2022

China as a Twenty First Century Naval Power: Theory, Practice, and Implications

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Michael A. McDevitt

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literacy" from a variety of platforms; audiovisual media appear to have become a substitute for print. Nevertheless, reading and viewing are not the same thing, just as doing is different from talking. (Stavridis has bridged this gap with this publication—it is available in both print and e-book formats.)

As the selections are based on the author's opinion, I will not question his choices of fifty nonfiction and fiction works by providing an alternative list of my own. Doing so would defeat the purpose of this review: explaining why this book should be read and by whom. Stavridis emphasizes the criteria he used for selection in the fifty summaries he provides of the works and their writers. Topics include the oceans, explorers, sailors in fiction, and sailors in nonfiction. He also recommends additional works that expand on the topics chosen.

The book is not an anthology as such but rather a guide to literature by an English major with an MA and a PhD. I recognize most of the authors, but others are new and revealing. Some selections on aviation, amphibs, and naval support activities ashore could have been added.

This single volume constitutes a metaphorical book bag whose contents can be read by a novice seaman, a midgrade petty officer, or an experienced commander. Books do not substitute for experience, but they do provide insights when direct experience has not presented itself, and they also can support the later reflection that puts experience into context. It also is worth recommending that the books be read and discussed with others, to provide the broader understanding that a collegial effort offers. Lastly, a working definition of a *literary classic*

is that when reread it offers further understanding or amusement. Considering all these benefits together, Stavridis wishes us "fair winds and following seas" as we set sail on his recommended literary voyage, charted by a book lover for readers of all stripes.

CHARLES D. MELSON

China as a Twenty First Century Naval Power: Theory, Practice, and Implications, by Michael A. McDevitt. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2020. 320 pages. $39.95.

There is no longer any question that China's national destiny has become tied inextricably to the maritime domain. As distinct from *naval power,* the term *maritime power* denotes the projection of manifold instruments of statecraft—military, political, and economic—into the seas. Nevertheless, China has affirmed that its maritime strategy ultimately rests on the extent of its navy. The naval dimension of China's maritime strategy is the central focus of Michael A. McDevitt's new book, *China as a Twenty First Century Naval Power: Theory, Practice, and Implications.*

McDevitt is a retired rear admiral in the U.S. Navy and a senior fellow at the Center for Naval Analyses. Although unable to speak Chinese, he draws on a rich array of translated English-language primary-source documents, as well as secondary sources from leading contemporary scholars. The result is an analysis both compelling and novel. The book traces the development of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), explores its role in defending China's national interests, and hypothesizes its twenty-first-century trajectory.

McDevitt's point of entry is the "Chinese dream," a potent expression of Chinese grand strategy propounded by Xi Jinping. It is a vision of national rejuvenation aimed at redressing the "century of humiliation," an epoch that began with the First Opium War (1839–42), in which the British laid bare China's vulnerability from the seas. The sought-after Chinese dream represents the culmination of yet another century, the one that began with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and will be complete in 2049. Given that a vast seaboard is a permanent feature of China's geopolitical makeup, Xi logically has concluded that fulfillment of the dream requires mastery of the maritime domain.

McDevitt systematically peels back the layers of China's near-seas defense by elucidating the most likely scenario for its deployment: a cross-strait conflict with Taiwan. China's "offshore waters defense" consists of two aspects: antiaccess and area-denial objectives. *Antiaccess* means the preemption of the entrance by American "first responders"—air and naval forces permanently stationed in Japan—into the combat theater. *Area-denial* refers to a sequenced strategy of coercion, neutralization of Taiwan and regional airpower, and invasion, aimed at defeating enemies within the combat theater before they can gain operational and tactical freedom of action.

