Vietnam they are neither so clearly understood nor accepted by cadets and recent graduates.

In 1962 General of the Army Douglas MacArthur told the Corps "... that in war there is no substitute for victory; that if you lose, the nation will be destroyed; that the very obsession of your public services must be DUTY-HONOR-COUNTRY." *School for Soldiers* examines both the development of this obsession and the education of the men who must possess it. Some of its pages will make you smile and swell your heart with pride; others will have you sadly shaking your head, troubled by what is said; all will make you think.

E.L. WEBB

Major, U.S. Army

George, Alexander L., and Smoke, Richard. *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974. 666p.

Few books of political science or history will possess more of importance for professional military men than this volume on the American theory and practice of deterrence. The book, in fact, combines the techniques of both political science and history to make deterrence theory more relevant to the practical problems of security in the nuclear age. Composed of three sections, the opening portion of the book describes the present state of deterrence theory with an emphasis on its deficiencies in limited conflict situations. A second section contains historical case studies of important attempts to employ deterrence from the Berlin blockade of 1948 to the Cuban missile crisis of 1962; and a

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third section extends deterrence theory on the basis of historical evidence and inductive logic.

The authors point to the fact that the real problems—and failures—of deterrence in American foreign relations since the end of World War II have come not in the realm of strategic nuclear confrontation, but in conflicts considerably lower on the scale. One problem is that traditional deterrence theory does not provide internal guides to application when the use of deterrence is appropriate and likely to produce desirable results. As a result, American leaders have often depended on deterrence in situations in which there was never any real possibility that it would work as, for instance, in the Middle East and to a certain extent in Indochina. Furthermore, showing its heavy debt to political science approaches, deterrence theory has been deductive and prescriptive, rather than inductive and explanatory, with the paradoxical result that it has been less, rather than more useful to policy-makers. The authors, therefore, in section three of the volume have suggested a new emphasis, understanding the intentions and calculations of the state or power which initiates a conflict situation rather than concentrating on the behavior that is necessary for a defender to deter a potential initiator of change or confrontation.

It is difficult in a short review to convey the depth of thought, the breadth of coverage, or the quality of material contained in this large book. The historical case studies alone are worthy of careful reading, and the chapters on theory as it stands and theory as it should be will indeed repay the effort invested in a reflective perusal. The book addresses one of the most fundamental issues of national strategy and policy, and it behooves every military professional to educate himself in the complexities and the

advances of this subject. There is no better way to begin than to read this book.

PROFESSOR THOMAS H. ETZOLD
Naval War College

Kohler, Foy D., et al. *Soviet Strategy for the Seventies: From Cold War to Peaceful Coexistence*. Miami: University of Miami Center for Advanced International Studies, 1973. 241p.

American public opinion in recent years has tended to vacillate between believing that the Government of the Soviet Union is bent on hostility and that détente has become a firm and lasting reality. The purpose of the present volume is to demonstrate that regardless of the current trend in public opinion, the Russian leadership from Stalin down to Brezhnev and Kosygin has been unswervingly hostile to the United States, an unpopular task in many circles, official and private. Assuming the general outlook of Americans at the present time, many reviewers will contend that the authors of *Soviet Strategy for the Seventies* are only interested in perpetuating the cold war. Yet, the hopes of the American people for peaceful coexistence with the U.S.S.R. have never borne fruit in the past, and one must at least be cautious about the present. (Back in the 1930's, a similar spirit of détente prompted the president of the Daughters of the American Revolution to visit the Soviet Embassy in Washington to participate in a fete of friendship, and the time must have come when Mrs. William D. Becker was sorry for her effervescent opinions.)

The authors of this volume believe that "peaceful coexistence" is just a meaningless phrase to the Soviet leadership and its in-house philosophers of Marxism, and surely the quotations gathered by the authors support their contention. The Soviets exclude from their calculations of "peaceful" wars of

liberation virtually all conventional wars, and some of the military leaders evidently believe that the protection of the socialist camp might be necessary by preventive atomic war. During the era of Khrushchev—that attractive though contentious and sometimes downright dangerous antagonist, the man who refused to be a nonperson and whose two-volume memoir is now receiving the closest attention from Sovietologists—the Soviet Union clearly was backing away from the use of force, either in large or small wars. Then came the reversion to the traditional precepts of Marxism, and the leaders of today have not hesitated to announce in the most formal manner where they are going and how. To them the only purpose of peaceful coexistence apparently is to buy enough time to get hold of Western technology, especially computer technology—all the while they continue the arms race. Eventually the Soviet Union will attain such a position of power that as Brezhnev said in 1970, “no question of any importance in the world can be solved without our participation.”

About half of this volume is text, although even that half is heavy with quotation. The other half is comprised of various documents keyed to the text. A great deal of work has gone into this book, and it deserves close reading, after which the reader may be forced to rethink his position on détente and the overall sincerity of Soviet good will.

