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## Seablindness: How Political Neglect Is Choking American Seapower and What to Do about It

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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



*Seablinde: How Political Neglect Is Choking American Seapower and What to Do about It*, by Seth Cropsey. New York: Encounter Books, 2017. 408 pages. \$27.99.

In *Seablinde*, 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 seabindness.

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.

*Seabindness* 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



*Neglected Skies: The Demise of British Naval Power in the Far East, 1922–42*, by Angus Britts. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017. 253 pages. \$34.95.

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.