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Cover
The Great White Fleet arrives in Australia, August 20, 1908. In "The Great White Fleet Sails Today? Twenty-First-Century Logistics Lessons from the 1907–1909 Voyage of the Great White Fleet," Christopher McMahon uses the difficulties the battle fleet of the U.S. Navy encountered on its around-the-world voyage of more than a century ago to make the case that USN forces attempting to operate in the western Pacific area during a modern crisis likely would suffer from many of the same logistical vulnerabilities.
Credit: Australian National Maritime Museum, via Wikimedia Commons

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The reemergence of great-power competition in a multipolar world is seen, widely and rightly, as the most important feature of the current strategic environment. All too often today, however, historical precedents for this new global order are remembered only dimly, at best. The rise of China in the twenty-first century as a great power—and especially and increasingly as a great maritime power—calls for renewed attention to these precedents. In “Nationalism, Geopolitics, and Naval Expansionism: From the Nineteenth Century to the Rise of China,” Robert S. Ross offers a systematic survey of three historical cases that provide a useful framework for understanding the contemporary Chinese challenge: France in the 1850s under Louis-Napoléon, Germany in the two decades preceding the First World War, and the United States during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. In all three cases, naval expansionism was driven by a combination of committed political leadership and nationalist sentiment rather than by any careful strategic calculus. The geopolitical circumstances facing France and Germany caused these efforts to be ineffective and indeed counterproductive, while in the American case our geographical isolation favored the fundamental transformation of the United States into a major maritime power. Ross argues that, while China no longer faces a serious continental threat (he offers an interesting analysis here of the Russia-China relationship), its maritime ambitions are not about to go uncontested. Whether the strategic costs associated with those ambitions are worth the candle is the large question he poses to the reader. Robert Ross is a professor of political science at Boston College.

In “Escalation at Sea: Stability and Instability in Maritime East Asia,” Ian Bowers addresses one dimension of the potential strategic costs of confrontation in the South China Sea. He argues that the nature of the maritime environment itself is such that the risk of dangerous escalation of incidents at sea is less than often supposed, with reference particularly to the history of U.S.-Soviet interactions of this kind. Ian Bowers is an associate professor at the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies.

The increasingly contested nature of the maritime domain of the present has an important implication for U.S. naval forces that too often is overlooked. As Christopher McMahon argues in “The Great White Fleet Sails Today? Twenty-First-Century Logistics Lessons from the 1907–1909 Voyage of the Great White
Fleet,” the sealift capabilities currently available to the U.S. military are inadequate; dangerously dependent on foreign sources; and, in any serious international conflict, highly vulnerable to destruction. This is particularly so in the western Pacific, as the Chinese continue a rapid expansion of their long-range antiship missile forces. Christopher J. McMahon currently holds the Maritime Administration Emory S. Land Chair of Merchant Marine Affairs at the Naval War College.

Two historical studies of crisis decision-making round out the current issue. In “The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Joint Chiefs: Military Operations to Meet Political Ends,” Dan Martins provides a carefully researched account of the oft-told tale of President John F. Kennedy’s management of political-military decision-making during the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. Finally, in “Coalition Coordination during the Boxer Rebellion: How Twenty-Seven ‘Councils of Senior Naval Commanders’ Contributed to the Conduct of Operations,” Umio Otsuka tells the little-known story of the improvised organizational arrangement devised by the on-scene allied naval commanders to manage the crisis created by the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900. Commander Dan Martins is a serving U.S. naval officer. Vice Admiral Umio Otsuka is Director General, Defense Intelligence Headquarters, Ministry of Defense of Japan.

IF YOU VISIT US
Our editorial offices are located in Sims Hall, in the Naval War College Coasters Harbor Island complex, on the third floor, west wing (rooms W334, 335, 309, 332). For building-security reasons, it would be necessary to meet you at the main entrance and escort you to our suite—give us a call ahead of time (401-841-2236).
Rear Admiral Jeff Harley is the fifty-sixth President of the U.S. Naval War College. The College is responsible for educating future leaders, developing their strategic perspective and critical thinking, and enhancing their capability to advise senior leaders and policymakers.

Admiral Harley is a career surface warfare officer whose sea-duty assignments have included command of USS Milius (DDG 69), Destroyer Squadron 9, and Amphibious Force Seventh Fleet / Expeditionary Strike Group 7 / Task Force 76. During his command of Milius, the ship participated in combat operations supporting Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and his crew won the Battle Efficiency Award and the Marjorie Sterrett Battleship Fund Award for overall combat readiness.

Admiral Harley attended the University of Minnesota, graduating with a bachelor of arts in political science, and received master of arts degrees from the Naval War College and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. Additionally, he served as a military fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City.
ON JUNE 15, 2018, your Naval War College brought to a close the 2017–18 academic year, with all the pomp and circumstance the occasion deserved. We were honored to have Defense Secretary James Mattis address the 544 resident and nonresident students in attendance, from the Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, federal civilian agencies, and the College’s international programs. When we add in the students who graduated in the November 2017 and March 2018 midyear ceremonies and the 991 students who completed course work through our College of Distance Education programs, we arrive at a grand total of 1,647 students in the class of 2018. That this class is one of the largest in the College’s 134-year history serves as one indication of the positive influence this great institution continues to have on the Navy and the nation. Also during this ceremony, we were able to award the first twenty Naval War College international master’s degrees ever presented, to a select group of our students from allied nations who worked side by side with their American counterparts in meeting the requirements for this academic degree.

In his commencement remarks, Secretary Mattis stated: “We are witnessing a world awash in change—a world beset by the reemergence of great-power competition, and we define the categories of challenges as urgency, power, and political will.” He went on to say that he expects the school’s graduates “to be at the top of your game mentally, physically, and spiritually, and to work to maintain that standard throughout the rest of your career.” The graduates, he added, now have “the credentials to measure up in the crucible of combat, and your character must do the rest.” He closed with an admonition to the students to “Keep your wits about you, keep your grace under fire, your civility with subordinates; inspiring those you lead
with humility and intellectual rigor, and reconciling war’s grim realities with your political leaders’ aspirations.”

Just days prior to graduation we hosted the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and many other distinguished visitors during this year’s Current Strategy Forum, which served as the capstone event of our academic year. This was the sixty-ninth forum held since the inception of the series, and the theme—“Technology, Innovation, and Strategy”—was particularly relevant to the challenges we foresee for our graduates in the decades to come. The presence of leaders from the Department of Defense and the Department of the Navy here in Newport is indicative of the resurgence of interest in and support for the education and professional development of our officers and senior enlisted personnel. In a related subject, we are intensely involved in the Department of the Navy’s Education for Seapower study (referred to as E4S), which is being led by Under Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modly. He has formed an independent team of subject matter experts to conduct a comprehensive study of learning throughout the Department of the Navy. I will share with you their recommendations when they are made to the Secretary of the Navy early next year.

Looking downrange, this September we will host the twenty-third International Seapower Symposium, titled “Security, Order, Prosperity.” This truly unique event, held biennially, often is referred to as the largest gathering of maritime leaders in the history of the world. For nearly a half-century, this symposium has provided a forum for senior leaders from allied navies and coast guards from around the globe to discuss common maritime challenges and consider opportunities to enhance international maritime security cooperation and improve fleet operations. More than one hundred service chiefs and war college presidents will spend three days discussing crucial issues and engaging with panels of distinguished speakers. I will share the results of this major event in future issues of the Review.

From my vantage point, I see all the trend lines at the College moving in positive directions. We have taken significant steps to ensure that the College remains the Navy’s flagship institution for top-quality graduate and professional military education. The combination of motivated and engaged students, dedicated scholars and teachers, and relevant and constantly refined curricula will ensure that the return on the Navy’s and the nation’s investment will be direct and sustained. In the years ahead, a large and growing cadre of enlightened critical thinkers will go forth from Newport to succeed in positions of leadership and senior management throughout the national security community of the United States and our friends and allies. The College is committed to ensuring that our alumni
are recognized universally as better decision makers, more effective leaders, and more compassionate and patriotic citizens.

JEFFREY A. HARLEY
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
President, U.S. Naval War College
Robert S. Ross is a professor of political science at Boston College and an associate at the John King Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University. He has been a visiting scholar at the Institute for Security Studies, Peking University; a Fulbright professor at the Chinese Foreign Affairs College; and a visiting senior fellow at the Institute of International Strategic Studies, Tsinghua University. From 2007 to 2016, he was an adjunct professor at the Institute for Defence Studies, Norwegian Defence University College, and in 2009 he was a visiting scholar at the Institute for Strategy, Royal Danish Defence College. His recent publications include coediting Strategic Adjustment and the Rise of China: Power and Politics in East Asia (Cornell, 2017) and authoring Chinese Security Policy: Structure, Power, and Politics (Routledge, 2009). He has testified before Senate and House committees and the Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee. He is a member of the Academic Advisory Group, U.S.-China Working Group of the U.S. Congress, and is a consultant to U.S. government agencies.

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NATIONALISM, GEOPOLITICS, AND NAVAL EXPANSIONISM
From the Nineteenth Century to the Rise of China

Robert S. Ross

There is perhaps no more momentous great-power strategic decision, short of launching a war, than to develop a power-projection, war-winning maritime capability—thereby challenging, and risking heightened conflict with, an established maritime power. The likely costs of such a decision should caution the rising power against pursuing expansive naval ambitions. Such costs include the long-term costs of building the requisite number of surface ships that possess the advanced engineering and military capabilities necessary to enable maritime security; of diverting resources from other pressing territorial-defense and domestic demands; of suffering the predictable societal, economic, and security impacts of heightened and protracted great-power conflict; of preparing for the possibility of great-power war; and ultimately, perhaps, of losing a great-power war.

Despite these generalized risks entailed in pursuing destabilizing maritime capabilities, and frequently despite particular risks inherent to their insecure geopolitical circumstances and interior borders, many great powers have pursued extensive great-power maritime capabilities. In the past two hundred years, France twice challenged British maritime hegemony. The United States initiated its effort to develop global maritime capabilities in the early twentieth century. Germany challenged British maritime security in the early twentieth century. Russia frequently sought great-maritime-power capabilities, including in the 1850s, in the 1890s and the early twenty-first century, and in the late 1970s and ’80s. Japan simultaneously sought maritime hegemony in the western Pacific Ocean and continental hegemony on the East Asian mainland in the 1930s. In the twenty-first century, China has launched an extensive buildup of its navy to
secure great-power maritime capabilities and to challenge U.S. maritime dominance in East Asia.

Great-power development of destabilizing maritime capabilities frequently has reflected the nationalist aspirations for great-power status associated with the possession of large capital ships and a reputation for maritime dominance. Great-power nationalist aspirations may reflect the personal ambitions of autocratic leaders, the pressures on unstable autocratic regimes to use nationalism to enhance domestic legitimacy, the popular aspirations of voters in a democratic state for international prestige, or a combination thereof. But whatever its particular sources, naval nationalism can have the effect of encouraging expansionist maritime policies, which can force acquisitions that are not informed by strategic interests and that ultimately undermine security and contribute to unnecessary and costly great-power conflict, including war.

This article examines three case studies of nationalist-driven great-power maritime aspirations from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It addresses the role of nationalism in driving French maritime ambitions in the 1850s and 1860s, under the leadership of Louis-Napoléon; German maritime ambitions in the early 1900s, under the leadership of Kaiser Wilhelm II; and U.S. maritime ambitions in the late 1890s and especially at the beginning of the following decade, during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. In each case, the article examines the high cost of the revisionist power’s naval expansionism, the relative importance of its strategic and economic maritime interests to its naval buildup, and the nonmaterial nationalist sources of its expanding maritime ambitions and quest for great-power status. It places these countries’ naval nationalism within the context of their distinct geopolitical circumstances and the challenges to their continental security interests, explaining both the failures of French and German naval expansionism and the success of American naval expansionism.

The article’s fourth case study examines China’s recent ambition to acquire great-power maritime capabilities. Like the other case studies, this one considers the material and nationalist sources of China’s naval ambitions. It also analyzes China’s recent naval expansionism in the context of China’s post–Cold War geopolitical circumstances, considers the prospects for China’s success, and explores the implications for great-power politics and U.S.-Chinese relations.

NATIONALISM, FRENCH NAVAL AMBITIONS IN THE 1850s AND ’60s, AND THE ANGLO-FRENCH NAVAL ARMS RACE
In 1858, following the attempted assassination of Louis-Napoléon by Italian nationalists based in England and led by Felice Orsini, France began a major expansion of its maritime defense budget and its naval shipbuilding program. The catalyst for the French buildup was British naval power and popular French
hostility toward the apparent inadequacy of British opposition to anti-French terrorists in the aftermath of the failed assassination attempt.

The era began with France’s completion in 1858 of the large, modern port facilities at Cherbourg on the English Channel—directly across from English shores. France also deployed more ships in the English Channel, and with construction of the Suez Canal it expanded its presence in the Mediterranean Sea, thus posing a growing challenge to British maritime security. France also significantly increased its defense spending through the early 1860s to support its naval buildup; in six years the French naval budget grew by over 30 percent. Louis-Napoléon also increased French naval personnel, so that the number of French sailors and marines was nearly twice the British total.

Along with increased naval spending and naval expansion, France launched a new stage of naval competition when it preceded Great Britain in the construction of the first ironclad capital ship. In 1858, it ordered construction of six ironclads; it began constructing the first that year and another in 1859; and it commissioned the first, Gloire, in 1860. France thus began a rapid ship-construction program, and by the end of the decade it had constructed twenty-six ironclads, representing a challenge to Great Britain in the form of potential maritime supremacy in British coastal waters.

As French naval power grew, the regime explicitly challenged British security. In 1860, the French ambassador in London warned that if Great Britain did not accept French ambitions in Europe, France would destroy the foundations of British naval power. Napoléon III publicly aspired to turn the Mediterranean Sea into a “French lake.”

Louis-Napoléon, Nationalism, and French Naval Ambition

France’s ambitious maritime policy was financially costly and strategically risky. While the country increased its naval budget, its army budget stagnated and its continental defense capability languished. At the outset of the naval buildup, France’s naval ambitions also risked heightened conflict with Great Britain. The combination of belligerent French diplomacy and the naval buildup created the 1859–60 French “invasion scare” in England. French naval ambitions alarmed Queen Victoria and Prince Consort Albert. Queen Victoria argued that Great Britain’s “very existence may be said to depend” on the country’s resolve to maintain its maritime supremacy. The prime minister, Henry J. Temple, Lord Palmerston, was especially alarmed by the French buildup and successfully argued for funding the rapid fortification of British harbors and dockyards.

France’s challenge to British maritime supremacy was intrinsically risky, yet French naval ambitions were not fueled by either relative expanded financial resources or increased security or economic concerns. Trends in relative British
and French economic development in the 1850s did not suggest a financial opportunity for France to outspend Great Britain in a naval arms race. On the contrary, during the 1850s trends in British and French economic growth significantly reduced French financial competitive ability vis-à-vis Great Britain, and by 1860 British gross domestic product (GDP) was approximately 40 percent greater than French GDP, so Great Britain was in a much better position to fund an arms race. Moreover, unlike France, because of its territorial security Great Britain could prioritize funding for the navy within its overall defense budget.

France’s growing naval budget burden also did not represent a strategic response to increased British maritime capabilities. From the end of the Crimean War through 1859, London maintained a moderate maritime budget and shipbuilding program and the strength of its fleet declined, even as France modernized and expanded the size of its fleet. London showed minimal interest in developing ironclad ships. Moreover, the bulk of British ships remained in distant waters rather than in the vicinity of French coastal waters. Thus, heightened threat perception did not drive France’s revisionist maritime acquisitions.

Similarly, concern for economic security did not drive France’s heightened maritime ambitions. Despite France’s colonial presence in northern Africa and its recent acquisition of colonies in Indochina, France remained dependent on its continental economic relationships. In 1858, approximately two-thirds of French total trade was conducted with four of its immediate neighbors: Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Spain. During the decade prior to the onset of the American Civil War in 1860, the United States was France’s leading single trade partner, but the U.S. portion of total French trade declined over the course of the 1850s. Thus, growing global economic interests and the increased importance of protecting sea-lanes and overseas trade relationships did not drive France’s heightened interest in maritime power and its challenge to British security.

Thus, in general, material interests cannot explain France’s costly pursuit of maritime ambitions and its challenge to British maritime security. Rather, France’s naval ambitions reflected a combination of Louis-Napoléon’s personal commitment to developing French naval power and his use of French naval power to sustain his domestic political legitimacy, and thereby the stability of his autocratic regime. The French fleet under Louis-Napoléon was a “prestige fleet.” In its support for Louis-Napoléon, the French populace sought glory over all else, and the navy was the “principal instrument of glory.”

Louis-Napoléon’s preoccupation with great-power status to the detriment of security contributed to a devastating French military defeat, the demise of his nationalist regime, and his exile from France.
Louis-Napoléon’s overwhelming election as president in 1848 and his continuing popularity reflected his populist legitimacy among the rural masses as the French leader. They believed he represented the interests of the people rather than the aristocracy and would restore the glory of the French empire. He was the “Napoléon of the people.” His antiaristocratic coup d’état in 1851 and the restoration of the empire were well received as promesses, populist measures. Nonetheless, potential opposition to his regime was a constant concern, and he depended on the army to maintain domestic stability and suppress potential opposition movements. In this political context, an essential aspect of Napoléon’s domestic legitimacy derived from his stature as a military leader. On his election to the presidency in 1848, he put on a military uniform and posed as an imperial leader, and frequently reviewed the troops with great fanfare. Moreover, popular support in the 1850s for military adventurism contributed to France’s military policies and its participation in the Crimean War, its war in Italy, and its Mexican expedition. Napoléon’s “forward foreign policy,” including his support for war against Russia, reflected his effort to retain his “precarious hold upon the French people.”

In the aftermath of Louis-Napoléon’s succession of military successes in the 1850s, French naval nationalism assumed heightened importance as a source of the regime’s legitimacy. Moreover, following the Orsini bomb plot, French public opinion turned against London. Orsini’s bomb had been made in England, and the French public was dissatisfied with British efforts to curtail subsequent anti-French activities in England. In this domestic and international context, despite Louis-Napoléon’s commitment to Anglo-French cooperation, his domestic political interests encouraged him to pursue French international prestige through the construction of world-class maritime capabilities.

In addition to his domestic political interest in developing expansive naval power, Louis-Napoléon also possessed a strong personal nationalist interest in military affairs, and particularly in maritime power and French shipbuilding. He played an active role in developing day-to-day French naval policy, and he personally decided that France should commence construction of the world’s first ironclad ship. Following the French bombardment of Sevastopol during the Crimean War in 1854 and the substantial damage that return fire inflicted on French wooden ships, Louis-Napoléon proposed the development of ironclads. He then actively promoted research into ironclad technologies and ordered and oversaw the early experiments of the armor-plated ships, leading to the completion of Gloire. He also made detailed recommendations for the dimensions of particular ships for particular missions. He was thus an active “lobbyist” on behalf of the French navy and the “prime catalyst” of French maritime innovation. The ironclads were the “Emperor’s own creation,” and he had “inaugurated
a great revolution in naval architecture." His intrinsic fascination with naval matters made possible the allocation of scarce financial resources away from the French army for the construction and deployment of ironclads, which fed France’s ambition to become a major maritime power and challenge British maritime security.

**Geopolitics and the Failure of French Nationalism**

Not only did Louis-Napoléon’s leadership of French populist nationalism and his personal naval ambitions fail to promote greater French maritime security and French great-power status, but rather they contributed to a major weakening of French security. In 1858, in response to France’s completion of its naval base at Cherbourg and the continuance of its ambitious shipbuilding program, Great Britain fortified its coastal regions and began deployment of a Channel Fleet—an unusual policy in peacetime. Thousands of British volunteer riflemen went to the shore to defend Great Britain’s coast from the French navy.

Then, when French construction of the first ironclads threatened to make British Royal Navy ships obsolete, Great Britain in 1859 began construction of its own ironclads, launching HMS Warrior in December. Between October 1860 and August 1861, Great Britain increased its planned construction of ironclads from four to fifteen ships. In response to France’s numerical superiority in ironclads, Britain abandoned its ongoing construction of wooden, screw-propulsion liners in favor of an all-ironclad fleet. Moreover, Great Britain’s ironclads were superior to France’s ironclads, in that they had iron hulls, in contrast to the wooden hulls of the French ironclads. In addition, British ironclads were over 50 percent larger than French ironclads. Trends in numerical superiority also favored Great Britain.

By the early 1860s, England’s superior financial resources and industrial strength had dashed any French hope that France might take a permanent lead over Great Britain in warship construction. By the mid-1860s, France had no choice but to acquiesce to enduring British maritime superiority, and both sides returned to their pre–arms race levels of defense spending, in keeping with a status quo ante maritime balance of power.

But the greatest impact of Louis-Napoléon’s personal preoccupation with maritime affairs and France’s popular nationalist naval aspirations was the effect on French continental security. Despite Louis-Napoléon’s dependence on the army for his political base, domestic prestige, and maintenance of domestic stability, the army was the weakest of the French armed services. The service was poorly administered and Napoléon neglected to use his authority to modernize the ground forces and impose needed reforms on recruitment and training. Thus, in the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian War, the French army performed poorly, failing to provide even modest resistance to the Prussian invasion.
Meanwhile, during the war the navy was mostly irrelevant, as the decisive battles were fought on land, not at sea. But equally revealing was the French navy’s poor wartime performance, despite its numerical superiority over the Prussian navy. By the time the navy mobilized for war, the decisive land battles were over and the outcome of the war had been decided. Napoléon’s focus on the development of a large maritime fleet to enhance French great-power prestige did not include development of the intelligence and training required to deploy the fleet quickly and effectively.20

French resources and Louis-Napoléon’s military interests would have served France better if they had focused on continental security rather than French maritime grandeur, and if France had maintained a low-cost yet effective guerre de course capability that could protect French trading interests. France pursued this strategy in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War when it developed its “asymmetric” Jeune École maritime policy.21 Ultimately, however, Louis-Napoléon’s preoccupation with great-power status to the detriment of security contributed to a devastating French military defeat, the demise of his nationalist regime, and his exile from France.

NATIONALISM, GERMAN NAVAL AMBITIONS, AND THE PRE–WORLD WAR I ANGLO-GERMAN NAVAL ARMS RACE

Beginning in 1898, Germany launched a major naval shipbuilding effort that imposed a significant financial burden on the country’s finances and provoked a dangerous arms race with Great Britain. In 1898, Germany’s First Naval Law funded the construction over six years of nineteen battleships and an additional fifty ships. Two years later, the Second Naval Law nearly doubled the scope of this plan, providing unlimited funding for construction of thirty-eight battleships and a total of ninety-six ships. Between 1900 and 1905, Germany laid down twelve battleships.

When Great Britain responded to Germany’s naval buildup with the construction of the first Dreadnought-class battleship in 1905, thus neutralizing Germany’s superior matériel, Germany countered with its own dreadnought program, determined to outpace Britain and challenge its maritime dominance. The 1906 German Novelle (supplemental bill) allocated funding for two dreadnoughts and increased naval spending by 35 percent.

But British efforts to sustain the naval arms race led to ever-further expansion of Germany’s shipbuilding plans and to greater German naval expenditures. Between 1905 and 1914, the German naval budget increased by 102 percent and absorbed an ever-larger share of the total defense budget. Between 1901 and 1909, the German naval budget nearly equaled the entire German budget deficit, and it continued to grow.22
Kaiser Wilhelm, Nationalism, and German Naval Ambition

Germany’s naval ambitions were strategically risky. They provoked a naval arms race with Britain and risked a British preventive attack on the nascent German fleet, a “Copenhagen.” British leaders, including Admiral of the Fleet Sir John A. Fisher and Civil Lord of the Admiralty Arthur Lee, advocated such an attack, and German leaders, including State Secretary of the Imperial Naval Office Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, were acutely aware of the risk of a British preventive attack before Germany could achieve a deterrent capability, during the “danger zone” of its naval buildup. Equally important, Germany’s naval ambitions threatened the German ground force’s capability and German continental security. As tension mounted on the continent and the likelihood of war increased, budget competition from the navy increasingly constrained the German army’s access to resources. From 1904 to 1912, while the naval budget climbed 137 percent, the army budget grew 47 percent. Despite Germany’s precarious two-front territorial defense dilemma, from 1889 to 1911 the relative size of the naval budget grew from 20 percent to nearly 55 percent of the army budget, so Germany essentially was allocating equal financing to the navy and each of the land fronts.

Neither expanded relative financial resources nor increased security or economic interests can explain Germany’s ambitious and risky naval ambitions. Unlike France in the 1850s and ’60s, Germany experienced considerable industrial development in the 1880s and ’90s. From 1880 to 1900, the German GDP grew a remarkable 44 percent; during this same period, the British GDP grew less than 30 percent. But because of Great Britain’s prior significant economic lead over Germany, Germany’s more rapid economic development did not enable it to diminish significantly Britain’s financial advantage; in 1900, the British economy remained nearly one-third larger than the German economy. Overall, British global industrial domination diminished in the last decades of the nineteenth century, but Germany’s industrial development had not yet yielded it the financial parity with Great Britain that could foster the confidence necessary to challenge British maritime dominance. On the contrary, rather than benefiting from German economic growth, Germany’s increased naval budget was a major source of Germany’s budget deficit. Moreover, Germany should have been cautioned further by the British ability to prioritize its naval budget over its army budget, unlike Germany.

Germany’s ready dismissal of its economic constraints did not reflect a heightened British maritime threat to German security. During the 1880s and early ’90s, the British navy became increasingly overextended as its colonial commitments came under challenge, not only in distant waters of the Western Hemisphere and East Asia, but also in European waters, with the rise of the French and Russian...
navies and the prospect of Franco-Russian cooperation. The latter development challenged British maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea and compelled Great Britain to budget so as to maintain its two-power standard. Moreover, worldwide interest in maritime power had stimulated ship production among all the great powers. Whereas in 1893 British battleships nearly equaled in number the combined total of all the other great powers’ battleships, in 1897 its advantage had disappeared; it now possessed approximately two-thirds of the total of the other great powers’ battleships. In this transformed strategic environment, Great Britain reduced its strategic commitments in the Caribbean Sea and in Northeast Asia and redeployed much of its fleet to the Mediterranean.26 Thus, in the 1890s, British maritime capabilities and deployments did not pose a growing threat to German maritime security that might explain Germany’s insistence on incurring the financial and strategic burdens of unrestrained naval expansion and an Anglo-German arms race.

Germany’s global colonial and economic interests expanded in the 1890s and the early twentieth century, but they were not a compelling driver of naval expansion either. Granted, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck’s interest in colonial expansion and Germany’s acquisitions in Africa and the Pacific Ocean in the 1880s and ’90s created a German motivation to protect its colonial possessions and its trade with its new colonies; moreover, from 1899 to 1910, as Germany required ever-greater exports to support its growing industrial sector, total German foreign trade increased by nearly 80 percent, creating in parallel a greater German interest in maritime security.27 Nonetheless, German colonies made only a secondary contribution to German economic prosperity. As late as 1895, over 60 percent of Germany’s trade was with its European neighbors. The overwhelming share of Germany’s remaining trade, and its most important overseas trade, was conducted with the United States. German trade with its colonies was insignificant.28 Thus, for Germany, economic security priorities lay in continental security.

Thus, in the mid-1890s Chancellor Leo von Caprivi argued that Germany should not seek maritime security through development of a major oceangoing fleet. In particular, he argued that Germany lacked the maritime potential to guarantee its transatlantic trade with the United States. Because Germany’s continental neighbors were its most important trading partners and its colonies were inconsequential to German economic security, Caprivi believed that Germany

*Kaiser Wilhelm’s pursuit of his personal naval ambitions and his political manipulation of popular German naval nationalism not only failed to promote German maritime security . . . but contributed to a major weakening of German continental security.*
should concentrate its defense resources on its ground forces to enable it to dominate the continent, and that it should develop only a limited counterblockade capability to ensure continued access to overseas trade.29 But Caprivi’s prudent foreign policy preferences failed to gain the kaiser’s support, and advocates of naval expansion soon dominated the development of German maritime policy.

As in the discussion of the sources of French maritime policy from 1858 through the 1860s under Louis-Napoléon, German material interests cannot explain Germany’s costly maritime ambitions in the 1890s and early twentieth century and its challenge to British maritime security. Rather, similarly to France’s ambitions under Louis-Napoléon, Germany’s revisionist naval ambitions and its maritime policies reflected the destructive combination of Kaiser Wilhelm’s personal nationalist commitment to developing a global naval capability that would challenge British maritime dominance and the growing dependence of the regime on nationalism for domestic legitimacy.

Kaiser Wilhelm’s commitment to building a world-class German navy, regardless of the strategic and financial impediments, reflected his personal obsession with naval power and his association of naval power with great-power status and Germany’s destiny. He considered the head of state to be the “officer of the watch of the ship of state” and identified his historic mission as the development of a German navy with stature and capabilities similar to those of the German army. He personally telegraphed shipbuilding orders to the naval yards. He bestowed on himself the title of grand admiral of the Imperial German Navy, and he enjoyed his status as admiral of the Russian navy; admiral of the royal navies of Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark; and honorary admiral of the Greek navy. He possessed a personal flotilla of naval ships that he used for his summer voyages. From the earliest days of his regime he wore his naval uniform and saw to it that he was the only member of the German aristocracy to wear an executive naval officer’s uniform. He also dressed his sons in naval uniforms. As Admiral Tirpitz later reported, Wilhelm regarded the German navy as his “mechanical toy.”30

Wilhelm associated his personal attachment to naval power with the necessary emergence of Germany as the preeminent world power. When he spoke of Germany achieving its “place in the sun” he meant that Germany must possess the world’s most powerful navy. In August 1911, when Germany’s arms race with Great Britain was at its height, he declared that Germany must strengthen its navy “so that we can be sure that nobody will dispute with us our place in the sun which belongs to us!” He insisted that in distant oceans of the globe “no important decision should be taken without Germany and the German Kaiser.” He believed that “without being a world power one was nothing but a poor appearance.” When he encountered among his advisers opposition to his plans to increase the naval budget, he exclaimed, “I will not allow England to tell me what to do.”31
But Germany’s revisionist naval ambitions, its challenge to British maritime security, and its initiation of the arms race reflected more than Kaiser Wilhelm’s personal preoccupation with maritime power and his commitment to German great-power status and nationalist aspirations. Germany under Wilhelm was experiencing intensifying societal pressures for political reform of its autocratic monarchy. In these circumstances, rather than yield to popular demands for liberalization, Wilhelm and his conservative advisers developed domestic and foreign policies that would unify the German people behind Wilhelm and his autocratic leadership and consolidate his monarchy. For the German autocracy, the navy was the most powerful source of German nationalist unity, so appeals to German naval power served the interests of the German regime as well as Wilhelm’s personal ambitions, just as naval expansionism had served Louis-Napoléon’s interest in bolstering regime legitimacy.

In the aftermath of German unification, many of Germany’s institutions, including the army, railways, and postal service, were not national institutions but institutions of the German component states. Because a German navy did not exist prior to unification in 1871, it was created by the new German imperial government under the direct authority of the kaiser. It was the foremost German “national institution.” In addition, the navy embodied German middle-class concepts of German culture and international economic superiority. And unlike the German army, the German navy was not the exclusive realm of the aristocracy; members of the German bourgeoisie could enlist in the navy and rise through the ranks to become senior officers. This created widespread popular support for the German navy.

Within German society, the Navy League occupied a prominent place. It was the most popular of all Germany’s various nationalist groups, including the Pan-German League and the Colonial Society, and it established branches throughout the country. Despite its later start, in 1898, within its first eighteen months, the Navy League surpassed in total membership all the other nationalist groups combined. The 1900 Second Naval Law stimulated a major increase in Navy League membership, and by 1907 it had over a million members and associates, making its membership over eight times larger than that of the Colonial Society.

Thus, on the one hand, for German naval leaders seeking support for naval spending, appeals to popular nationalism were effective. Wilhelm understood this and planned budget politics accordingly, to realize his personal nationalist ambitions. On the other hand, for the German elite seeking to promote its nationalist credentials and foster national unity under the monarchy, the navy was the perfect nationalist instrument. Thus, as in France under Louis-Napoléon, a mutually reinforcing relationship existed between Kaiser Wilhelm’s use of popular naval nationalism to serve his personal ambition for Germany’s naval buildup...
and its great-power status and the monarchy’s use of naval expansionism to enhance popular support for the regime. Admiral Tirpitz well understood this dual value of naval nationalism.\(^{36}\)

**Geopolitics and the Failure of German Nationalism**

Kaiser Wilhelm’s pursuit of his personal naval ambitions and his political manipulation of popular German naval nationalism not only failed to promote German maritime security and Germany’s “place in the sun” as a maritime power but contributed to a major weakening of German continental security.\(^{37}\) Despite Germany’s extensive effort to compete with British naval power, throughout World War I the German fleet of dreadnoughts was unable to challenge British maritime supremacy. In the decade prior to World War I, whereas Berlin allocated between 19 and 26 percent of its defense budget to the navy, London allocated 60 percent of its defense budget to the navy. Ultimately, Wilhelm and Tirpitz had to give up the naval race to focus Germany’s limited resources on its army and continental security.\(^{38}\)

Great Britain’s victory in the naval race enabled it to impose a close-in blockade of German maritime trade for the duration of the war. The German fleet ventured into the North Sea to engage the British fleet just once during the war. Although Germany fared better than Britain in the 1916 battle of Jutland and could claim a tactical victory, its greater losses relative to the sizes of the respective fleets deterred Germany from seeking a second engagement. Its fleet remained in harbor for the remainder of the war, essentially irrelevant to its outcome.\(^{39}\)

But the greatest impact of Germany’s nationalist naval ambition was its diversion of scarce economic resources from more strategically important priorities, and thus its contribution to German military defeat in World War I. In the maritime theater, Wilhelm’s preoccupation with battleships led him to neglect German development of a cost-effective counterblockade submarine fleet that could have posed a more secure and effective threat against the British fleet.\(^{40}\)

In contrast, Adolf Hitler later would understand the value of a less expensive submarine capability to a continental power’s blockade and counterblockade capabilities. In September 1939, after the early successes of his U-boats against British shipping, Hitler switched to construction of a massive U-boat fleet. His *guerre de course* strategy drastically reduced British imports, while posing a minimal constraint on Germany’s continental capabilities.\(^{41}\)

In the continental theater of World War I, the effect of Wilhelm’s failure to place sufficient priority on German ground forces was all too clear on the western front. Diversion of funds equivalent to the cost of even one dreadnought to create an additional German division might well have enabled an early German victory against France and altered the campaign on the eastern front against Russia.
Ultimately, Kaiser Wilhelm’s intense military interests would have served Germany better if he had focused on developing a more robust continental security force so as to dominate continental Europe, while procuring only a limited maritime capability, rather than on securing Germany’s “place in the sun” as a global maritime great power. Wilhelm’s nationalist preoccupation with German naval preeminence on the high seas contributed to a devastating German military defeat in World War I and the demise of his monarchy.

NATIONALISM, AMERICAN NAVAL AMBITIONS, AND AMERICA’S RISE TO WORLD POWER
As was true of the sources of France’s and Germany’s expansive naval ambitions, the development of expansive U.S. naval ambitions during Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency in the first decade of the twentieth century did not reflect pressing security or international economic concerns. Rather, similarly to the French and German experiences, the U.S. maritime buildup reflected a combination of a personal nationalist leadership commitment to developing great-power maritime capabilities and the domestic politics of mass nationalism.

From the end of the Civil War until the passage in 1890 of the so-called Battleship Act, the United States neglected its navy; minimal funding and poor conditions allowed the deterioration of the country’s naval capabilities. The 1890 act funded construction of three second-class battleships to provide a coastal, guerre de course naval capability. Then in 1895 Congress authorized funding for the construction of the first two first-class American battleships and the development of an oceangoing power-projection capability. In the ten years between 1900 and 1910, the U.S. Navy commissioned twenty-five first-class battleships, including world-class dreadnought-type battleships, as well as many smaller ships. During the Roosevelt presidency, the Navy commissioned twenty-one battleships. After fifteen years of funding, in 1910 the U.S. Navy possessed the second-largest number of capital ships in the world.42

This naval buildup was the result of a fundamental reorientation of U.S. military priorities. The 1890 naval act doubled in one year U.S. spending on the Navy. During the Roosevelt presidency, the naval budget increased from fifty-five million dollars to $140 million, a peacetime record for U.S. naval appropriations, and the tonnage of U.S. capital ships doubled. The Roosevelt administration also tripled the number of active-duty naval personnel. During this same period, the U.S. Army budget stagnated and the number of army personnel decreased by 20 percent. Whereas in 1900 the number of naval personnel was less than 20 percent that of army personnel, in 1910 that proportion was nearly 60 percent. Increased naval spending during the Roosevelt presidency also changed federal
budget priorities. Between 1900 and 1910, the defense budget share of the overall federal budget increased from 36.6 percent to 45.1 percent. Under Roosevelt’s leadership, the United States began its transition from being a land power to a naval power.

Theodore Roosevelt, Nationalism, and American Naval Ambition

Neither increased U.S. security concerns nor greater U.S. international economic interests can explain the costly transformation in U.S. defense policy. In international security affairs, the rapid buildup of U.S. naval forces coincided with the most secure era in U.S. history. Whereas since 1776 the United States had been plagued with concerns about European military presence in the Western Hemisphere and the implications for U.S. territorial security, by the time of the Roosevelt administration all the European powers had retreated from the Western Hemisphere, withdrawing their naval presences to home waters to deal with pressing European security concerns. The turning point in U.S. domination of the western Atlantic was the outcome of the 1895 Anglo-Venezuelan boundary dispute. Amid a context of German involvement in the Boer conflict in South Africa, Russian challenges to the British presence in South Asia, and the rise of the French and Russian navies, the growing threat of war with the United States compelled Great Britain to concede the merits of the Monroe Doctrine and to acknowledge the U.S. right to intervene in disputes between Latin American and European countries. By 1902, Great Britain began a strategic withdrawal from the Western Hemisphere, conceding U.S. maritime superiority, and it soon welcomed American expansion, both in its colonial presence in the western Pacific and in the form of the construction of the Panama Canal.