PROFESSOR ROBERT H. FERRELL
Naval War College

Luttwak, Edward N. *The Political Uses of Sea Power*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1974. 79p.

With the publication of this brief analytic study, Mr. Luttwak has once again proven the wisdom of the adage that “good things come in small packages.” Demanding no more than an hour and a half of concentrated reading, this book contains a treasury of the core

concepts necessary for either professional or interested lay observers who wish to develop an appreciation for the political worth of modern navies.

Using examples or analogies drawn from both the historic past and recent international experience, Luttwak skillfully outlines and supports the view that naval forces in the modern era play a psychological and political role in the peacetime interactions of nations which is both unique and little appreciated. In laying the theoretical basis for his premise, the author correctly notes that “The familiar attributes of an ocean navy—inherent mobility, tactical flexibility, and a wide geographic reach—render it peculiarly useful as an instrument of policy even in the absence of hostilities,” and that “the focus of Great Power naval strategy has been shifting to missions that are ‘political’ in the sense that their workings rely on the reactions of others, . . .” Luttwak further takes into account that much of the terminology associated with this unique characteristic of naval power is often ambiguous or marred by previously acquired and often misleading connotations. In his effort to avoid such misunderstanding, he brings into the jargon a new term—“suasion”—which he suggests is more neutral in its commonly understood meaning than the more frequently used terms, “naval presence” or “gunboat diplomacy.”

In outlining his “theory of suasion,” Luttwak casts the influence of naval power on the political decisions of other nations as but one form of the general peacetime influence of overall military power. Luttwak points out that

Any instrument of military power that can be used to inflict damage upon an adversary, physically limit his freedom of action, or reveal his intentions may also affect his conduct, and that of any interested third parties, even if force is never actually used. The necessary . . . condition is that the

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parties concerned perceive . . . the capabilities deployed, thus allowing these capabilities to intrude on their view of the policy environment and so affect their decisions. (emphasis added)

The reference to third party reactions is of interest here since this vital aspect of peacetime naval diplomacy is too often overlooked by those who are most concerned with the interactions of the major actors in world affairs. Particularly for the United States, the perceptions of third parties—allyed, adversary, or neutral—are of major importance. During the past quarter-century, this Nation has developed an international security system on a foundation of economic interdependence and mutual security support. Our principal possible adversaries, on the other hand, are much less dependent on the freely arrived at political decisions of their own client-states or trading partners. In effect, the security of the United States and its partners today is the result of freely held views of common vital interest cemented by the individual perceptions of the reality of U.S. power held by the political leadership of each nation so linked to us.

It is in this context that the special role of naval power in modern international affairs seen by Mr. Luttwak is of greatest significance. In his discussion of the impact on the policy decisions of other nations resulting from the use of "the symbolic warship," Luttwak emphasizes that the "symbolic warship can play its role only before, in order to prevent, a confrontation. Its effect on the local balance of power may be insignificant, but its purpose is to affirm a commitment of national power, local and strategic, naval or otherwise." He had previously pointed out that

Land-based forces . . . can also be deployed in a manner to encourage friends and coerce enemies, but only within the narrow constraints of insertion feasibility,

and with inherently greater risks, since the land nexus can convert any significant deployment into a (possibly unwanted) political commitment, with all the rigidities that this implies.

Since the United States stands as the focus of a worldwide *maritime* alliance system, its ability to fulfill overseas mutual security commitments remains credible to allies and adversaries alike only so long as its naval power is perceived to be adequate to the task. Thus, our adversaries must pursue a course of naval expansion activity calculated to undermine this perception by our allies, while we must not only maintain our existing superiority but, equally, make plain to both allies and neutrals that our forces are sufficient to the challenge.

Pursuing this point, Luttwak makes the cogent observation that "Whatever the imperatives of self-denigration imposed by the Congressional appropriations process, it is obvious that this official stance by the U.S. Navy (of decline in American naval power) must intrude on third-party perceptions of the (naval) balance of power." As a result of this "public relations" approach, Luttwak properly fears that "America's friends and clients are discouraged and intimidated by the presumed adverse trend in the balance of naval power; her enemies, on the other hand, are encouraged to believe that they may harm American interests with impunity."

There is much more which could be said in favor of the Luttwak study—it is that kind of paper—but, to do so would diminish the net impact of his work. There is also a real need for amplification of the seminal concepts which he has so concisely outlined.

On balance, the greatest asset of Mr. Luttwak's work is its combination of brevity and substance—its greatest weaknesses stem solely from the fact that so little analytical thinking has previously

been done along the same lines. I strongly commend this short but pithy and provocative work to all who would pretend to competence in the area of understanding the role of military—and particularly, naval—power in the “age of détente.”

