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From the Editors

Carnes Lord

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FROM THE EDITORS

As Thomas-Durell Young trenchantly observes in “NATO’s Selective Sea Blindness: Assessing the Alliance’s New Navies,” the U.S. Navy’s long-standing profession of commitment to enhanced maritime cooperation with friends and allies around the world has not always translated effectively into practice. This is especially the case with the small navies of the former communist countries of NATO’s east. Young argues that these navies remain far short of the capabilities they require to deter an increasingly provocative and threatening Russia, and for reasons that are not widely appreciated—including by their own governments and defense establishments. Above all, the dead hand of legacy Soviet-era doctrines and organizational culture has hindered their navies from effectively modernizing their maritime capabilities and integrating them within their own armed forces, not to speak of their low level of interaction with regional allies. Thomas-Durell Young is a professor of national security affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School.

Joshua Edwards, in “Preparing Today for the Mines of Tomorrow,” addresses a war-fighting capability that long has been neglected in naval operational and strategic doctrine and planning. At a moment when radically new technologies in the undersea domain are on the near horizon, he argues that it is time to take a new look at the way the Navy conceptualizes mine “measures of effectiveness”; this is especially so with respect to the often underappreciated psychological and political effects of mine warfare. Joshua Edwards is an operations research analyst at the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Panama City Division.

In “Back to Basics: Research Design for the Operational Level of War,” Margaret M. Polski surveys the current state of play within the Navy and the wider military research community with respect to the relationship between research methodologies and their application to practical problems of contemporary war fighting. Over the last several years—as has been noted often in these pages—there has been a significant revival of interest in war-fighting simulations across the defense establishment. Polski underlines the importance of ensuring that enhanced attention to the value of wargaming is accompanied by a commitment to a realistic assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and the need to apply them with appropriate rigor. Margaret Polski is an analyst in the War Gaming Department of the Naval War College.

The U.S. military currently is facing significant challenges in what is now generally agreed to be a necessary process of growing the force. In “Storm Clouds on the Horizon: Challenges and Recommendations for Military Recruiting and Retention,” Christopher J. McMahon and Colin J. Bernard analyze the societal factors complicating this effort, particularly with respect to the groups known as millennials and Generation Z. They argue that a greater effort is needed both to mitigate the liabilities of these generations (such as obesity and criminal history) and to appeal in a positive way to their concerns in areas such as family stability. Christopher McMahon currently holds the Maritime Administration Emory S. Land Chair of Merchant Marine Affairs at the Naval War College; Commander Colin Bernard, USN, is currently an instructor at the United States Naval Academy.

While most attention to China’s maritime ambitions has focused on its activities in the South China Sea, the Chinese have made clear that they are not satisfied with the status quo in the East China Sea either. The main issue concerns the competing claims of China (as well as Taiwan) and Japan to the Senkaku Islands. In “Origins of a ‘Ragged Edge’: U.S. Ambiguity on the Senkakus’ Sovereignty,” Robert C. Watts IV reviews the complex history leading to the reversion of these islands from American control following World War II to the Japanese in 1972. He argues that the United States may have a special responsibility for ensuring that the unresolved issue of the sovereignty of the Senkakus does not escalate to armed conflict. Commander Robert C. Watts IV, USN, currently is serving as the executive officer of USS *John Paul Jones*.

That the slow-motion encroachment and intimidation currently being practiced by the People’s Republic of China in nearby seas represents a strategic novelty is a notion that seems to be held widely today. In “‘They Were Playing Chicken’: The U.S. Asiatic Fleet’s Gray-Zone Deterrence Campaign against Japan, 1937–40,” Hunter Stires argues that a very similar scenario played out in East Asian waters in the late 1930s, when the then-named U.S. Asiatic Fleet found itself in the position of protecting American interests in China in the face of rising Japanese encroachment and intimidation. Particularly interesting is his emphasis on Washington’s extreme delegation of authority to its representative on the spot, Admiral Harry Yarnell, USN, who in turn was an enlightened proponent of mission command with respect to his own subordinate commanders. Hunter Stires is currently a fellow at the John B. Hattendorf Center for Maritime Historical Research at the Naval War College.

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