Germany posed an equally remote threat to U.S. security. It had no naval bases in the Western Hemisphere and faced multiple strategic challenges in continental Europe and a costly maritime competition with Great Britain. By the beginning of the Roosevelt administration, the combination of military and political conditions had eliminated a German challenge to U.S. preeminence in the Western Hemisphere. Both Kaiser Wilhelm and Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow understood the importance of not antagonizing the United States. Thus, during the 1901 German-Venezuelan dispute, Germany imposed a blockade on Venezuela but shortly thereafter accepted U.S. mediation of the dispute, thus concurring with Britain’s earlier acknowledgment of a U.S. right to intervene in Latin America. The end of the German blockade signaled the demise of German ambitions in Latin America.

Nor could Japan threaten the United States. In 1890, the Japanese navy was weaker than the U.S. Navy, and the Pacific Ocean was a formidable barrier to Japanese power projection into the Western Hemisphere.
Thus, in 1890 the Naval Board recognized that the United States did not face a threat from any advanced power, including Great Britain. By the early twentieth century, the United States enjoyed “remarkable security,” and Theodore Roosevelt understood this. He believed that Great Britain dared not provoke war with the United States and that it had conceded leadership to the United States in the Western Hemisphere. Any alleged threat from Germany was premised on that country’s reputed long-term intentions, rather than on its immediate capabilities, and Roosevelt understood the limits to the German challenge. Given current trends in European great-power politics, a potential German naval threat did not require a rapid and expensive buildup of the U.S. Navy. After the U.S. naval buildup was well under way in 1906, Roosevelt raised the Japanese navy as a potential threat to U.S. security, but he also understood that if this threat developed it would do so in the distant future. Throughout the Roosevelt presidency, the absence of a threat to U.S. security frustrated the Navy’s effort to articulate a naval policy and to justify a naval buildup.

The United States also did not require a strong oceangoing navy to protect its interests in foreign trade and international investments. In 1900, less than 10 percent of U.S. GDP came from foreign trade; exports constituted less than 5 percent of GDP. During the rise of U.S. naval power, the United States was not a trading nation. Moreover, during this period the United States possessed only a small commercial fleet; most U.S. trade was carried on foreign-flagged ships. The United States gained colonial interests in the western Pacific Ocean following the war of 1898, but the economic significance of the Philippines, of other U.S. Pacific possessions, and of overall U.S. trade with East Asia did not require development of a large navy to protect U.S. economic interests in the western Pacific. President Roosevelt understood this and did not attempt to justify U.S. maritime expansion on the basis of American economic interests.

Similarly to the sources of French maritime policy from 1858 through the 1860s under Louis-Napoléon and of German maritime policy prior to World War I, national material interests cannot explain expansive U.S. maritime ambitions in the early twentieth century. Rather, American revisionist naval ambitions reflected dynamics similar to those that gave rise to French and German naval ambitions. U.S. naval policies reflected President Roosevelt’s personal interest in naval ships and his nationalist commitment to maritime power, combined with the impact of American popular nationalism on the development of U.S. defense policy.

According to Howard K. Beale, Theodore Roosevelt shared with Kaiser Wilhelm a “boyish” fascination with naval ships. As a young boy, Roosevelt greatly admired his two uncles who had served in the Confederate navy and he
maintained a long-term relationship with them. In his senior year at Harvard he began writing a scholarly volume on the naval history of the War of 1812. In his introduction to the volume, Roosevelt expressed his personal outrage at the poor condition of the U.S. Navy during the war and the importance of naval power for national dignity. He wrote that it was “folly” for “the great English-speaking Republic to possess such an old and inadequate fleet”; America deserved better. Equally important for explaining his lifelong commitment to U.S. naval power was the intrinsic excitement Roosevelt associated, from boyhood forward, with naval warfare, along with the youthful pleasure, natural fun, and lifelong exhilaration he derived from having and directing a large navy. Roosevelt’s early interest in and enthusiasm for naval matters contributed to his strong personal attention to naval policy during his presidency. Throughout his presidency he possessed a nearly “fanatical desire” and persistent determination to develop a large navy. In contrast to his predecessors, he personally participated with Congress in developing naval appropriations legislation, and he used his considerable political popularity and political drive to compel congressional support for his policies. In his first message to Congress, in December 1901—within three months of his inauguration—Roosevelt made a rousing appeal for a large navy, and soon thereafter he presented specific funding legislation. Throughout his presidency he was personally involved in such detailed issues as the height of smokestacks and the proper deployment of ships in battle groups. Roosevelt combined his personal interest in ships and navies with a nationalist impulse to promote American great-power status in world affairs. In this respect, the rise of the United States as a global naval power depended on the leader’s nationalist impulse, similarly to the dependence on the leaders’ nationalist impulses of the development of the French navy under Louis-Napoléon and the German navy under Kaiser Wilhelm.

Roosevelt and his associates, including Alfred Thayer Mahan and Henry Cabot Lodge, were strong nationalists who were impelled by an overwhelming pride in the United States. Roosevelt believed that American honor should be placed above the honor of all other nations. Thus, he considered it “impertinence” for any country to be angry at U.S. actions, was intent on defending U.S. honor and establishing U.S. resolve, and was determined to resist challenges to U.S. achievement and maintenance of world-power status. Thus he argued that

America pursued its naval ambitions wearing the same strategic blinders as had France and Germany. The United States succeeded where other great powers had failed because of the fortuitous combination of domestic circumstances with a strategic opportunity in great-power politics.
the United States required warships in numbers commensurate with “the greatness of our people” and that a large navy would serve U.S. prestige. When Britain launched its first dreadnought, Roosevelt was determined that the United States should possess the world’s largest battleships. He pushed through Congress funding for construction of U.S. dreadnoughts that were larger than those of both Britain and Germany.54

Roosevelt’s nationalism, including his sense of American greatness, superiority, and infallibility and his inability to conceive of any reason for another nation to oppose U.S. diplomacy and military policies, was rooted in his conviction of the superiority of the Anglo-American race and its destiny to lead the world. The United States stood for peace and civilization, and U.S. expansionism and imperialism, including the development of U.S. maritime power, reflected a national obligation to crusade for international moral improvement and the spread of civilization to “backward” peoples. In 1893, Roosevelt wrote that it would be “a crime against white civilization” for the United States not to annex Hawaii. The U.S. victory in the war against Spain and its territorial acquisitions in the Far East should make Americans proud that the United States now could take its place among the world’s great powers.55

Roosevelt’s nationalist aspirations for U.S. honor and international prestige were important for the rise of the U.S. Navy. But equally important was the popular American nationalism that reinforced Roosevelt’s personal aspirations and established the national democratic political conditions for U.S. naval expansionism. In the context of a significant economic recession in the 1890s and the final fulfillment of Manifest Destiny from coast to coast and the end of the American “frontier,” Americans were susceptible to emotional sources of renewed national pride, including the superiority of American values and the legitimacy of U.S. global power. American churches joined in the expansionist movement, promoting the “imperialism of righteousness” that would spread to the world American religious values, thus complementing Roosevelt’s personal “crusade” to spread Anglo-American civilization.56

These popular societal trends established the underlying foundation for jingoism, America’s particular style of nationalism, and for its effect on both U.S. domestic politics and foreign policy. In this context, forceful U.S. resistance in 1895 to British policy toward Venezuela and Great Britain’s subsequent acceptance of U.S. intervention in Latin America reflected widespread American nationalism and support for an expansionist foreign policy and the corresponding political pressures on U.S. foreign policy making. The outcome of the 1895 Venezuela crisis also encouraged Americans to press for further military-backed nationalist successes. These trends continued through the end of the decade, when popular nationalism was a powerful force leading in 1898 to the annexation of Hawaii
and the U.S. war against Spain. President William McKinley’s effort to negotiate with Spain a resolution to the conflict in Cuba increasingly isolated him from Congress and the American people. Quite apart from peripheral U.S. material interests in opposing Spain’s Cuba policy, Congress and the voters clamored for war, and ultimately they pushed the president into a war he did not support.  

The rapid American naval victory over Spain elicited widespread and enthusiastic nationalist pride in the U.S. Navy, and within a year of the war Congress passed widely popular legislation that funded construction of five battleships and multiple other ships. The Roosevelt administration’s naval legislative agenda benefited from the larger American naval nationalism. The Navy League of the United States was founded in 1902, its membership grew quickly among retired naval officers and American corporate leaders, and it played a valuable role in mobilizing support to bring about Roosevelt’s legislative successes. Roosevelt himself frequently campaigned for his naval legislation with populist speeches laden with nationalist appeals harking to the importance of naval expansion for America’s world stature. In his first State of the Union address, in December 1901, he declared that for the “honor” of the United States, the “work of upbuilding the navy must be steadily continued” and that Americans “must either build and maintain an adequate navy or else make up their minds definitely to accept a secondary position in international affairs.” During the 1904 presidential campaign, Roosevelt appealed to popular economic nationalism and benefits for the American worker to justify his naval policies and U.S. imperialism in East Asia. As he later acknowledged, his decision in 1907 to send the U.S. Atlantic fleet on an around-the-world cruise reflected more his ultimately successful effort to arouse popular nationalist support against congressional opposition to his battleship legislation than his effort to establish global—especially Japanese—respect for U.S. power.  

**Geopolitics and the Rise of the American Navy**

It is tempting to explain America’s unique success by the superiority of U.S. political institutions, or the leadership thereof, or both. Neither factor, however, can explain American success. American democracy and foreign policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century experienced popular jingoistic and expansionist impulses that reflected minimal awareness of the relative resources or national interests of the United States. Similarly, there is minimal documentation that suggests that Theodore Roosevelt calculated that European great-power politics or advantageous U.S. economic resources had created a strategic opportunity for the United States to challenge the regional and global strategic orders and develop great-power maritime capabilities. America pursued its naval ambitions wearing the same strategic blinders as had France and Germany.
The United States succeeded where other great powers had failed because of the fortuitous combination of domestic circumstances with a strategic opportunity in great-power politics. American popular naval nationalism and the expansionist impulse emerged after the United States had defeated Mexico, completed its conquest of the American Indian, and settled the Pacific frontier. These developments and the intrinsic stability of the U.S.-Canadian border established the enduring territorial security that enabled the United States to fund safely its strategic transition from being a continental power dependent on its ground forces for security to being a maritime power seeking global influence. In contrast, similar efforts by France and Germany jeopardized their territorial security and contributed to devastating military defeats.

Moreover, Britain’s preoccupation first with the emerging French and Russian navies and then with German naval ambitions compelled it to acquiesce to U.S. global naval ambitions and to acknowledge the Caribbean Sea as a U.S. sphere of influence. These developments in British security enabled the United States to avoid engagement in a costly arms race and the prospect of a “Copenhagen”—the strategic challenges that plagued the security and naval aspirations of both France and Germany.

CHINA GOES TO SEA
A combination of nationalist leadership and popular nationalism drove French naval ambitions under Louis-Napoléon in the 1850s and 1860s, German naval ambitions under Kaiser Wilhelm in the early twentieth century, and U.S. naval ambitions during the Theodore Roosevelt presidency in the early twentieth century. In each case, a personal leadership commitment to building naval power coalesced with popular nationalism to fuel national ambitions for great-power status, reflected in large capital ships and substantial maritime power. Such nationalism contributed to strategic disaster for France and Germany. For the United States, however, these same conditions propelled the country to construct, by 1908, the world’s second-largest navy while strengthening national security, and to establish the foundations for America’s eventual emergence as the world’s preeminent maritime power.

In the twenty-first century, China has become the latest land power to go to sea. After thirty-five years of double-digit annual growth in its GDP and defense spending and significant technological modernization, China is building a large and modern naval fleet whose capabilities soon may rival those of the U.S. Navy in East Asia. The recent pace of China’s shipbuilding program has been impressive. Since 2000, China has replaced most of its prereform platforms with “modern” platforms. Whereas only 3 percent of Chinese attack submarines were
“modern” in 1996, currently 70 percent are. China also has been developing large numbers of modern surface ships. Serial production of the Houbei and Jingdao classes has contributed to establishing and maintaining the Chinese maritime presence throughout the East and South China Seas. China’s development of a next-generation frigate, the Jiangkai class, will enhance the war-fighting capability of the Chinese navy. Even at reduced rates of GDP growth, China’s shipbuilding program will add significant numbers of modern naval platforms, including attack submarines, frigates, destroyers, and smaller fast-attack ships armed with antiship cruise missiles. According to one estimate, assuming that China’s naval budget over the next fifteen years grows commensurately with its GDP growth, by then the Chinese navy will possess well over four hundred surface combat ships and nearly one hundred submarines. All these modern ships will make significant contributions to Chinese naval capabilities in the East and South China Seas and will contribute to improved Chinese capabilities in the western Pacific Ocean. China’s navy is not as technologically advanced as the U.S. Navy, but even merely in quantity China’s naval ships constitute an effective war-fighting force and attest to China’s long-term naval ambitions. The U.S. Navy’s increased attention to “dispersed lethality” reflects its concern with the modernization, growing number, and improved quality of China’s naval ships.

China also is developing airpower to support its oceangoing navy. It is producing military aircraft with greater capabilities and ranges that will provide greater air support for Chinese surface ships. Its intermediate-range surface-to-surface ballistic missiles can degrade U.S. access to the naval facilities throughout East Asia that enable the U.S. Navy to project naval and air power. China also is modernizing its command and control capabilities with improved satellite communications and air-based and underwater reconnaissance and targeting.

**Xi Jinping, Nationalism, and Chinese Naval Ambition**

As was the case with French, German, and American naval expansionism, nationalism is a driver of China’s naval ambitions. Xi Jinping’s “China dream” platform is a nationalist promise to bring modernization and advancement not only to the Chinese people but also to the Chinese nation in world affairs. Members of the Chinese military, including Chinese naval officers, have argued that a “strong army dream” and a strong navy are central to achieving the “China dream.” Similarly, Xi’s call for *da fuxing Zhongguo* (the great rejuvenation of China) is a direct call for China to restore its status as a great power. In 2017, Xi assured the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) that “[t]oday, we are closer to the goal of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation than any other time in history, and we need to build a strong people’s military now more than any other time in history.” He promised the PLA that “[w]e will never allow any people,
organization, or political party to split any part of Chinese territory from the country at any time, in any form.”

Reinforcing Xi Jinping’s ambitions has been the growth of Chinese mass nationalism. The combination of the spread of the Chinese people’s access to the World Wide Web in China’s major cities and widespread dissatisfaction with the alleged weakness of Chinese foreign policy, encouraged by the global financial crisis and the onset of the U.S. recession, has heightened mass nationalist demands for a more belligerent Chinese foreign policy. Despite China’s authoritarian single-party political system, nationalism can influence Chinese foreign policy. Leaders who are not sufficiently nationalist/hard-line and responsive to mass nationalism can be vulnerable to political challenges from their political adversaries—and in China the cost of political defeat is, at best, lifetime isolation under house arrest. Equally important, the Chinese Communist Party leadership is acutely sensitive to the challenge that social instability, including urban nationalist demonstrations, can pose to regime stability and survival.

In 2009, the number of Internet users in China increased by nearly 60 percent. Use of the Internet spread most significantly among the urban population. Between 2007 and 2010, Internet usage in Beijing increased by 60 percent, penetrating nearly 70 percent of the population; the comparable figures for Shanghai were 67 percent and 65 percent. The expansion of Internet usage has led to strident online nationalist criticism of Chinese foreign policy and has contributed to widespread nationalist demonstrations against Japan for its arrest of a Chinese fisherman in 2010 and its government’s “nationalization” of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in 2012. Belligerent online mass nationalism also contributed to Chinese government opposition to U.S. naval exercises in the Yellow Sea following North Korea’s 2010 sinking of a South Korean corvette.

As Xi Jinping has promoted a nationalist vision of China’s future and as mass nationalism has spread through Chinese cities, he has led China’s naval activism. The impact of nationalism and the China dream is especially clear in China’s costly commitment to developing aircraft carriers, just as nationalism drove French, German, and U.S. acquisition of large capital ships. Given the proximity of China’s air and naval bases to its neighbor’s defense facilities in the surrounding seas, including those in Japan, Taiwan, and the South China Sea countries, China does not require aircraft carriers to project power to contend with regional competitors, including the United States, to defend its maritime security.

China’s economic growth increasingly relies on its domestic market. Since 2006, as Chinese domestic manufacturing has increased, there has been a steady and significant decline in Chinese trade dependence, including export dependence. China also is only minimally dependent on imports of energy resources.
for its energy security; approximately 90 percent of Chinese energy resources are sourced domestically or via pipelines transiting countries on China’s interior periphery. So the country does not require a power-projection navy to defend its economic interests. But aircraft carriers are a symbol of great-power status, so realization of the China dream required China to develop a fleet of them. As Chinese leaders considered launching China’s first carrier late in the first decade of the twenty-first century, popular demand for a carrier increased. At public presentations, Chinese military officers were pressed to explain when China would build a carrier. Many Chinese citizens offered their own funds to support construction of an aircraft carrier. China’s first Soviet-era aircraft carrier, the former Minsk, was a popular tourist attraction—33,000 visitors toured the ship in just seven days during the 2006 Chinese New Year holiday. Talk shows on China Central Television (CCTV) focused on the merits of an aircraft carrier; the popularity of the subject led CCTV to air additional programs on the subject. Among the most popular CCTV television programs at that time was The Rise of the Great Powers. It stimulated widespread public discussion over the lessons of history for China’s emergence as a great power. According to the documentary, all successful great powers have possessed a large blue-water navy, with large capital ships. In 2009, a Chinese foreign affairs weekly reported on the widespread national conversation focused on “the long-held dream of so many people” that China would “build its own aircraft carrier.” Since then, Xi has expanded the pace of Chinese carrier production.

China’s recent maritime impatience and boldness reflect Xi’s personal ambition and impatience to resist any challenge to Chinese interests and to restore China’s great-power status. In the brief span of the fifteen months from late 2012 to early 2013, shortly after he assumed authority over Chinese security policy, Xi led China to establish routine maritime presence within twelve miles of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, thus actively challenging Japanese sovereignty; announce an air-defense identification zone in the East China Sea; occupy the Philippine-claimed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea; explore for oil in disputed waters in the South China Sea for the first time since 1994; challenge Vietnamese maritime activities in the South China Sea, contributing to heightened tension and a crisis atmosphere in Sino-Vietnamese relations; challenge, more frequently and more assertively, U.S. air and naval surveillance activities in the South China Sea; and carry out extensive land-reclamation activities in
disputed areas of the South China Sea, and subsequently construct air and naval facilities on its artificial islands.

Accompanying these developments in East Asia is the determined expansion of the global presence of the PLA Navy (PLAN). Under Xi’s leadership, in 2017 the PLAN carried out its first live-fire exercises in the Mediterranean Sea and its first joint exercise with the Russian navy, in the Baltic Sea. In 2017, China also reached agreement with Djibouti for the PLAN to establish its first overseas naval facility: a logistical support base in East Africa for its operations in the western Indian Ocean.79

**Geopolitics and the Rise of the Chinese Navy**

China’s rapidly expanding naval capabilities and its maritime activism attest to its resolve to challenge U.S. maritime supremacy in East Asia and become a world-class naval power. As China goes to sea, will its fate resemble the failed nationalist ambitions of France under Louis-Napoléon and of Wilhelmine Germany, or the successes of the United States when it emerged as a naval power? The fate of China’s naval ambitions, as was the case with the United States, France, and Germany, ultimately will depend on the country’s geopolitical circumstances.

In important respects, China’s contemporary geopolitical circumstances resemble U.S. geopolitical circumstances in the 1890s and the early twentieth century. In the decades since the end of the Cold War China has established overwhelming military superiority vis-à-vis its neighbors along its entire periphery. China is bordered by fourteen countries, but none can challenge Chinese territorial security. After decades of Chinese modernization of its ground-force capabilities, China’s smaller neighbors, including Vietnam, cannot pose even a minor challenge to Chinese security. India is a great power in South Asia, but over the past thirty years the gap between India and rising China has increased significantly. In contrast to China, India in military affairs remains dependent on imported platforms for both its navy and its air force. Moreover, the Himalayas pose a formidable check on India’s ability to threaten Chinese territory, and thus on the outbreak of a major war on the Sino-Indian border. In economics, recently India’s annual GDP growth rate has surpassed China’s GDP growth rate. But because China’s GDP is five times the size of India’s, even should China’s annual growth in GDP maintain the relatively “slow” rate of 7 percent and India’s maintain 8 percent growth through 2020, China still will add another “three Indias” to its GDP in that time.80

China’s only neighbor that conceivably might pose a threat to Chinese security is Russia. But since the end of the Cold War, in Northeast Asia Russian military and economic capabilities have declined dramatically vis-à-vis China’s. In 1991, there were fourteen million Russians living in the Far East, but in 2010
the Russian census found that fewer than 6.3 million Russians lived there.\textsuperscript{81} Infrastructure in the Far East also has suffered since the end of the Cold War. Lack of Russian investment has contributed to a deterioration of electrical-power facilities and transportation networks. Russian ports in Northeast Asia have fallen behind global standards. Overall, the Far East economy is far poorer than the Russian economy west of the Urals, and at best has stagnated over the past twenty-five years. Russia has called for China to help with the development of the Far East economy, contributing to Russian dependence on China.\textsuperscript{82}

Russian military power also has declined. Despite successful Russian ground-force actions in Georgia and Ukraine, much of the Russian military remains backward and poorly trained. For much of the post–Cold War period the Russian navy was in decline. Although in recent years it has received increased funding, its shipbuilding has focused on frigates and cruisers that lack adequate defenses and primarily are limited to coastal-defense operations.\textsuperscript{83} But even this limited recent expansion of the Russian fleet has been hampered by the poor state of the Russian shipbuilding industry. Russian observers acknowledge that the navy’s shipyards are in difficult shape and require significant funding, contributing to extended delays in delivering new ships. In 2017, of the Russian navy’s twenty-four major surface ships, only three had been constructed since the end of the Cold War. Overall, the decline in Russia’s defense industry is significant. Only 20 percent of its defense companies can be modernized in an economical way.\textsuperscript{84} Yet the Russian defense budget has declined in recent years, reflecting the absence of reform of the Russian economy, the extended decline in GDP growth, and Western sanctions following Russia’s annexation of Crimea and its intervention in Ukraine. Budget problems have compelled Russia to delay development of a next-generation destroyer and aircraft carrier. In 2018, the Russian military budget declined by 20 percent compared with 2017’s.\textsuperscript{85} According to Russian sources, in 2017 China’s defense budget was three times that of Russia’s.\textsuperscript{86}

Russia’s military decline has become especially apparent in the Far East. Its intervention in Ukraine and NATO’s subsequent renewal of ground-force and naval exercises on Russia’s periphery have compelled Russia to concentrate much of its limited force capabilities on the growing U.S./NATO challenge to Russian security, thus weakening further the Russian strategic presence in the Far East.\textsuperscript{87} China, on the other hand, has developed advanced ground-force and naval technologies and platforms that contribute to the growth of its full-spectrum conventional superiority over the Russian military in Northeast Asia. Moreover, just south of the Sino-Russian border China enjoys the benefits of plentiful arable land and rapid industrial growth. In its northeast, China has developed a modern economy, an increasingly well-educated and capable population, advanced and well-trained ground-force capabilities, and a sophisticated high-technology
infrastructure. Moscow cannot patrol its borders, so the Sino-Russian border can be as porous to Chinese migration and trade as it was for most of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, when 80 percent of the civilians in Vladivostok were Chinese or Korean. In the twenty-first century, China’s stronger commercial presence in the Far East challenges the economic integration of the Far East with the rest of Russia. China’s domination of the Sino-Russian border has increased since the end of the Cold War.

Overall, the gap between Chinese and Russian underlying economic great-power capabilities has widened in the twenty-first century. The significant difference between Chinese and Russian GDP growth rates over the past twenty-five years has contributed to the widening of the Sino-Russian economic and technological gaps. Moreover, Russia has yet to reform its economy; it has been content to rely on oil revenues to sustain economic growth. The prospects for relative improvement in Russia’s economic situation have not improved. More recently, the new international sources of gas and oil and the resulting drop in world energy prices, combined with NATO’s economic retaliation against Russia for its intervention in Ukraine, contributed to the onset of a Russian recession. This recession, or stagnation, is likely to endure for many years, thus postponing further Russia’s ability to develop sustained economic growth and to field a strong military in the Russian Far East. Russian defense spending as a share of GDP is already more than double Chinese defense spending as a share of GDP. Russia cannot contend with China in an arms competition.

The decline of Russian capabilities in Northeast Asia diminishes the necessity for Beijing to allocate significant resources to defend its northern border. Chinese analysts have minimal concern that Russia will reemerge as an East Asian great power that can challenge Chinese security. Thus, in terms of the domestic security of the great power, the Sino-Russian border increasingly resembles the U.S.-Canadian border.

Therefore, along its entire mainland periphery China’s strategic circumstances resemble U.S. strategic circumstances in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when American nationalism promoted the development of the United States as a global naval power, rather than the geopolitical circumstances that contributed to the demise of French and German nationalist naval ambitions. Consolidated Chinese border security has allowed China to allocate an increasing share of its growing defense budget to developing a large, modern naval force, thus enabling the development of great-power capabilities that can challenge U.S. maritime hegemony. The PLA’s 2015 defense white paper on China’s military strategy reported that China’s “traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests.” Thus, China’s navy
“will gradually shift its focus from ‘offshore waters defense’ to the combination of ‘offshore-waters defense’ with ‘open-seas protection.’ Insofar as China’s defense budget consumes a mere 2 percent of its GDP, China can expand its naval budget significantly with minimal repercussions for the Chinese economy.

The Rise of the Chinese Navy and U.S.-Chinese Competition

Thus, in many respects, China’s geopolitical circumstances resemble the American geopolitical circumstances that facilitated the U.S. effort to dominate the Caribbean Sea and ultimately the Western Hemisphere. China possesses the continental security and the growing economy that will enable it to fund a large and modern naval force without undermining Chinese continental border security.

But in one important respect China’s geopolitical circumstances are different from those of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. The United States peacefully rose to be a great naval power and to exert hemispheric hegemony because the established global powers faced more-pressing issues in their home theater. Between 1895 and 1905, both Britain and Germany ceded the Caribbean Sea to U.S. naval hegemony because they faced threats to their territorial integrity from other European powers, so they could not afford conflict in distant regions. Britain, the established global power, withdrew its fleet to European waters, and Germany, the rising global power, never thought to challenge the United States in the Caribbean Sea. Thus, in effect, the United States did not face a serious great-power challenge to its maritime rise in the Western Hemisphere.

China’s rise as a maritime power faces very different great-power politics. The United States, the established maritime power in East Asia, does not face a challenge in the Western Hemisphere to either its continental or maritime security. Similarly, European countries are not dependent on a major U.S. presence in Europe to contend with Russian military power. U.S. security interests outside East Asia thus do not require the United States to concede Chinese maritime hegemony in East Asia. On the contrary, China’s maritime rise in East Asia already has encountered significant U.S. resistance. The U.S. “pivot to Asia” during the Barack Obama presidency, including the strengthening of the U.S. naval presence in East Asia, reflected U.S. concern about rising Chinese naval power and the American intention to balance the rise of China and strengthen U.S.–East Asian alliances. Similarly, during the Donald Trump administration, U.S. defense policy has focused on expanding the size of the U.S. Navy to contend with China’s expanding fleet. U.S. development of advanced-technology weapons reflects the country’s growing concern for the maritime balance of power in East Asia. U.S. researches on laser weapons, the rail gun, carrier-based attack and reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicles, underwater antisubmarine and antimine drones, long-range antiship cruise missiles, range extensions for U.S. carrier-based aircraft, and ship-based antiship cruise missiles all reflect the U.S. effort to
contend with the rise of China’s navy. Similarly, heightened U.S. resistance since 2013 to China’s legal claims and its land-reclamation activities in the South China Sea reflects U.S. efforts to bolster its regional strategic partnerships as China has developed greater naval power.

Thus, despite similar continental geopolitical circumstances, the great-power consequences of the rise of China in East Asia may be very different from the great-power consequences of the rise of the United States in the Western Hemisphere. America’s peaceful rise reflected the strategic priorities that the established great powers, especially Great Britain, faced in distant regions. As China rises, it will not enjoy such fortunate geopolitical circumstances. Rather, America’s strategic priority will be balancing the rise of China in East Asia. This suggests that the rise of China in the twenty-first century may elicit far greater instability and great-power competition and tension, including crises and arms races, than the instability and tension elicited by the rise of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.

This historical comparative analysis of case studies of great-power maritime expansionism suggests that naval nationalism, not realist strategic considerations or an unrelenting drive for security or immediate national security interests, drives costly revisionist impulses and strategically counterproductive naval acquisitions that distract from realist policy making and frequently contribute to significant strategic setbacks. Such nationalist dynamics explain not only the costly failures of the French and German maritime ambitions discussed in this article but also the failed ambitions of France in the early nineteenth century during the Napoleonic Wars, Russian maritime ambitions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Japan’s maritime ambitions in the 1930s, and the Soviet Union’s maritime ambitions in the 1970s and 1980s.96

In the twentieth century, the United States was the exception to this historical pattern. Nationalism drove its naval expansionism, but its successful rise as a global maritime power reflected the benefits neither of nationalism nor of realist, threat-based strategic planning. Instead, U.S. success as a rising naval power occurred despite the potentially detrimental effects of American nationalism. Given America’s single-minded expansionist ambitions and its ambitious naval acquisition program during the Roosevelt administration, fortuitous strategic circumstances best explain America’s early maritime successes.

In the twenty-first century, China is the rising power that is challenging the great-power status quo. To a significant degree, its naval ambitions and its revisionist strategic impatience are driven by the convergence of growing mass nationalism and nationalist leadership. Nonetheless, unlike France and Germany, China possesses the necessary geopolitical circumstances that allowed the United
States to become a maritime great power. It does not face a significant continental threat to its security. But unlike the United States, China likely will face resistance to a revised regional security order from the established maritime power, the United States. Thus, China's fortuitous geopolitical circumstances and the likelihood of continued economic growth, even at lower annual rates, probably will enable it to challenge U.S. maritime hegemony, but in doing so it will contribute to heightened great-power conflict, with implications for the global security order and the prospects of great-power war instead of peace.

NOTES

2. Ibid., p. 83.
34. John C. G. Röhl, Germany without Bismarck: The Crisis of Government in the Second Reich,


36. Eley, Reshaping the German Right, pp. 173–76; Röhl, Germany without Bismarck, pp. 276–77.


46. Baer, One Hundred Years of Sea Power, p. 38.


61. Friedberg, “Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline.”


63. See, for example, Thomas Rowden [VAdm., USN], Peter Gumataotao [RAdm., USN], and Peter Fanta [RAdm., USN], “Distributed Lethality,” U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings 141/1/1,343 (January 2015), available at www.usni.org/; Megan Eckstein, “Next PAC SAG


71. For an extended discussion of the role of nationalism in this period of Chinese diplomacy, see Ross, “The Domestic Sources of China’s Assertive Diplomacy.”


75. Interviews by author, Beijing, April 25, 2007; interview by author, Beijing, December 2007.
78. “Zhongguo de haiyang quanyi he hyaijun” [China’s maritime rights and navy], *Shijie zhiishi* [World knowledge], no. 1 (2009), pp. 16–17.

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92. Chinese government and military researchers, interviews by author, April 2018.


96. For a brief discussion of these other cases, see Ross, "China’s Naval Nationalism." These findings are contrary to the argument that structural security imperatives compel great powers to seek ever-more-expansive hegemony, despite the costs and the long history of prior failures. See John J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001). For a critique of Mearsheimer’s “offensive realism” and its implications for misunderstanding the rise of China, see Jonathan Kirshner, "The Tragedy of Offensive Realism: Classical Realism and the Rise of China," European Journal of International Relations 18, no. 1 (2010), pp. 53–75.
ESCALATION AT SEA
Stability and Instability in Maritime East Asia
Ian Bowers

In recent years, the seas of East Asia have witnessed frequent clashes among naval, coast guard, and paramilitary vessels and civilian actors. This has created academic and policy concerns regarding the potential for significant escalation in the region. This article argues that low-level instability is to be expected with maritime boundary disputes or when power competition occurs at sea; however, sustained escalatory cycles are unlikely, because of the characteristics of the maritime strategic environment. The maritime theater possesses unique strategic characteristics. These include the nature of potential strategic threats, the speed of response, and quick attribution of responsibility. These characteristics reduce the potential for escalation and allow de-escalatory strategies to achieve greater success. These findings demonstrate that the maritime sphere in East Asia is more stable than is commonly thought.

In East Asian waters, disputes over the sovereign control of islands, the extent and delimitation of maritime jurisdictional boundaries, and the operational rights and obligations of military vessels in jurisdictional waters coexist with conflicting nationalist narratives and fears of great-power competition. China's growing presence and actions in this strategic maritime arena are upending the post–World War II status quo and shifting the power dynamics that have maintained stability in the region. This, in combination with political and strategic uncertainty arising from the election of Donald Trump to the American presidency, has led to increasing fears about conflict escalation at sea. Such instability is manifested in fractious interactions among growing naval (indigenous and external), civil maritime
law-enforcement, and civilian actors who aim to assert or contest perceived economic and navigation rights at sea. Reflecting this reality, in 2016 the commander of U.S. Pacific Command, Admiral Harry B. Harris, stated that the region was “ripe for miscalculation that could escalate to conflicts that no one wants, in an area vital to global prosperity.”

On the surface, given the publicity that clashes at sea garner, such a fear may seem well-founded. Numerous studies have revealed the propensity for conflict escalation over the issue of sovereign control of land, including disputed islands. However, the potential for escalation arising from incidents at sea and the strategic effect of such incidents remain largely understudied phenomena.

By focusing solely on incidents at sea, this article argues that in areas of contested maritime jurisdictional claims or maritime zones in which strategic competitors meet, peaceful interactions among military, law-enforcement, and civilian actors should not be expected. However, accidental, inadvertent, or even intentional acts that result in clashes between rival forces should not trigger escalatory cycles or be construed as a prelude to major conflict at sea or on land. Rather, such events should be viewed as an expected consequence of operations in contested maritime environments. In short, at sea, the threshold for stability in contested areas is low, and therefore escalatory incidents are likely; however, escalatory cycles or sustained conflict, including war at sea, are unlikely to follow such incidents.

To justify this contention, this article argues that a maritime strategic environment imposes specific conditions on escalatory and triggering dynamics. Disputed maritime borders, unlike those on land, cannot be held, and thus must be contested. Despite this requirement of contestation and the impossibility of exercising total control, conflicts at sea typically do not present an existential strategic threat to the involved parties. Escalation arising from inadvertence or miscalculation is easier to control, owing to the realities of operating in a maritime environment. At an operational level, it is easier to achieve controlled de-escalation at sea than on land. The options to use new weapons systems or attack new types of targets (vertical escalation) are limited, and geographic expansion of the area of conflict (horizontal escalation) is unlikely.

The article develops this argument by discussing how the nature of the maritime strategic environment simultaneously can sustain low-level instability yet dampen escalatory pressures. It supports these ideas by examining U.S.-USSR maritime interactions during the Cold War and by analyzing incidents at sea that have arisen from disputed maritime boundaries across the globe since the Cold War. The article finishes by using these findings to consider the implications for our understanding of how stability and instability in maritime East Asia manifest themselves.
CONTESTED SEAS, STABLE INSTABILITY, AND WAR

Maritime geography enhances the potential for instability at sea, since it allows actors in competition or in conflict to interact to a greater extent than is possible on land. This section argues that this instability should be expected unless maritime boundaries are agreed to or strategic competition is rendered inert. Further, it shows that, despite this instability, sustained vertical or horizontal escalation past any initial incident is unlikely.

Disputed Maritime Rights

In the case of contested territory or strategic competition on land, the role of a state’s armed forces is to defend demarcated borders or to seize and hold enemy territory. Control of territory brings about the capacity to govern both the land and the people and to use both for economic advantage. It is only during times of war that borders dissolve, the armed forces of competing states interact, and the control of territory becomes uncertain.

At sea, the type of control that allows for the maintenance of land borders is not possible. Except for areas close to shore, the sea is controlled permanently by no one. Sovereign boundaries—such as those delineating territorial waters, contiguous zones, and exclusive economic zones (EEZs), as defined under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)—are not demarcated by the permanent presence of navies or civilian agencies; rather, they are maintained by political agreements on land.

If a party chooses to ignore UNCLOS or parties have differing interpretations of its parameters and the obligations it imposes, the possibility for clashes is heightened, since in contested areas at sea any exercise of administrative control is fluid and limited. If one power vacates an area of the sea, control does not transfer automatically to another party; rather, it is left vacant. Parties who possess the requisite naval or maritime capacity easily can enter disputed waters to contest control or undertake resource-exploitation activities.

To maintain legitimacy in contested waters, states are required to undertake operations to assert and defend their perceived rights. This can take the form of sailing through disputed waters, exploiting maritime zones for economic purposes, or performing law-enforcement and naval operations consistent with sovereign control. Absent an intervening authority such as the United Nations, political agreement on land, or compatible interpretations of the UNCLOS regime, this can create substantial friction, leading to clashes among military vessels, other state-controlled vessels, and civilian vessels such as fishing boats.

This friction has been illustrated in a number of clashes between democratic countries over maritime economic exploitation rights. The “Lobster War” between Brazil and France in early 1963, the “Cod Wars” between Iceland and the United Kingdom in the mid-1970s, and the Canadian-Spanish “Turbot War” in
1995–96 all saw democratic countries deploying military force to assert their perceived maritime economic rights against other democracies. Similarly, a 2006 incident between South Korea and Japan over exploration in a potentially lucrative fishing zone surrounding the disputed Dokdo/Takeshima Islands saw military and maritime law-enforcement assets being deployed to assert both countries’ claims.\(^\text{13}\)

This type of deployment of military and civilian maritime law-enforcement actors to contested maritime zones has not yet resulted in substantial levels of escalation. The three earliest cases described above each ended with a political solution, while the fourth, between South Korea and Japan, has resulted in sustained but low-level instability characterized by the periodic dispatch of military and civilian law-enforcement assets to indicate the respective country’s claims.

