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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

The future of the aircraft carrier in the evolving security environment has been a perennial topic of debate within and beyond the U.S. Navy. At a time of continuing uncertainty regarding the Navy's future force structure, this very much remains the case. Unfortunately, this debate often fails to transcend familiar talking points. John F. Lehman Jr., in "Aircraft Carriers: Missions, Survivability, Size, Cost, Numbers," provides an informed and succinct overview of this subject, focusing particularly on the fraught issue of carrier vulnerability and the argument for resuscitating a *Midway*-class medium carrier. John F. Lehman Jr. is a former Secretary of the Navy.

This year is the hundredth anniversary of the Washington Naval Conference of 1921. As Sam J. Tangredi points out in "Sizing the Carriers: A Brief History of Alternatives," it is more than a little ironic that it was an arms-control agreement that provided the impetus for the construction of America's largest warships. He goes on to survey the history of the prewar experimentation with various carrier concepts, and then the World War II experience, with its rapid creation of quick-to-build smaller carriers (CVLs and CVEs) for limited missions such as antisubmarine warfare. While after the war interest continued in small carriers equipped with V/STOL aircraft, he concludes that the case for reliance on large (CV or "fleet") carriers remains persuasive. Sam J. Tangredi holds the Leidos Chair of Future Warfare Studies at the Naval War College.

One of the most important naval developments in recent years is the so-called AUKUS agreement among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, designed to improve collaboration on a range of cutting-edge military technologies. The centerpiece of this new alignment will be the acquisition of nuclear submarine-propulsion technology by the Australians. A predictable effect of this development is that other countries in the region may take a second look at moving to nuclear propulsion in their own submarine fleets. In fact, a debate on this subject has been ongoing for some years in the Republic of Korea. In "Seoul's Misguided Desire for a Nuclear Submarine," James Campbell takes a close look at the many obstacles to be overcome by the South Koreans or any other nation in pursuing this option. He argues that Seoul would be better advised to invest the enormous anticipated costs of such a program in alternative ASW capabilities,

including additional modern diesel submarines. James Campbell is a production manager at the U.S. Naval Sea Systems Command.

In “Jomini and Naval Special Operations Forces: An Applied-Competition Approach to Russia,” Kevin Stringer appeals to the authority of the distinctly nonnaval nineteenth-century strategist Antoine-Henri Jomini to make a provocative case for a new approach to deterring and countering Russian pressures against NATO Europe in the so-called gray zone of subviolent conflict—and as a preparation for potential escalation of this conflict. The approach focuses on what would seem to be a novel role for naval special operations forces. Colonel Kevin D. Stringer, USA, currently serves on the faculty of the U.S. Army War College.

All navalist writing is vulnerable to the fallacy that maritime power is the royal road to geopolitical success. In “The Limits of Sea Power,” Jakub Grygiel makes a wide-ranging argument cautioning against this fallacy and also suggesting ways in which the limits he describes at least can be mitigated. Jakob Grygiel is a professor of politics at the Catholic University of America.

The relative military value of, as well as the relationship between, surface and subsurface naval forces remains a fundamental issue for modern navies. Regarding the two world wars of the last century, the conventional wisdom seems to accept that the U-boat threat was the potentially decisive element of German sea power, yet one to which the Germans themselves failed to give adequate priority in their overall strategic planning for the employment of naval forces. In “‘To Die Gallantly’? The Role of the Surface Fleet in German Naval Strategy, 1919–41,” Peter Hooker challenges this view. Emphasizing that Germany’s naval leadership well understood the limitations of U-boat technology and armament and rightly judged that the submarine force by itself could win neither war, he argues that the navy’s commitment to rebuilding a serious surface fleet in the run-up to World War II was sensible in itself and that the resultant fleet in fact proved a much more significant threat to British maritime dominance in the first years of the war than generally is believed. Peter Hooker is a PhD candidate at the University of Newcastle, Australia.

With John D. Moore’s “Letter from Port Moresby,” we revive a onetime feature of this journal and invite similar contributions from others in the future. This piece is particularly timely in light of the recently announced AUKUS agreement, mentioned above. It is rather remarkable that so little attention is paid regularly to Papua New Guinea, located on an island that is one of the largest and perhaps the most interesting in the world, in both human and environmental terms, not to mention that it provided the stage for General Douglas MacArthur’s virtuoso performance in his “island-hopping” campaign of the Pacific War. Noteworthy are Moore’s brief discussion of U.S.-Australian interest in developing military facilities on Manus Island and his flagging of Chinese attempts at political-economic penetration of the country.