However, PLAN activity hardly is limited to China's near seas. The country's increasing national power has yielded a proliferation in the global arena of economic and political interests—which simultaneously constitute maritime-security imperatives. McDevitt states that China's maritime strategy is driven by a heightened awareness of these global interests, which has produced a "sea lane anxiety." Consequently, Beijing has deemed the security of China's sea lines of communication an "imminent issue"—as vital an interest as protection of the nation itself. With the rollout of its Belt and Road Initiative, China is expected to shift its maritime strategy by gradually adding "open seas protection" to "offshore waters defense."

China has been developing its capabilities to operate beyond the first island chain since the 1980s. However, only within the last twenty years has the PLAN become a truly global force. One of McDevitt's contributions to the literature is an understanding of precisely how the Chinese accelerated so rapidly along a blue-water learning curve. He contends that from 2008 onward, China's participation in the multinational antipiracy effort in the Gulf of Aden and northern Arabian Sea served as a "blue water laboratory" through which crews gathered experience "in terms of operations, ship design, training, and, most importantly, logistical support to the fleet" (p. 31).

Through the policy of "build a little, test a little," China has used this blue-water laboratory to develop a formidable far-seas force built to be congruent with the demands of defending the country's burgeoning interests. Over the last fifteen years, China has added 240 warships to its navy, 131 of which are blue-water-capable ships, including carriers, other surface combatants, amphibious assault ships, submarines, and fleet-replenishment ships. Although the Chinese have yet to deploy a carrier-centered task force, McDevitt forecasts that this will take place in the near future. At that point, China

undeniably will have become a blue-water naval power. The book rounds out its analysis of China's coercive maritime power with appendices written by experts on the China Coast Guard and the country's maritime militia.

Although not all the details of China's vision of a "world-class navy" are clear, McDevitt projects that the PLAN will outnumber the U.S. Navy in ships by 2035. As the American advantage gradually erodes, a deliberate assess-ment of the strategic situation will become even more imperative. With that in mind, the present work, which consolidates and updates the advances made in Chinese maritime-strategic studies, will serve well any professional within the field. It provides an incisive complement to Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes's tour de force, *Red Star over the Pacific* (2010). McDevitt has delivered a work both scholarly and en-during, one that will provide a theoreti-cal foothold for understanding China's naval development for years to come.

FRANCIS MIYATA

The Day After: Why America Wins the War but Loses the Peace, by Brendan R. Gallagher. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2019. 308 pages. $32.95.

Brendan Gallagher has written what will be the best book on this topic for at least the next several years, and probably for many more. It should be required reading for every person within the U.S. national-security enterprise, as well as anyone with an interest in security, postconflict actions, and nation building. *The Day After* is excellently written, academically rigorous, and convincing. It is a must-read.

Gallagher is a serving lieutenant colonel (infantry) in the U.S. Army and stands tall among the rare breed known as warrior-scholars. He has served seven tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, including multiple deployments with the 75th Ranger Regiment, and currently is a battalion commander; so much for establishing his warrior credentials. His academic bona fides include winning the General George C. Marshall Award as the top graduate in his class at the Army's Command and General Staff College and completing a PhD in public and international affairs at Princeton.

Put simply, Gallagher wants to know why the United States has dominated the battlefield in many conflicts, only to watch subsequent efforts to secure the peace fail—often dramatically. A single failure might be brushed off as a one-of-a-kind event, but when failures become repetitive, something is wrong. Clearly the old adage about the burned hand teaching best does not apply; rather than learning from a hand singed by the hot stove, the United States keeps grabbing for the burner. It should be pointed out that *The Day After* was published before the American withdrawal from Afghanistan, which gives an air of prescience to the work.

Gallagher's introduction lays out his research with both precision and passion. Why does the United States win massive battlefield victories and seemingly create conditions to achieve long-lasting, positive change, only to watch the moment pass, opportunities dwindle, and failure eventually result? He also makes it clear that while his approach is grounded in strong scholar-ship and academic rigor, his involvement is not that of a distant inhabitant of the ivory tower. In his own words: "Most