As represented in table 1, data extracted from the Dispute Narratives of the Military Interstate Dispute dataset provide further evidence of sustained low-level instability at sea. However, in no case did this instability evolve into war; indeed, no substantial escalation occurred past the initial clash.\(^\text{14}\) These data indicate that instability and clashes are to be expected in contested maritime environments, but substantial escalation, including to the point of interstate war breaking out, is unlikely.

### TABLE 1
**DISPUTE NARRATIVES, 1993–2010: GLOBAL MILITARIZED INTERSTATE DISPUTES AT SEA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Dispute</th>
<th>Total Number of Cases</th>
<th>Cases at Sea</th>
<th>Level of Force Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>561</td>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency No. (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities in disputed waters</td>
<td>50 (43.1)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal fishing operations</td>
<td>20 (17.2)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations around disputed islands</td>
<td>13 (11.2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic and security operations</td>
<td>18 (15.6)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15 (12.9)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of disputes</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>64 (55.2%)</td>
<td>48 (41.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notably, operations in waters with disputed maritime boundaries accounted for over 40 percent of the interstate disputes at sea. These were caused primarily by resource-exploitation operations, including fishing and oil exploration. In several cases—notably in the Gulf of Fonseca, on the Pacific coast of Central America—multiple interactions took place within short periods, but there is no evidence that any escalation in the level or mode of violence occurred. In a number of theaters, including the South and East China Seas, economic and strategic operations in disputed waters resulted in the consistent display and use of force to enforce perceived maritime rights, yet again no further escalation occurred.

**Power Competition at Sea**

Disputed maritime borders are not the only source of conflict at sea. Power competition there is manifested in a different manner than on land. The sea is a global commons with free access for all. Consequently, geographically distant but still adversarial powers can operate in closer proximity and with greater freedom than they would on land in areas of mutual strategic interest, thereby heightening the risk of interstate clashes. This risk can be exacerbated further in that under UNCLOS littoral states cannot restrict innocent passage through territorial waters. Naval forces therefore legally can pass through the maritime territory of a competing state. Further, differing legal interpretations of the necessity for notification of innocent passage and the operating rights of military vessels in the EEZ can lead to conflict, because littoral states may seek to limit the ability of others to enjoy the navigation and operating freedoms commonly understood to be granted under UNCLOS.

During the Cold War, the sea was a marginal strategic arena when compared with the NATO-USSR divide that dominated continental Europe. While the opposing land forces did not engage each other directly during this period, their navies often operated in proximity, both in important geostrategic areas such as the waters of northern Europe and the Mediterranean and in their respective littoral zones. This resulted in numerous distinct acts of extremely dangerous behavior. As table 2 shows, over the thirty-five-year period between 1950 and 1984, there were 422 acts between U.S. and Soviet naval and state-controlled vessels and aircraft that at least one side described as exceeding peaceful operations.

Such incidents included the harassment of vessels during normal operations, dangerous maneuvers such as crossing and shouldering, and the pointing of weapons and use of fire-control radars to track opposing ships and aircraft. Pointing was considered particularly hazardous, as it blurred the line between peacetime harassment and preparation for attack.
Despite these multiple acts, war did not break out; rather, low-level instability persisted without resulting in a sustained escalatory cycle or the substantial heightening of political tensions between the parties.

**Instability at Sea and the Transition to War**

It is important to emphasize that in cases of both disputes over maritime boundaries and power competition at sea, despite clashes involving varying levels of force and lethality, there is no evidence that significant escalation followed any incident. Indeed, there is little historical evidence that clashes at sea are a primary reason for the occurrence of interstate conflict, either at sea or on land. In other words, war is unlikely to break out as the sole result of clashes on the water. In modern history, the British-Spanish War of Jenkins’s Ear between 1739 and 1748 is a notable exception. Conflicts such as the War of 1812, the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), and the Pacific theater in World War II had substantial maritime components, yet the wars at sea were secondary to the broader strategic, political, and economic issues at stake on land.  

To understand why, we must return to the relationship between the sea and the land. As the highly regarded British naval theorist Sir Julian Corbett noted when discussing naval warfare, “Since men live upon the land and not upon the sea, great issues between nations at war have always been decided—except in the rarest cases—either by what your army can do against your enemy's territory and national life or else by the fear of what the fleet makes it possible for your army to do.”

In other words, what happens on the sea can be understood only in the context of its relationship with the land and the material effect such events have on populations.

Acts at sea rarely have an immediate influence on a state’s survival or the living conditions of the populace. They often occur far from the public eye and evoke less emotional responses. Therefore the escalatory pressure on decision makers is reduced, so low–level or tactical interactions at sea generally do not have an impact on the broader strategic picture. Consequently, the Cold War’s numerous and severe incidents at sea between the two superpowers did not result in

### TABLE 2
**REPORTED INCIDENTS AT SEA BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND USSR: 1950–84**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Incident</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>422</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous Maneuvers</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing/Tracking</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collision/Shouldering</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data taken from Winkler, Cold War at Sea, pp. 177–210.
escalation. Such events did not impact strategic stability and were not important enough to warrant a response that could trigger conflict in the core theater of continental Europe or risk the possibility of nuclear war. The high strategic stakes of the Cold War ensured that even serious clashes at sea, much like higher-profile incidents such as the Cuban missile crisis, were contained, since the leadership of neither side desired a mutually catastrophic conflict.23

The Korean Peninsula provides ample further evidence of these dynamics. Between 1954 and 2010 there were 510 cases of what the South Korean Ministry of National Defense classifies as local provocations at sea.24 These include 490 cases of North Korean–flagged naval and civilian vessels crossing into South Korean waters and twenty cases of naval engagements.25 Since 1999, there have been several high-profile incidents near the contested Northern Limit Line (NLL) on the west coast of the peninsula. These include three battles at sea: the first and second battles of Yeonpyeong (1999 and 2002) and the battle of Daecheong (2009). The sinking of ROKS Cheonan in 2010 cost the lives of forty-six South Korean naval personnel but did not result in escalatory actions either at sea or on the Korean Peninsula itself. These incidents, while costly in terms of lives and equipment, did not warrant the risk of starting an escalatory cycle that could impact the broader strategic balance on the peninsula, and by extension the physical and economic well-being of South Korea.26

Similarly, the capture of the intelligence-gathering ship USS Pueblo in 1968 by North Korean forces resulted in substantial pressure on the Johnson administration to escalate in response to Pyongyang’s actions. While the United States did deploy extra naval assets to the region as a show of force, there was a clear preference on the part of the U.S. government to find a negotiated solution. As Clark Clifford, a U.S. presidential adviser, stated, a spy ship was not worth going to war over.27

**FACTORS THAT FURTHER INHIBIT ESCALATION**

Beyond the often asymmetrical strategic importance of incidents at sea compared with those on land, other factors further explain why significant escalation is unlikely at sea. The nature of naval combat and operations at sea reduces the likelihood of a sustained escalatory cycle. This, combined with the factors of time and distance and, frequently, the opacity of incidents at sea, has a calming influence on the wider political and strategic picture, thereby contributing to making de-escalation easier.

**Attribution**

Escalation is rendered less likely by the often-opaque nature of incidents at sea. The difficulty of attribution following incidents at sea, something that is magnified in the case of submarine operations, reduces the escalatory potential of an
incident, even one as serious as the sinking of a vessel. Richard Smoke argues in his analysis of the Italian submarine campaign of 1937 that because of the anonymous character of submarine warfare, “[t]he immediate and direct connection to the responsible nation in this sense was broken, and the probability of a response directly against Italy reduced.”

This argument seemingly was confirmed following the sinking of Cheonan. The South Korean corvette sank on March 26, 2010, yet while North Korea immediately was suspected of being behind the incident, the lack of eyewitnesses and the difficulty of collecting evidence made the immediate authoritative attribution of the attack to North Korea particularly challenging. This reduced South Korea’s ability to justify an immediate military response. It also provided time for Washington and, as Robert Gates suggests, Beijing to work to de-escalate postsinking tensions. Ultimately, it took almost two months for an international investigatory team to attribute the attack officially to a North Korean torpedo.

The time needed to investigate incidents at sea has provided the necessary breathing room to de-escalate tensions in other cases as well. The 1904 Dogger Bank incident, in which a Russian fleet transiting from Europe to Asia accidentally sank a number of British fishing vessels, demonstrates that the time needed to establish the facts fully allowed both governments and outside powers to ameliorate substantial public ire, control the military response, and reduce internal pressures to go to war. The incident ultimately was resolved with an apology and the establishment of an international investigatory commission.

**Distance and Escalation Dominance**

The operational space that characterizes the sea also reduces the possibility of escalation. Naval and other maritime forces have the capacity to transit greater distances and to do so much more quickly than land forces. Yet the areas in which individual vessels and units operate often are much larger than those on land. Unless there is a specific and demarcated area of contention, such as the aforementioned NLL, forces at sea tend to be dispersed. Therefore, following an accidental or isolated clash at sea, time is required for additional forces to enter the area of operations. Conversely, the lack of geographical barriers allows for clashing vessels to separate quickly without losing control of territory, as would occur on land. The speed of modern naval warfare supports the case that distance and dispersal reduce the likelihood of escalation.

While there is little contemporary evidence of what the precise nature of naval warfare in a modern combat environment will be, it likely will be a rapid affair in which combat between vessels would be over quickly. This lessens the likelihood that the use of force will evolve organically, as any clash would be finished before reinforcements could arrive.
Once again, the sea battles on the NLL provide the best evidence to support this argument, as they are among the few examples of contemporary modern naval combat, albeit without the use of missiles. In the first battle of Yeonpyeong, once the North Korean vessels opened fire the engagement lasted fourteen minutes. The second battle of Yeonpyeong, including the arrival of proximate South Korean reinforcements, lasted approximately thirty minutes. The battle of Daecheon lasted eight minutes. In each of these cases, South Korean naval forces quickly achieved dominance in the engagement, either sinking their North Korean opponents or forcing them into retreat before North Korean reinforcements could arrive. After the initial clash, the combination of South Korean superiority, the North Korean navy’s inability to concentrate force, and the North Koreans’ ability to escape resulted in clashes that ended without further escalation.

The importance of escalation dominance also was demonstrated during the Lobster War of 1963, when President Charles de Gaulle deployed a French naval destroyer to protect French fishing interests off the coast of Brazil. The Brazilian navy deployed its aircraft carrier, Minas Gerais, and the French force quickly backed down. The situation de-escalated because the Brazilian forces achieved escalation dominance and distance prevented the French from providing reinforcements quickly. This speaks to the importance of the local balance of forces in the area of engagement, as opposed to the total capability of opposing navies. Even weaker powers can achieve escalation dominance if their deployed forces are superior. Reflecting these findings, several studies on deterrence have found that it is not the ratio of total capabilities but the “immediate or short-term balance of forces” in proximity to the target that has the greatest impact on deterrence calculations.

The Naval and Maritime Profession
The nature of shipboard life and the technical expertise needed to operate at sea require a relatively high level of professionalism and minimize the number of individuals capable of undertaking escalatory action, in comparison with land forces. Command chains in most navies are more structured than they are in the other military services, with obedience to the commanding officer an absolute requirement in the rigid world of ships often operating away from port. The technical nature of naval operations also places a premium on following procedures. In combination, these realities ensure that inadvertent escalatory action on the part of a crewmember is less likely (although not impossible).

This reality also places a lot of responsibility on the senior officers of vessels. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union signed the 1972 Incidents at Sea Agreement (INCSEA). A primary driver behind the Soviets’ agreeing to such a measure was the rapid expansion of their navy, which had
resulted in inexperienced officers being promoted. This created fears within the Soviet command that such inexperience could “inadvertently lead to an incident with grave consequences for both countries.”

The importance of the commanding officers for avoiding or initiating escalation at sea can be seen during the so-called lock-on incident between Japanese and Chinese vessels in 2013. Media reports suggest that it was the Chinese vessel’s commander himself who made the decision to lock a fire-control radar onto a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force ship. Equally, the decision whether to respond was in the hands of the Japanese commander himself. In this case, restraint following the initial escalatory act led to de-escalation of the situation.

**Expense and Pride**

As states develop their navies and invest more money in them, they are less likely to be willing to sacrifice expensive and prestigious assets by escalating clashes in a nonexistential context. While warships are purchased and designed to fight, they represent large capital investments and are linked closely to national pride and achievement. Clashes in nonexistential environments rarely justify the loss of such assets.

This argument only is strengthened when navies grow in power. The costs of miscommunications and clashes at sea increase as more-powerful platforms become involved, since losing such a ship has both a high financial and a high political impact. As Abram N. Shulsky points out, as the Soviet navy expanded, its platforms increased, not only in number and power, but in monetary and ideational value. While this provided the Soviet leadership with greater signaling options at sea, it also ensured that the accuracy of such signaling increased in importance, as both the USSR and the United States stood to lose more if operations at sea escalated.

For many smaller states, modern warships are among the most expensive military assets they possess and are not easy to replace. Modern, high-technology warships are more powerful and their increasing multifunctionality means they are capable of fulfilling a wider number of roles, but their rising costs have reduced fleet numbers. This places a premium on the survival of expensive platforms and ensures that these vessels will be risked only if national interests demand it.

**Agreements and Managing Escalation**

Escalation through an inadvertent miscalculation or following an isolated incident can be prevented or mitigated by the establishment of agreements that both set the rules of interaction between maritime forces and provide mechanisms for the alleviation of tension.
Internaval or intergovernmental agreements that aim to mitigate potential clashes at sea have proved successful. This was especially true during the Cold War. INCSEA provided rules for both navies on how to operate and provided relief mechanisms when incidents occurred. The agreement was negotiated at a time when incidents at sea between the two sides were becoming increasingly robust, including a number of collisions and near collisions. The concern was that, aside from the actual danger to lives and equipment that an incident at sea represented, there was substantial risk that an incident could cause a crisis, or even direct combat, to erupt.48

Importantly, both sides acknowledged that incidents at sea were an inevitable consequence of great-power interaction at sea, but that such incidents needed to be managed. As Sean Lynn-Jones points out, INCSEA accepted “the reality of U.S.-Soviet competition and competitive interaction... [I]t implicitly assumes that U.S. and Soviet warships and aircraft will continue their rivalry at sea and engage in ‘gunboat diplomacy’ to influence political outcomes.”49

The agreement provided for an annual meeting at which violations were reviewed, and when required naval attachés assigned to their respective embassies served as liaisons. While the agreement was not perfect and clashes continued at sea, it was an effective release valve that reduced tensions and mitigated the risk of miscalculation.

The effectiveness of this agreement was predicated on the reality that neither side wanted to escalate tensions inadvertently and damage valuable government assets. This resulted in both the United States and the Soviet Union actively seeking to improve INCSEA and engaging with each other via its processes.50 This suggests that for an agreement to have utility, both sides must view it as beneficial. Professional understanding between naval officers of the two sides also was a key component in ensuring the success of INCSEA.51 Professional empathy created by consistent working-level interactions between officers of conflicting sides cannot eliminate the possibility of inadvertent escalation but can reduce it. Another successful component was the agreement’s relative obscurity; keeping it out of the public eye allowed both navies to administer the agreement with minimal political interference.52

Beyond formal agreements such as INCSEA, open channels of communication also are viable methods of reducing tension. Establishing hotlines between governments, ministries of defense, and military services can reduce the risk of misunderstandings and aid in coordinating de-escalatory measures. However, as with operational agreements, hotlines are not a panacea, nor do they guarantee peace. Rather, their primary utility, as was demonstrated during the Cold War, is as a crisis-management tool.53
ESCALATION IN EAST ASIAN WATERS

This section asks whether the dampening effect that a maritime strategic environment has on escalation applies to the current situation in East Asia. This theater presents a complex array of challenges, with maritime boundary disputes interacting with the wider issues that have developed because of China’s rise and the increasing sophistication of its maritime strategy.

Currently, the nature of interactions at sea in East Asia conforms to the construct outlined above. Boundary and strategic disputes in the region have created a maritime environment in which instability is a prominent feature, yet escalatory acts, though frequent, have remained limited in nature and so far have not created an escalatory spiral or resulted in the outbreak of sustained violence.

Maritime Disputes

China’s 2015 defense white paper, China’s Military Strategy, calls for the “traditional mentality that land outweighs sea” to be abandoned and for China to develop into a maritime power. This white paper documents China’s progressive emphasis on sea power, both to protect its regional interests and to support its growing number of overseas strategic priorities. Such an approach is designed to further China’s vision of a new maritime status quo for the region, one in which China has broad economic exploitation rights beyond those that UNCLOS grants and in which China maintains a position of geostrategic preeminence.

China’s approach has been to legitimize its maritime claims in East Asia through the use of domestic law, obstruct other littoral nations from exploiting their own resources, and facilitate the operations of Chinese state and nonstate economic actors in the region. The coercive actions of these state and civilian actors in carrying out Beijing’s vision have led to several incidents and clashes, which have resulted in sustained low-level instability but no significant escalation.

Disputes over resource exploitation arising from contested maritime boundaries also have occurred among other claimant states in the South China Sea. The naval and maritime law-enforcement forces of Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam all have clashed at sea. These disputes have resulted in standoffs, gunfire, and spectacular water fights at sea between rival sets of coast guard and civilian actors. However, as with the incidents involving China directly, they have not yet resulted in war, sustained escalation, or significant loss of life.

A snapshot of significant maritime incidents in the South China Sea reveals that, of fifteen significant clashes in 2016, twelve involved Chinese naval or coast guard forces. The level of force used included ramming, harassment, and even the firing of shots, but in none of the cases did escalation occur after the initial clash. A similar pattern prevailed in 2015, during which eight out of ten major incidents involved Chinese forces.
In the East China Sea, a comparable trend of low-level instability without escalation can be observed. Chinese government and private vessels consistently have operated in Japanese-claimed waters, particularly around the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. According to the Japanese government, over a four-year period between 2012 and 2016, each month an average of fifty-seven Chinese governmental and nongovernmental vessels operated in the contiguous zone surrounding the disputed islands, and an average of nine vessels operated in the claimed territorial seas. These monthly averages are punctuated by occasional spikes in activity; for example, in August 2016 over two hundred Chinese fishing vessels escorted by China Coast Guard ships entered the contiguous zone around the islands. Such contestation operations have resulted in some significant but isolated clashes in the region, including collisions between fishing boats and coast guard vessels, the use of water cannon, and the previously highlighted lock-on incident.

Violent clashes at sea, with no further escalation, also occur in the fertile fishing grounds off the coast of South Korea. Chinese fishing vessels consistently have performed illegal fishing activities in South Korean waters, even in the highly sensitive areas around the NLL. South Korean sources suggest that between April and June—the height of blue crab season—over two hundred Chinese boats per day have fished illegally in that region. Such activities have resulted in numerous, even deadly clashes between South Korean coast guard vessels and Chinese fishermen. In 2011, a South Korean officer was murdered by a Chinese fishing captain during efforts to seize the Chinese vessel. In 2016, three Chinese fishermen were killed accidentally during boarding operations, and in a separate incident a small South Korean coast guard vessel was sunk after being rammed by a Chinese trawler.

The United States, China, and Freedom of Navigation

While the United States is not a claimant state in the disputes in the East and South China Seas, it does have substantial strategic and economic interests in the region. China’s use of coercive pressure to enforce its claims and its island-building activities have drawn substantial criticism from U.S. policy makers. This derives from both normative and strategic concerns. China presents a potential challenge to U.S. maritime dominance in Asia and is in dispute with many U.S. allies and security partners, most notably Japan. Further, the United States does not recognize China’s expansive claims in the region, nor does it accept China’s assertion that China as a coastal state can regulate foreign military activities in its EEZ. These factors have combined to create substantial but not insurmountable strategic tensions between Washington and Beijing.

The United States challenges China’s expansive claims in the region through its freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs). This has resulted in operations at
sea that have brought U.S. naval vessels into proximity with Chinese civilian, paramilitary, and military actors. While the United States officially views FONOPs as normal operations, the Chinese perceive them as potentially threatening. In 2016, a Chinese admiral stated that “China consistently opposes so-called military freedom of navigation, which brings with it a military threat and which challenges and disrespects the international law of the sea.”

Despite such sentiments, to date the Chinese have not challenged U.S. FONOPs substantially on an operational level, instead preferring to engage on a political and rhetorical one. Under the Obama administration, U.S. naval vessels conducted five widely reported FONOPs in the South China Sea, and at the time of this writing the U.S. Navy has conducted four more FONOPs since President Trump took office. So far no case of FONOPs has resulted in escalation to the use of substantial force; however, robust incidents have occurred. These incidents, as with clashes over maritime disputes, conform to the pattern of low-level instability seen in recent years at sea. The now-infamous 2009 incident of Chinese harassment of USNS Impeccable highlighted the potential for diverging views of freedom of navigation to lead to isolated clashes at sea. The general Chinese response has been to shadow vessels conducting such operations with naval and coast guard assets. Additionally, it has been reported that in the case of USS Lassen a number of Chinese fishing and merchant ships maneuvered around the U.S. ship as it sailed by the Chinese installation on Subi Reef. In December 2016, a Chinese vessel removed a U.S. underwater drone from the water within eyeshot of a U.S. naval vessel. This was a blatant obstruction of U.S. navigation rights, yet it did not result in an escalation to violence.

FONOPs also were carried out during the Cold War. The initial Soviet response was diplomatic, but the Soviets felt that such FONOPs were unnecessarily provocative, and responses escalated to more-forceful measures, notably the ramming of USS Yorktown in 1988 while it was conducting a FONOP in the Black Sea. However, the parties found military and political solutions. The military solution prescribed further rules for interaction between vessels. The political solution, agreed to in 1988, saw the Soviet Union acceding to the U.S. interpretation of the law of the sea and the United States determining that it no longer needed to assert its right of freedom of navigation in the Black Sea. This was an elegant solution for both sides, in that the United States did not give up its right to perform FONOPs, yet it got the USSR to agree to the established laws of the sea, while the Soviet Union put a stop to what it perceived as destabilizing behavior. This suggests that political solutions to freedom of navigation issues can be found and that clashes over FONOPs, if they occur, can be managed once it is in the interests of both parties to do so.
The Potential for Escalation

Currently, available data suggest that the trend of maritime interactions in the seas of East Asia is mirroring that seen during and after the Cold War. This would indicate that sustained low-level instability will continue to characterize the strategic picture, but that escalation is unlikely.

Significant clashes did occur in the South China Sea in 1974 and 1988. However, in both cases, Chinese and Vietnamese forces clashed over the control of disputed features, not as a result of operations at sea. In 1974, China wrested control of the Paracel Islands from Vietnamese forces, and in 1988 the militaries of the two countries fought as they attempted to secure Johnson South Reef in the Spratly Islands. While this article focuses on the potential for escalation arising out of clashes resulting from incidents at sea, it also is worth noting that following both of these cases no substantial further escalation occurred.  

However, East Asia has a unique characteristic when it comes to strategic-level interactions. Unlike during the Cold War and the case of the Korean Peninsula, in East Asia the main crucible of interaction is located at sea. China and the United States have no forces opposing each other on land, and with the exception of Taiwan there are no arenas where the United States and China could clash that have significant populated areas. This arguably reduces the risk of a clash at sea spilling over onto land; therefore, the restraining effect of devastating war that was operative during the Cold War may be weaker. This may allow Chinese or U.S. commanders the freedom to escalate a clash, given that the potential strategic costs resulting therefrom would be lessened.

However, while there is no existential threat, conflict between the United States and China would mean conflict between the world’s two biggest economies in some of the world’s most economically vital seas. This places pressure on both sides to manage the instability caused by conflictual interactions. As Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi stated in 2017, “There cannot be conflict between China and the United States, as both sides will lose and both sides cannot afford that.”

Operationally, the increasing presence and prominence of civilian law-enforcement actors such as coast guards and the role of paramilitary maritime militias are new phenomena. This introduces a variable that has not been seen previously. A clash between coast guard or militia vessels may escalate to the involvement of naval vessels. However, so far—despite substantial clashes at sea between maritime law-enforcement actors—such escalation has not occurred.

A further issue arising from competing maritime claims in Asia is their linkage with nationalism and history. Contested claims over the sovereign control of islands and operations in contested waters have provoked significant public reaction in countries across the region, including China, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Clashes that occur at sea increasingly are portrayed on social media, and while
that might constrain maritime actors from acting aggressively, it also could stoke
protests to which governments might feel the need to respond, to assuage their
publics. Significant protests occurred in China following Japan’s nationalization of
the Senkaku Islands and in Vietnam following China’s exploration activities near
the Paracel Islands, but these did not result in escalatory processes and the gov-
ernments in question eventually acted to quell public displays of dissatisfaction. 77
However, it should be acknowledged that even a single future clash at sea may act
as a trigger for nationalist sentiment, which could elevate an incident beyond its
objective political or strategic value and result in unforeseen escalation.

As with the Cold War, tensions have produced some positive outcomes, par-
ticularly in managing interactions at sea and reducing the risk of miscalculation.
The 2014 multinational Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) agree-
ment indicated a desire to manage interactions at sea. Similarly, the 2016 agree-
ment between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
on CUES and ongoing negotiations over a code of conduct for the South China
Sea should be seen as starting points to mitigate further the potential for unin-
tended escalation at sea. 78

Given the concerns that the Soviet Union highlighted in the 1970s regarding
the escalatory potential of inexperienced officers, the rapid expansion of Asian
cost guards should be noted. The circumstances of East Asia, where coast guards
are taking the lead in enforcing maritime claims, suggest a need for similar agree-
ments within this context. Such agreements should be tailored to the specific
roles that coast guards undertake. 79 As with naval agreements during the Cold
War, for such agreements to be successful it is vital that all sides perceive their
operational and political benefits.

Hotlines also are present in Northeast Asia, most notably between the military
services of South Korea and Japan and those of South Korea and China. 80 There
also are moves toward a working-level hotline between China and ASEAN. Fur-
ther, there is a South Korea–China coast guard hotline, which soon could be rep-
licated between China and the Philippines. 81 However, hotlines are effective only
when both sides agree to use them. There is some evidence that in times of crisis
China has not used hotlines effectively. In January 2017, a fleet of Chinese mili-
tary aircraft entered the South Korean air-defense identification zone. Reports
suggest that the Chinese did not answer the hotline when South Korean officials
attempted to contact them to clarify the fleet’s intentions. Nevertheless, Japan
and China also are in the process of agreeing on a communication mechanism to
de-escalate unintended incidents in the East China Sea. 82

This analysis suggests that the fear that escalation will result from an incident
at sea is, by and large, overemphasized. Clashes in areas of strategic tension or
contested maritime boundaries are to be expected; however, there is little evidence that such clashes lead to escalatory cycles or sustained violence.

This absence of escalatory behavior can be attributed to several factors that maritime strategic geography imposes. Historically, the strategic or political benefits of escalation at sea rarely have outweighed the potential costs. The bottom line is that what happens at sea rarely materially affects populations on land, and therefore a costly war over maritime issues is less likely to occur.

De-escalation after an incident is facilitated by the fact that the sea cannot be controlled permanently, so the costs of withdrawal are reduced, as such a move does not result automatically in the loss of territory. Further, the size of the maritime environment, coupled with the speed of clashes at sea, allows for easier de-escalation, as time is needed to concentrate often-dispersed maritime forces. Organic escalation therefore is less likely to occur, since political and military elites would be required to commit expensive assets intentionally to continue a clash. Equally, information gathering also is hindered by the nature of operations at sea. Time often is required to ascertain facts fully, and this gap allows for political and strategic tensions to cool.

It would be wrong to suggest that it is impossible for an outbreak of sustained violence at sea in Asia to occur. Decision makers could choose to escalate following a clash at sea, or they might feel they had no other option. Further, the geostrategic situation in East Asia, where the stakes are not existential, may increase the risk of one side seeing a strategic or political benefit from escalating such a clash deliberately. However, to date, incidents at sea in the region have not resulted in substantial escalation; instead, they have conformed to the patterns outlined in this analysis.

More attention should be paid to differences arising from geostrategic competition occurring at sea rather than on land. It is important for all parties to realize and accept that, in the conditions currently present in Asia, clashes at sea are normal. The keys to maintaining stability in these conditions of sustained low-level instability are crisis management and the ability to cope with the initial clashes that inevitably will occur when strategic and territorial interests collide at sea.

NOTES


4. This article modifies the Correlates of War project’s definition of militarized interstate disputes to define a clash at sea as an act in which one or more military, paramilitary, or civilian actors at sea threaten, display, or use nonlethal or lethal force at a level below full-scale war. See Joseph Grieco, G. John Ikenberry, and Michael Mastanduno, Introduction to International Relations: Enduring Questions and Contemporary Perspectives (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 141.


8. This article uses the definitions of vertical and horizontal escalation set out in Forrest E. Morgan et al., Dangerous Thresholds: Managing Escalation in the 21st Century (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), pp. 18–19.

9. This article adapts Avery Goldstein’s definition of instability, defining it as the willingness to use force, no matter how limited, to achieve aims at sea. See Avery Goldstein, “First Things First: The Pressing Danger of Crisis Instability in U.S.-China Relations,” International Security 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013), p. 51.


13. Paul Midford argues that this clash directly challenged democratic peace theory, such was its severity. See Paul Midford, “Challenging the Democratic Peace? Historical Memory and the Security Relationship between Japan and South Korea,” Pacific Focus 23, no. 2 (2008), pp. 189–211.

14. Of the 445 described disputes on land, six resulted in the outbreak of war.


17. For a discussion on interpretations of operating rights in an EEZ as defined under UNCLOS, see Peter Dutton, introduction to Military Activities in the EEZ: A U.S.-China Dialogue on Security and International Law in the Maritime Commons, China Maritime Studies 7, ed. Peter Dutton (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2010), pp. 7–9.

18. Data taken from David F. Winkler, Cold War at Sea: High-Sea Confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.

https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol71/iss4/1


44. This incident also highlights the importance of peacetime rules of engagement. In the United States, these restrain the use of force except in acts of self-defense and ensure that any use of force is proportional to the threat posed. They also deny the use of force as punishment for an act that already has been committed. Such rules reduce the possibility of the escalatory use of force in peacetime once the initial incident has ended. See Bradd C. Hayes, Naval Rules of Engagement: Management Tools for Crisis, RAND Note N-2963-CC (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1989), and J. Ashley Roach, "Rules of Engagement," chap. 35 in Readings on International Law from the Naval War College Review, 1978–1994, ed. John Norton Moore and Robert F. Turner, International Law Studies 68 (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 1995) [hereafter Readings on International Law].


49. Ibid., p. 181.

50. Winkler, Cold War at Sea, pp. 174–75.


58. These data are from the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, available at chinapower.csis.org/.

59. Ibid.


61. Japan Coast Guard, "The Numbers of Chinese Government and Other Vessels That


73. As Toshi Yoshihara points out, in the case of the Paracel Islands, China quickly established escalation dominance in the aftermath of the battle, discouraging Vietnam from attempting to retake the islands. Toshi Yoshihara, “The 1974 Paracels Sea Battle: A Campaign Appraisal,” Naval War College Review 69, no. 2 (Spring 2016), pp. 50–51.

74. Øystein Tunsjø, “The Cold War as a Guide to the Risk of War in East Asia,” Global Asia 9, no. 3 (Fall 2014), pp. 15–19.


76. It is worth noting that during the Cod Wars, Royal Navy vessels could not fire on Icelandic coast guard ships, as the international political consequences would have been too severe. See Till, Seapower, p. 275.


78. In May 2017, media reports suggested that China and ASEAN were close to an agreement on a code of conduct. No details were available at the time of this writing. See “China, ASEAN Agree on Framework for South China Sea Code of Conduct,” Reuters, May 18, 2017, www.reuters.com/.


THE GREAT WHITE FLEET SAILS TODAY?

Twenty-First-Century Logistics Lessons from the 1907–1909 Voyage of the Great White Fleet

Christopher McMahon

We need above all things, a proportionate Navy, one that is perfect in every essential particular, not simply the ships that are necessary for fighting, but the ships that are necessary to sustain the ships that do the fighting, to carry coal [fuel] and supplies . . . and without these ships, the Navy would be as helpless in case of war as we would be without the battleships or the fighting ships of the Navy.

SENATOR FRANCIS G. NEWLANDS (D-NY), CONGRESSIONAL HEARING, MARCH 1908

In the numerous conflicts since the founding of the republic, and in particular since the late nineteenth century, the United States has relied on its ability to project military power far from its shores. With the country isolated from much of the world by massive oceans, America’s military has employed sealift and—to some extent, since early in World War II—airlift to move troops, equipment, ammunition, and supplies around the world.¹ The majority of this lift capacity has been provided by commercial merchant vessels under the operational control of the military.

World War II offers the most spectacular example of strategic lift in the history of warfare. Using hundreds of Army and Navy logistics vessels and over five thousand merchant vessels, the United States carried more than 132 million measurement tons of cargo during the war.² This included the movement of nearly 1.4 million vehicles, two thousand locomotives, and nearly eight million soldiers, plus vast amounts of ammunition, supplies, and other equipment.³ As it mounted the largest naval armada in history, the U.S. Navy

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would have found it impossible to achieve its accomplishments in the Atlantic and Pacific theaters without the thousands of Army and Navy logistics ships and commercial merchant ships that supported the fleet.

Recognizing the direct relationship of logistics to the ability of the U.S. military to forward-deploy around the world and acknowledging the need to coordinate military lift capabilities for all the services, the U.S. Merchant Marine, and the airline industry, the U.S. government created the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM, or simply TRANSCOM) in 1987. TRANSCOM is headquartered at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois and is a four-star unified command. TRANSCOM components include the Air Force’s Air Mobility Command (AMC), the Army’s Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC), and the Navy’s Military Sealift Command (MSC). Augmenting and supporting MSC is the Ready Reserve Force (RRF) of the Maritime Administration (MARAD). The RRF consists of government-owned ships that MARAD and its contracted companies maintain in a ready status. These ships fall under MSC’s operational control when activated and are used in sealift emergencies to support all the armed services. For more than thirty years—through numerous conflicts, military actions, and deployments—TRANSCOM and its component commands (and MARAD’s RRF) have proved their efficiency and effectiveness. They have played vital roles in the success of American military actions—in the air, on land, and at sea.

Yet, as well as many military leaders and planners in all the services understand and appreciate the critical importance of sealift logistics, too often as time passes some military professionals and politicians forget or overlook the lessons learned from past logistics failures. We are again at a time in history when the importance and vulnerability of sealift, for both military and commercial activities, need to be considered and reassessed. The voyage of the U.S. Navy’s Great White Fleet around the world from December 1907 to February 1909 offers some powerful lessons in this regard.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, European powers rushed headlong into the building and expanding of global empires around the world. As the twentieth century dawned, with most of the United States and its territories explored, America too launched itself into imperialist actions as it sought great-power status. A particular manifestation was the Great White Fleet’s voyage, which seemingly proved that America’s navy could project power forward to any region of the world and defend the country’s newly acquired overseas territories and its trade. Credit can be given to President Theodore Roosevelt for envisioning this voyage, which, by most measures, was an unparalleled success. Never before had any navy in the world embarked on such a voyage,
circumnavigating the globe and visiting as many countries with such a large and powerful battle fleet.

Less known with regard to the 1907–1909 voyage is the logistics backstory. This background demonstrates the critical importance of strategic sealift and the ultimate vulnerability of any navy, army, or air force that is dependent on logistics ships for fuel, stores, and ammunition. This story provides lessons that remain as important for all the armed services of the twenty-first century as they were to the U.S. Navy of the early twentieth century—lessons that often go unappreciated or forgotten. While today the U.S. Navy, and the U.S. military writ large, have great logistics capabilities through the strategic sealift managed by USTRANSCOM, MSC, RRF, and the commercial U.S. Merchant Marine, there are serious challenges that need to be considered and overcome. The ability of America’s navy and all its armed services to forward-deploy depends on doing so.

BACKGROUND TO THE VOYAGE

The U.S. Navy ended the Civil War with, in theory, almost seven hundred ships in commission. This included some sixty-five ironclads. But by 1880, Navy vessels had dropped to only forty-eight in number—and all of them were essentially technologically obsolete. During this period, the U.S. Merchant Marine was in equally poor shape. To make matters worse, those shipowners who had transferred their vessels to neutral flags during the Civil War to avoid attacks from Confederate forces were considered traitors, so Congress passed a law specifically forbidding the reflagging of those ships back under the U.S. flag.

Exhausted from the war and with the huge interior of their country largely unoccupied (except by native peoples) and offering great promise, Americans turned inward and ignored the sea, their navy, and their merchant marine. Partially contributing to the lack of interest in a sizable U.S. Merchant Marine was the fact that by 1890 there were twenty-two coastal states and twenty-two inland states, resulting in a decline in political support for maritime industries.

During these years following the Civil War, industrialization spread rapidly in the United States; American industry eclipsed that of Great Britain by the end of the century. With industrialization came incredible wealth, which went to a new class of Gilded Age businessmen but spread as well to many average Americans and the country at large.

As the United States became more dependent on overseas trade during this period, political leaders in Washington began to look at the decrepit state of the Navy and the Merchant Marine. There was fear that if overseas powers threatened seagoing trade, the United States did not possess a navy adequate to protect the nation’s interests, much less a merchant marine capable of carrying a significant portion of the nation’s international trade.
It was Secretary of the Navy William H. Hunt who began to build a new and more powerful U.S. Navy in the early 1880s. Under his leadership and that of subsequent Navy secretaries, Congress appropriated funds for the construction of modern cruisers. By 1890, six armored cruisers had been built and were operational. During the same year, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, USN (later rear admiral and President of the Naval War College, in Newport, Rhode Island), published his seminal book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*. In the book, Mahan argued that sea power was critical to establishing national strength and dominance in global trade. (Importantly, Mahan also noted that one of the critical attributes of sea power was a capable and robust commercial merchant marine, although ever since Mahan first offered his thesis most in America have overlooked this observation.)