JAMES F. McNULTY
Captain, U.S. Navy

Wheeler, Gerald E. *Admiral William Veazie Pratt, U.S. Navy: a Sailor's Life*. Washington, D.C.: Naval History Division, Department of the Navy. 1974. 456p.

We shall never know whether William Veazie Pratt would have made a great wartime admiral for he reached flag rank and rose to the top of the Navy during the peacetime years between 1921 and 1933. We do know that Admiral Pratt's role at the London Naval Conference in 1930 and his bad luck to head his service as the depression forced drastic cuts in the Navy meant that most naval officers did not regret his retirement in 1933.

While Professor Gerald Wheeler's admiration for this intelligent, humane, and extraordinarily professional naval officer is abundantly clear throughout his new biography, he concludes that Pratt's distinctive contributions to the Navy were rather modest. I would disagree. I believe that the evidence in Professor Wheeler's careful and detailed biography reveals Admiral Pratt as one of the outstanding figures of the modern American Navy. In his long career Pratt's two greatest contributions to the Navy and the Nation were his crucial role as Assistant Chief of Naval Operations in the conduct of World War I; and his courageous part in breaking the Anglo-American deadlock over cruiser limitations which made possible the London Naval Treaty of 1930.

As Assistant Chief of Naval Operations in World War I, Pratt managed, almost miraculously, to keep the stolid

and anglophobic CNO, Adm. William S. Benson, working effectively with the commander of the Navy's European forces, the brilliant but contentious anglophile Adm. William S. Sims. The eruption in 1919 of bitter charges and countercharges between Admiral Sims on the one side and Admiral Benson and Secretary of the Navy Daniels on the other convinces me that without Pratt in Washington, Sims' pent-up anger would have exploded during the war with disastrous consequences for the entire American war effort.

With the end of hostilities, the now Rear Admiral Pratt served as naval adviser to the American delegation of the Washington Conference in 1921-1922, but it was not until the London Conference of 1930 that his most important and controversial contribution to the limitation of naval armaments was made. Pratt was at that time called from his command of the U.S. Fleet to serve as naval adviser to the American delegation. The same quarrel between the United States and Great Britain over cruiser types and quotas that had caused the 1927 Geneva Naval Conference to fail seemed to once again doom the cause of disarmament. Pratt, however, had the courage to produce a compromise, in the conviction that since the Navy was well below the limits of the treaty, any agreement, no matter how imperfect, would serve the Navy well by providing long-term levels to build up to.

In his final evaluation of Pratt's career, Professor Wheeler cites Pratt's support for the 1930 London Treaty as one of the two issues “of transcendent importance to the Navy” on which Pratt was wrong. Perhaps this is because in the short run, during the Hoover administration, there was indeed no building up to treaty limits, and the Navy suffered continuous reductions which unquestionably damaged Pratt's prestige as CNO. Once Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933, Pratt's “treaty Navy”

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concept became, as one author has written, a magic formula for securing ever-increasing naval appropriations. For the Nation and the Navy, Admiral Pratt made the right decision in pressing for a compromise and a treaty in 1930.

In Professor Wheeler's judgment, Admiral Pratt's second great error was his willingness to trust Japan and his eagerness for friendship with Great Britain. Pratt had supported both the 1922 Washington naval treaty and the 1930 London naval treaty in the belief that if America and Great Britain could avoid rivalry between themselves, the two together could probably pressure Japan into limiting her navy as well. Pratt's willingness to trust Japan therefore depended upon the success of American cooperation with Great Britain. Moreover, it seems clear that Admiral Pratt never doubted that Japan was America's most likely future enemy, even if he refused to accept that war with Japan was inevitable.

Professor Wheeler, a distinguished historian of the U.S. Navy in the inter-war period, is especially well qualified to write this biography—the first ever—of Admiral Pratt. The book is based on wide research, most notably in Admiral Pratt's own extensive papers which fortuitously became available for research at the Naval War College while Professor

Wheeler held the King Chair of Maritime History there in 1968-1969. Professor Wheeler's scholarly yet eminently readable account of Admiral Pratt's life is valuable not only as the story of an individual's development but also as a case study in the sociology of the naval officer corps in this period. "Ticket-punching" careerism, cliques around rising admirals, and inexplicable flag selections are not innovations peculiar to the Navy of our generation. The author quotes generously from Pratt's fitness reports, and this art form has not advanced at all from the 1890's to the present. Beyond all this, Professor Wheeler's narrative of Pratt's role in the formation of American naval policy in World War I, at the Washington Conference, and from the 1930 London Conference to the end of the Republican era in 1933 is full of insights for our own struggles with strategic arms limitation and the fate of defense spending in times of national economic decline. Our defense establishment is now vastly larger and our management techniques more sophisticated, but I am not sure that we have nothing to learn from the experience of Admiral Pratt and his colleagues of 40 or 50 years ago.

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