Mahan’s book had a tremendous impact, not just in the United States but around the world. Huge, expensive battleships, large fleets, and decisive battles seemed to be the order of the day. At the same time, newcomers to colonialism, such as Germany, Japan, and the United States, clamored for overseas colonies—if necessary, to be obtained and then protected by the force of their navies.

In the United States, the Naval Appropriations Act for 1891 (better known as the Battleship Act of 1890) for the first time authorized the construction of three battleships, which would be christened USS Indiana, USS Massachusetts, and USS Oregon. During the next ten years, several more battleships were completed, bringing the U.S. Navy, by some metrics, from a ranking of twelfth among the world’s navies in 1870 to fifth place.

**PRESIDENT TEDDY ROOSEVELT AND THE GREAT WHITE FLEET**

By the conclusion of the Spanish-American War in 1898, the U.S. Navy had destroyed the Spanish fleets in the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico and seized the Philippines and Puerto Rico as possessions in a new “American Empire.” The American navy, with its new and apparently proven ships, was the pride of the nation.

As luck would have it for the growth of the fleet, the political sun continued to shine on the Navy with the accession of Theodore Roosevelt to the presidency in 1901. As a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the early days of the war with Spain, Roosevelt was an ardent advocate of naval power and a fervent believer in the words of Mahan. Under his tenure as president, the Navy continued to grow in both size and power.

World events during Roosevelt’s administration contributed to support for a larger and more powerful navy. In 1903, the Roosevelt administration eagerly encouraged and provided resources to rebels in Panama to help them gain independence from Colombia. The motive was ultimately to establish a treaty with a
new Panamanian government whereby the United States could build and operate a canal across the isthmus. This would enable the U.S. Navy to move from ocean to ocean rapidly to deal with conflicts in Europe or Asia. U.S. tensions with Japan began during these years, and the shocking defeat of the Russian fleet at the naval battle of Tsushima during the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 seemed to prove Mahan’s theories of decisive naval battles and the need for large, powerful battle fleets. Roosevelt and Congress grew concerned about the ability of the U.S. Navy to protect newly acquired territories and colonies in the Pacific, notably the Philippines. The launching of HMS Dreadnought in 1906 also had profound effects on the psychology of naval strategists around the world. Dreadnought was essentially an all-big-gun ship, and its steam-powered turbines made it fast for battleships of the day. Over the course of the next three years, the world’s navies ordered nearly seventy of these powerful—and expensive—ships.

In 1901, the U.S. Navy possessed nine battleships, with eight more under construction. Responding to pressure from Roosevelt and support from the press and the public, Congress authorized the construction of an additional ten battleships and four armored cruisers in the years from 1901 to 1905. In 1906 and 1907, two additional battleships were authorized, and in 1908 two more. By this time, the United States had emerged as a first-rate naval power. In fact, in 1908, the U.S. Navy ranked as number two in the world, second only to Great Britain’s Royal Navy. (This would change in ensuing years as Germany continued its naval arms race with Britain; its navy moved from the number three to the number two spot by the start of World War I.)

During the early 1900s, navies, and especially their battleships, became tangible and dramatic symbols of national power. Even countries that could ill afford the cost of building and operating battleships built one or two to demonstrate that they too were great naval powers, or at least to provide some substantive support for the notion. The best way to show off a nation’s power was to hold or participate in naval expositions or parades or to visit the ports of other major naval powers. Indeed, it was a statement of respect when a nation received an invitation to join another nation’s naval festivities, and when invitations were received utmost attention was given to impressing others with a display of one’s own powerful battleships. In this environment, President Roosevelt first conceived of sailing a USN fleet around the world.

THE VOYAGE OF THE GREAT WHITE FLEET
Roosevelt’s plan for sending America’s battle fleet around the world apparently began to develop in 1905. The genesis of this idea may have been his observation of and admiration for the epic transit of Russia’s Baltic Fleet from Saint Petersburg to the Far East to challenge the Japanese navy in the Russo-Japanese War.
In 1904, the tensions between Japan and Russia over Korea and Manchuria reached the boiling point and the two nations found themselves at war. The ill-trained and ill-equipped Russian Far East Naval Squadron was no match for the modern and highly trained Japanese navy, which, on February 8, 1904, attacked and heavily damaged what Russian naval power was available in eastern Russia.

In response, the tsar decided to send the entire Baltic Fleet to the Far East to engage the Japanese, destroy their fleet, and quickly win the war—or so he thought. But it was not to be so. The Russian fleet departed Revel (modern Tallinn, Estonia) on October 15, 1904. After a grueling 18,000-mile journey from northern Europe to the Tsushima Strait off the coast of Japan, on May 27, 1905, the Russian fleet engaged the Japanese. In the ensuing fierce battle most of the Russian ships—including all the battleships—were sunk, with only a few ships reaching Russian ports and three cruisers escaping to the Philippines. The war soon came to a close. Both sides, exhausted, agreed to peace negotiations and eventually signed a treaty—engineered by none other than President Theodore Roosevelt—in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Despite this complete disaster (from the Russian perspective), Roosevelt was probably very impressed by the long voyage of the Russian Baltic Fleet—particularly since the world press covered it extensively during the seven-month span. He may have been inspired to send the U.S. Navy’s battle fleet on an even longer voyage. Then there were the unsettling tensions with Japan. Considering Japan’s devastating defeat of the Russian fleet at Tsushima, its growing belligerence in China and Korea, and the rapid growth of its merchant marine, Americans on the West Coast were becoming increasingly uneasy. The initial voyage of the Great White Fleet (from the American East Coast to the West Coast) was clearly an attempt to reassure Americans that their Navy could defend the West Coast. In his autobiography, written in 1913, Roosevelt also stated that the purpose of the cruise was to “impress the American people in order to gain support for a program to build more battleships.”

Amid the growing tensions with Japan in the summer of 1907, it was originally Admiral George Dewey who suggested to Roosevelt that he send the battle fleet to the Far East as a show of force. Apparently during that summer Roosevelt began to consider seriously a “world cruise” for the fleet, but he kept this idea to himself for a time. Then, in late summer, the Roosevelt administration announced that sixteen battleships would make a voyage from the East to the West Coast of the United States via the Strait of Magellan. In December 1907, the fleet departed Hampton Roads, Virginia, bound for San Francisco. Initially this fleet included sixteen battleships, eight armored cruisers, and six torpedo boats. The officers and men of the fleet, at this point, were aware that the voyage probably would continue around the world; the world press was still in speculative mode,
but as the weeks progressed intentions for the voyage of the Great White Fleet became clear. The ships would travel from the West Coast of the United States to New Zealand, Australia, Japan, and the Far East, then to Sri Lanka, through the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean to Spain, and finally across the Atlantic and back to Hampton Roads, arriving in early 1909.

This would be a 43,000-mile, around-the-globe voyage to twenty ports on six continents. It was a world first for the large battle fleet of any nation—an accomplishment that brought envy, concern, pride, or criticism, depending on the source. It was, in any case, an impressive accomplishment for a relatively young nation and a rising naval power.

THE “REST OF THE STORY”: COAL AND STORES

The expression “An army marches on its stomach” (attributed to both Frederick the Great and Napoléon) is well understood by most people. It seems rather obvious that food and fuel (fodder for horses was the equivalent of the latter in premodern times) are basic necessities if an army is to move from one point to another. What may be less obvious is that the same is true for a navy. Granted, some types of warships can carry substantial amounts of food, supplies, fuel, and ammunition, but in general warships’ steaming range, and therefore their ability to fight, is limited—often only a few days’ underway time.

The ships of the Great White Fleet were no exception. In that era, a battleship steaming at sea speed consumed its coal supply within a week. Fresh water—crucial throughout maritime history—was even more important in the age of steam power, since steamships were dependent on liberal amounts of fresh water to resupply their boilers. Then there was the question of feeding warships’ crews. On the voyage of the Great White Fleet, the crew complement of the fleet consisted of some fourteen thousand men. The one other often-critical commodity for warships, ammunition, was not a concern on the peacetime voyage of the Great White Fleet—in stark contrast to the situation of the Russian fleet as it steamed toward its fateful rendezvous in the Tsushima Strait.

Roosevelt and Navy planners were well aware of the supply issues facing the Great White Fleet, but the solutions were daunting and dangerous. For example, they were aware that Admiral Dewey’s wholesale destruction of the Spanish fleet in the Philippines and the U.S. Navy’s pursuit of the Spanish fleet off Cuba during the Spanish-American War were, in many respects, quite fortuitous because they exposed that the Navy’s ability to resupply its combatants with coal, stores, and ammunition during war was seriously limited and reliant on foreign-flag merchant ships.

Despite the massive growth in the number of USN battleships and other combatants from 1898 into the first decade of the new century, the Navy possessed
only three U.S.-flag supply ships: USS Celtic, USS Culgoa, and USS Glacier. Further complicating this vulnerability at the time of the voyage of the Great White Fleet, the Navy possessed only six old colliers (some still rigged with sails) to support the fleet on its voyage. It was estimated that the fleet would consume upward of five hundred thousand tons of coal just on the voyage from the United States to the Far East. The Russians, for example, had needed to charter sixty foreign-flag colliers to supply their fleet on its voyage from the Baltic to the Far East.

A study the Naval War College conducted in early 1907 estimated that the Great White Fleet would require some one hundred chartered colliers to support it on its voyage around the world. The problem was that there were no U.S.-flag colliers to charter, because the U.S. Merchant Marine had been allowed to atrophy during the decades after the Civil War. As Assistant Secretary of the Navy prior to the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt, along with Mahan and senior Navy officials, had advocated to Congress that a sufficient fleet of U.S.-flag colliers be built to enable the Navy to forward-deploy. But this proposal never gained any traction, and Congress took no action on its own to support a revitalized U.S. Merchant Marine. Only warships, no colliers or supply ships, were authorized and built.

Accordingly, in October of 1907, the Navy Department—now desperately in need of logistics ships—contracted for thirty foreign-flag colliers to supply the Great White Fleet on its voyage from Hampton Roads to San Francisco. The majority of these were British-flag merchant ships. In an interview just after the fleet began its voyage, contemporary German naval critic Graf Ernst zu Reventlow underscored that “the lack of supply ships and colliers left the Americans and the Great White Fleet in a highly vulnerable position given their dependency on foreign flag ships, especially British ships.” He would be proved right. In total, more than forty-one British merchant ships were chartered to carry coal and supplies for the Great White Fleet during the around-the-world voyage. Many other foreign ships, mostly European, also were chartered. As expected, there were many more chartered supply ships supporting the Great White Fleet than there were warships on the voyage. (It is important to emphasize that any requirement to resupply naval ordnance would have necessitated even more supply ships.)

In the Pacific, the U.S. Navy learned firsthand the dangers of becoming too dependent on foreign-flag ships to carry the fleet’s coal. During a portion of the Pacific voyage, no colliers were available to resupply the fleet. Some historians have suggested that diplomatic tensions over a possible U.S.-German alliance against a Japanese-British alliance caused the British to withdraw their coal ships—and their coal—for a period. The coal was as important as the ships: during this part of the Pacific voyage, the U.S. Navy was forced to buy Australian coal, which was inferior in quality, requiring nearly half again as much to achieve the same output.
from the fleet’s boilers. Rear Admiral Charles S. Sperry (the fleet commander on the later part of the voyage) noted in subsequent congressional testimony that this demonstrated clearly how Great Britain “could control the actions of the fleet.” Exacerbating this problem, throughout the voyage there were frequent rendezvous problems with contracted foreign-flag vessels; in some cases, they simply never met the fleet.

Coal was not the only commodity dependent on shipping that was less than fully reliable. When the Great White Fleet was in the Mediterranean, an earthquake in Italy created a serious humanitarian crisis. Admiral Sperry dispatched the U.S. supply ship USS Culgoa to assist. But the fleet depended on this one ship for food and other supplies, so to compensate the Navy chartered a British-flag ship, SS Republic, to bring food and supplies to the fleet while it was in the Mediterranean. Unfortunately, Republic sank in a collision in fog with another vessel. Fear of famine created widespread panic throughout the fleet. It was only when the Royal Navy provided the Great White Fleet with basic rations from its stores at Gibraltar that the crisis was averted. Additional food and supplies from America never did arrive, but through strict rationing the fleet successfully sailed from Gibraltar to Hampton Roads.

On February 21, 1909, the Great White Fleet steamed majestically into Hampton Roads to a huge celebration and a proud president and nation. The U.S. Navy had accomplished a magnificent feat, and for the most part had gained the respect of seafaring nations across the globe.

CRITICISM, AND VULNERABILITIES EXPOSED

Even before the Great White Fleet departed on its voyage, critics noted that the lack of a U.S. Merchant Marine limited the ability of the Navy to forward-deploy, much less to sail around the world in a conflict situation. Senator Eugene Hale (R-ME, 1881–1911), chairman of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, was appalled that the magnificent battleships of the U.S. Navy were almost completely dependent “on the indulgence of foreign powers” to forward-deploy on any voyage beyond the Atlantic Seaboard. In a Senate debate and congressional hearing, Senator Hale was quoted as saying that “due to the lack of U.S. flag colliers and supply ships, the Great White Fleet was ‘as useless as a painted ship upon a painted ocean’.”

The fact that the Great White Fleet was almost completely dependent on having foreign-flag commercial ships, especially of the British merchant marine, available to follow the fleet around the world to resupply it was not revealed fully until after the fleet had returned to the United States. Indeed, it is curious that during the period of the voyage the Germans had been hoping to establish an alliance between their country and the United States for a possible war against
Japan and Britain. What the Germans apparently did not consider is that the size and capability of the U.S. Navy mattered not, because without sufficient USN logistics ships and an American merchant marine capable of resupplying the fleet, any U.S. naval contribution to a war against Japan and Britain would have been negligible.\(^5^4\)

With the successful return of the Great White Fleet to the United States, the Navy enjoyed substantial support from the public, Congress, and the press. That said, the voyage exposed significant vulnerabilities in the Navy and its ability to project power around the world. As Scientific American noted, “We refer to our great shortage of colliers and to the fact that had it not been for the foreign bottoms in which coal was shipped to the fleet at various points of rendezvous, it would have been impossible for this voyage to have been made. . . . [In a wartime setting] with no colliers of our own available to carry the necessary fuel, our sixteen battleships would have been as useless as so many anchored.”\(^5^5\)

Following the return of the fleet in 1909, Congress became fully aware of the serious lack of U.S.-flag colliers and supply ships and the Navy’s absolute dependence on foreign-flag merchant ships to deploy on voyages beyond the continental United States. This shortage obviously rendered the Navy impotent in potential conflicts far from U.S. shores. In a March 20, 1908, Senate debate on a shipping bill amending the 1891 Act to Provide for Ocean Mail Service between the United States and Foreign Ports, and to Promote Commerce, Senator Newlands of Nevada noted that the War Industries Board had been consulted regarding the needs of the U.S. Navy in case of a war. The board indicated that “about 232 commercial ships and/or auxiliaries would be needed to use as scouts, transports, colliers, and dispatch boats.” Senator Newlands commented that “we all know we have no such merchant marine as well as such supply ships.”\(^5^6\)

Through the course of several congressional hearings and debates after the voyage of the Great White Fleet, it was acknowledged that a sizable U.S. Merchant Marine was critical to national security, and yet Congress took little action until the eve of World War I to support a commercial merchant marine. In the absence of a robust U.S. Merchant Marine, and realizing the critical vulnerability the lack of logistics ships and commercial vessels represented, the Navy in 1908, with the consent of Congress, allocated 59 percent of its ship-construction budget to building a new fleet of Navy colliers and supply ships.\(^5^7\)

**AMERICA’S TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY NAVY—LESSONS LEARNED OR FORGOTTEN?**

One hundred twenty-five years after the publication of Mahan’s *Influence of Sea Power upon History* and 110 years after the voyage of the Great White Fleet, the
Navy’s *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower: Forward, Engaged, Ready*, issued in 2015, stated in part:

> Forward naval presence is essential to strengthening alliances and partnerships, providing the secure environment necessary for an open economic system based on the free flow of goods, protecting U.S. natural resources, promoting stability, deterring conflict, and responding to aggression. As global maritime commerce expands, populations increase, competition for energy and natural resources grows, and advanced military technologies proliferate across the oceans and through the littoral, so too will challenges arise for anyone operating in those regions.

The American people will continue to rely on the Sea Services to respond to fast-changing and complex world events that threaten the security of the United States and our allies and partners. ⁵⁸

Although international objectives may have changed, the importance of sea power that Mahan formulated has not diminished. In fact, given the rapid growth of navies around the world over the last twenty years, there is little question that great world powers are as eager today to possess large and powerful navies as nations were more than a century ago. It can be argued that currently there is under way a naval arms race much like that which occurred in the early years of the twentieth century. For decades after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. Navy had no near-peer competitor; this situation has changed considerably in recent years with the rapid growth of navies around the world.

Unfortunately, it seems that many operational strategists and planners have almost forgotten some of the lessons learned from the voyage of the Great White Fleet regarding fleet logistics. This is especially true when it comes to realizing the importance of a U.S. Merchant Marine in deploying all the armed forces around the world, including the Navy, as Mahan discussed. The coal-burning battleships of the Great White Fleet required refueling after one to two weeks’ steaming time, depending on voyage speed. Yes, today’s nuclear-powered carriers and submarines can steam for decades without refueling, but gas turbine–powered destroyers and cruisers require fuel nearly as often as coal-burning steamships did, and much more often if they are engaged in combat operations. In addition, maintaining combat air operations requires a carrier to replenish jet fuel at least every five days. ⁵⁹ Simply put, Navy combatants today are as dependent on logistics ships as their predecessors were during the voyage of the Great White Fleet.

**TODAY’S STRATEGIC SEALIFT/LOGISTICS CAPABILITIES**

To keep warships and land and air forces forward deployed and capable of fighting, the military today has an asset that did not exist a century ago: TRANSCOM. One of its component commands, Military Sealift Command,
provides logistics sealift for all the armed services. MSC’s mission is clear: “Military Sealift Command exists to support the joint warfighter across the full spectrum of military operations. Our mission is timeless and essential. Regardless of the challenge, we prevail! Working seamlessly with key partners to master the maritime and cyber domains, MSC provides on-time logistics, strategic sealift, as well as specialized missions anywhere in the world, under any condition, 24/7, 365 days a year.”

MSC is a capable, well-organized, and efficient organization with numerous missions. Supporting all the armed forces, MSC operates nearly 130 ships around the world. MSC ships are divided into eight mission sets: fleet oilers, special mission, prepositioning, service support, sealift, fleet ordnance and dry cargo, afloat staging, and expeditionary fast transport. Specifically to provide Navy fleet-logistics support around the world, MSC operates fifteen fleet oilers and fourteen fleet ordnance and dry-cargo ships. Other MSC ships support the Army and Air Force and other essential military missions not related to supplying Navy ships. MSC government-owned, U.S. Naval Service ships are crewed by civilian, government-employee mariners. Many other MSC vessels are commercial merchant ships chartered to provide logistics support for all U.S. armed forces around the world. These ships are crewed by civilian, union mariners.

The Maritime Administration (part of the U.S. Department of Transportation) has complementary government and commercial strategic sealift capabilities to support all the armed forces. MARAD’s primary government sealift asset is the RRF, which consists of forty-six former merchant ships: thirty-five roll-on/roll-off (RO/RO) vessels, eight of which are fast sealift support vessels; two heavy-lift or barge-carrying ships; six auxiliary crane ships; one tanker; and two aviation-repair vessels. These ships are dedicated to strategic sealift, and when activated in times of national emergency they fall under the operational control of MSC. RRF ships are berthed at various U.S. ports. Each is expected to be fully operational within its assigned five- or ten-day readiness status, thence to sail to designated loading berths. Through competitive contracts, commercial U.S. ship-management companies provide systems maintenance, equipment repairs, logistics support, activation, and operations management for RRF vessels. American civilian mariners contracted through maritime labor unions constitute the crews.

MARAD’s commercial sealift capability also includes managing the Maritime Security Program (MSP), which provides an annual operating subsidy for sixty commercial cargo ships under the U.S. flag. This program supports an active, privately owned, U.S.-flag and U.S.-crewed liner fleet in international trade, which becomes available to support Department of Defense (DoD) sustainment operations when necessary. The MSP facilitates maintenance of a base labor pool of approximately 2,400 American mariners available to crew government and commercial ships in times of peace and war.
Finally, MARAD also oversees the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA) program. The VISA program is a partnership between the U.S. government and the maritime industry to provide DoD with “assured access” to commercial sealift and intermodal capacity to support routine and emergency deployment and sustainment of U.S. military forces. The VISA program enables DoD to benefit from the maximum use of a modern, global logistics network and intermodal capabilities, including dry-cargo ships, shoreside equipment, terminal facilities, and intermodal management services. All MSP ships are part of the VISA program.\(^64\)

The global strategic sealift capability of the U.S. military through USTRANSCOM’s MSC and MARAD and the programs these organizations administer is, indeed, impressive, and is unmatched by any other nation. These entities’ efficiency and effectiveness have been proved in countless U.S. military deployments; the battle testing they received during Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM was especially significant.

However, compliments aside, there is growing concern that the strategic sealift (logistics) nightmares the Navy faced during the voyage of the Great White Fleet could affect similarly (i.e., negatively) not only the deployment and readiness of USN combatants but the forward deployment of all U.S. armed forces, traceable to some of the same factors the Great White Fleet experienced.

Clearly the strategic sealift capabilities of the U.S. military in general, and the U.S. Navy in particular, are greatly superior to those of the U.S. Navy of a century ago. However, the size of the American fleet, the missions of the U.S. Navy and the military as a whole, and the degree of forward deployment of U.S. forces also are vastly greater and more complicated than they were a century ago. As impressive as the voyage of the Great White Fleet was, it pales in comparison with what the U.S. military does every day around the world in the current era. In other words, although the strategic sealift capabilities of the United States are impressive, so too are the demands on and potential challenges to the capabilities of the logistics system that supports the Navy and the military as a whole.

For decades, the U.S. Navy has faced no capable competitors as it sailed the seven seas. For decades, USN task forces and ships have engaged in combat operations around the world, with no serious threat from other forces. For decades, U.S. military strategic sealift ships, whether government owned or commercial, could sail throughout the world with no threat of attack from an enemy. Now this situation has changed completely. Today, enemy threats on logistics ships abound, whether in the form of kinetic strikes or a loss of control and incapacitation from cyber-warfare attacks. There are other challenges as well, some of which are discussed in the sections that follow.
Lack of a Sizable U.S. Merchant Marine

Alfred Thayer Mahan's most famous work, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, published in 1890, drew from a series of lectures he gave at the Naval War College. In the book he concluded that merchant shipping was both a source of maritime power and something that navies naturally needed to defend. As if to prove Mahan's point, shortly after the book's publication, during the Spanish-American War, the United States found itself without the commercial shipping it needed to support the U.S. Navy. In fact, it was necessary to charter and purchase foreign-flag ships to resupply U.S. fleets during the war, and only serendipity enabled the United States to do so.

The lack of a sizable U.S. Merchant Marine for economic and strategic sealift manifested itself again at the outbreak of World War I. European belligerents removed their vessels from U.S. trade, which seriously damaged the U.S. economy. Recurrence of the same problem in World War II was partially avoided by the vision of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration and Congress, which enacted the Merchant Marine Act of 1936. This legislation initiated a massive buildup of commercial shipyards and the construction of huge numbers of U.S.-flag merchant ships.

Today, there are more than ninety thousand commercial ships in the world, a majority of which are engaged in global deep-sea trade. (This figure does not include hundreds of thousands of inland commercial vessels.) The nation owning and controlling the most merchant ships is China, with more than 5,400 vessels registered, mostly in China (and Hong Kong), but with hundreds of other Chinese ships registered in flag-of-convenience (FOC) nations. The United States has only eighty-one merchant ships in international trade under the U.S. flag. The majority of these ships are operated by U.S. companies that are subsidiaries of larger shipping companies that are owned and located in other nations, such as Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, and France. (Sixty of these ships are supported through MARAD'S MSP.)

The question is whether in a global conflict involving the United States there would be enough U.S.-flag ships to support the U.S. armed forces, including the U.S. Navy. The answer is: possibly. However, the crux of the problem is this: if, in a contested environment, U.S.-flag shipping experienced casualties, there is no reserve of commercial, U.S.-flag ships on which to call; there is no “bench,” so to speak. Could the United States rely on foreign ships registered in other countries and crewed by foreign nationals? If there were no MSC or other commercial, U.S.-flag vessels available, could the U.S. Navy rely on foreign-flag ships to resupply a task force? Possibly yes—but quite possibly no. So, if foreign-flag ships and crews were not available because of particular circumstances (and one can think of many combinations of factors that would have that effect), the U.S. military
very quickly would be immobilized, rendered incapable of carrying on a fight far from U.S. shores. The Navy of today would be in the same position as the Great White Fleet more than a century ago.

Today, USN task forces are resupplied by the fifteen fleet oilers and fourteen ordnance and dry-cargo ships that MSC operates. These ships draw fuel and supplies from various depots around the world, in both U.S. and foreign ports. Depots in the United States are supplied by U.S.-flag merchant vessels; depots in other countries are supplied by both U.S.- and foreign-flag ships. However, there are only six U.S.-flag product tankers to supply fuel for the entire U.S. Navy around the world. There are no other U.S.-flag tankers in international trade, and very few, if any, other product tankers in domestic trade that could be used in an emergency. In a manner similar to its practice during the voyage of the Great White Fleet, the Navy today frequently relies on foreign-flag tankers and cargo ships to carry Navy fuel and supplies because of the limited number of U.S.-flag merchant ships.

In a contested environment, if one or more of the limited number of MSC or U.S.-flag merchant ships were taken out of action by kinetic or cyber means, would there be a work-around? Quite possibly no.

Inability to Protect Logistics Ships
There is great concern about the Navy’s ability to protect logistics ships, both government owned and commercial. Of course, the U.S. Navy has substantial war-fighting capabilities; however, the Navy’s fleet of combatant ships currently (in 2018) numbers 272 ships and submarines, and these vessels already have multiple war-fighting missions that stretch the capabilities of the fleet substantially. In a 2014 congressional hearing on sealift force requirements, the deputy commander of TRANSCOM was asked about the ability of the Navy to protect logistics ships. He replied as follows: “So in terms of protecting ships as they go across [the ocean] we—just so you know—we don’t have a lot of attrition built into our modeling. So we . . . that’s not something we build in there.” In other words, although the United States has substantial strategic sealift capability, even modestly successful kinetic or cyber attacks on MSC, RRF, or MSP/VISA merchant ships could have far-reaching consequences for the Navy and the military’s ability to forward-deploy and conduct combat operations. Simply put, currently no doctrine is in place to protect merchant shipping, and protection for strategic sealift vessels is not factored adequately into U.S. policies or plans.

Nonavailability of U.S. Mariners
During the numerous conflicts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there have been no examples of U.S.-flag carriers refusing to offer their ships in times of national emergency. Similarly, there have been no examples of American
merchant mariners refusing to enter contested environments and thereby preventing U.S.-flag ships from serving the military. Quite to the contrary, U.S. merchant mariners have served with distinction in all U.S. conflicts. During World War II, for example, nearly six thousand U.S. merchant mariners were killed or lost at sea. This represents the greatest percentage loss of any U.S. service during the war.\(^76\) (One in twenty-six mariners serving on U.S. merchant ships during the war died in the line of duty.)\(^77\)

Some have suggested that foreign ships and mariners might be available to serve the logistics needs of the military in a U.S. conflict. However, there is no guarantee this would work. Despite the relatively benign environment of the Persian Gulf during the Gulf Wars, chartered foreign-flag ships and crews did refuse, on occasion, to deliver U.S. military cargoes.\(^78\) There are many political scenarios under which foreign vessels and their crews would be prohibited by their governments from supporting the U.S. military.

Clearly, the availability of experienced U.S. mariners is crucial for crewing the RRF, MSC commercial merchant ships on charter, and U.S.-flag ships in the MSP and VISA programs that are supporting military sealift. However, ensuring such availability in a future national emergency would require that there be an adequate pool of available mariners. Just as important, there also must be a pipeline of younger mariners entering the commercial maritime workforce throughout the years ahead. All this can happen only if there is a stable U.S. Merchant Marine with a number of jobs adequate to ensure employment.

However, because of the shrinking number of commercial ships and commercial seagoing billets, it has become increasingly difficult for younger mariners to gain the sea time and experience necessary to raise the level of their commercial licenses and to sail in positions of higher responsibility.\(^79\) As the U.S. Merchant Marine continues to decline, the number of available jobs in the industry also decreases. Senior leaders at TRANSCOM and MARAD are deeply concerned that the military readiness of the United States is currently at risk because the declining number of U.S.-flag commercial ships means the pool of available, experienced mariners continues to get smaller.\(^80\) At the present time, it is questionable whether there would be enough American mariners available during a conflict—particularly a long one—and the picture grows bleaker with each passing year.\(^81\)

**Effectively U.S. Controlled Ships Dwindling**

Ships owned by Americans and U.S. interests but flagged in other countries, particularly FOC countries, have been termed *effectively U.S. controlled* (EUSC) ships. The theory is that these vessels would be available to the United States in times of national emergency. Expecting and relying on the availability of EUSC shipping constituted a long-standing policy of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In 1989,
for example, President George H. W. Bush signed a National Security Sealift Policy that reiterated the importance of EUSC shipping as part of the military’s strategic sealift capability.\textsuperscript{82}

However, the problems with relying on EUSC shipping are twofold. First, while the owners of EUSC ships theoretically might be willing to support the United States in a national emergency, there is no guarantee that the flag states of those EUSC vessels would allow them to be used to support U.S. interests or objectives. For example, Panama has the largest number of merchant ships registered under its flag. China owns 534 vessels under the Panamanian flag.\textsuperscript{83} A Chinese company operates the two major marine terminals on the ends of the Panama Canal, and the Chinese have numerous other business interests in Panama.\textsuperscript{84} For these reasons, the Panamanian government might be reluctant to allow the United States to use any vessel under Panamanian registry in a conflict between the United States and China. Further, EUSC vessels are crewed by foreign nationals, not Americans, and there is no guarantee that foreign crews would be willing to serve on EUSC vessels in a U.S. conflict.

In any case, because of U.S. tax laws passed in 1979 and 1986, American owners of EUSC ships no longer can avoid paying taxes on their incomes. As a result, the number of EUSC ships has dwindled dramatically in the decades since.\textsuperscript{85} Because there are fewer American citizens involved in EUSC shipping than in the past, it is no longer a viable source of ships for the American military in times of national emergency.\textsuperscript{86} Compounding this problem, of the vessels owned by Americans and registered in other countries, the proportion that are militarily useful is very small.

\textit{Aging of the Fleet}

Companies that participate in and receive funds through MARAD’s MSP are required to keep relatively new ships in the program. This does not pose a particularly onerous burden, since the participants’ parent companies (the vast majority of which are foreign owned) maintain large fleets of modern ships under other flags of registry. MSP operators are encouraged to replace aging MSP vessels with newer ships, and must replace them before they reach age-out limits defined in the MSP. This keeps newer vessels composing the MSP-VISA fleet.

The situation with the Ready Reserve Force is quite different. RRF vessels are largely foreign-built vessels, plus some U.S.-built vessels constructed and operated commercially in the late 1970s and early ’80s. Some RRF vessels are even older, with a few (such as the fast sealift vessels, former Sealand Services vessels) approaching and exceeding fifty years of age. Although well maintained by MARAD and the companies contracted to manage them, these formerly commercial RRF ships were not designed and built for half-century life cycles.
For MSC and MARAD to maintain the state of readiness necessary to provide emergency strategic sealift, it is critical to have a solid and continually well-funded vessel-replacement program in place. Yet current budget constraints make this a daunting challenge. This puts at extreme risk the ability of MSC and MARAD to provide logistics ships for strategic sealift for all U.S. armed forces, including the U.S. Navy.

In a report delivered to the Secretary of the Navy in 1946, Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King noted, "Whatever else [World War II] is, so far as the United States is concerned, it has been a war of logistics."

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 established the U.S. Transportation Command. With its component commands of AMC, SDDC, and MSC, USTRANSCOM fully integrated the military’s transportation modes, so that for the first time in history the U.S. military operated all its military transportation resources under a single command. TRANSCOM soon proved its worth in 1990–91 with the buildup and war against Iraq in DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, which together constituted one of the largest logistics deployments in history. TRANSCOM and its components have proved their efficiency and effectiveness continually since that time, most notably in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM.

The voyage of the Great White Fleet of 1907–1909 demonstrated the emerging capabilities of the U.S. Navy and proved that the United States quickly was becoming a great world power. But it also revealed the critical importance of logistics and logistics ships in keeping a navy supplied in any forward-deployed situation. Although the voyage was completed successfully, there were many challenges and logistics near disasters during the voyage. This primarily was owing to the lack of U.S. logistics ships and the lack of a substantial U.S. Merchant Marine capable of supporting the U.S. Navy—and this was a peaceful operation, facing no threats from an enemy navy. The U.S. Navy and Congress learned from this voyage and, at least for a time, placed emphasis on developing Navy logistics capabilities using U.S.-flag ships. But these lessons had to be relearned in World War I and in the years leading up to World War II.

Given the massive responsibilities the U.S. military shoulders around the world today, it faces challenges similar to those the Great White Fleet faced more than a century ago—but on a much larger scale. As able and efficient as MSC, MARAD’s RRF, and the MSP/VISA fleets are, their capabilities were developed to operate at sea in an uncontested environment. None of the vessels in these fleets are capable of self-defense.

But the continuation of a benign environment on the seas of the world no longer can be assumed. In today’s world, in a conflict involving the United States,
sea lines of communication may pass through contested waters, and U.S. strategic sealift ships, whether government owned or commercial, may be attacked. World powers are building and operating powerful navies and intense cyber-attack capabilities. Even if the Navy were to develop doctrines and strategies to protect sealift ships, the number of USN warships available to protect logistics ships is very limited at best. In some scenarios, it would be next to impossible for the Navy to protect logistics ships in a heavily contested environment.

In the early years of World War II, the Germans had the ability to deploy only one to two dozen submarines at any one time. Yet because defense of merchant vessels supporting the British economy and war effort was inadequate or nonexistent, the Germans nonetheless were able to sink six million tons of British shipping from 1939 to 1941. This represented more than 1,400 ships sunk by a small fleet of German submarines. The naval resources needed to defeat the German submarine threat in the Battle of the Atlantic ultimately were staggering, running into the hundreds of billions in today’s dollars.

In the Pacific, the Japanese did not mount an effective defense of their logistics ships or their merchant marine. Their lack of doctrine and maritime trade-warfare defense enabled the U.S. Navy to destroy more than eight million tons of Japanese logistics and merchant marine vessels, virtually eviscerating the Japanese economy and war machine and starving the nation.

In other words, without sufficient protection of logistics and U.S.-flag merchant ships today, losses from an even modestly capable enemy could be substantial. The problem is compounded by the limited numbers of MSC, RRF, and MSP ships available and of American mariners to crew them. The loss of one or more of the twenty large, medium-speed, RO/RO (LMSR) vessels in MSC’s fleet (each of which has a capacity of between 290,000 and 380,000 square feet of cargo space) would have catastrophic effects on a U.S. Army deployment that depended on the timely arrival of supplies and equipment. The loss of one or more of the six American commercial tankers on charter to MSC or the fifteen MSC fleet tankers or fourteen MSC ordnance and dry-cargo ships could devastate Navy resupply of one or more task forces. The same would be the case if the foreign-flag tankers on which MSC depends no longer were available.

The logistical issues and the lack of USN logistics and American commercial merchant ships nearly paralyzed the around-the-world voyage of the Great White Fleet and provided powerful and enduring lessons that need to be looked at with fresh eyes today. In his 1908 congressional testimony, Senator Newlands noted that “in case of war these fighting ships would, without an auxiliary navy [i.e., logistics ships], be absolutely derelict in the ocean, unable to move. Our Navy may be compared to a man with strong lungs and a strong heart, perfect organs, without legs or arms. . . . We need above all things, a proportionate Navy, one that
is perfect in every essential particular, not simply the ships that are necessary for fighting, but the ships that are necessary to sustain the ships that do the fighting.\(^{154}\)

This observation is just as true today as in 1908, and not just for the Navy but for the entire U.S. military.

NOTES


2. A measurement ton is a volume measurement equal to forty cubic feet.


5. Since the late fifteenth century, European powers had established “empires” around the world. However, these were mostly for mercantile purposes. It was in the nineteenth century that most of the world was carved up by European countries—notably Great Britain, France, and Germany—into governed empires and spheres of influence.


11. Ibid., pp. 149, 151.


18. Battleships built before Dreadnought carried a variety of guns of various calibers.


23. Ibid., p. 23.


25. Ibid., pp. 310, 312.


29. Ibid., p. 220.
30. Ibid., pp. 222–23.
35. This was before the invention of evaporators, which convert seawater into fresh water.
37. Because of its inability to resupply ordnance, the Russian fleet was unable to engage in the necessary target practice en route from the Russian Baltic to the Far East. This was probably a factor in its decisive defeat.
39. Ibid., p. 144.
42. Miller, War Plan Orange, p. 90.
44. Reckner, Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet, p. 17.
47. Ibid., pp. 198–99; Miller, War Plan Orange, pp. 89–90.
51. Ibid., p. 55.
52. 42 Cong. Rec., p. S3635 (daily ed. March 20, 1908) (statement of Senator Hale). The epigraph at the beginning of the article is drawn from this record.
53. In the United Kingdom since World War I, the British merchant marine has been referred to as the British Merchant Navy.
57. Miller, War Plan Orange, p. 91.
59. Representatives of USN Carrier Strike Group 4 and staff members of the Wargaming Department, Naval War College, interview by author, August 10, 2017. During Operation DESERT STORM, the conventionally powered carriers in the Persian Gulf replenished aviation fuel every 2.7 to 3 days. USS Roosevelt, the only nuclear-powered carrier in the DESERT STORM air campaign that was also operating in the Persian Gulf, replenished its aviation fuel about every 3.3 days. Navy Aircraft Carriers: Cost-Effectiveness of Conventionally and Nuclear-Powered Carriers, NSIAD-98-1 (Washington, DC: General Accounting Office, August 27, 1998), p. 67.


70. James Kynge et al., “How China Rules the Waves,” *Financial Times*, January 12, 2017, ig.ft.com/. A flag-of-convenience country is one that, for a fee, encourages registration of ships in that nation. Shipowners benefit by avoiding taxes, lowering crew wages and related costs, reducing liability, and avoiding some onerous regulations. Examples of FOCs include those of Panama, Liberia, and the Marshall Islands. More than 50 percent of the world’s merchant ships are registered in FOC nations.


72. A product tanker is a tank vessel designed to carry refined petroleum products such as jet fuel, diesel fuel, and gasoline.


79. In the United States, it is the U.S. Coast Guard that issues seagoing licenses and certifications. Licensing and certifications for deep-sea commercial vessels require many years of sea time in lower positions and numerous exams for a seafarer to rise to the rank of captain or chief engineer.


86. Ibid., pp. ii–iii, vi.


88. Matthews and Holt, *So Many, So Much, So Far, So Fast*, p. 11.

89. Ibid., p. 12.


92. Michael T. Poirier [Cdr., USN], “Results of the German and American Submarine Campaigns of World War II,” Chief of Naval Operations, Submarine Warfare Division, October 20, 1999, archive.li/.


95. 42 Cong. Rec., p. S3629 (daily ed. March 20, 1908). The senators were debating S.28, “Shipping Bill,” to amend the March 3, 1891, Act to Provide for Ocean Mail Service between the United States and Foreign Ports, and to Promote Commerce.
The role the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) played in the Cuban missile crisis offers a significant historical lesson on the primacy of defining political objectives over pursuing an expedient military solution. The recommendations the JCS provided to the president were consistent with decades of military experience, as well as doctrine designed to keep the Soviets in check through deterrence, but President John F. Kennedy did not take those recommendations, and the crisis was resolved by other means.

Following the Cuban missile crisis, General Thomas S. Power, the commander of Strategic Air Command (SAC), cited SAC’s overwhelming nuclear deterrent as the reason President Kennedy was able to achieve a diplomatic solution to the crisis. During the crisis, SAC stood an airborne nuclear alert, conventional forces massed in the southeastern United States to prepare for an invasion, and the U.S. Navy carried out a blockade. On October 19, 1962, the chiefs disagreed with the president’s assessment of Soviet premier Nikita S. Khrushchev’s next move and recommended that the president respond with an air strike.

That would have been an appropriate military response, one in line with White House policy and Department of Defense plans. The JCS recommendation of an air strike against Cuba as the solution—to accomplish the removal of the Soviet medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs)—was the logical result of decades of planning and Air

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Force operations. Furthermore, the military’s Operational Plans (OPLANs) 312, 314, and 316 and the initial actions the JCS took were aligned with the Kennedy administration’s Cuba policies following the Bay of Pigs invasion of April 1961. From October 15 to 24, 1962, the JCS pressed military planning and deployments that placed U.S. nuclear forces at their highest state of readiness during the Cold War.

President Kennedy ultimately pursued a course that was at variance with the initial military recommendations from the JCS. Yes, nuclear and conventional deterrence were keys to resolving the Cuban missile crisis, but it was avoiding a confrontation that would have required Khrushchev and Kennedy to make a full conventional or nuclear response that provided the balance that allowed the crisis to be resolved.

Having dutifully advised the president over the course of the Cuban missile crisis, including disagreeing as appropriate, the JCS—particularly the Air Force and Navy chiefs—then faithfully executed the president’s direction. This offers a narrative of the crisis that is far more nuanced than a simplistic hawks-versus-doves interpretation.

This article relies on military command histories, declassified notes and chronologies from JCS meetings during the crisis, and declassified oral histories. Furthermore, this analysis relies heavily on the Miller Center transcripts of the presidential recordings. While digesting the voluminous declassified documents presents a challenge, this article focuses on primary sources that reveal how the JCS maintained their primary recommendation for military action against Cuba. Lastly, my research builds on James G. Hershberg’s “Before ‘The Missiles of October’: Did Kennedy Plan a Military Strike against Cuba?,” which deftly examines the covert and contingency plans for a U.S. removal of Castro and the invasion of Cuba. The Cuban missile crisis must be viewed as a Soviet response to the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Kennedy administration’s continued efforts to remove Castro. Hershberg’s article is key to understanding the normalization of military operations and planning among military commanders with respect to Cuba. Leading up to the Cuban missile crisis, the Joint Chiefs developed plans and conducted exercises aimed at removing Castro from Cuba and overthrowing the Communist government. This supports my conclusion that the JCS decision to support air strikes was a normal response to the discovery of Soviet missiles in Cuba and was in keeping with years of military planning.

The JCS recommendation to conduct air strikes against Cuba was aligned with previous Kennedy administration Cuba policies, but ultimately did not take sufficiently into account the political costs of taking such unilateral action. On October 19, 1962, after four days of planning, the JCS argued forcefully to President Kennedy in favor of air strikes against Soviet targets in Cuba. But while the JCS
worked to implement a military solution to the crisis, the president maximized the variables of space and time to achieve a diplomatic solution. After the JCS had made their case for air strikes and an invasion to accomplish the removal of the Soviet missiles, the successful implementation and execution of the blockade demonstrate that solving any complex crisis must be guided by the sought-after political outcome, not by which action seems expedient or decisive.

MISSILES IN CUBA AND MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON

Beginning in March 1962, covert U-2 surveillance flights tracked the Soviet buildup in Cuba. These Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) flights eventually observed surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites, missile-armed patrol boats, and Soviet-built MiG-21 fighter jets.

When the CIA began flying over Cuba, SAC used a lower-echelon command—the 544th Reconnaissance Technical Group's Research Center, under Lieutenant Colonel Eugene F. Tighe Jr.—to study the Cuban intelligence. The 544th was able to shorten the time necessary to discover possible SAM sites, and eventually MRBMs, because it concentrated its initial analysis efforts on locations described in CIA reports, relying on information passed on from Cuban operatives. As director of SAC intelligence, Brigadier General Robert N. Smith provided the SAC commander in chief (CINCSAC), General Power, the latest assessments on Cuba. The 544th's Cuba assessments were one of the many ways SAC monitored worldwide Soviet threats to the U.S. nuclear force.

By late June 1962, “[a]ll-source intelligence”—corroborated by “refugee and agent reports, communications intelligence, and the like—had begun to highlight certain areas as centers of unusual activity.” Photo interpreters at the 544th observed ground sites prepared in Cuba that matched SA-2 missile sites in the Soviet Union. When Tighe had served in West Germany in 1958, he had watched the Soviets deploy similar rings of SA-2 sites at Glau, East Germany. The effect had been to elevate the risk of reconnaissance flights, and thus to deter U.S. observation of Soviet missile deployments in East Germany.

General Power, Brigadier General Smith, and Lieutenant Colonel Tighe briefed their assessment of possible missile deployments in Cuba at the Pentagon, but the reception in Washington was lukewarm. The National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC), the CIA, and the Air Staff discounted SAC's assessment. Not until late August did further photo intelligence reveal roads with “the characteristic ‘star of David’ pattern associated with the SA-2.” Tighe's assessment jibed with a memo from CIA director John A. McCone to President Kennedy that interpreted the SAM deployments as predecessors to offensive missile deployments. A preponderance of evidence pointed to the presence of
offensive weapons in Cuba, which President Kennedy publicly stated would be intolerable for U.S. national security. 9

On the afternoon of October 14, 1962, SAC and the 544th used the tracker-camera film from a U-2 overflight of Cuba to confirm the presence of Soviet MRBMs. When the JCS convened for a three-hour meeting at 2:00 PM (EST) on Monday, October 15, 1962, the meeting content suggests that SAC relayed its assessment of the U-2 flight photography. This put events in motion at the Pentagon a day before NPIC director Arthur C. Lundahl briefed the president on October 16, relying on analysis of the higher-resolution main-camera film. On Monday evening, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) informed the Pentagon that the October 14 U-2 flight revealed “cylindrical objects that equated to 700 or 1100 nautical mile ballistic missiles in the Pinar del Rio area west of Havana.” 10

Yet despite the DIA information, the JCS did not meet until the next day, at 10:00 AM, Tuesday, October 16. 11

While mention of SAC's assessment of the tracker film is absent from the JCS meeting notes of October 15, the Pentagon thereafter planned and operated as if the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba had been confirmed. Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara summarized as follows: “[The] President wants no military action within the next three months, but he can't be sure, as he does not control events. For instance, aerial photos made available this morning show 68 boxes on ships that are not believed to be Il-28s and cannot be identified.” 12 The meeting discussed the long lead times for the troop movements necessary to prepare an invasion force, and McNamara cited the Suez crisis, stating, “We can’t do what the British and French did over Suez—say we will take action, then do nothing while a long buildup is completed. We can’t do nothing during the 18-day preparatory period for OPLAN 314 while the enemy prepares and world pressure mounts.” 13

The meeting notes are sparse for a three-hour meeting, but the JCS decided that Commander in Chief, Continental Air Defense Command should provide a report on the air defense of the southeastern United States, along with estimates of casualties and damage from an air strike from Cuba.

Additionally, the JCS requested that Commander in Chief, Atlantic Command (CINCLANT) revise OPLANs 314 and 316. 14 On October 15, 1962, the JCS directed revisions to invasion plans for Cuba before NPIC had interpreted the preliminary results of the October 14 U-2 flight. 15 Thus, even before the presence of MRBMs was confirmed, the Pentagon already had begun to address the delays inherent in the existing military plans and to prepare revised and additional military options to respond to Soviet missiles in Cuba. 16

The chiefs were decidedly hawkish on the next actions the United States should take. At 7:30 AM on October 16, DIA director Lieutenant General Joseph F. Carroll briefed Secretary McNamara on the ballistic missiles found near San
Cristóbal. At the 10:00 AM meeting, the DIA briefed the Joint Chiefs that three MRBM sites could be operational within twenty-four hours. The Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), General Earle G. Wheeler, favored a surprise air strike, followed by invasion, and the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral George W. Anderson, concurred. General William F. McKeer, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, dissented only slightly, believing that an invasion was not necessary on top of air strikes and a naval blockade, and the Chairman of the JCS (CJCS), General Maxwell Taylor, agreed. The Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), General David M. Shoup, recommended that the United States give the Soviets an ultimatum to remove the missiles, or the United States would eliminate them. The meeting concluded with the JCS agreeing that the first step should be to recommend additional intelligence flights, then “surprise attacks on missiles, airfields, patrol torpedo [i.e., PT] boats, SAMs, and tanks; concurrently reinforce Guantanamo, [and] prepare to initiate an invasion.” General Taylor took these recommendations to the first meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm).

At 4:30 PM on October 16, General Taylor summarized the first ExComm meeting to the Joint Chiefs and select subordinates, including General Power (CINCSAC); General Walter Sweeney, Commander, Tactical Air Command; and Admiral Robert L. Dennison, CINCLANT. Taylor highlighted the perspective of Secretary of State Dean Rusk, who viewed the Soviet move to place missiles in Cuba as a measure to further Khrushchev’s objectives in Berlin. McNamara laid out three courses of action: he classified political moves as useless; he weighed the possibility of open surveillance and a blockade; and he supposed that an all-out military action could trigger a Soviet response.

Out of this meeting, the Joint Chiefs cautiously agreed that low-level reconnaissance flights did not recommend themselves as a course of action, since the effort could appear to be an attack. Intent on eliminating any Soviet threat on Cuba, the JCS decided it was not advisable to attack only the MRBM sites, leaving Soviet aircraft, SAMs, patrol boats, and tanks untouched. Thus, while the JCS were careful not to take actions, such as low-level flights, that could be mistaken as a prelude to invasion, they agreed that any action taken should be decisive: a large strike, against all Soviet forces.

At the October 16 evening ExComm meeting, Taylor echoed his morning position and took an approach in favor of gaining more intelligence, to build time for a decision. “Our recommendation would be to get complete intelligence, get all the photography we need, the next two or three days, no, no hurry in our book. Then look at this target system. If it really threatens the United States, then take it right out [with a] hard crack.” Taylor reiterated the stance the Joint Chiefs had taken that morning, during the 10:00 AM meeting at the Pentagon.
This desire by General Taylor and the Joint Chiefs for more intelligence gave the Pentagon additional time to refine military plans, thus delaying any immediate decision that would reveal U.S. knowledge of the missile sites. On the basis of McNamara’s and Taylor’s guidance, the JCS prepared to conduct the defense of the United States and contingency air strikes against Cuba. The lead time for a possible air strike allowed President Kennedy additional time to contemplate the consequences of air strikes on Cuba and the possible Soviet response.

On the morning of Wednesday, October 17, President Kennedy met with West German foreign minister Gerhard F. Schröder. They discussed recent developments in Berlin with respect to visa initiatives and Soviet intentions to restrict movement into Allied zones by West Germans. This conversation between Kennedy and Schröder, occurring as it did early on during the Cuban missile crisis, shows that for Kennedy the Soviet measures in Berlin were important political considerations, to be factored into the analysis of Khrushchev’s placement of missiles in Cuba.

The early planning meetings of McNamara and the JCS focused on surveillance and preparations for either an invasion of or an air strike against Cuba. Absent from the JCS meeting notes are any extensive discussions of Soviet motives or expected follow-on actions by Khrushchev, other than General Taylor’s comment that amassing a force for a large-scale invasion of Cuba would tie up 250,000 U.S. soldiers—“playing Khrushchev’s game.” 26 In contrast, Kennedy’s meeting with Schröder on October 17 illustrated that the president viewed the placement of missiles in Cuba as a political act that held wider implications for the Western presence in Berlin. At the October 19 ExComm meeting, the Joint Chiefs disagreed with the president that military action against missiles in Cuba would lead to a Soviet response in Berlin. 27 Yet Kennedy continued consistently to view the placement of missiles in Cuba as part of the Soviets’ wider Cold War engagement with the United States. 28

The Joint Chiefs reconvened at the Pentagon at 10:00 AM on October 17, 1962. Overnight the staff had prepared sortie estimates based on McNamara’s five courses of action for air strikes, and had forwarded these estimates to the White House. Yet—in evidence of planning myopia—the estimates did not account for support missions related to the air strikes, including “escort, suppression of air defenses, and post-strike reconnaissance.” General Taylor chastised the staff, proclaiming, “What! These figures were reported to the White House. You are defeating yourselves with your own cleverness, gentlemen.” 29 Nonetheless, the Joint Staff had sidestepped the chairman. Whether the staff did this intentionally or through ineptitude, the result was the same: from there the sortie estimates subsequently climbed, increasing the projected scale of an air strike against Cuba. Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs remained adamant that it would be pure folly to
strike only the MRBM sites. The staff subsequently (on October 17) produced a memorandum to McNamara “advocating air attack against all missile sites, all combat aircraft, and nuclear storage, combat ships, tanks, and other appropriate military targets in Cuba, in conjunction with a complete blockade . . . and advising that the elimination of the Castro regime would require an invasion, preferably under OPLAN 314.”

On October 17, an internal study that examined Soviet intentions contributed to the military leadership’s entrenchment in its position that air strikes were necessary. The Joint Strategic Survey Council (JSSC), a planning body under the Joint Staff, concluded that “the USSR would not resort to general war in direct response to U.S. military action against Cuba, that the most likely Soviet reactions would be at sea, against Iran or an ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile] ‘accident’ on the Pacific Test Site, and that sharp and strong encroaching actions at Berlin, short of direct seizure, could reasonably be expected.” General Taylor debriefed the chiefs on the Wednesday morning meeting at the White House with personnel from the State and Defense Departments—Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Under Secretary of State George W. Ball, Ambassador at Large for Soviet Affairs Llewellyn E. Thompson, and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Paul H. Nitze—along with Attorney General Robert Kennedy. General Taylor relayed State’s preference for political measures—which would minimize damage to alliances—including perhaps a summit meeting with Khrushchev. At the State Department meeting the feeling had been that a blockade necessitated a wider war, and was considered as an additional step only by those who did not feel air strikes alone were enough to eliminate the threat of Soviet missiles in Cuba. By the 17th, internal memos and external meetings had reinforced the Joint Chiefs’ views that air strikes were the primary action necessary in Cuba, and that Russian reactions to such strikes would be confined to the periphery and incidental to main U.S. interests.

From October 16 to 19, the JCS consistently advocated for some form of air strikes and prepared for an invasion of Cuba. On the 18th, U-2 photos revealed MRBM sites at Guanajay, San Julian, San Cristóbal, and Santa Cruz. At the 9:00 AM JCS meeting that day, General Taylor aligned with the chiefs in support of air strikes and an invasion. He outlined to the JCS three plans that the ExComm was considering: “(1) maximum political effort; (2) a combination, with military effort being built around blockade, then reconnaissance; (3) no political discussion, air strike followed by invasion.” The CJCS reported that the Secretary of State had proposed a period of discussions with the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and Khrushchev, thereafter proceeding to a blockade “and state of war.” After three days of planning, General LeMay expressed frustration at the hesitation to commit to a military solution, saying, “Are we really going
to do anything except talk?” On the basis of the October 17 meetings, General Taylor outlined the likely approach, suggesting that there would be a political overture and warning, followed by a blockade, air strike, and invasion, starting sometime the next week. The earliest date an air strike could be ready was October 21, with the optimum date being October 23, followed by an early invasion on October 28, but optimally on October 30, 1962.35

At the October 18 meeting, Taylor directed that planning efforts should continue to examine a “total blockade, selective blockade, and the necessity for a declaration of war.”36 This direction did not precipitate a lightbulb moment of clarity for the Joint Chiefs, with General LeMay responding negatively to the blockade proposal: “It would be pure disaster to try that.”37 Taylor told the JCS that the options on the table were either an air strike against all targets, with an invasion and blockade possibly to follow, or the aforementioned political action, with a blockade to follow. The JCS were due to meet with the president on Friday morning, so they codified their recommendations as follows: “(1) Notify [British prime minister] Macmillan and possibly [West German chancellor] Adenauer, two hours in advance. (2) Carry out a surprise attack on comprehensive targets. (3) Reconnaissance surveillance. (4) Complete blockade. (5) Invade Cuba? CSA, CSAF [USAF Chief of Staff], and CNO say yes; CJCS says only be prepared to do so. (6) Realize there will be a strain upon and NATO problems about Berlin.”38 McNamara dissented from the Joint Chiefs’ belief that the Soviet deployments affected the strategic balance of power, but the chiefs found the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba to be militarily unacceptable.39

“ALMOST AS BAD AS THE APPEASEMENT AT MUNICH”
On October 19, following a 9:00 AM planning session at the Pentagon, the JCS drove to the White House for a meeting with the president in the Cabinet Room. The CJCS laid out for the president the chiefs’ united position: that the United States should attack the missile sites, continue surveillance to watch for other sites, then blockade Cuba to prevent additional Soviet weapons from entering. Taylor admitted that the JCS had not considered fully the political implications of this course of action or the “political disabilities” inherent in the JCS recommendation.40

For the president, the entire situation was tied directly to Khrushchev’s motives in Berlin. “When we balance off that our problem is not merely Cuba but it is also Berlin and when we recognize the importance of Berlin to Europe, and recognize the importance of our allies to us, that’s what made this thing be a dilemma for three days. Otherwise our answer would be quite easy.” General Taylor agreed with the president, offering that the JCS thought that if the United States did not respond in Cuba it would hurt U.S. credibility in Berlin.41
General LeMay agreed that decisive action in Cuba was necessary to ensure U.S. credibility in Berlin, but echoed the JSSC assessment on expected Soviet actions in Berlin if the United States should strike or invade Cuba. LeMay disagreed with the president that the Soviets would take Berlin if the United States invaded or bombed Cuba. The Air Force general went further: “This blockade and political action, I see leading into war... This is almost as bad as the appeasement at Munich. [pause] Because if this blockade comes along, their MIGs are going to fly. Their IL-28s are going to fly against us. And we're just going to gradually drift into war.” LeMay and the JCS felt that maintaining a blockade—including large military forces on high states of readiness—ran the risk of accident and misinterpretation, and closed off the military advantage of surprise. LeMay concluded his long statement as follows: “I just don’t see any other solution except direct military intervention right now.”

CNO Anderson and CSA Wheeler both agreed with LeMay’s statement. Anderson acknowledged President Kennedy’s opening statement to the meeting regarding the president’s concern over Soviet intentions in Berlin. The CNO asserted that the United States must demonstrate resolve in Berlin in conjunction with the attack, blockade, and invasion of Cuba: “We recognize the great difficulty of a military solution in Berlin. I think on balance, the taking [of] positive, prompt, affirmative action in Berlin demonstrating the confidence, the ability, the resolution of the United States on balance, I would judge it, would be to deter the Russians from more aggressive acts in Berlin.” Anderson and Wheeler reemphasized the JSSC assessments, with Wheeler adding that “from a military point of view, the lowest-risk course of action if we’re thinking of protecting the people of the United States against a possible strike on us is to go ahead with a surprise air strike, the blockade, and invasion because these series of actions progressively will give us increasing assurance that we really have got the offensive capability of the Cuban-Soviet cornered.” Wheeler’s statement of his case to the president was effective, appealing as it did to the fact that Khrushchev had not declared Cuba a part of the Warsaw Pact, nor had he made an announcement that the Soviet Union was establishing a base in Cuba. On this evidence, Wheeler found an attack prior to such an announcement to be not only a low-risk maneuver but politically advantageous.

CMC Shoup reflected that the American people already lived under the threat of a Soviet nuclear strike from Russia, and that adding the capability to strike from Cuba was a Soviet move to tie the United States up in its own back yard. “And each time you then have to take some action in Berlin, South Vietnam, Korea, you would be degrading. You'd have to degrade your capability against this ever-increasing force in Cuba.”
To each of the chiefs, Kennedy agreed or disagreed openly, leading to the infamous LeMay-versus-Kennedy exchange in which LeMay told the president, “You're in a pretty bad fix,” and the president responded, “You're in there with me . . . personally.” The president solicited the earliest date an air strike could be conducted, and LeMay offered October 21 and 23 as the earliest and optimal dates, respectively. 45

Before the president concluded the meeting, General Wheeler asked, “Today . . . am I clear that you are addressing yourself as to whether anything at all should be done?” President Kennedy replied, “That's right.” Wheeler followed up, “But that if military action is to be taken, you agree with us.” The president replied with an affirmative, “Yeah.” 46 Thus, Kennedy agreed with the JCS that it might come to an air strike and invasion, but he was not going to make that decision yet. That afternoon the president remained uncommitted.

Before departing, Kennedy had a private discussion with McNamara, after which the Secretary of Defense issued orders to the CJCS to develop fully the planning for a blockade and continue to work on the details for an air strike. 47 At the JCS meeting on the morning of October 19, Anderson had voiced his concern regarding the difficulties of conducting a blockade, but after the meeting with the president the Joint Chiefs would press ahead with two planning efforts. 48

After McNamara and Taylor departed, Wheeler, LeMay, and Shoup continued their discussion. There in the Cabinet Room Shoup voiced his final dissent, and the secret tape recorder continued to capture their conversation.

SHOUP: You, you pulled the rug right out from under him.

LEMA: Jesus Christ. What the hell do you mean?

SHOUP: I just agree with that answer, General. I just agree with you a hundred percent. He [President Kennedy] finally got around to the word escalation. I heard him say *escalation*. That's the only goddamn thing that's in this whole trick. It's been there in Laos; it's been in every goddamn one [of these crises]. When he says *escalation*, that's it. If somebody could keep them from doing the goddamn thing piece-meal. That's our problem. You go in there and friggin' around with the missiles. You're screwed. You go in and frig around with anything else, you're screwed.

LEMA: That's right.

SHOUP: You're screwed, screwed, screwed. And if some goddamn thing some way, he could say: “Either do this son of a bitch and do it right, and quit friggin' around.” That was my conclusion. Don't frig around and go take the missiles out. 49

The generals agreed that the president equated Berlin with Cuba, and Wheeler suggested that, on the basis of Kennedy's statements, the president was leaning
toward political action and a blockade. But the Joint Chiefs had made their case for the best military solution to the president, and their recommendations had an effect. As the president departed Washington on a campaign trip, he requested that McGeorge Bundy, the presidential assistant for national security affairs (i.e., the national security advisor) keep the air-strike option open despite the president’s inclination toward a blockade.\textsuperscript{50}

General LeMay’s comments during the meeting with the president were pointed. Admiral Anderson and General Wheeler were forthright in their counsel to the president. The JCS had such an effect that the president’s planning continued in both directions. At McNamara’s direction, the Pentagon divided into two planning teams to explore the details of the blockade and air strikes. During the JCS meeting on Saturday, October 20, at 10:00 AM, Admiral Anderson “protested to the SECDEF [Secretary of Defense] that this would [be] locking the barn door after the horse had been stolen. Blockade would not accomplish the objective, was not in the U.S. interest, would be imposed after the missiles had been emplaced, and would bring a confrontation with the Soviet Union rather than Cuba.”\textsuperscript{51} So Anderson still thought the blockade alone would not eliminate the missiles in Cuba, but nonetheless he directed the Navy planning effort to implement a blockade.

JCS meetings continued throughout Saturday, culminating with General Taylor’s return to the Pentagon to debrief the afternoon meeting at the White House. Announcing that “[t]his was not one of our better days,” Taylor described how Rusk, McNamara, and Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson had weighed in to support a blockade, to commence twenty-four hours after the president’s television address. The Joint Chiefs were to plan for a naval blockade against offensive weapons and “be prepared to execute an air strike against missiles only, (1) without warning on Monday or Tuesday or (2) after 24 hours’ notice.”

Taylor recounted to the JCS in the Pentagon, “The President said to me, ‘I know that you and your colleagues are unhappy with the decision, but I trust that you will support me in this decision.’ I assured him that we were against the decision but would back him completely.” In this statement Taylor appealed to the absolute professionalism of the military in the execution of the lawful orders of the president of the United States. Kennedy knew that by asking for Taylor’s backing he was calling expressly on the Joint Chiefs to execute their duty-bound, constitutional obligation or resign. Taylor, in turn, relayed this to the JCS and put the matter to rest, effectively telling the Joint Chiefs to get in line. The chiefs complied, although Wheeler raised a last flag of protest, stating, “I never thought I’d live to see the day when I would want to go to war.”\textsuperscript{52}
ONLY A BLOCKADE AWAY FROM THERMONUCLEAR WAR

Over the weekend following the Friday, October 19, JCS meeting with the president, the Navy continued planning to make the quarantine a reality and the Air Force prepared for air strikes. On Sunday morning, President Kennedy met with Tactical Air Command's General Sweeney to review the general's estimate on the likely success of any air strike. The meeting lasted from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. CIA director John McCone and McNamara agreed that the number of launchers totaled approximately forty, with thirty-six sites known. General Sweeney, with the support of General Taylor, maintained that to be effective any air strikes against missile sites would have to include sorties against Soviet fighter jets and bombers, pushing sortie counts for an air strike up to five hundred. Although on Saturday Kennedy had shut down the idea of an air strike, on Sunday morning the president reviewed the plan with General Sweeney and directed McNamara to be ready to execute such an attack as early as Monday, October 22, if required.53

Kennedy had to keep the possibility of a direct attack on Cuba poised for execution should the blockade fail entirely. The JCS and Air Force stood ready to give the president military options during the crisis.

Although the meeting was not archived on Kennedy's secret tape-recording system, the ExComm convened again on Sunday, October 21; the meeting lasted from 2:30 PM until 4:50 PM.54 In this meeting Admiral Anderson described how the blockade would follow “accepted international rules,” and reported that forty Navy ships already were in position.55 Anderson further recommended that the blockade commence twenty-four hours after the president’s scheduled speech on October 22, 1962, to allow the Soviets time to issue instructions to their ships. Anderson proposed that if Soviet ships or aircraft took hostile actions, the Navy would have permission to respond. McNamara backed the CNO, stating that he favored such rules of engagement.56 At the conclusion of the meeting the president and CNO had their famous exchange, in which President Kennedy said, “Well, Admiral, it looks as though this is up to the Navy,” to which the CNO responded, “The Navy will not let you down.”57

That night the Navy worked to answer the concerns regarding the blockade (even as the president’s speech was adjusted to use the word “quarantine” instead of “blockade”). Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell L. Gilpatric further informed the Navy that the Secretary of Defense required the drawing up of rules of engagement regarding the blockade and Guantánamo. The CNO remained at the Pentagon until 11:25 PM, finalizing a message to CINCLANT Admiral Dennison, for approval by the Secretary of Defense (the Secretary of State had approved the message previously).58 Navy personnel worked through the night, and by 7:20 AM had produced a rules-of-engagement document that outlined how the Navy would respond to Soviet ships approaching the blockade line.59

https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol71/iss4/1
memorandum referenced established Navy procedures and specified that compliant Soviet ships would be diverted to non-Cuban ports. Should a Soviet ship not comply, “the blockade would be carried out with minimum use of force.”

Late in the evening of October 22, 1962, following President Kennedy’s address to the nation, McNamara and Anderson began the process of identifying which ship would be the first to be stopped.

As commencement of the blockade drew closer on October 23, 1963, in a 10:00 AM ExComm meeting President Kennedy and the ExComm held detailed conversations on which ships were likely to be stopped first, with McNamara identifying Kimovsk. Further, the Secretary of Defense reviewed possible alternatives by which the president could respond if SAMs shot down a U-2. The ExComm and the president dug further into the details of the military execution of the blockade and the surveillance flights over Cuba. Given the risks involved if the blockade effort escalated and Kennedy's interest in the details of military procedure, McNamara's review with the president of the delegation of authority to respond to a SAM “shootdown” of a U-2 was understandable.

At the second ExComm meeting that day, at 6:00 PM, the ExComm members debated how to handle Soviet ships approaching the quarantine line. Kennedy read the quarantine proclamation aloud, going through it point by point. He paused in his reading to voice his understanding that if a Soviet ship was hailed it would have the option to divert to a non-Cuban port. McNamara followed up: “The question is: Can we search a vessel which was proceeding toward Cuba, was hailed, requested to stop, did not do so, but turned around and proceeded to reverse direction away from Cuba. . . . I don't believe we should undertake such an operation.” To which President Kennedy replied, “Not right now.” McNamara again agreed with the president, “Not immediately. That's right. So my instruction to the Navy was: Don't do it.” Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy argued in favor of seizing a Soviet ship to obtain further evidence of Soviet missile shipments to Cuba, and raised the possibility of exploiting the weapons for intelligence purposes. Secretary of State Rusk, Robert Kennedy, McNamara, and National Security Advisor Bundy debated the merits of seizing ships suspected of carrying offensive material. President Kennedy stopped the discussion, forestalling any decision on seizing ships, and returned the focus to editing the proclamation. Thus, while the Navy had established rules of engagement on the morning of October 22, as late as the evening of October 23 the ExComm still was debating tactical-level decisions for conducting the quarantine, while the president edited the quarantine proclamation.

Near the end of the October 23 ExComm meeting, President Kennedy asked, “Okay, now what do we do tomorrow morning when these eight [Soviet] vessels continue to sail on? We're all clear about how we handle it?” JCS Chairman
General Taylor offered, “Shoot the rudders off of them, don’t you?” McNamara added that he would like to hold off issuing more-specific instructions to CINCLANT Admiral Dennison until the morning. The ExComm walked through various scenarios, such as whether ships carrying nurses or baby food would press through the quarantine. Kennedy found none of the scenarios in which ships continued beyond the quarantine line acceptable. The president realized the difficulties and joked, “I’ll tell you, for those who considered the blockade course to be the easy way, I told them not to do it!” The president received a loud outburst of laughter from around the room.64

Ultimately, the possibility that bothered the president was a tactical engagement in which USN sailors forcibly boarded a Soviet ship, then got killed by machine-gun fire. The ExComm did not have an easy answer for the president, so finally General Taylor offered, “I think we just have to say, Mr. President, [to use] a mission type of order: to use the minimum force required to cause—” The president stopped Taylor: “Well, except that doesn’t give them quite . . . I think this is the point. If he disables a ship and they’re eight hundred miles out and they refuse to let us aboard, I don’t think we ought, he ought to feel that he has to board that thing in order to carry out our orders.” Taylor responded, “Well, he’s to keep the ships from going into Cuba, that’s his basic mission now.” Kennedy drilled further down into the quarantine procedures: “I think at the beginning it would be better if this situation happened, to let that boat lie there disabled for a day or so, not to try and board it and have them [unclear] with machine gunning with thirty to forty people killed on each side.”65

Whether Kennedy was thinking back to his own service in the Navy and the life-and-death decisions a commander faced, or he simply sought to minimize the chance that an escalation of force would spiral out of control, the effect was the same. The ExComm and McNamara did not press the president any further on his guidance.

McNamara briefed Kennedy on suspected submarine movements and Kennedy communicated his concern for the survivability of the carriers Enterprise and Independence. Assured by Taylor that the Navy could track the Soviet submarines reasonably well, the president closed the tactical discussion on the quarantine as follows: “All right. Well, Mr. Secretary, I think I’d like to make sure that you have reviewed these instructions that go out to the Navy, having in mind this conversation that we’ve just had.” McNamara replied, “I have, and I will do so again tonight, Mr. President.”66 Following the ExComm meeting, McNamara and Gilpatric returned to the Pentagon and directed the Navy to set up a meeting in Flag Plot to discuss the first Soviet ship intercept. The discussion on Russian submarines must have had an effect on President Kennedy, because at 7:35 PM the White House phoned the duty officer at the Pentagon and directed the Navy
to “put a hold on any depth charge attacks on submarines for 48 hours.” The duty officer later logged that McNamara phoned the President at 10:00 PM for clarification on the depth charge order, and McNamara obtained permission to use “noise type” depth charges against Soviet submarines to cause them to surface. Thus, with the blockade less than a day away, the White House and Department of Defense still were finalizing guidance to the Navy.

The different accounts of the Flag Plot meeting between CNO Admiral Anderson and Secretary of Defense McNamara are incongruent in several particulars. The Secretary of Defense’s oral history from 1986 recounted a long tirade by McNamara emphasizing the blockade’s political nature to Admiral Anderson. A more balanced investigation into the meeting (which was actually held in Intelligence Plot) depicted a calmer encounter, with the meeting focused on suspected Soviet submarine positions and the Secretary of Defense directing Navy ships to positions intended to force the interdiction of specific Soviet ships on October 24. Following the meeting in Intelligence Plot, the CNO returned to Flag Plot and relayed McNamara’s orders to CINCLANT Admiral Dennison, determining which Navy ships would intercept Kimovsk, Gagarin, and Poltava.

Reviewing McNamara’s account in light of the ExComm transcripts and recordings from October 23 reveals that, while President Kennedy asked the Secretary of Defense to review the quarantine procedures with the Navy, McNamara missed the president’s ultimate concerns. Kennedy understood that the Navy had to stop the Soviet vessels if they breached the quarantine line. The CNO met with the ExComm on Sunday, October 21, and explained the procedures, and had codified them into rules of engagement by the morning of October 22. The president’s message—which McNamara did not convey—was the president’s fear of escalation if the Navy had to board a Soviet ship. If all the previous week’s planning is reduced to McNamara’s supposed statement, according to his account—“There will be no firing of any kind at that Soviet ship without my personal authority”—it means that his direction ran counter to the president’s intent. Earlier in the interview, McNamara stated, “We established the quarantine, not particularly to stop the Soviet ships, but to convey as forcefully as possible the political message.” Yet despite McNamara’s recollection, the actual concerns that the ExComm and the president explicitly expressed on the evening of October 23 concerned the political disaster that would ensue if Soviet ships with offensive weapons were allowed to proceed through the quarantine line. The ExComm meeting centered on ensuring that the Navy was prepared to stop the Soviet vessels.

While the Secretary of Defense’s oral history makes for a great “sea story,” the presidential recordings of the ExComm meetings reveal a nuanced understanding of the difficulties the Navy could anticipate in upholding the quarantine.
the end, neither the Navy nor the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Anderson, let the president down.

On October 24, at the 10:00 AM ExComm meeting, CIA director McCone received a message from the Office of Naval Intelligence that Poltava, Gagarin, Kimovsk, Dolmatovo, Moscow Festival, and Metallurg Kursk either had stopped or had changed direction. Thus, the quarantine had the desired tactical effect: it turned around the Soviet ships inbound to Cuba.

After the initial quarantine standoff, diplomacy continued, as did the threat of all-out war. The crisis was not resolved until Sunday, October 28, 1962, with Radio Moscow’s broadcast and Khrushchev’s letter to Kennedy agreeing to remove the missiles from Cuba in return for the United States pledging not to invade the Communist island.

Sheldon M. Stern’s *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myth versus Reality* compares secondary literature and primary-source recollections on the Cuban missile crisis with the presidential recordings. The analysis reveals that the participants shaped the lessons they drew from the Cuban missile crisis so as to align themselves with the ultimate outcome: a political resolution to a Soviet nuclear missile deployment ninety miles from the United States.

The simplistic narrative of the Cuban missile crisis painted the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a dogmatically warmongering light. McNamara’s oral history cast Admiral Anderson as a naval officer who would have preferred to blow the Soviets out of the water at first light. The truth is just not that simple. Both Stern’s work and any review of the ExComm recordings reveal that nearly every member of the ExComm shifted his views on supporting an air strike or establishing a blockade. The only consistent member of the ExComm was President Kennedy, who sought room to maneuver and delayed making a decision, and whose overriding concern was avoiding a path that would lead to all-out war.

The Joint Chiefs, on the other hand, had decades of institutional knowledge and military planning behind them when they gave President Kennedy their recommendation for air strikes and a subsequent invasion of Cuba. Presented with a military problem, the Department of Defense returned a military solution. Kennedy finally opted for the quarantine, keeping the air strikes as an option depending on the Soviet response to the quarantine. The Air Force placed its bombers on alert and the Navy readied the Atlantic Fleet. The Joint Chiefs disagreed with the president’s quarantine decision, but they executed his orders faithfully and expertly. Furthermore, the chiefs understood that if the quarantine failed, the military could be called on to execute the air strikes and an invasion. Experience uniquely informs decisions, and the military experience of the Joint Chiefs informed their decisions and actions during the Cuban missile crisis.
Military and political leaders are forged in the organizational culture and by the personal experiences of their careers. The JCS remained entrenched in their initial assessment and provided a military option to end the Cuban missile crisis. Their assessment of the larger political crisis and possible Soviet reactions to an air strike differed from President Kennedy’s. As commander in chief, the president cast the deciding vote, after careful consideration of his subordinates’ opinions. President Kennedy weighed the resolution of conflict against the cost of war with the Soviet Union.

The outcome of the Cuban missile crisis was that a Communist dictatorship became entrenched in Cuba. But as politically abhorrent to the Kennedys (and many later U.S. presidents) as Castro proved to be, after the crisis Cuba failed to prove itself to be an existential threat to the United States. Yet until the resolution of the missile crisis, Castro’s removal was considered.

The president always will have a military solution available, and the quarantine, by any definition, was a military operation against Soviet shipping. Perhaps one of the many lessons of the Cuban missile crisis is that the military is the sharpest tool of diplomacy. Yet military operations must be conducted with clearly defined objectives, and military solutions should serve as options to achieve those objectives—and as deterrents, to ensure the continuation of political discourse and diplomacy.

The implicit trust underlying military service, which includes the inherent possibility of sacrifice, is that when sailors, Marines, soldiers, and airmen are called on to defend the nation, their lives will not be treated as merely an expedient solution, without recourse to thoughtful diplomacy. “The Navy”—and the Department of Defense—“will not let you down.” But when dealing with a dictator—whether in Russia, North Korea, or Syria—our elected leaders must take the long view when balancing the achievement of political objectives against the cost of military action.

NOTES

3. The U-2 aircraft carried two cameras, a main camera with higher-quality resolution and a second camera with variable resolution, used to correlate ground-track positioning. Since the National Photographic Interpretation Center in Suitland, Maryland, spent the bulk of its time viewing the main-camera film, the 544th’s photographic interpreters reviewed the tracker-camera film—which often was available weeks before the main-camera film. Sanders A. Laubenthal [Capt., USAF], The Missiles in Cuba, 1962: The Role of SAC Intelligence (U), SAC Intelligence Quarterly Project Warrior Study (Peterson AFB, CO:...
544th Strategic Intelligence Wing, May 1984), pp. 2–6, previously available at www.afso.af.mil, now available from author on request.
4. Ibid., p. 6.
5. Ibid., p. 8.
6. Tighe interview, as cited in ibid.
11. “Notes Taken from Transcripts of Meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, October–November 1962, Dealing with the Cuban Missile Crisis” (handwritten 1976, typed 1993), pp. 2–3, National Security Archive, George Washington Univ., Washington, DC [hereafter NSA GWU], available at nsarchive2.gwu.edu/.
12. Ibid., p. 2.
13. Ibid.
14. CINCLANT Contingency Operation Plan No. 312-62 provided for a tailored air strike against single or multiple targets in Cuba to eliminate a threat to the United States, with little lead time from order to execution. OPLAN 314-62 provided for a simultaneous amphibious landing and airborne assault, requiring an eighteen-day buildup prior to attack. OPLAN 316-62 provided a shortened-timeline alternative to OPLAN 314-62, with the amphibious/airborne assault beginning seven days after the air strikes. Headquarters, U.S. Atlantic Command, “CINCLANT Historical Account of Cuban Crisis—1963,” 000119/J09H, April 29, 1963, Post-1946 Reports Collection, box 16, Archives Branch, Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, DC.
18. “Notes Taken from Transcripts of Meetings,” p. 3.
19. Ibid., p. 4.
21. “Notes Taken from Transcripts of Meetings,” p. 5.
25. “Notes Taken from Transcripts of Meetings,” p. 3.
26. Ibid., p. 5.
28. Ibid., pp. 394–95. Specifically, Kennedy was alarmed by the September 28 letter from Khrushchev regarding Berlin and the Soviet leader’s statements in the run-up to congressional elections.
29. “Notes Taken from Transcripts of Meetings,” p. 6.
30. Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum (JCSM)–794-62 is referenced in ibid., p. 7. The quoted

32. "Notes Taken from Transcripts of Meetings," p. 7.
33. Ibid., p. 9.
34. Ibid.
36. "Notes Taken from Transcripts of Meetings," pp. 9–10.
37. Ibid., p. 10.
38. Ibid.

39. Naftali, Zelikow, and May, The Presidential Recordings, pp. 441, 513. The intelligence on October 19 indicated sixteen MRBM launchers, with two previously identified MRBMs assessed as possible intermediate-range-ballistic-missile sites, capable of firing missiles with a range of 2,200 nautical miles. Additionally, there were three confirmed coastal-defense cruise-missile sites, twenty-two SA-2 SAM sites, and thirty-five to thirty-nine MiG-21 fighters. "Chronology of JCS Decisions," p. 19.

40. "Meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the Cuban Missile Crisis on 19 October 1962," in The Presidential Recordings, ed. Naftali, Zelikow, and May, tape 31.2.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
49. "Meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the Cuban Missile Crisis on 19 October 1962."
51. "Notes Taken from Transcripts of Meetings," p. 12.
52. Ibid., pp. 12–13.

56. Ibid., p. 528.
58. William D. Houser [Capt., USN], Francis J. Roberts [Col., USA], and Sidney B. Berry [Lt. Col., USA], Duty Officers Journal, 8B 10-21-62 Duty Officers, October 21, 1962, October 20–25, 1962, Secretary of Defense CMC files, Cuba 381, 1962, box 1, record group 330, NSA GWU.
60. Herbert D. Riley [VAdm., USN], Director, Joint Staff, to Deputy Secretary of Defense, "Rules of Engagement," memorandum, document 7, October 22, 1962 (Top Secret—excised copy), Taylor file, Misc. Papers, box 6, NSA GWU.
63. Ibid., tape 35.2.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.


70. Ibid., p. 27.

71. McNamara oral history, p. 6.

72. Ibid., p. 4.


74. “Cuban Missile Crisis,” John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum, microsites.jfklibrary.org/.
COALITION COORDINATION DURING THE BOXER REBELLION

How Twenty-Seven “Councils of Senior Naval Commanders” Contributed to the Conduct of Operations

Umio Otsuka

In China’s Shantung (Shandong) Province at the end of the nineteenth century, xenophobic bandits known as Boxers emerged, and violence against foreigners and Christians increased. Ministers representing foreign countries in Peking (Beijing) complained to the Qing court and requested that warships be deployed to protect their nationals. At that point a matter that had begun as terroristic attacks by bandits became a conflict between the nations involved: the Qing government declared war against foreign powers. The military operations that the foreign states—which included Japan, a newly emerging Asian power—conducted during this war were the first coalition operations of the modern era.

On June 5, 1900, Vice Admiral Edward Seymour, Royal Navy, Commander in Chief, British China Squadron, the senior naval officer present in the port of Taku (Dagu), took the initiative. He assembled a council of the naval commanders of the foreign powers represented in Taku on board his flagship, with the aim of achieving concerted action. Between then and October 25, twenty-seven such councils convened. The senior naval officers of all the foreign powers with ships in Taku composed the membership. Councils assembled...
on an ad hoc basis and functioned as the supreme consultative body for the commanders.

Historical analysts assess that “on the whole, this consensual method worked well.”5 By way of contrast, the theater commanders who led the army forces that the foreign powers deployed to conduct the ground campaigns assembled only at the most crucial point during their pursuit of the ultimate goal, which was to rescue the diplomatic corps in Peking. Naval commanders, by assembling the Council of Senior Naval Commanders periodically throughout all phases from the outset of the uprising to the end of major operations, ensured that coalition operations were conducted smoothly. Because the naval councils were the sole mechanism for command and coordination of the coalition forces, they shaped the course of not only naval operations but all military activities that the foreign powers conducted during the war.

Today's Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, as part of the global war on terrorism, which broke out in 2001, has become the largest example of coalition warfare at the beginning of the twenty-first century—one hundred years after the foreign response to the Boxer Rebellion represented the first coalition warfare of the twentieth century.6 In Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, U.S. armed forces have created a model of command and coordination for coalition warfare.7 Joint publications governing Operation ENDURING FREEDOM provide for parallel command structures, with no single force commander designated—which was the case during the Boxer Rebellion as well.8 However, the leadership of any coalition must develop a means of coordinating among the participants to attain unity of effort, so employing some coordination center is essential.9 The Council of Senior Naval Commanders worked so well during the Boxer Rebellion because it served as the multinational coordination center for the commanders of the foreign navies present.

This article examines the roles the Council of Senior Naval Commanders played during the Boxer Rebellion throughout the conflict’s phases—with that role changing on the basis of the nature of the particular challenge at hand—and how these councils contributed to the smooth coordination of coalition warfare. The most important supporting documentary reference is the official naval record edited by the Kaigun Daijin Kanbo (Office of the Minister of the Navy), Meiji 33 Nen Shinkoku Jihen Kaigun Senshishou Kan 1–5 (Naval History of the Northern Qing Incident in 1900), which contains all the documents regarding the twenty-seven councils, including minutes of their deliberations, Japanese translations thereof, reports of the participants, and the related orders submitted by the respective authorities. (The numbering of the councils from first to twenty-seventh is in accordance with this document.)

For the sake of convenience in discussing similar items with regard to each council, the article divides the period of the Boxer Rebellion into four phases. To
organize examination of the discussions and resolutions of each council meeting, the analysis identifies the foremost feature of each phase. In doing so it takes into consideration the diplomatic relationships among the foreign powers, the situation on the ground among the fighting armies, and the activities of Admiral Seymour as senior commander of the foreign navies and the central figure of the naval coalition.

Phase 1 covers the period from the outset of the Boxer Rebellion to Seymour’s landing in command of the marines that the coalition navies supplied to move on Peking. During this phase the naval commanders of the foreign powers present established the coalition and set its course. Phase 2 covers Seymour’s return to Tientsin (Tianjin) following his failed expedition against Peking, during which the coalition navies supported the expedition. Phase 3 begins with the shift of the ground campaigns from bluejackets to soldiers and ends with the relief of Peking. By this phase, the objectives of the foreign powers had become more complex and the objectives of the naval coalition therefore more diffused. Phase 4 marks the period during which the coalition navies planned and executed operations for occupying Shanhaikwan (Shanhaiguan) and Chinwangtao (Qinhuangdao) to maintain coalition communications during the winter.

PHASE 1: ESTABLISHING THE COALITION AND SETTING ITS COURSE

Since a British priest had become the first victim of the most recent bout of Chinese xenophobia in 1899, the Boxers repeatedly had attacked Christian churches and killed foreigners. On May 28, 1900, when the Boxers destroyed a train station
in a suburb of Peking, the ministers of the foreign powers in the capital requested the deployment of marines to protect the embassies, and warships of the foreign powers started arriving off Taku. By June 2 the foreign navies with ships in the vicinity of China had sent 442 marines to Peking. Seymour arrived off Taku on June 1 and went ashore on the 3rd to inspect the Tientsin area.\(^\text{10}\)

As the senior naval officer present, Seymour believed he should initiate any action. He consulted Rear Admiral Charles Courrejolles of the French navy, the next-most-senior naval officer present, who suggested that Seymour convene a council on his flagship. The immediate aim was to inform the other naval representatives of the request for relief from the ministers in Peking. Seymour issued the following invitation to the commanders.

In view of the gravity of affairs at Peking and its neighbourhood, and the possibility of all communication being cut off by the “Boxers” between the Capital and Tientsin, leaving our respective Ministers isolated and unable to communicate with their Government or with us in this anchorage; it seems to me desirable that the respective Senior Officer of the Ships of War present here (except the Chinese) should meet together to consider the situation. As I happen to be the Senior Naval Officer present I therefore take on myself to have the honour of putting the above question before you; and should you agree I would suggest you might assemble on board this ship at 4 p.m. to-day for the above purpose.

On the 5th, Seymour assembled the first Council of Senior Naval Commanders of the foreign powers on board his flagship, *Centurion*.\(^\text{11}\) This action represented the very outset of the formation of a coalition: the consolidation of twenty-five ships, from eight navies, that happened to be present off Taku. It marked the beginning of a series of twenty-seven Councils of Senior Naval Commanders. Seymour had no authority to command or control the foreign navies, and the humble wording of the invitation letter implies the difficulty of his position. At the first council, in addition to Seymour, the participants were Rear Admirals Courrejolles of France, Vesselago of Russia, and Kempff of the United States and Captains Guelig of Germany, Casella of Italy, and Nagamine of Japan. In addition, a commander represented Captain Montalmar of Austria, as he would at the second and third councils as well.

At the first council, the participants agreed to points as follows:

- The purpose of the coalition was to protect the lives and properties of their countrymen via a peaceful and defensive mission, which in no way was directed against the Chinese government.

- Actions of the coalition should be taken according to the desires and with the consent of the ministers, and it behooved the commanders to act in concert.
If the ministers in Peking were isolated and communicating with them was impossible, and if time permitted, the commanders should consult their superior naval authorities.

If affairs were so serious and urgent that time did not permit such consultation, the commanders should consult with each other and act without further consultation with authorities. ²

At the second council, on the 6th, Seymour presented a telegram from the British minister at Peking asking, as the collective will of the diplomatic corps, that, should railway and telegraph lines be cut and Peking besieged, the commanders off Taku would consult with one another and march to the ministers’ relief. The commanders discussed the matter and decided on a concept for deploying their embarked marines, as follows: ³

Command and control: While different foreign guards should consult their own consuls with regard to the protection of their consulates in Tientsin, if combined forces made an advance on Peking there would need to be a single officer in command. Seymour asked the participants to consider whether an officer should be nominated to command the forces, and if so who that officer should be.

Rules of engagement: In his telegram, the British minister strongly urged that permission be granted for the guards to respond to hostility with active measures. The only comment on or response to this request from the British minister came from the U.S. Navy’s Admiral Kempff, who stated that if the Chinese attacked the guards who were protecting lives and properties and keeping communications open with Peking, they must accept the consequences.

While the ministers were taking an active line with regard to the possibility of military engagement, the naval commanders’ approach seems generally restrained; the missions of the deploying marines were to protect lives and property and restore communications with Peking. ⁴

The first and second councils were conducted with no prearranged format to the meetings—there was no time for the participants to prepare. However, during the second council it was agreed that if anyone received a dispatch containing news of great importance he should send it to Seymour so that, if necessary, the Council of Senior Naval Commanders might be convened. The participants also agreed that the senior naval officer present should preside over each meeting, meaning that if Seymour should be absent from Taku the next-most-senior naval commander present would preside. ⁵
The ministers in Peking recognized on the 8th that the Chinese governmental forces had no intention of defending Peking from the Boxers. Seymour decided to send marines to Tientsin to augment its defenses and announced his intent to the other naval commanders at the third council, which took place on the 9th. The French and Russian commanders proposed that a request be submitted to the Chinese government to suppress the rebels, but Vice Admiral Bendemann of Germany, attending the council for the first time, stated that the German government had directed him to consult with the other powers on how best to relieve the ministers; he argued that anything beyond that was the province of the diplomats in Peking. The French-Russian proposal was denied. This indicates that the naval commanders considered the province of the council to be military affairs only, staying out of diplomacy.16

After the conclusion of the third council, Seymour received a message of alarm from the British minister in Peking. The admiral sent a letter to Captain Nagamine of Japan, commanding officer of Kasagi, in which he argued that time was limited. Seymour therefore requested commencement of a combined action, for which Seymour planned to land as many forces as possible immediately and take command himself.17 Seymour took this precipitate action not only because speed was paramount but also because the perceived risk in taking military action was low, as the enemy was considered to be mere bandits.18

An additional consideration was that by taking action the British government could forestall Russian occupation of the territory around Peking, as well as the railway in northern China.19 This consideration vis-à-vis Russia may have been an important factor, as demonstrated by the fact that Seymour communicated his critical decision—to land forces and take direct command—only to Japan, without convening the council.

As reasons why coalition operations were executed smoothly under the auspices of the Council of Senior Naval Commanders, despite the fact that the coalition contained, within its eight powers, nations in competition with each other (e.g., Japan versus Russia, France versus Germany), Eric Ouellet offers four, as follows: Seymour, the senior commander, was from the Royal Navy, which was the world’s leading navy; all the commanders shared a sense of urgency; the powers believed it would be easy to suppress the Boxers; and all the powers sought to expand their influence in China.20

The theme of the initial three councils, comprising Phase 1, was how to deal with the crisis unfolding in Peking, and the powers—despite their diverse diplomatic calculations—framed an initial posture concentrated on relieving the besieged diplomatic corps. Seymour believed that if the commanders had no time to confer with their home authorities, it was most important that they consult as a body. Thereafter the Council of Senior Naval Commanders was considered the
supreme decision-making body among the powers fighting against the Boxers in theater. A corroborating fact is that when the diplomats in Peking sent their telegraph beseeching that “should this (the siege of Peking) happen we beg immediate instructions be sent to Officers commanding Squadrons Taku to consult together and march to our relief,” it was sent to the naval commanders. This indicates that the diplomats approved the Council of Senior Naval Commanders functioning as the supreme decision-making body at the outset of the incident.

The diplomatic position of each power vis-à-vis China varied, depending on the respective governmental policy. Britain intended to maintain the status quo—preventing Russia from taking advantage of the Boxers’ uprising—while other powers swarmed over China seeking to extract concessions over finance, trade, and territory. In this international environment, the Councils of Senior Naval Commanders held during Phase 1 played the role of determining the strategic course of action of the coalition, as well as functioning as a body of liaison and coordination, and even of decision-making to execute military operations.

PHASE 2: SUPPORTING SEYMOUR’S EXPEDITION
As soon as Seymour landed on June 10 he began leading the coalition forces composed of marines on their march toward Peking. On the same day, communications between Peking and Tientsin were cut. On the evening of the 11th, the first armed engagement against the Boxers occurred, and the railway between the coalition forces and Tientsin was cut. Vice Admiral Hiltebrandt of Russia, the senior commander present in Taku, was informed that the Boxers were approaching Taku to occupy the train station and destroy the railway and were contemplating mining the mouth of the Peiho (Hai) River. Hiltebrandt convened the fourth council on the evening of the 15th aboard his flagship, Russia. The council decided to direct the commanding officers of the gunboats anchored in the Peiho to protect the railway station and the trains but not to take any offensive action initially; however, if the Chinese forces attempted to occupy the railway station the naval forces were to attack, first at the station, then at the fort.

On the morning of the 16th, the fifth council convened aboard Russia. The commanders judged that the minelaying that had been conducted at the mouth of the Peiho demonstrated the will of the Chinese government to cut the transportation link from Peking and Tientsin to Taku. The commanders off Taku needed to maintain their communications with Seymour’s force, so they could not overlook the danger of an attack from the fort at Taku. The commanders decided to propose that the Chinese evacuate the fort, and if this was not accepted they would occupy the fort by force. They set a deadline of 2 AM the next day. However, Admiral Kempff rejected the proposal and refused to sign the minutes, believing that an attack on the fort could lead to war with the Qing government.
Thereafter the coalition forces attacked the fort at Taku and occupied it after a fight of a few hours.  

Immediately after the occupation of the fort on the 17th, the sixth council was held aboard Russia. The commanders discussed how to dispose of the Chinese ship Hai Yung that was anchored in the harbor. Inviting Admiral Yeh of the Chinese Navy aboard, they directed Yeh to forbid the departure of the ship; he agreed to do so, albeit unwillingly. Kempff was waiting for instructions from his government, and left the council before its adjournment without signing the minutes.

Seymour wrote in his memoir that, although he had been absent at the time and thus was not in a position to comment authoritatively, he felt that it had been necessary for the commanders off Taku to make a judgment without him and that under the circumstances occupying the fort at Taku was the right decision. However, subsequently the conservative faction in the Qing court took advantage of the coalition navies' attack on the fort to declare war against the powers, with the empress dowager issuing a proclamation to that effect.

The seventh council took place aboard Russia on the 20th. The commanders resolved to notify Chinese governmental officials that the purpose of coalition military operations was to relieve their nationals in Peking, and that their targets were the bandits who were hindering that aim. However, heavy resistance by both the Boxers and Qing forces halted all advance by Seymour's force on the 18th, and the marines started retreating to Tientsin on the 19th. The coalition forces set up defenses around the city while their opponents closed in. On the 23rd, augmenting army forces broke through the encircling net around Tientsin and succeeded in contacting Seymour and his marines.

On the same day, the naval commanders convened the eighth council, again on Russia, and discussed a request received from the senior consul general in Shanghai, in the south of China, for the protection of foreign nationals there. The commanders deemed that no ship was available to allocate to Shanghai while the crisis was still going on in northern China, especially since the situation in the south was still relatively calm. This council also agreed that Admiral Vesselago of Russia would assume command of the forts and gunboats in the Peiho River, while Lieutenant Commander Wise, USN, was appointed commander of forces at the Tongku (Tanggu) railway station near Taku.

Admiral Togo of Japan, who had arrived at Taku the day before, attended this eighth council. To finesse the issue of seniority, thereafter Rear Admiral Dewa attended almost all councils on behalf of Togo.

Following the failure of Seymour's expedition, the coalition marine forces finally returned to Taku on the 26th. Any further relief operation was postponed until additional army forces arrived to augment the marines. Japan, as the
power located closest to northern China, was expected to send a good number of soldiers.\textsuperscript{32}

The term of the Seymour expedition coincided almost exactly with that of Phase 2. During this phase the senior naval commanders used the councils to discuss how to support Seymour’s force and how to break the encirclement of Tientsin, including by their attack on the fort at Taku. The councils were not the venue by which to exercise tactical command over the attack on the fort; however, it was the strategic decisions the councils made, especially to attack the fort, that changed the nature of the struggle from the suppression of bandits to a war against China, even if this development was unintended.

Although northern China remained the focal area, the Yangtze River area, which included Shanghai, had become an additional area of interest for some coalition nations. One reason advanced for this is that the diplomatic priority for Britain—the most important actor in the coalition—was to maintain its national interests in the Far East in general, with the specific issues at stake in Peking and with regard to the Qing dynasty being of secondary importance.\textsuperscript{33} Separately, the British government had ordered its deputy consul general in Shanghai to build a cooperative relationship with the Chinese viceroyys there, and the Admiralty had ordered the China Squadron to take measures sufficient to protect the lives and property of British nationals along the Yangtze River. This demonstrated the government’s great interest in southern China—and that maintaining those interests was even more important than the relief of Peking.\textsuperscript{34}

PHASE 3: DIFFUSION OF COALITION OBJECTIVES

While he was in Tientsin Seymour sent a letter to Rear Admiral Bruce, the next-most-senior RN officer off Taku, directing him to request that Japan augment the coalition forces in response to reinforcement by the enemy. The senior naval commanders convened the ninth council on Russia and decided to ask Japan for an army division, and that they would conduct boardings to prevent ammunition and military equipment from flowing into northern China.

In his letter Seymour also requested consultations about the situation in Shanghai, at the Woosung (Wusong) forts, and regarding the Chinese cruisers and other ships in that area; however, there is no evidence the commanders discussed these subjects at the council. One might presume that this was because they already had made a decision regarding the Shanghai area at the eighth council. But Seymour’s attempt to swing the discussion over to Shanghai served to demonstrate the magnitude of British interests in southern China. Britain realized an immense profit from the enormous commercial network it had formed in the south around the Yangtze River, and the British government was very keen to maintain order in the Shanghai area.\textsuperscript{35} On June 27, the consuls general of the
powers in Shanghai concluded an agreement with the viceroy's there to maintain order in southern China, with the viceroy's attesting to their desire for peace, including no confrontations with foreign powers.  

The tenth council, held on July 7 aboard Russia, convened at the request of Admiral Kempff, whom Washington had directed to ask the coalition navies' collective opinion regarding how many soldiers it would require to relieve Peking. At the eleventh council, convened on the 8th, again on Russia, the execution of boardings of merchant ships sailing under the flags of the council members' nations, which already had been discussed at the ninth council, was the theme.

Seymour returned to his flagship, Centurion, on the 12th, fresh from completing a plan to capture Tientsin that had been produced with the army commanders of the forces of Japan, the United States, and France. The attack on Tientsin took place the next day and the city was liberated on the 14th. Seymour convened the twelfth council on July 13 on Centurion, with Admiral Togo participating. It had been more than a month since Seymour last presided over the council. The body resolved to order the consuls to conduct boardings to enforce the embargo against weapons and ammunition flowing into China. Even though the attack on Tientsin commenced that day, the only issue relating to the ground campaign discussed was a proposal to request that the Japanese army take the initiative in the defense of the fort at Taku.

On the 16th, the army commanders of the foreign powers gathered at the Tientsin headquarters of Lieutenant General Alekseyev of Russia and discussed the governance of the city. On the same day, in response to a request from Alekseyev, Seymour convened the thirteenth council aboard Centurion (with Togo again in attendance) to discuss the management of the railway between Tongku and Tientsin. It was resolved by majority vote, with Britain and the United States opposed, that management of the line should be placed in the hands of Russia, which would assume the responsibility to guard it, with the reservation that the railway would be returned to the former administration as soon as military circumstances permitted. Having taken this action, the Coalition Transportation Committee, which had been established at the eighth council, was dissolved.

Admiral Seymour and Major General Gaselee, commander of British army forces, were dissatisfied with this conclusion; they thought that the matter of the railway's operation should not be decided by the fleet alone. It was true that the Russians in actuality were already in charge of maintaining and protecting the railway; that the Coalition Transportation Committee was then the only organization authorized to delegate railway management; and that the senior officer of that committee was Russian. Yet given that it was the eighth council that had granted the committee its authority, it would have been appropriate for any amendment of that agreement also to be discussed and resolved by the council.
That, presumably, is why General Alekseyev had requested that the council convene. This episode illustrates that the nature of the Council of Senior Naval Commanders had changed by this stage, with the core concern shifting to the relief of Peking by army forces.

On the 23rd Seymour left Taku, cruising south with his flag in Alacrity, arriving at Shanghai on the 26th. On the 24th, Hiltebrandt convened the fourteenth council aboard Russia, at Bendemann’s request. Berlin had directed Bendemann to propose a discussion of the blockade of the Chinese fleet in the Yangtze River and measures to prevent the Chinese from reinforcing the forts along the Chinese coastline. The commanders decided to send a letter to Seymour, who was then en route to the south, and the naval commanders in the Yangtze area to dictate to the local Chinese authorities that there was to be no departure by the Chinese fleet from the Yangtze River and no reinforcement of the coastal forts. In his letter of response dated August 6, Seymour would write that such a request was inappropriate at that time.

Also at the fourteenth council, the commanders discussed the earliest possible relief of the diplomatic corps in Peking. It also resolved to request that the viceroy in Shantung send a letter to the Tsungli-Yamen (Zongli Yamen) (the government body in charge of foreign policy in imperial China) requesting that a letter be produced signed by the ministers themselves, to prove they were safe.

On the 27th, Seymour handed command of all British forces over to General Gaselee. Lieutenant General Linevich arrived as commander of Russian forces on the 31st. The commanders of the ground forces of all eight foreign powers convened on August 4. With this, the ground forces were being reinforced, a leadership structure was being consolidated over them, and a concrete plan for the relief of Peking was being prepared. On the 28th in Shanghai, the consuls general resolved to entrust the protection of the foreign settlement there to the naval ships of the foreign powers anchored in Shanghai. Seymour, who was in Shanghai, accepted the new charge.

Back in Taku, Hiltebrandt convened the fifteenth council on August 2. The commanders applied themselves only to a purely practical business issue: they discussed and agreed on the landing point of undersea cables that were being laid from Chifu (Yantai), which lay across the Gulf of Chihli (Bohai Sea) to the southeast.

On the 5th—the day the ground forces started marching on Peking—Hiltebrandt convened the sixteenth council. He proposed to notify Seymour to direct the commanding officers of coalition navy ships in Shanghai to halt the departure of Chinese warships, a step with which all the commanders off Taku agreed. Seymour, however, sent a letter, dated the 19th, in which he wrote that he was unable to give orders to Chinese warships. Instead he notified the Chinese...
that they should inform the consuls general of the purpose of any departure by Chinese warships, so that any misunderstanding by coalition navy commanders could be avoided.

During this period Seymour acted as the senior naval commander in Shanghai, and through a second council of senior naval commanders there he exerted his influence among the powers. As early as July 3 the British Admiralty already had notified Seymour of the shift of command authority over military operations in China from him to Gaselee, so Seymour could concentrate his efforts on activities intended to maintain British interests in southern China without worrying about the operation to relieve Peking. Therefore, even though the operation to relieve Peking was still going on, he cruised south on July 23 and met the viceroy in Nanking (Nanjing). His intent was to confirm for himself whether the China Squadron could shift its focus to southern China once Gaselee’s army forces were launched into northern China. Following his consultations with Chinese officials in southern China, on August 18—when the relief of Peking had been completed—Britain landed two thousand troops in the south, on its own discretion. Seymour’s denial of restrictions on the ability of the Chinese fleet to maneuver—contrary to the resolution of the sixteenth council in Taku—makes it quite clear that Seymour’s activities in southern China were aimed at protecting British national interests in that area, regardless of whether Peking was relieved.

Russian interests in Manchuria started to suffer damage at the end of June. In response, the Russian emperor approved the deployment of forces to Manchuria, and battles began to occur in various places. Like Britain, Russia prioritized protection of its national interests, in its case in Manchuria, ahead of the relief of Peking, which likely weakened the Russian will to invade the city. On the other hand, since Russia had no direct interest in southern China, it must have looked favorably on the competition among foreign powers in that region, as it might divert the attention of the other powers away from northern China.

Off Taku on August 10, Admiral Courrejolles presided over the seventeenth council aboard D’Entrecasteaux. The commanders again discussed a purely practical business matter, having to do with a contract with a civilian company regarding a lighthouse boat.

Peking was relieved on August 14. On the 23rd, Rear Admiral Candiani of Italy presided over the eighteenth council on Fieramosca. Matters discussed were how to handle contributions received for the men wounded, asking Rear Admiral Dewa to convey a collective message of gratitude from the coalition to the government of Japan for the Japanese treatment of the wounded men, and how to deliver messages that arrived via the submarine cable that had opened just two days before.
The fourth through eighteenth councils used French as their official language, and minutes were recorded in that language.\(^{46}\) This probably was because Hiltebrandt did not speak English.\(^{47}\) By contrast, almost all the senior officers were proficient in French, as it was common for people from the upper echelons of European societies, from which most senior officers were drawn, to learn French. In modern coalition operations as well, language differences within a multinational force can present a real challenge to command and control, efficient communications, and unity of effort. From a tactical and an operational perspective, proficiency in French influenced the cohesion of the 1900 coalition positively.\(^{48}\)

In Phase 3 the major action shifted away from the navies to the armies, and the primary focus of the coalition became the planning and implementation of a ground campaign springboarding from the capture of Tientsin to the relief of Peking. As was seen in the record of the ninth council, at which the request for Japan to deploy an army division for the relief of Peking was resolved, the commanders (unanimously) participated in that strategic decision made early in Phase 3.

In contrast, it is worth noting that Britain and Russia—two major actors in China—acted more for their own important interests than for the relief of Peking, which was the initial common goal of the coalition. On completion of the relief, the foreign powers started acting unilaterally to build a new order in China—prioritizing their own interests.\(^{49}\) During the latter stages of this phase the focal points of discussion in the Councils of Senior Naval Commanders became unsettled, and the role of the council became unclear.

**PHASE 4: EXECUTING OPERATIONS IN SHANHAIKWAN AND CHINWANGTAO**

Once Peking was subjugated, the withdrawal of troops started taking place in September. Marshal Waldersee of Germany, the commander in chief of coalition forces, arrived in Taku on the 25th. On the 27th, Seymour convened the nineteenth council aboard *Alacrity* in response to a request from Bendemann. Bendemann introduced Waldersee’s contention that occupation of Chinwangtao was necessary to maintain transport connections during the winter, and that the navy should conduct the operation.\(^{50}\) The senior naval commanders agreed to this proposal, except that Rear Admiral Skrydroff of Russia reserved comment, as he had no instructions from General Alekseyev. Two days later, on the 29th, the twentieth council discussed the details of the operation. Seymour would take overall command of the operation in Chinwangtao, and an anchoring plan was decided on. No American representative attended the twentieth council—in fact, the United States did not send anyone to any of the remaining councils—and the United States did not participate in the Shanhaikwan operation.
On the 30th, Seymour presided over the twenty-first council. The commanders decided that the expedition would depart for Shanhaikwan on October 2. This council settled the tactical details of the operation, including the allocation of forces, the order of march, and reporting procedures. In comparison with most of the other councils, this one was more tactical and operational, aimed at conducting a specific campaign; it was most similar to the council that preceded the capture of the fort at Taku.

Meanwhile, Walter Hillier, a former British diplomat who had been stationed in Peking, voluntarily proceeded to Shanhaikwan aboard the British gunboat *Pigmy* to recommend surrender to the Chinese. Surprisingly, the Chinese commander in Shanhaikwan followed this advice and evacuated the forts with no conditions. By the time the coalition forces landed at Shanhaikwan the Chinese troops already had completed their evacuation, so the forts were reoccupied without any conflict. At the twenty-second council, on October 1 aboard *Centurion* in Taku, Seymour notified the participants of the reports from *Pigmy*, and the council resolved that the national flags of the seven countries involved should be hoisted and that the commanders should land at 7 AM on October 2 to fix the location of the flags. Then Admiral Skrydroff shocked the other participants by declaring that, because Shanhaikwan was at the left front of the Russian maneuver area in Manchuria, it was included within the Russian sphere of influence.

On the 2nd, the flagships of the coalition powers anchored off Shanhaikwan and the commanders went ashore. They gathered at Fort No. 1, made an inspection, and then convened the twenty-third council at the railway station—the first council held ashore. The commanders made interim decisions on which countries should occupy the five forts, the magazine, and the railway station and how to hoist the national flags, pending submission of these matters to Walderssee for approval. On the 4th, Seymour presided over the twenty-fourth council aboard *Centurion*, at which it was agreed that the principal place of disembarkation would be at Chinwangtiao and that a small jetty would be constructed at Shanhaikwan.

It was resolved further that the *taotai* (*daotai*) (the Chinese official in charge of administration and foreign diplomacy) and the principal officials of the walled town of Shanhaikwan were to be summoned to appear before the representatives of the coalition nations at Fort No. 1. On the 5th, the Chinese general and other Chinese officials presented themselves at the fort, demonstrating their submission. Thereupon the twenty-fifth council convened at the fort and drew up minutes of what had been discussed with the Chinese officials.

Although the twenty-fourth council had determined by majority vote to build a jetty at Shanhaikwan, Rear Admiral Dewa continued to insist that it was possible to transport goods from the sea and unload them without the expense...
of constructing a jetty. He sent Seymour a letter repeating his opinion, and Seymour agreed to raise this issue anew at the next council. Accordingly, when the twenty-sixth council convened on the 8th aboard Centurion off Taku, the commanders agreed to nominate officers to a committee that would assemble at Chinwangtao and Shanhaikwan to consider the question and advise what piers, if any, should be constructed at each place, where they should be positioned, and for whose use they should be appointed. The twenty-seventh council, held on the 15th aboard Centurion, decided to construct one pier at Chinwangtao and three jetties at Shanhaikwan. The council also received notification of the departure of the Chinese cruiser Hai Yung, escorted by an RN ship, to be kept under watch in Weihaiwei (Weihai).

During the first half of Phase 4 the Councils of Senior Naval Commanders served as naval operational planning conferences aimed at capturing Shanhaikwan and Chinwangtao. During the second half the commanders discussed the management of these two places, which the coalition fortuitously had occupied without bloodshed. In short, the councils of this phase almost exclusively discussed issues related to the Shanhaikwan-Chinwangtao operation. Thus, the focus of discussion in the councils of Phase 4 did not blur, as it had during Phase 3. The primary reason was that by the early part of July Britain's China Squadron already was interested in occupying Shanhaikwan, and once the squadron had completed its activities in southern China, Seymour—as chairman of the council—could focus the council’s attention on the Shanhaikwan-Chinwangtao operation.

Historically, navies have fulfilled a role of protecting nationals and assets endangered overseas during peacetime. In the case of the Imperial Japanese Navy, the mission of protecting overseas nationals was regulated by the Gunkan-Gaimurei (Orders for Expeditionary Fleets) that the Navy Ministry had issued in 1898; therefore, a military operation conducted for this purpose was not considered “war.” In addition, one result of the Opium and Sino-Japanese Wars was that port calls by warships and the landing of marines in China by the relevant foreign powers, including Japan, were authorized by treaty. Therefore, at the outset of the Boxer Rebellion it was the navies that took the initiative, and the Council of Senior Naval Commanders was expected to serve as the sole coordinating body among the foreign powers throughout the incident.

During Phase 1, when no framework yet existed under which the representatives of the eight foreign powers could discuss issues of mutual interest, Admiral Seymour, the senior naval officer present off Taku, proposed convening a Council of Senior Naval Commanders, and the commanders of the foreign navies present agreed. The council would serve as the decision-making body to set the
coalition’s strategic direction, including clarifying the coalition’s purpose and ensuring that it acted in concert. The commanders further agreed to convene councils as necessary to share the latest information and make any decisions required. Commanders’ intent during this phase was unified.

During Phase 2—the period of the Seymour expedition—the naval coalition supported Seymour’s forces indirectly by capturing the fort at Taku, as well as by breaking through the net encircling Tientsin. The council provided the venue for exercising command and control.

At the council at which the commanders decided to attack the fort at Taku, the U.S. commander opposed the plan and did not sign the minutes, and the next day he carefully left the council that had been convened on completion of the capture of the fort before the meeting’s end so again he could avoid signing the minutes. The reason given was that he still was waiting for direction from his government; however, his behavior can be interpreted as a desire not to constrain the coalition from adopting its overall course of action unanimously. In this way the coalition could adhere to the original objective of supporting the Seymour expedition and maintain unity of effort.

During Phase 3 the army became the primary actor in military operations, and the expectations of the foreign powers began to diverge from each other. As a result, the focus of the councils began to blur and the role of the council became unclear. Nonetheless, even though four different commanders presided over these councils, each council continued to produce useful results, including the request for Japanese reinforcements, the boarding of merchant ships, the managing of railways, the disposal of the Chinese warships in the Yangtze River, and the laying of submarine cables.

Finally, during Phase 4 the councils functioned as tactical-operational conferences. In this mode they conducted the Shanhaikwan-Chinwangtao naval operation and managed its aftermath.

In each phase the senior naval commanders of the foreign powers present acted in concert—although on the basis of their own national interests—even when they could not communicate with their respective ministers in Peking. It was the coordination that the Councils of Senior Naval Commanders accomplished that made this “system” work, enabling them to conduct coalition operations smoothly. In short, the commanders were able to maintain their unity of effort, with the councils providing the means of coordination.

At the outset of the twenty-first century—one hundred years after the Boxer Rebellion—the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) created a coordination mechanism to carry out Operation ENDURING FREEDOM—another coalition operation—by hosting roughly four hundred liaison officers from approximately sixty countries at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. The goal was to
create a coordination mechanism by which the U.S. commander conducting the operation could liaise and coordinate easily with his coalition counterparts, obviating the need for complex diplomatic processes. This unique mechanism provided a venue at which representatives of all participating nations were gathered in one place, with the United States as host. It has served its purpose very successfully, carrying out the liaison and coordination roles efficiently and effectively. In executing the war, the CENTCOM commander is the primary actor and the coalition partners are in position to support him. To conduct the administrative work, such as the business procedures for managing the coalition, senior national representatives (SNRs) set up an SNR Coordinating Group, with a chairman elected by mutual vote.

For operations during the Boxer Rebellion, although Admiral Seymour played an important role, the courses of action the coalition followed were determined at the Councils of Senior Naval Commanders. Each council was presided over by a particular officer, whoever happened to be the senior naval commander present—not necessarily British. The business practices of the council—such as who would propose a council, who would chair the meeting, and what language would be used—were established in an ad hoc fashion, without a standing secretariat. The Council of Senior Naval Commanders functioned as the unique mechanism for coordinating coalition operations. This council, during the first major coalition operation at the beginning of the twentieth century, performed essentially the same function that coalition operations still require in the twenty-first century.

At the ninth council the Japanese representative was Rear Admiral Dewa, not Vice Admiral Togo. Togo had attended the eighth council, over which Hiltebrandt presided even though Togo was senior to him. Dewa later wrote in a report that Togo directed him to attend subsequent councils on his behalf so that Hiltebrandt could preside—in accordance with the “circumstances.” There is no clear explanation for this decision. The editor of Meiji 33 Nen Shinkoku Jihen Kaigun Senshishou merely footnotes the dates of promotion of Togo and Hiltebrandt, adding the comment “suffice it to mention the fact.” One might conjecture that Japan sought to avoid an unnecessary confrontation with Russia, that Japan did not want the other powers to perceive it as eager to take advantage of the Boxer Rebellion to expand its sphere of influence, that the other powers subtly exerted pressure to discourage the newcomer from stepping forward, or simply that Japan lacked confidence to fulfill the role.

For whatever reason, Japan intentionally avoided taking the initiative in this early coalition operation. It was not until 115 years later that a flag officer of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force—the successor to the Imperial Japanese Navy—assumed the duty of Commander, Combined Task Force 151, a
multinational naval force combating piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off Somalia, under the Japanese governmental policy of “proactive contribution to peace.”

NOTES


1. The British Admiralty ordered HMS Hermione and HMS Brisk to proceed to Taku in response to a request from the Foreign Office dated March 24. Naval Intelligence Department, “Diary of the Principal Events in China during the Boxer Insurrection 1900,” no. 583, p. 3. For place-names in China and similar references, this article uses the appellations that were in use in the West at the time of the Boxer Rebellion. On first mention, the accepted modern version is appended in parentheses.

2. The adjectives that historians and analysts have applied to the forces of the eight foreign powers range from allied to coalition, international, and multinational, with no consensus. In the modern sense of the term, coalition is the most appropriate choice.


4. The Royal Navy did not apply any official name to these meetings. The Imperial Japanese Navy officially entitled the body “Rekkoku Kaigun Shikikan Kaigi,” whose English translation is “Council by the Naval Commanders of the Powers.” Office of the Minister of the Navy, Meiji 33 Nen Shinkoku Jihen Kaigun Senshishou [hereafter M33 SJKS K1–5]. For convenience, this article refers to these meetings as “Councils of Senior Naval Commanders,” or “councils” for short.


8. At the stage when Peking had been relieved and Marshal Waldersee had arrived, an integrated command structure was implemented ashore to administer the occupation. However, the foreign navies made sure they were not part of this structure. See, for example, M33 SJKS K1, p. 2.


12. M33 SJKS K1, p. 72.

13. Ibid., pp. 83–86.

14. Seymour reported to the Admiralty that he did not accede to the request from the consul in Tientsin for active measures. Seymour to Admiralty, ADM 125/109, no. 384, June 27, 1900. Ion interprets Kempff’s statement as a warning against taking active measures. Hamish Ion, “The Idea of Naval Imperialism: The China Squadron and the Boxer Uprising,” in British Naval Strategy East of Suez,


15. The fourth through the eleventh councils were presided over by Hiltebrandt aboard Russia, the seventeenth by Courrejolles aboard D’Entrecasteaux, and the eighteenth by Candiani on Fieramosca.


17. Ib., pp. 95–96; Seymour to Admiralty, June 27, 1900.


19. Financial capitals such as Hong Kong and concerns such as the Shanghai Banking Corporation were afraid they would become unable to recover the money they had invested if the Russians occupied the railways under the pretext of securing the transportation link, so they pressured the British government. The government also feared for British national interests if the Russians speedily invaded and occupied Peking. Seymour therefore decided to conduct his expedition to Peking, which otherwise was questionable from a military viewpoint. Ion, “The Idea of Naval Imperialism,” pp. 42–44.


22. M33 SJKS K1, pp. 103–104.


25. Rear Admiral Dewa, Commander, Standing Fleet, to Admiral Yamamoto, Minister of the Navy, written report, June 21 (4 PM), M33 SJKS K1, pp. 509–10.

26. Washington had ordered Kempff not to initiate action against China unless provoked to the point of war. Silbey, The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China, p. 93.


28. Silbey, The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China, pp. 101–102. Saito, relying on Kimihiko Sato, Giwadan no kigen to Sono undo (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 1999), writes that this proclamation actually was aimed at creating unity of national effort by mobilizing nationalism and anti–foreign power sentiment among high-ranking officials, and was not directed at foreign powers, which is why it was not transmitted to those powers. Seiji Saito, Hokushin Jihen to Nihon Gun (Tokyo: Fuyo Shobo Shuppan, 2006), pp. 65–66.

29. M33 SJKS K1, p. 543.

30. The consuls’ meeting on June 21 resolved to request that the senior naval commanders off Taku send four warships to protect the lives and properties of foreign residents. Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nihon Gaiko Monjo, Dai 33 Kan, p. 790, Dai 777 Bunsho.

31. Togo was the senior naval officer present; he had been promoted to vice admiral about six months before Hiltebrandt. Togo’s attendance at councils presided over by Hiltebrandt would have violated the principle of the senior officer present presiding. This sequence of events implies Japanese reluctance to preside over councils. M33 SJKS K2, pp. 171–72.

32. The British government submitted requests for reinforcements to Japan on June 23 and July 3 and 5; at a cabinet meeting on the 6th the Japanese government decided to deploy the 5th Division. Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nihon Gaiko Monjo, Dai 33 Kan, Jo-Kan, p. 579, Dai 605 Bunsho.


34. Ibid., pp. 35–36.

35. Ibid., p. 44. Saito, relying on the correspondence between the Admiralty and the senior officer present, states that the
British government clearly directed that maintaining order in the Shanghai area was a very important role for the forces in theater. Saito, Hokushin Jihen to Nihon Gun, pp. 207–208.


37. According to Seymour, the reasons he returned to his squadron were that there were three general officers at Tientsin, and the matter had become mostly a military (as opposed to naval) one, whereas his duty was afloat. Seymour, My Naval Career and Travels, pp. 360–61.


40. In particular, the U.S. government ordered its commander on-site to propose the necessity of making this an urgent demand to Peking. Ibid., pp. 201–202. Today what was requested would be termed proof of life.


42. Ibid., pp. 856–60.

43. Saito, Hokushin Jihen to Nihon Gun, p. 133.

44. M33 SJKS K3, pp. 465–68.


46. Dewa reported to Minister of the Navy Yamamoto that either a military officer or a civilian official fluent in English and French was needed. Ibid., p. 545.

47. Dewa wrote in his report that at the sixth council the German admiral had put the questions to the Chinese admiral on behalf of the Russian admiral, because the latter did not speak English. Ibid., p. 509.


50. By the early part of July the China Squadron’s interest had become focused on the occupation of Shanhaikwan rather than the relief of Peking, to protect British investments in the railways in northern China from Russian ambitions over the territory. Ion, “The Idea of Naval Imperialism,” pp. 50–51.

51. M33 SJKS K4, p. 397.

52. Adm. Walter Kerr, the First Sea Lord, described this action as Russia showing its true nature. Ion, “The Idea of Naval Imperialism,” p. 51.

53. M33 SJKS K4, pp. 399–400.


55. Ibid., pp. 444–45.

56. Ibid., p. 520.


58. Ibid., pp. 546–50.


62. The author worked as the Japanese SNR at CENTCOM from November 2002 to June 2003, and in due course assumed the post of deputy chairman of the SNR Coordinating Group, with more than fifty SNRs as members. This allowed him to observe how efficiently and effectively the Coalition Coordination Center coordinated among the partners.

63. M33 SJKS K1, p. 551.

64. Togo was promoted to vice admiral on May 14, 1898, Hildebrandt on December 18, 1898. M33 SJKS K2, p. 172.
“GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT STRATEGY IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA”
WHAT ANALYSIS IS REQUIRED TO COMPEL A NEW U.S. STRATEGY IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA?

Steven Stashwick

China’s extensive island-building projects in the Spratly Islands, the aggressive harassment tactics of its maritime law-enforcement and paramilitary fleets, and its rejection of binding arbitration rulings on both those activities threaten the rules-based international order and pose political, economic, and potentially military threats to U.S. interests in the region. In “Getting Serious about Strategy in the South China Sea,” from the Winter 2018 Naval War College Review, Hal Brands and Zack Cooper make an important contribution to the debate on how the United States should respond to China’s challenge in the South China Sea. However, because their argument in favor of finding a new strategy is isolated from the identified consequences that such new strategies would have on other policies, their analysis falls short of providing a compelling argument for the United States to pursue a substantially different South China Sea strategy.

Citing muddled and confused U.S. policies to date, Brands and Cooper systematically evaluate four broad strategies for a U.S. response, as well as the costs and hazards associated with each. Ultimately, they advocate combining aspects of two strategies—containment and offsetting—for implementation. However, in their analysis the authors perpetuate a tendency among South China Sea analysts to restate what makes the region important in isolation, but not to make the case about why it is more important than other aspects of the U.S.-China relationship and adjacent regional priorities. Doing
the latter is necessary to change the incumbent policy hierarchy and defaults. If such a reordering is self-evident to proponents of more-assertive policies, it demonstrably is not to decision-making authorities, and “Getting Serious” is unlikely to change that.

While their analysis admirably defines a universe of strategy options for the United States, Brands and Cooper do not provide a systematic way to evaluate the trade-offs they identify between the four strategies and other U.S. policy priorities. Without such a framework for comparing the value of a strategy’s expected benefits with the expected damage it would impose on other policy priorities, it is difficult to evaluate the merits of those trade-offs. The result is that the authors’ own strategy-selection criteria appear more subjective than systematic. Neither is it clear, in any case, that Brands and Cooper’s recommended hybrid strategy would be substantially different in execution from the strategy that emerged under President Obama and appears to be consolidating under President Trump.

Brands and Cooper present a compelling list of U.S. strategic interests in the South China Sea: the free flow of more than three trillion dollars in trade each year; the natural resources that regional states harvest and extract; the military-access challenge posed to U.S. forces by China’s island bases in the event of an armed conflict; regional stability and what is sometimes called the international rules-based order; and, more broadly, regional states’ ultimate choice to align and cooperate more with the United States than with China.4 The authors implicitly argue that America’s defense of these interests is incoherent and confused owing to a lack of systematic thinking about its strategic options, the priority objectives it should seek, and acceptable levels of risk in pursuit of those objectives. Their subsequent analysis evaluates four strategies for the United States: (1) rollback—to dislodge China coercively from its artificial island bases, (2) containment—to prevent China’s occupation or reclamation of additional geographic features, (3) offset—to match China’s military advances in the region with additional military capacity and capabilities of its own, and (4) accommodation—to acquiesce deliberately to China’s regional dominance.

However, advocating a change in U.S. South China Sea policy (or any policy) requires an affirmative and compelling argument for decision makers to accept additional risks to other policy interests in exchange for the expected benefits of a new course of action. Unfortunately, while Brands and Cooper consider the negative impact of each strategy on other U.S. policy priorities, such as armed-conflict avoidance, fairness in trade relations, and cooperation on climate change and North Korea’s nuclear program, and effects on other regional partners, they do not suggest how to place a value on those hazards. As a result, while a reader gains insight into why the South China Sea matters on its own terms, it is not clear why, or even whether, it matters enough to accept new risks to those other priorities.
in the U.S.-China relationship or to other regional partner relationships. Today, U.S. South China Sea policies already are effectively subordinated to these other interests. By not providing an affirmative argument to reorder those strategic priorities, Brands and Cooper implicitly endorse the current strategic hierarchy, thereby undercutting their assertion that the United States should accept greater risk in the region.

Without such a prioritization framework, Brands and Cooper’s recommended hybrid containment-offset strategy appears compelling less for its departures from existing policies than its similarities. The authors argue that the United States should contain China’s ambitions to seize any additional geographic features in the South China Sea or to embark on renewed island reclamation. However, since containment would not prevent China from reinforcing its existing South China Sea bases (and might even encourage it), the United States also should seek to offset any such military advances with enhancements to its own regional military posture. Yet if this approach is intuitively attractive, it is unclear how new or substantively different it is from what the United States is pursuing already.

Their case for containment rests largely on its demonstrable efficacy in previous isolated containment efforts the United States has implemented to prevent China from occupying or reclaiming additional features in the South China Sea. But if Brands and Cooper’s criticism is that U.S. containment efforts have been only episodic, they elide that China’s recent expansion efforts have been similarly isolated and episodic. Arguing that U.S. containment now should be more comprehensive seems a distinction with little practical difference, as China has not occupied or reclaimed successfully any additional features beyond the original seven Spratly features it reclaimed and built up after 2013.

In arguing for the offset component of their recommendation, Brands and Cooper do not differentiate meaningfully their version from the global Third Offset policy enacted by the Obama Pentagon and the pivot/rebalance to Asia to counter, in no small part, rising Chinese capabilities. While the Trump administration may have abandoned the “offset” name, it does not appear to have abandoned the underlying policies or acquisition goals, and its subsequently published strategies make commitment to responding to great-power competition explicit. Thus, while Brands and Cooper perhaps have helped clarify the terms and vocabulary of debate for a U.S. South China Sea strategy, they seem substantively to be advocating for the policy status quo. If U.S. policy has appeared confused or muddled, this is perhaps attributable less to a lack of analytic rigor than to issues of execution and the complexity of translating written policy into real-world effects.
Granted, the ultimate choice of strategy rests with U.S. political leadership, as do decisions about how to order U.S. policy priorities when they conflict. Brands and Cooper recognize this, which perhaps accounts for choosing not to address how to order the strategic priorities within the scope of their argument. But if the prioritization of one policy area over another is a political choice, it need not be a subjective one. Since the publication of their article, the Trump administration has published its National Security Strategy (NSS), which signals greater focus on China’s strategic competition generally, and singles out the threat of China’s island construction in the South China Sea specifically. However, the NSS does not assign any specific political or military means for addressing the South China Sea, nor does it provide a hierarchy of U.S. interests vis-à-vis China to assist in evaluating policy trade-offs.

As Brands and Cooper assert, the free flow of trade, military access, and the rules-based order are important U.S. interests in the South China Sea. However, those interests are not generally self-evidently more or less important than other aspects of the U.S.-China relationship or other regional interests that would be hazarded by a new South China Sea policy. Since the Trump NSS does not provide an explicit hierarchy of those interests, it privileges the de facto hierarchy that deprioritizes the South China Sea today. At the same time, it does not prescribe such a hierarchy by policy guidance, leaving the door open to those who might advocate for elevating the South China Sea’s importance. However, without demonstrating why preferred strategies will not affect other priorities adversely or why South China Sea objectives are sufficiently more important to hazard them, Brands and Cooper’s analysis is insufficient to compel such a change in South China Sea strategy.

Nonetheless, Brands and Cooper’s preferred hybrid strategy does suggest a research need and a potential policy opportunity. The authors admit that the hybrid strategy would not prevent additional militarization on the features China already occupies. This weakness is mitigated by the offset component, which would in theory match—or, rather, offset—any new Chinese capability in the region with additional U.S. and partner capabilities. But an offset strategy also effectively commits the United States to an arms race with China in a region where the latter enjoys advantages of economic ascendancy; geographic proximity; and the ability to concentrate forces more easily, given its fewer geographically diffuse security demands. The implication is that an offset strategy is more likely than not to exacerbate the security dilemma between the two competitors—a vexing problem the authors identify but leave unexplored. This recommends research into policy options to halt or limit further militarization of China’s occupied features in the Spratly Islands, with a specific objective of preventing either permanent or rotational deployment of the force-projection capabilities those islands by now have.
been built up to host. Such a policy course most likely would entail a bargain or implicit agreement, but—unlike the authors’ accommodation strategy—would require maintaining some form of leverage or inducement to ensure compliance.

Such a course falls under a family of policies, such as confidence-building measures, crisis-management tools, arms control, and international law and institutions, that the United States and other Southeast Asian powers already pursue on an ad hoc basis or as supporting policies of the four strategies Brands and Cooper evaluate. But instead of considering these as policies intended only to mitigate the risks of those broad strategies, their systematic pursuit might constitute a fifth strategy option; call it risk attenuation. Like Brands and Cooper’s hybrid strategy, it is largely a defense of the strategic status quo in the South China Sea. Such a course would not abandon the role of military balancing and suasion, but would privilege the prevention of armed conflict as an affirmative objective.

A risk-attenuation strategy may be criticized as Pollyannaish or naïve by advocates of assertive versions of containment or offset policies, but such a strategy recognizes the constraint that those advocates thus far have failed to surmount, which is to offer decision makers a compelling argument to change the incumbent hierarchy of China policy priorities and accept the additional risk of armed conflict that their preferred strategies incur. To that end, a comprehensive comparison of those relevant strategic trade-offs is a worthy, if daunting, analytic endeavor. However, advocates of stronger South China Sea policies must be prepared that a systematic comparison of those priorities may not yield the compelling justification to change the status quo that they imagine; indeed, it may be just as likely to endorse the current policy “muddle” as being appropriate to the broader U.S. interests in China and East Asia.

NOTES

2. Representative of the analytic observation that other China and regional issues retain the U.S. government’s priority while appealing for greater attention to the South China Sea is Ely Ratner in Andrew Erickson et al., “China’s Menacing Sandcastles in the South China Sea,” War on the Rocks, March 2, 2015, warontheroscks.com/.
4. The authors cite successful containment of Chinese interference at Second Thomas Shoal in 2014 and of an apparent Chinese intent to conduct land reclamation at Scarborough Shoal in 2016 following high-level U.S. warnings and commitments to the status quo.
5. Mischief, Quarteron, Subi, Fiery Cross, Gaven, Johnson, and Hughes Reefs in the Spratly chain, plus the Paracel group to the north, all were occupied by China prior to the wave of land reclamation and construction that began in 2013, meaning none were occupied expressly for that purpose. The only known subsequent attempt at physical
occupation and reclamation was the case of Scarborough Shoal, which the United States successfully deterred, as Brands and Cooper note. See “Occupation and Island Building—China” (China Island Tracker), Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, amti.csis.org/.


7. Offset is no longer explicit Pentagon policy in the Trump administration, and some of the Pentagon offices associated with it apparently have diminished under the Trump administration; see, for example, Paul McLeary, “The Pentagon’s Third Offset May Be Dead, but No One Knows What Comes Next,” FF December 18, 2017, foreignpolicy.com/. However, Trump Secretary of Defense James Mattis announced at the beginning of his tenure that any focus on capabilities and modernization would not come until the Pentagon’s 2019 budget was in place; see Secretary of Defense, memorandum, “Implementation Guidance for Budget Directives in the National Security Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces,” January 31, 2017, available at media.defense.gov/. The modernization priorities that the Pentagon’s 2019 budget proposal expresses, as well as those of combatant commanders and service chiefs, suggest that the technologies and capabilities that the Third Offset championed, such as hypersonic weapons, artificial intelligence, and machine-learning integration, remain relevant. See “FY2019 Budget Proposal,” Department of Defense, www.defense.gov/.

Also see, for example, “Statement of Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr., U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, before the Senate Armed Services Committee on U.S. Pacific Command Posture, 15 March 2018,” United States Senate Committee on Armed Services, www.armed-services.senate.gov/.

Hal M. Friedman continues to mine the archives of the Naval War College (NWC), producing another detailed monograph to add to his already substantial body of work about the Navy and naval policy in the period just after World War II. In particular, this monograph, as Friedman makes clear in his introduction, picks up where Blue versus Orange (2013) and Digesting History (2010) left off. Readers unfamiliar with the monograph format are cautioned that Friedman’s approach does not lend itself to the “casual reading” by which one might address a standard narrative naval, military, or political history; however, those readers interested in understanding deeply, or academics looking for a deep treasure trove about, the wargaming process during this critical period will be rewarded.

The structure of the monograph is chronological. After some initial comments and a fine introductory chapter giving a valuable overview of the NWC curriculum, Friedman over several chapters details the framework and rules for wargaming. He then begins an in-depth discussion of each
exercise and its components, spanning from June 1946 to November 1946 (a total of seventeen chapters). The focus is overwhelmingly on a “new” enemy labeled “Purple,” using the old war-plan color-coding system of the interwar period. Purple stood for the Soviet Union, and the monograph breaks new ground in showing how—at least for the Navy, at the Naval War College—the Cold War already was being conceptualized and operationalized as early as 1946.

The intricate discussions are supported throughout by photographs of various “players” (literally and figuratively), as well as charts and figures that the officers used in their games. For those unfamiliar with the milieu of wargaming at the Naval War College, the work highlights how the Navy’s conception in these problems covered vast geographic distances and what can only be described in today’s doctrine as an operational-level approach—that is, an approach at the campaign level, although tactics clearly played a big role in gaming.

The choice of the Pacific frames the end point of Friedman’s analysis and presumably implies another work forthcoming, because the wargaming focus switched to the Atlantic for the remainder of the 1946–47 academic year (p. xxii). This may seem odd to those of us who participated in the late Cold War, with its very Atlantic focus on the problems of the Greenland–Iceland–U.K. gap and the intricacies of executing the 1984 Maritime Strategy. However, Friedman shows how the shadow of the recent war in the Pacific still dominated the naval officer culture after the war, and that starting things out in that arena—with the implication that the Soviets might attempt a Pearl Harbor repeat—made perfect sense to them, if not to us. Friedman also emphasizes striking parallels with today’s perception of an antiaccess/area-denial (known as A2/AD) threat—despite démarches from our current Chief of Naval Operations—that was inherent in the expected adversary’s anti-Navy tactics: “Soviet naval doctrine, for instance, stressed initial strikes against American carrier battle groups by, first, torpedo-firing, later missile-firing, submarines, followed up by strikes from long-range, land-based naval aviation, and then surface battle groups. Some of the 1946 scenarios at the Naval War College already reflected this pattern of doctrine” (p. xxii).

Friedman emphasizes how recent experience in the Pacific War at places such as Guadalcanal and Okinawa seemed to justify these concerns. He then draws direct parallels with Chinese naval developments and capabilities today.

Hidden within the detailed account are various nuggets, but the reader must remain attentive to catch them. For example, in the overview of the curriculum the reader learns that each student was assigned to write two lengthy (a recommendation of nine thousand words) research papers, on the following topics: “Relations between Russia and the United States, and Their Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy” and “The Influence of the Atomic Bomb on Future Naval
Clearly, the Navy leadership at the College, including NWC President Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, had two main concerns on its collective mind. Later, the reader learns how combined-arms operations—involving aircraft of various types, submarines, destroyers, and even battleships and cruisers—had become so integrated in all phases of naval warfare, particularly in the early search and reconnaissance phases of the movement exercises (pp. 70–72). Finally, during an exercise in which officers role-played Purple, one sees elements of World War II cropping up in an attempted Purple invasion of Attu, as Purple pushes out from bases on the Kamchatka Peninsula (pp. 142–56). This was prescient; the peninsula became a key geographic area and base for the Soviet Far Eastern Fleet during the Cold War.

Throughout the text, a modern War College student will find how open the dialogue and the criticisms often were. The goal was not so much to wargame with a view to justifying a capability or force structure as it was to develop the student-officers’ minds and their decision-making skills. With regard to the larger arguments of the work, thankfully Friedman summarizes those in a concise and hard-hitting final chapter. He emphasizes the transition from an Orange (Japanese) enemy to a new threat. With regard to the games’ practical value, he notes that “major aspects of war gaming reflected the theoretical underpinnings of the activity itself, as well as more-practical applications of interwar and wartime doctrine.” The focus was not doctrinal conformance but “learning opportunities” aimed at “naval operational decision making” (p. 405). He explains the apparently counterintuitive focus, especially on surface warfare, which seemed at odds with the lessons learned about aircraft carriers and aviation becoming the dominant components of naval warfare. To resolve this problem, he brings up the historical record and the experience and actions of a surface officer such as Spruance, or even William F. Halsey Jr., in the Pacific campaigns: from desperate surface combat in the Solomon Islands, to later plans and actions vis-à-vis Japanese surface threats in the Marianas, and especially at Leyte Gulf (pp. 406–407).

Thus, Navy leaders after the war still took surface threats very seriously indeed. This does not mean they discounted submarine and air threats, but they realized that any future war at sea would be a three-dimensional, combined-arms fight. Accordingly, they paid particularly close attention in their scripting to the “manned cruise missiles” they had faced only recently, at Okinawa in the last year of the war; and the threat of submarines—which sank more U.S. aircraft carriers than any single other platform—was never far from their thoughts. They even gave Purple some aircraft carriers, even though the Soviet Union had none of those platforms yet. Friedman also argues that Navy leaders did not buy into the idea that atomic weapons had eliminated the peer maritime threat. They justly can be credited with anticipating that the main maritime threat indeed would be
the Red Banner Fleet of the Soviet Union, and in the games they had it employ just the sort of tactics and platforms (missiles, submarines, surface ships, and aviation) that it eventually would do in actuality (p. 408).

Obviously scholars such as I have much to gain by acquiring, reading, and otherwise examining monographs like this one, but they will provide value and benefit for anyone else wanting a “deep” look into a distant mirror. BZ, Professor Friedman.

NOTES

2. For A2/AD, see, for example, Kyle D. Christensen, “Strategic Developments in the Western Pacific: Anti-access/Area Denial and the Airsea Battle Concept,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 14, no. 3 (2012).
LEHMANN’S MARITIME TRIUMPH

Dov S. Zakheim


John Lehman probably was the most powerful Secretary of the Navy since Theodore Roosevelt effectively filled that position. Lehman entered office determined to reinvigorate the Navy, whose force level had declined precipitously in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, and whose assigned mission in a war with Europe seemed to consist primarily of establishing sea control to protect convoys to Europe. An A-6 navigator, Lehman brought to his position both real operational experience and more than a passing acquaintance with many of the Navy’s most talented strategists and operators. Both stood him in good stead as he reshaped the Navy into a larger, more powerful force that during the height of the Cold War conducted radically innovative exercises that traumatized Soviet military leaders. Oceans Ventured is not the first book by this warrior-analyst-leader. But it is, in many ways, the most revealing, because it both draws on recently unclassified material and provides insights into Lehman’s implementation of his bold, innovative, risky, and highly controversial Maritime Strategy.

Lehman came to lead the Navy at a time when—not for the first time—its force levels were declining owing to opposition from within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. As he recounts, while the Navy had thrived under Franklin Roosevelt, who had spent eight years in the Navy Department, it did far less well under Harry S. Truman and Louis A. Johnson, the latter named Secretary of Defense after Truman’s victory in the 1948 presidential election.

When the Korean War broke out in June 1950, little over a year after Johnson took office, the Navy was still in a position to support American operations in Korea after the North overran all the air bases in the South. The Marine Corp’s audacious landing at Inchon in September 1950 virtually coincided with Truman’s firing of Johnson, who (in addition to having an unpleasant personality) was seen as responsible for America’s initial lack of preparedness at the outset of the war.

Lehman spends a considerable portion of his book providing an overview of the Navy’s vicissitudes during the three decades before he took office. He points out that the Navy’s fortunes improved markedly once Truman recognized his...
strategic blunder and reversed himself on defense spending. In fact, Truman tripled the defense budget, which now included construction of a new aircraft carrier that Johnson had canceled. Lehman then outlines the increasing demands on the Navy as it not only supported land operations on the Korean Peninsula but also played a major role in maritime exercises conducted by the new North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). He goes into considerable detail regarding those exercises, as well as the service’s new strategic role when in 1961 the Kennedy administration adopted the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP), which assigned specific targets to both Navy carrier air wings and the Air Force.

Lehman rightly observes that the SIOP severely constrained the Navy’s operational flexibility, which constituted its fundamental competitive advantage over the Soviets. As he puts it, “The targeting constraints bit into the fleets’ basic needs for movement, cover, and deception,” which later became the essential ingredients of Lehman’s Maritime Strategy. He applauds the Reagan administration’s decision gradually to off-load nuclear weapons from the carriers, which afforded the fleet additional operational flexibility.

Lehman also discusses the role of civilian analysts in fleet operations. He notes that after World War II analysts began to go to sea to act as “unbiased [sic] fact-based analysts and judges of the effectiveness of weapons, electronics, equipment, tactics, and overall operations.” The teams of evaluators eventually evolved into a major component of CNA, which continues to send its analysts to accompany major naval exercises.

Lehman’s review of the Navy’s strategic and operational role prior to his taking office sets the stage for his extended discussion of its exercises under his leadership. Before finally describing its operations during his term, however, he devotes considerable space to the policies of the Carter administration, which he vigorously opposed. Jimmy Carter’s attitude to the Navy—despite his own background as a naval officer—was to some extent a throwback to the Louis Johnson years. Carter highlighted his 1976 presidential campaign with a promise to cancel production of the Navy’s newest nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. It was only after the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that Carter reluctantly accepted the need for another carrier. Nevertheless, the Secretary of Defense’s Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E) not only opposed the construction of additional carriers but proposed reducing the carrier force to eight.

It was not merely the Carter administration’s plan to reduce the fleet that angered Lehman, as well as many of his closest Navy colleagues, such as Captain James A. “Ace” Lyons Jr.; it was more that the Navy had been assigned a defensive role in any conflict with the Soviets, with its primary mission being to escort resupplies to land forces fighting along what was then termed the “inner German
border.” Lehman and his colleagues chafed at what they viewed as a reluctance to unleash the Navy’s power directly against the Soviets, thereby both complicating and undermining any strategic plans Moscow might have developed for a thrust across the heart of Europe. Lehman points out that by 1980, with the Royal Navy’s last conventional aircraft carrier retired and the U.S. Navy’s carrier force committed to the Pacific, Indian Ocean, and Mediterranean theaters, “no more than one lone flattop was expected to be available to try to deter Admiral Gorshkov’s swollen Northern Fleet” (pp. 72–73). For Lehman and close associates such as Lyons, this was an intolerable situation.

Lehman notes that despite the Carter administration’s biases, the stage was being set for a significant change in the Navy’s role—if only a friendly administration would come into office. The Navy’s SEA PLAN 2000, together with the results of wargames conducted at Newport under the leadership of Francis J. “Bing” West, the War College’s dean of research, provided the conceptual backbone of what soon became the Maritime Strategy.

In contrast to the policies of the Carter administration and thanks to Lehman’s influence, Ronald Reagan already had committed himself to a major expansion of the Navy well before he was elected president. Once in office, he fully supported Lehman’s drive to increase Navy force levels from about five hundred to six hundred ships and to increase the number of aircraft carriers from twelve to fifteen. He also sought to increase the submarine force by as many as twenty-five boats, with the goal of achieving a total of one hundred attack submarines.

Secretary Lehman fought long and hard to make a six-hundred-ship, fifteen-carrier Navy a key priority of the Reagan administration, often in the face of opposition from analysts in PA&E. I was a witness to the power of Lehman’s influence at a 1983 National Security Council meeting that President Reagan chaired and that the Secretary of the Navy did not even attend. At one point in the meeting, President Reagan interrupted Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick—who rarely was interrupted by anyone—and asked the assembled group: “I understand that there is opposition to the 600 ship, 15 carrier Navy. Well, I support it. Does anyone disagree?” No one dared to speak up. Lehman got the president to settle the matter without even being present in the room.

Lehman pushed for an accelerated shipbuilding program that even included funding for two aircraft carriers in a single budget year. Moreover, working alongside Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, he pressed for the acquisition of fourth-generation F-18 aircraft as well as the most-advanced missile and electronic systems, which would constitute a vastly more capable deterrent against any aggressive moves by the Soviets, whether at sea or on land.

Lehman’s ultimate objective was not modernization; rather, it was to develop and then implement an ambitious and radically different strategy that would be
buttressed by innovative operations and aggressive tactics for which the Soviets were completely unprepared. What became known as the Maritime Strategy called for operations just outside the Soviet Union’s territorial waters, initially in the far North Atlantic and then in the Pacific.

Precisely because he was an analyst himself, Lehman, along with the Navy military leadership, exploited the Navy’s network of intellectual resources to refine the Maritime Strategy and its underlying operations and tactics, so that each succeeding at-sea exercise conducted was more sophisticated than its predecessor. The Navy drew on the findings and evaluations of top operations analysts from CNA, who continued to accompany battle units as they exercised at sea. The Navy also incorporated the conclusions of key studies completed by students at the War College’s Strategic Studies Group and at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey. Finally, it examined elements of the Maritime Strategy at the Naval War College’s annual Global wargame.

Turning to innovative leaders such as the caustic but tactically brilliant Vice Admiral Ace Lyons, whom he chose to command the Second Fleet, and rising stars such as Rear Admirals Henry “Hank” Mustin and Jerry O. Tuttle, Captain Fox Fallon, and Commander Philip A. Dur, Lehman authorized exercises that masked the location of large multicarrier task forces until they were within shooting range of Leningrad and beyond. On virtually every occasion, Lyons’s stealthy techniques caught the Soviets flat-footed.

The first such exercise, dubbed OCEAN VENTURE, from which Lehman’s book draws its title, was a key part of a series of NATO exercises that began in July 1981. Lyons led his Navy and NATO colleagues in planning and developing OCEAN VENTURE ’81 into a massive exercise involving fifteen nations, over a thousand aircraft, 250 ships, two aircraft carriers, and the British jump jet carrier Invincible. As Lehman notes, “It was the largest such exercise in anyone’s memory” (p. 77).

The exercise practiced offensive and sea-control operations well north of the Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom gap. It also posed major challenges for the operators; freezing temperatures and high winds and sea states in the North Atlantic proved to be extremely hazardous. Nevertheless, the exercise continued, with Lyons masking his entire striking fleet through electronic means, exploitation of the foul weather, and the use of decoys, until it was within striking distance of Murmansk.

The large-scale exercises in the Atlantic, which included allied forces, were paralleled by similar exercises in the Pacific, which employed the same techniques to threaten the Soviet Pacific bases. Moscow’s military leaders soon realized that any attempt by their forces to cross the inner German border could well result in the destruction of key Soviet facilities, notably those that housed their
second-strike nuclear deterrent—namely, the strategic ballistic-missile submarine forces of the Northern and Pacific Fleets.

The Maritime Strategy often was dismissed, not only by the PA&E analysts but by influential officials such as Robert W. Komer, who devoted an entire volume to challenging both its utility and its rationale. At the time, there was no real way to rebut these critiques, as any attempt to do so would result in the leaking of highly classified information. It thus took three decades before the critical importance of Lehman’s innovations finally could see the light of day. It is no exaggeration to assert, as Lehman does, that the Navy played a vital role in bringing the Cold War to a successful conclusion in America’s favor.

Lehman’s book does more than provide a valuable record of the Navy’s prominent role in winning the Cold War for the West. In his relatively brief epilogue, Lehman makes a powerful argument for turning once again to maritime forces to provide America with a key advantage over near-peer potential adversaries. Russia’s increasing assertiveness in Europe, whether through the conduct of hybrid warfare or through cyber aggression, has frightened not only longtime NATO allies such as Norway and Denmark, plus many of Moscow’s former constituent republics—notably the Baltic States and Poland in the north and Romania and Bulgaria in the south—but nonaligned Sweden and Finland as well. At the same time, China’s bald efforts to militarize the South China Sea threaten to upset long-standing power balances in Southeast Asia.

The Navy has declined to its lowest force levels since the days before World War II. Although the quality of its individual warships is unmatched, there are limits to what a fleet of fewer than 285 ships can do when faced with demands that range from the western Pacific to the Indian Ocean and the Arabian, Mediterranean, Black, Baltic, and North Seas. Add to these challenges the emerging importance of the Arctic owing to climate changes that have melted what previously were frozen barriers to transit routes, and it is obvious that—once again, as in Lehman’s day—there is an urgent need for a new naval force buildup. The current defense program calls for funding a 355-ship fleet, including a dozen aircraft carriers. Whether that goal can be realized is an open question, given the ongoing expense of both naval air modernization—the ultimate cost of the F-35 has yet to be determined—and the new fleet of strategic ballistic-missile submarines.

Lehman asserts that “the history of deterrence is a lesson that schoolboys know: credible threats are respected, while weakness invites unwelcome outcomes. America’s naval decline since the end of the Cold War has invited the challenges we face today.” He ominously notes, with more than a bit of hyperbole, that “the allied naval disarmament treaties of the 1920s and ’30s emboldened Germany, Japan, and their allies and became a contributing cause of World War II. America’s postwar naval disarmament . . . facilitated the Korean War. The
post-Vietnam U.S. naval disarmament had the same result, encouraging Soviet aggression and expansion globally. Like a law of nature, this fact holds true irrespective of time and place: a decline in sea power invites disaster” (p. 276).

Lehman argues that, at least with respect to naval forces, America can achieve a rapid buildup that would mirror the one over which he presided during the 1980s. Moreover, “the lesson of this book,” he concludes, “is that we must restore the capability of our naval forces not because we might have to go to war with North Korea, Russia, Iran, or some other adversary, but because we must prevent having to go to war at all” (p. 284).

The Trump administration is committed to a major budgetary increase for defense, including for maritime forces—but only for the next two years. Moreover, the projected increases will result at best in a Navy of 355 ships, far short of the force levels required to maintain American naval power sufficient not merely to confront the three nations Lehman lists but also to maintain a credible presence elsewhere on the world’s oceans. If Lehman’s advice is to be taken seriously, defense budgets must be captive no longer to any sort of sequester, while the president and his administration must recognize the contribution of America’s long-standing allies, even as he also makes it clear that Russia, China, and any other country with aggressive intent at last will be met by more than mere rhetorical opposition. Anything less will result in outcomes that America may well regret bitterly for years to come.
BOOK REVIEWS

THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY


Since August 1945, historians have debated President Harry S. Truman’s controversial decision to use the atom bomb—a catastrophic new military technology—to force Japan’s Emperor Hirohito to surrender and avoid a costly Allied invasion of the Japan home islands. In his well-researched Hell to Pay (first published in 2009, but newly updated and expanded in October 2017), D. M. Giangreco weighs in on the traditional side of the debate, arguing that Truman based his decision on reasonable casualty estimations and sound military planning.

Two schools of thought have framed the debate. Traditionalists maintain that Truman’s claims were justified, while revisionists argue that use of atomic force was unnecessary because Japan’s sea, land, and air forces were largely destroyed and Soviet entry into the war against Japan tipped the scales toward inevitable defeat. Giangreco, however, disagrees with revisionist historians such as Bernard Bernstein who contend that Truman exaggerated casualty projections. Giangreco provides readers with a rich stream of lesser-known dates, facts, and figures, including with regard to troop movements, Selective Service needs, and medical supplies. Both the United States and Japan scrambled to organize land, sea, and air resources, drawing inexorably toward a hellish, last-ditch fight to the finish.

Hell to Pay’s seventeen chapters flow chronologically from 1944 through the end of the war in 1945, then continue with events up to 1947. In this revised edition, Giangreco adds two new chapters (chapter 11, “To Break Japan’s Spine,” and chapter 17, “The Hokkaido Myth”) and an appendix that provide facts pertinent to the Soviet entry into the war. In addition to these new chapters, several others stand out as especially noteworthy.

In chapter 2, “Spinning the Casualty Numbers,” Giangreco gives details on how U.S. military leaders calculated total casualty numbers and how, when, and why they chose to publish them. The U.S. government wanted public support for Selective Service, but also did not want to reveal its deployment plans to the enemy. Although many
strategists argued at the time that the number of replacements needed that U.S. leaders published was inflated, the author argues that strategists actually intentionally underinflated the numbers, using mostly conservative estimates. U.S. troops, for example, were familiar with repeated announcements that at least five hundred thousand replacements were needed to continue the war in Japan, whereas on March 9, 1945, Yank magazine published figures for U.S. losses from the beginning of World War II through February 7, 1945, of “782,180, including 693,342 for the Army alone” (p. 20). In addition to exploring the various methods of estimation, Giangreco gives evidence that Truman based his decision to avoid invasion on conservative, not inflated, casualty estimates.

In his fifth chapter, “Not the Recipe for Victory,” Giangreco documents U.S. and Japanese reallocations of troops among various areas of operation. Despite Allied attempts to deceive the enemy with misleading communications campaigns, Japanese military leaders correctly anticipated the time and location for the planned initial Allied invasion of Japan’s home islands: October 1945 in Kyushu, southern Japan. Accordingly, the Japanese transferred thirteen divisions to Kyushu before the end of the war in August, whereas General Douglas MacArthur and U.S. planners expected only six to ten Japanese divisions. MacArthur anticipated outnumbering Japanese troops by a comfortable margin, but the thirteen divisions transferred made the probable ratio closer to 1 : 1. Giangreco emphasizes that, since “planned superiority” was no longer likely, Truman’s assertion that five hundred thousand lives would be lost probably was too conservative.

One of the most significant chapters in the book is chapter 6, “The Decision,” referring to Truman’s decision to drop the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Giangreco traces factors from the summer of 1944 to August 1945 that affected the decision, including the casualty surge from the earlier ratio of more than 4.5 Japanese casualties to every U.S. casualty to a more even ratio of 2 : 1 or even 1.2 : 1 in recent campaigns, such as Iwo Jima. This surge was one of Truman’s considerations when he requested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) provide a projection of casualties that would result from an invasion of Kyushu.

The aforementioned new chapters 11 and 17 contribute facts and research regarding Soviet entry and participation. Giangreco provides evidence that MacArthur and other military advisers supported Soviet entry into the war against Japan soon after Pearl Harbor. Accordingly, the author reasons that Truman did not drop the bombs to minimize Soviet participation; contrary to such a narrative, U.S.-Soviet cooperation in defeating Japan was an extension of Lend-Lease arrangements and planning. Although Giangreco argues that it always had been the intent of the JCS to incorporate the Soviets into U.S. war-termination plans in the Pacific, his research aligns in at least one instance with revisionists who argue that Truman wanted to minimize Soviet participation as much as possible: while MacArthur always argued for Soviet entry as the best plan, other JCS advisers, such as Admiral Ernest J. King, told Truman that the United States could defeat Japan without Stalin’s help.

Contemplation of the locations, participants, and numbers involved in this story can be daunting, but a dedicated
reader gains a nuanced mental picture of the moving parts on both sides of the conflict. Scholars and researchers who desire in-depth information will benefit from Giangreco’s research, and the appendices and bibliography include numerous primary sources that have received little or no attention in past traditionalist-versus-revisionist debates. This work is a must-read for those interested in U.S. and Japanese military and political historiography and strategy in the final year of World War II and the critical factors contributing to war termination in the Pacific.

GINA GRANADOS PALMER

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Judging Scott Mobley’s Progressives in Navy Blue by its cover, it might seem a bit esoteric. The parallels with the modern U.S. Navy, however, quickly become apparent in this well-written and -researched history of the transition of our Navy from sail to steam and from constabulary force to national fleet. This is Mobley’s first book, but in a thirty-year career as a nuclear-trained surface warfare officer, including command of two ships, he lived the same “warrior-engineer” dichotomy that was central to the late-nineteenth-century American naval culture around which this book revolves. The U.S. Navy between the Civil and Spanish-American Wars engenders limited historical discourse owing to the lack of naval combat, but Mobley asserts that the progressive currents that the naval officer corps debated during this period marked a pivotal shift in ideas on naval professionalism and strategic thinking.

The Gilded Age Navy, in relation to its time, was not an anachronistic organization wedded to outdated ideas, as it often is portrayed. Indeed, in many ways, the Navy of the 1870s and 1880s preceded the national Progressive movement. Even as the Navy addressed the massive challenges involved in incorporating emerging technology into an organization steeped in tradition, the service simultaneously had to deal with the emergence of national strategic thought. The idea that America should maintain a navy for war during peacetime ran counter to a century of tradition. Mobley asserts that this change in strategic focus drove the cultural shift in the Navy officer corps. In this he challenges previous scholars “who attribute the Navy’s revival to a mix of commercial expansionism, hegemonic aspirations, and imperial ambition” (p. 12). Progressives in Navy Blue adds to the scholarship by considering the “influence of strategic ideas, beliefs, values, and practices upon the Navy’s professional culture and identity” (p. 14).

With the marked exception of the Civil War, within the service’s first century “decades of overseas service, policing, and promoting America’s maritime empire fundamentally shaped the U.S. Navy as a constabulary force led by mariner-warriors” (p. 37). The post-Civil War American navy emphasized single-ship operations, with limited to no opportunity for multiship training. Naval officers and civilian leaders saw no need to dedicate resources to homeland defense, believing that the frigate-and-coastal-fort system in place...
since the Navy’s inception still sufficed. But by 1880 the focus had shifted from imperial constabulary duties to national defense as “the essential foundation of naval policy” (p. 143). While most historians tie the renaissance of the U.S. Navy to the nation’s imperialist expansion around the turn of the twentieth century, Mobley asserts that the birth of the modern American navy predated this imperialist surge—perhaps even facilitating it. Navy progressives were divided in their approach to advancing the Navy. One branch focused on harnessing technology, while the other advocated the study of strategy. As an ardent voice for technology, Lieutenant Bradley A. Fiske advocated for developing ships with the latest technology, to stand up to the more advanced European navies. At the opposite end of the progressive movement, Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce founded the Naval War College in 1884 to ensure that the officer corps studied not only emerging technology but also the art and science of war. These two branches of progressivism “clashed between 1887 and 1897 in a series of bureaucratic and cultural struggles, with the Naval War College their primary battleground” (p. 207). Despite their differences, however, “the two cultures complemented each other in many ways. . . . Indeed, many officers readily embraced both perspectives” (p. 207).

Using Harold L. Wilensky’s professionalization model, Mobley tracks how the U.S. naval officer corps established its professional credentials. The final step involved the establishment of the U.S. Naval Institute and the Naval War College as forums for debating ideas. Prior to the 1873 founding of the Naval Institute, no forum existed for professional discussion within the naval service. The institute was open to all officers; the founders hoped that the inclusion of many voices would advance the profession as a whole. Mobley claims that—contrary to historiography regarding this era holding that naval education existed only at the intellectual fringes—“the early Naval War College mirrored the progressive trends shaping new graduate schools and social science disciplines in the United States during the Gilded Age” (pp. 182–83).

Many of the lessons Mobley identifies can inform today’s warrior-engineer debate. As the information age matures and the robotics age emerges, America’s navy faces new technological and strategic challenges. Those who trust technology to dominate future warfare and those who argue for the continued need to study the science of war continue to clash, just as they did over a century ago. Lieutenant William Bainbridge-Hoff’s observation rings as validly today as when he uttered it in 1886: “[W]ell-constructed strategy must consider technology, just as technology should be informed by strategy” (p. 207). For this reason, those desiring to advance the naval profession should read this book.

JAMES P. MCGRATH III


In Seablindness, Seth Cropsey delivers a comprehensive examination of sea power and makes a compelling argument for the modernization and recapitalization of the U.S. Navy. To do so he analyzes...
the future security environment, the projected use and requirements of the Navy, and the current state of readiness within the sea services. *Seablindness* serves as a cautionary reminder to U.S. leadership and the American people regarding the mandate of sea power for maritime states. Cropsey provides short historical examples of the actions and decisions that led to the diminution of the power and influence of earlier powerful maritime states and the international and domestic consequences. These analogies provoke reflection on the current state of U.S. sea power.

Cropsey defines *seablindness* as a mindset under which great maritime powers “forget, neglect,” or are “distracted” from the oceanic foundation of their commerce and security. It manifests its effects in national security policy and defense resource-allocation decisions that incrementally weaken the ability of the state to employ sea power, including its navy, in the promotion, protection, and defense of state interests. These policy and budget actions rarely are intended to diminish the capability or effectiveness of maritime forces; rather, the degradation is more an unintended consequence of seemingly unrelated policy actions or political objectives.

The author develops the urgency to make national security decisions and take action to remedy seablindness through a methodical and logical analysis of current and future maritime strategies, missions, operating concepts, and forces. This book is more than an argument for a larger naval force structure; it represents as well an opportunity for the reader to reflect on sea power and the employment of a navy, so as to form an answer to the question: “What does the nation need and want its navy to do?”

The author presents five core strategic missions of the U.S. Navy. The service's first priority is to use the nuclear triad to deter nuclear war. Second, the Navy must be able to conduct sustained and complex maritime warfare from the sea. The third priority is to deter and respond immediately to regional conflicts and challenges. Fourth, the Navy needs to conduct global surveillance through forward deployment, and to respond to crises. Lastly, the Navy provides extended coastal defense that keeps potential adversaries at greater distances from the United States. This list of core missions reflects the orthodoxy of American sea power, captures the enduring elements of the missions of the U.S. Navy, and is a clear expression of the purpose of the service.

The book presents a comprehensive assessment of the conditions that have affected matériel and personnel readiness within the naval force structure over the last two decades. Cropsey’s examination of sea power evaluates the complex interrelationships among force structure, strategy, operational employment, and readiness. He explains in detail the cascading effects on the Navy and Marine Corps, and on the men and women who serve therein, from reductions in force structure, prolonged deployments, deferred or truncated maintenance periods, and expedited predeployment training.

Using descriptive regional security scenarios, Cropsey presents plausible future situations and describes how and why potential adversaries such as China, Russia, and Iran would take actions in their regions in pursuit of their own national interests, thereby threatening U.S. partner states, regional stability, and U.S. national interests.
The author uses these scenarios to demonstrate how a U.S. maritime response to regional aggression could be constrained or limited by diminished Navy and Marine Corps force structures and postures. Thus, these scenarios examine the potential vulnerabilities that have resulted from seablindness. Cropsey recommends that the Trump administration conduct a comprehensive assessment of American sea power to determine the “goals, size, and character” of the U.S. Navy. In two chapters entitled “Rebuilding American Seapower” and “Naval Rearmament,” Cropsey’s analysis frames the naval force structure alternatives facing the Trump administration, Congress, and naval force planners. The author evaluates President Trump’s 2016 350-ship campaign goal by comparing it with the Navy’s 2017 thirty-year shipbuilding plan of 308 ships and the 2015 Congressional Budget Office assessment of Navy shipbuilding. Cropsey makes recommendations for changes in force posture, naval operating concepts, and force structure programming. He determines that the United States has the industrial capability and resources to build a 350-ship Navy—if the Trump administration effectively advocates for sea power, and if Congress establishes sea power as a priority.

Seablindness delivers a candid and uniquely comprehensive examination of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps by first assessing the past and current uses of American sea power and analyzing force-structure requirements, then considering the future security environment, naval missions in general, and particular employment options for the U.S. Navy.

SEAN SULLIVAN


Although the author describes his work as a “reconsideration” of the April 1942 clash between the British Eastern Fleet and the Imperial Japanese Navy’s Kido Butai (1st Mobile Force), this is probably something of a stretch. Britts’s main conclusion—that the neglect of naval aviation during the interwar years resulted in a Royal Navy that was uncompetitive when matched against the combat-seasoned and well-drilled multicarrier task force fielded by Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo—is hardly earth-shattering. Nor indeed are his explanations for this lapse: the obsolescence of both platforms and thinking in the Royal Navy; and the almost criminal squandering of a comprehensive early lead in naval aviation, a degradation brought about by parochial infighting within Whitehall, set against the chronic underfunding of the navy in particular. To my mind, to be considered a true reconsideration a work would have to offer significant new perspectives, new evidence, or a novel interpretation of an established set of events. Unfortunately, and notwithstanding a few fanciful counterfactuals, Britts does none of these things.

For a start, while the author in his second and third chapters conducts a thorough scrutiny of the policy-making rationale employed and the pitfalls of that approach, he does not back it up with a detailed analysis of the detrimental impact the “dual control” system had on comprehensive development of naval aviation as a warfare discipline.
The excessive compartmentalization and “stovepiping” always were destined to create difficulties, but in an era when the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force were fighting one another for their very existences, the necessary motivation to come together was lacking altogether. As a result, the research and development necessary to produce aircraft optimized for warfare at sea never achieved sufficient priority within a Royal Air Force primarily dedicated to offensive bombardment over land. Even more damaging, the low status of naval pilots within the service (a point that Britts does mention) meant that the development of the aerial tactics necessary to use the air weapon efficiently as an element of sea warfare suffered accordingly. Similarly, the book almost totally overlooks the reasons why the Japanese outclassed everyone (the U.S. Navy included) when it came to the operation of multiship carrier groups in 1941, even though there has been some excellent scholarship on this subject during the last couple of decades, most notably from Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully in their book _Shattered Sword_ (Potomac Books, 2005). After all, it was not a matter merely of the technical competence of the Japanese A6M Zekes and B5N Kates, as impressive as these aircraft were. The impact of the planes was magnified by the techniques the Japanese had developed for operating multiple air wings at sea and massing their effects. Unlike other navies—whose carriers still operated as individuals, launching small groups of aircraft of all disciplines in discrete packages—the Japanese alone had mastered the art of role-specializing decks. Carriers within the group coordinated their launches, such that half contributed dive-bombers to complement the torpedo/level bombers of the other half, thus producing a large, coordinated force of aircraft in each wave, while greatly simplifying the second-strike options (with each carrier’s contribution simply being reversed). Chapter 5 therefore could have been enhanced greatly by references to more-contemporary scholarship in this area.

So, with no new exploration of the operational imbalance between the two sides, the only real “reconsideration” on offer is the actual significance (to Great Britain and its dominions) of Admiral James Somerville’s decision on April 9, 1942, to preserve his fleet for another day. While certainly humiliating, this again was hardly the epoch-making event that is suggested. The Royal Navy, in company with many others, both before and after, arguably simply was adjusting to the changing realities of combat experience, as compared with prewar expectations. It had happened earlier, during World War I and off Norway in 1940, and it was going to happen to the U.S. Navy off Guadalcanal a few months later. As for the impact that this had on the perceived vulnerabilities of Australia and India, this is probably something that is understated in the other Western accounts and Britts, as an Australian, is in the right place to redress this balance. Whether the Japanese could have followed through in 1942 is almost immaterial; the perceptions were probably there.

Finally, although obviously not as importantly, the book has its fair share of questionable statements, exaggerations, and even spelling errors, none of which help its credibility. Perhaps most notable are the inaccuracies, which include the alleged “unabated”
construction of Japanese cruisers throughout the 1930s (p. 107), when in fact cruiser construction stopped after the completion of the Takao class in 1932 and did not resume until 1937. The “decks filled with aircraft” at Midway (p. 156) is an assertion Parshall proved false long ago, while the idea of the “F6F and TBF being near twins” (p. 163) makes no sense, given their completely different roles and specifications. The exaggerations—such as that Somerville’s fleet would “not have been out of place at Tsushima” (p. 16), and the reference to “octogenarian” aircraft (p. 47), when aviation itself was barely thirty-five years old—are just unnecessary.

To summarize, this book probably will disappoint serious historians and researchers, but nevertheless it does gather together a host of useful thoughts about the problems of block obsolescence and the integration of new capabilities within a fleet in peacetime. Given that these points may stimulate future work or serve to educate the amateur enthusiast, all is not lost. But the book could have been so much more.

ANGUS ROSS


The use of proxies as a part of the competition and conflict between states is an ancient and time-tested method. Yet from the mercenaries of the pharaoh’s army in ancient Egypt to private military and security companies accompanying militaries in modern conflict, each relationship between a state and its proxies is unique and is driven by a multitude of factors. In this timely and well-researched book, Tim Maurer examines how modern states use cyber proxies to pursue their geopolitical aims.

The introduction of Maurer’s book is a deep dive into the evolution of the use of cyber proxies by states. Unlike many authors of popular books examining the use of cyber operations, Maurer feels no need to sensationalize the cyber realm. Instead, we get a realistic and accurate assessment of the capabilities of cyber proxies. If there is a weakness to his introduction, it is that he focuses on traditional “hacking,” or denial-of-service cyber operations. Although this approach is quite understandable and is representative of most scholarly work on cyber, recent trends suggest a greater use of algorithmic exploitation to conduct information-operation campaigns. These campaigns are unique in that they do not appear to break any laws, domestic or international.

Following the introduction, Maurer proceeds to provide a logical, analytical framework for categorizing cyber proxies and how states use them. This is no small task, given the variety of roles and relationships these groups have vis-à-vis their respective state organizations. Maurer organizes the various modes of proxy use into three main categories: delegation, orchestration, and sanctioning. Delegation is the proxy relationship in which the state exerts the greatest degree of control over its proxy. An example is the relationship between the U.S. Defense Department and a contractor providing a cyber capability. In orchestration, the state may provide limited logistical support or general guidance to the proxy, but stops short of issuing specific instructions. This relationship
often exists when there is a common ideology between state and proxy. *Sanctioning* is a relationship whereby the proxy is permitted to engage in malicious activities, so long as the ends align with the goals of the state. An example is Russian criminal organizations that are permitted to operate as long as they target only non-Russians with their criminal activities and occasionally turn their skills to patriotic purposes.

The next two sections are the strength of Maurer’s book. He closely examines all three proxy relationships, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each type and using historical examples to illustrate his conclusions. Maurer clearly establishes historically the benefit of proxies to states and explains why states are likely to use cyber proxies as a tool for the foreseeable future. Maurer also does identify the standards for international legal responsibility that states bear for their proxies; however, after initially identifying these standards, he discusses them only minimally throughout his later case studies.

National security practitioners likely will gain the most insight from these case studies, in which Maurer applies his analytical framework to the use of proxies by the United States, Iran, Russia, and China. Drawing on the most recent events to highlight the use of cyber proxies by these states, he weaves together the economic, social, and political realities of each state and analyzes how these factors affect its use of proxies. Although it is tempting to view proxy relationships as being determined solely by the governmental actors, Maurer reveals how proxies often are a natural outgrowth of their societies. For example, he discusses how a combination of excellent technical training and poor job prospects has led to the increased use of sanctioning as a proxy relationship in countries of the former Soviet Union.

In conclusion, *Cyber Mercenaries* is both enjoyable to read and an important contribution to scholarship on the study of cyber conflicts. It dispels many of the myths and misunderstandings surrounding the use of proxies and provides an analytical framework that can be applied easily when following news reporting on international conflicts in cyberspace. It should be on the bookshelf of every scholar and practitioner in this vital field of national security studies.

JEFFREY BILLER


As the Second World War recedes ever further into the past, more and more works emerge that focus on historical back pastures or operations either overlooked or examined only lightly until now. *Shadow over the Atlantic* is an example of such works, but it is also a welcome contribution to understanding the vital Axis anticonvoy campaign and the role of the Luftwaffe in waging war at sea. Robert Forsyth is an experienced author, with a specialty in World War II German aircraft. He tells the story of the attempts by the German navy and air force to coordinate operations so as to maneuver Admiral Karl Dönitz’s U-boats into position to savage Allied convoys. In doing so, Forsyth focuses nearly exclusively on the operations of Long-Range Reconnaissance Group 5, Atlantic (designated FAGr-5).
Arguably, the most well-known German aircraft of the convoy war was the Focke-Wulf 200 Condor. FAGr-5 instead flew the newer, lesser-known, four-engine, twin-tailed Junkers (Ju) 290. Forsyth, with the passion of the true enthusiast, goes into great detail concerning the development and construction of the aircraft. No significant aspect of the plane is overlooked, from cockpit controls to armaments to the background color of the FAGr-5 emblem. Aircraft enthusiasts will find this detailed information of great interest, but lay readers may find just a bit too much emphasis on—at times literally—the nuts and bolts of the Ju-290.

By 1943, the tide in the U-boat war was turning against Admiral Dönitz, Germany’s supreme submarine admiral. His best commanders were dying, the ratio of U-boat losses to Allied tonnage sunk was rising, and the amount of ocean free from Allied air surveillance was decreasing rapidly. German air reconnaissance was deemed essential if there was to be any realistic hope of bringing wolf packs into action against the convoys, and thereby truly hurting the Allied war effort. Had the German navy possessed its own air arm, it might have been easier to provide this; instead, the Luftwaffe never was willing to give maritime reconnaissance anything like the support it needed.

Forsyth details how FAGr-5 went about its duties. He describes how search patterns were established and flown. The nascent use of airdropped buoys to try to track convoys and serve as navigational beacons is examined, as are efforts to use other emerging technologies.

For the pilots and aircrews of FAGr-5, Atlantic reconnaissance missions were long, demanding, and increasingly dangerous as Allied air coverage became more proficient and pervasive. Missions routinely exceeded twelve hours in duration. Weather conditions frequently were miserable, which also increased the risk of navigational error and mishap. Allied escort carriers and long-range, land-based fighter-bomber patrols increased in number, downing several of the group’s Ju-290s and damaging others.

Forsyth tracks the losses and replacement of the group’s aircraft with great care, to a level at which it is possible to track individual airframes over the period. His accounts of air-to-air combat are analytical and detailed. Allied reports are included to good effect.

Over the period discussed, attempts to direct U-boats into positions to attack convoys became less and less effective. Forsyth explains that this was owing in large part to the Allied ability to intercept and decode German radio traffic. This effort was so effective that the British often knew when Ju-290s were actually on patrol and when the next aircraft would be airborne.

After the invasion of Normandy in June 1944, things became increasingly difficult for FAGr-5. Resistance elements began affecting the squadrons’ operations. At times, the group formed ground-combat units and cleared local villages of resistance fighters, taking losses in the process. Getting supplies and needed parts from Germany took ever longer. Morale was low, but, as the records Forsyth accessed make clear, no one admitted such “defeatist” sentiments. During the same month as the Allied invasion, one of the group’s more unusual missions was the rescue of German meteorologists from Greenland.

Inevitably, FAGr-5 eventually flew its last missions over the Atlantic.
aircraft then departed for friendly fields in Germany—leaving the ground element to get out of France on its own. The account of the latter’s trek across France—in an eclectic convoy of vehicles with cobbled-together armaments and increasingly diverse groups of personnel who joined during the retreat—makes for fascinating reading. The trip was not without danger, and several firefights erupted between group personnel and French resistance units.

Yet for all the excellent detail that *Shadow over the Atlantic* provides concerning FAGr-5, the human element is lacking. The planes and the operations are the center of attention; the men of the group are identified only rarely. There is the occasional mention of encouraging sports to boost morale or how the loss of a crew was unfortunate, but in the end the vast majority of the men of FAGr-5 are simply ciphers.

**RICHARD J. NORTON**


Writer, lecturer, retired general officer, and PhD, James Dubik has made a significant contribution to military scholarship and the practice of war fighting with this book. He has introduced a major revision in just war theory that undoubtedly will transform the viewpoint of supporters and critics on this philosophical tradition in applied ethics. Dubik understands that his proposed revision will not answer all objections and naturally will be subject to claims of deficiencies and other criticisms, but he rightly argues that his revised defense of the just war tradition advances a new perspective—one that undeniably will alter the way in which current and future generations interpret the justification of war.

Demonstrating a mastery of detail and a clarity of understanding, Dubik persuasively employs the methodology of historiography to support and defend his war-waging principles, basing them on examples from the Civil War, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This methodological technique, reminiscent of Michael Walzer’s *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (Basic Books, 1977), is both convincing and engaging for those who study history and the art of war. By contrast with those who are academics and stress concepts primarily and praxis secondarily, as well as with those who are warfighters and stress praxis primarily and concepts secondarily, Dubik is a former Army general who experienced the challenges of warfare, yet is now a professor at Georgetown University. He balances both theory and practice in *Just War Reconsidered*, his magnum opus.

Although Dubik respects and acknowledges the profound contribution to just war theory made by Walzer—as part of a long line of philosophers and theologians, including Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Hugo Grotius, to name only a few—he criticizes the customary separation of *jus ad bellum* (justice in going to war) and *jus in bello* (justice in waging war). Walzer presents the usual understanding: that senior civil leaders debate the criteria that justify going to war, represented by *jus ad bellum*, and then, once a national decision
has been reached, it is the primary responsibility of senior military leaders to fight the war in accordance with *jus in bello* norms. Convincingly, through historical references and extrapolations, Dubik demonstrates that successful wars have been won not only on the basis of tactical excellence but also on the strategic merit that both civil and military leaders have provided. Dubik insists that just war proponents have focused exclusively on the tactical dimension of *jus in bello*, thereby omitting the strategic facet of waging war, including the necessary public legitimation, determination of end-state goals, provision of logistical support, and preparation for reconstruction.

The five principles laid out—continuous dialogue, final decision authority, managerial competence, war legitimacy, and resignation—presuppose the classic benchmarks of proportionality and discrimination in *jus in bello*, but these additional five strategic components fill in the gap of what is tragically lacking in the standard just war formulation. When senior civil and military leaders fail to optimize strategic coordination of war via a dynamic partnership involving intense dialogue, the costs of war escalate in both economic and human-casualty terms, rendering those leaders who squandered the war efforts morally culpable. Unforgettably, General Dempsey in his foreword asserts that one of the most important and haunting lines from the entire book consists of these few words: “‘The difficulty of conditions that may mitigate responsibility does not erase it’” (p. viii).

Dubik’s critique is not a replacement of Walzer’s ideas defending just war but rather an addendum that augments the value of strategic planning and cooperation between civil and military leaders. On reflection, a reader might question whether the strategic aspect of *jus in bello* might not exist already, to some extent, within *jus ad bellum*, considering military advisement as part of the moral calculation of proportionality and probability of success. Additionally, the reader might wonder whether the acceptable range across the military operations continuum would be determined best if the strategic dialogue and robust collaboration between civil and military leadership that Dubik champions went on not only as part of *jus in bello* but at every stage of war and peace. For instance, the war-waging principle of continuous dialogue also might apply to *jus ante bellum* (justice before war: strategic planning to shape fragile states so as to prevent war), *jus ad bellum* (justice in going to war: debating all nonkinetic and military options), and *jus post bellum* (justice after war: planning for reconstruction) to achieve *jus pax* (just peace).

Overall, Dubik’s strategic supplement to the category of *jus in bello* is a legacy that posterity will credit respectfully to the experience and wisdom of a distinguished scholar and warrior.

EDWARD ERWIN


June 4, 1942, stands out as one of the most pivotal moments in American naval history. The events of that day continue to be analyzed, scrutinized, and
debated down to the smallest details. However, few authors can speak with the authority of Captain Jack Kleiss, USN (Ret.). In his memoir of his naval service, Kleiss gives special attention to the part he and the rest of Scouting Squadron 6 played in the battle of Midway. The resulting narrative is compelling and offers a new perspective on the battle. Most histories of the battle try to explain the extended air battle as a complete picture, but Kleiss eschews this approach. It is his own story that the reader follows through the battle, with his personal triumphs and tragedies sharing the stage with the overall description of the desperate victory. Kleiss was a 1938 Naval Academy graduate from Kansas who joined Scouting 6 in 1941 after his mandatory two years in the surface fleet and flight school. His telling of his story is authoritative throughout, owing to an array of primary resources, including his wartime diary, letters, logbooks, and unit after-action reports. Although he penned his memoir some seventy years after Midway, the account is exceedingly detailed and surprisingly candid. Kleiss was a lieutenant (junior grade) at Midway and served as Scouting 6’s second flight commander, directly behind squadron commander Lieutenant Earl Gallaher. From that position, Kleiss put bombs on target on Kaga during the momentous afternoon air strike of June 4. Later that afternoon, he put his bombs into Hiryu to finish off the Japanese carrier force, and he also would get a hit on Mikuma on June 6. For his actions throughout the battle, the Navy awarded Kleiss the Navy Cross.

By telling the story from his perspective in the cockpit, Kleiss avoids many of the discussions of strategy and operations that dominate the historiography of the battle. However, he specifically cites and particularly disagrees with Walter Lord’s Incredible Victory (Harper and Row, 1967) as a flawed work that has mis-steered the narrative of the battle and perpetuates the misperception that the remarkable victory was largely the product of luck. “I prefer to believe we won the battle because we knew our stuff just a little bit better than our foes knew theirs. If luck played any role at all, it came in the fact that a few of us pilots lived to fly another day, while many others died. Luck determined who survived, not which side won the battle” (p. 280). Additionally, Kleiss opposes the notion that the victory can be credited mostly to the admirals in charge of the action, Frank Jack Fletcher and Raymond A. Spruance. Kleiss considers the plans for the battle to have been “overly elaborate” (p. 280) and deems the pilots responsible for the victory. Kleiss credits the tactical proficiency of the aviators and the mental flexibility of the squadron leaders and air group commanders with taking advantage of the situation and delivering a sudden, lethal strike—in spite of the admirals’ plan.

If June 4, 1942, stands out to the public, it haunts Kleiss and colors the entire tone of his retelling of the battle. “As the twenty-first century dawned, the Battle of Midway wouldn’t leave me alone. To answer the flurry of questions accurately, I had to relive the battle over and over again. I had to come face-to-face with memories I’d long since buried. I had to recall the smell of the salt air, the roar of the wind as it rushed past my cockpit, the sight of red flames coming up from the exploding ships, and other such vivid sensations for which words will never do justice.
I had to summon the faces of friends I’d lost and the sadness that tortured me as I whiled away the aftermath of the battle in my bunk. Today, that day—Thursday, June 4, 1942—hovers over my shoulder like an annoying friend, constantly chirping in my ear, ‘I am the most important day of your life.’ It will not leave me alone” (p. xiv).

Kleiss’s writing (in which he was assisted by Timothy and Laura Orr of Old Dominion University and the Hampton Roads Naval Museum) is easy to read even though it is laced with a slew of technical details, along with his vivid recollections. Anyone wishing to get a better insight into the way in which a scouting squadron operated in the early part of the war should consult this memoir as the first step. However, the emotion carried in the pages gives the work the weight that a secondary source must struggle to provide. It is one thing to understand academically the meaning of the sacrifice of the torpedo bombing squadrons, but it is another to read Kleiss’s account of parting with his best friend on the flight deck of Enterprise, with Kleiss in tears, knowing he will never see his friend again.

*Never Call Me a Hero* challenges the narrative of Midway that is dominated by the admirals and operational details. Kleiss freely admits that his conclusion is biased toward the evidence of his own experiences. However, the book constitutes a remarkably detailed and comprehensive account from one of the key actors in the events of Midway. It stands out as an exceptionally well-rounded military memoir that is worthwhile for both the general reader and the serious student of the battle.

ANDREW J. ROSCOE

**OUR REVIEWERS**

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REFLECTIONS ON READING

Professor John E. Jackson of the Naval War College is the Program Manager for the Chief of Naval Operations Professional Reading Program.

The Chief of Naval Operations Professional Reading Program is a professional reading program, which differentiates it from a simple list of books intended to be read for relaxation and entertainment. As such, the techniques a reader should use with these books are different from those of the casual reader. Admiral John Richardson, USN, is a fan of Mortimer Adler and Charles van Doren's highly regarded How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading. In the book, the authors provide some suggestions on how a reader can get the most out of his or her time. (Quotations are from the Touchstone Books / Simon & Schuster edition of 1972.)

Television, radio, and all the sources of amusement and information that surround us in our daily lives are also artificial props. They can give us the impression that our minds are active, because we are required to react to stimuli from outside. But the power of those external stimuli to keep us going is limited. They are like drugs. We grow used to them, and we continuously need more and more of them. Eventually, they have little or no effect. Then, if we lack resources within ourselves, we cease to grow intellectually, morally, and spiritually. And when we cease to grow, we begin to die. Reading well, which means reading actively, is thus not only a good in itself, nor is it merely a means to advancement in our work or career. It also serves to keep our minds alive and growing. (p. 346)

They go on to say:

A good book does reward you for trying to read it. The best books reward you most of all. The reward, of course, is of two kinds. First, there is the improvement in your reading skill that occurs when you successfully tackle a good, difficult work. Second—and this in the long run is much more important—a good book can teach you about the world and about yourself. You learn more than how to read better; you also learn more about life. You become wiser. Not just more knowledgeable—books that provide nothing but information can produce that result. But wiser, in the sense that you are more deeply aware of the great and enduring truths of human life. (p. 340)
The authors advocate a technique they identify as *analytical reading*:

The analytical reader must ask many, and organized, questions of what he is reading. We do want to emphasize here that analytical reading is always intensely active. On this level of reading, the reader grasps a book—the metaphor is apt—and works at it until the book becomes his own. Francis Bacon once remarked that "some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." Reading a book analytically is chewing and digesting it. (p. 19)

Adler and van Doren recommend that readers ask themselves four primary questions as they read:

1. “What is the book about as a whole? You must try to discover the leading theme of the book, and how the author develops this theme in an orderly way by subdividing it into its essential subordinate themes or topics.”

2. “What is being said in detail, and how? You must try to discover the main ideas, assertions, and arguments that constitute the author’s particular message.”

3. “Is the book true, in whole or part? When you understand a book, however, you are obligated, if you are reading seriously, to make up your own mind. Knowing the author’s mind is not enough.”

4. “What of it? If the book has given you information, you must ask about its significance. Why does the author think it is important to know these things? Is it important to you to know them? And if the book has not only informed you, but also enlightened you, it is necessary to seek further enlightenment by asking what else follows, what is further implied or suggested" (pp. 46–47).

The authors go to the heart of what I believe it means to be an informed sailor when they note the following: “We must be more than a nation of functional literates. We must become a nation of truly competent readers, recognizing all that the word *competent* implies. Nothing less will satisfy the needs of the world that is coming” (p. 31).

JOHN E. JACKSON

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