Summer 2022 Full Issue

The U.S. Naval War College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol75/iss3/1

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.
In the South China Sea in February 2022, the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Tulsa (LCS 16) prepares to conduct a replenishment at sea. Tulsa was operating with the U.S. Seventh Fleet to enhance interoperability with partners and support a free and open Indo-Pacific region. In "The Imperative of Political Navigation: India’s Strategy in the Indian Ocean and the Logic of Indo-U.S. Strategic Partnership," Yogesh Joshi explains the dissonance between the positions of different segments of India’s strategic community regarding U.S. and allied freedom-of-navigation operations in the Indian Ocean, especially within India’s exclusive economic zone.

Source: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Devin M. Langer
The Naval War College Review was established in 1948 as a forum for discussion of public policy matters of interest to the maritime services. The thoughts and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the U.S. government, the U.S. Navy Department, or the Naval War College.

The journal is published quarterly. Distribution is limited generally to commands and activities of the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard; regular and reserve officers of U.S. services; foreign officers and civilians having a present or previous affiliation with the Naval War College; selected U.S. government officials and agencies; and selected U.S. and international libraries, research centers, publications, and educational institutions.

Contributors
Please request the standard contributors’ guidance from the managing editor or access it online before submitting manuscripts. The Naval War College Review neither offers nor makes compensation for articles or book reviews, and it assumes no responsibility for the return of manuscripts, although every effort is made to return those not accepted. In submitting work, the sender warrants that it is original, that it is the sender’s property, and that neither it nor a similar work by the sender has been accepted or is under consideration elsewhere.

Permissions
Reproduction and reprinting are subject to the Copyright Act of 1976 and applicable treaties of the United States. To obtain permission to reproduce material bearing a copyright notice, or to reproduce any material for commercial purposes, contact the editor for each use. Material not bearing a copyright notice may be freely reproduced for academic or other noncommercial use; however, it is requested that the author and Naval War College Review be credited and that the editor be informed.

Periodicals postage paid at Newport, RI. POSTMASTERS, send address changes to: Naval War College Review; Code 32S, Naval War College, 686 Cushing Rd., Newport, RI 02841-1207.

ISSN 0028-1484
CONTENTS

From the Editors ................................................................. 3

President’s Forum ............................................................... 7

Strategy and Policy

U.S. Maritime Strategy in the Arctic
Past, Present, and Future ....................................................... 13
James G. Foggo III and Rachael Gosnell

Warming waters and melting sea ice will create new challenges off our northern shores, and the Navy and Marine Corps must be prepared to provide a presence in the Arctic that will ensure peace and prosperity in the face of aggressive Russian militarization and expanding Chinese interest. Lessons from America’s Arctic past can illuminate what needs to be done.

The Imperative of Political Navigation
India’s Strategy in the Indian Ocean and the Logic of Indo-U.S. Strategic Partnership ....................................................... 37
Yogesh Joshi

The dissonance between the positions of India’s Nehruvian strategic community and of the Indian strategic establishment, especially regarding the freedom-of-navigation operations the U.S. Navy long has conducted in India’s exclusive economic zone, is rooted in realpolitik considerations, especially China’s rise as a great power, and the difference between international law and politics.

Russia’s Twenty-First-Century Naval Strategy
Combining Admiral Gorshkov with the Jeune École ...................... 67
Johannes Riber

Both France after the Franco-Prussian War and post-Soviet Russia found themselves squeezed in multipolar worlds, with poor economies and loss of industrial power. Alongside Admiral Gorshkov’s continuing influence, modern Russian naval thinking has evolved toward an emphasis on smaller surface units with advanced capabilities—similar to the Jeune École concept—with implications for Western naval planning.

How the Weak Can Beat the Strong in War at Sea ........................ 85
Dustin J. Nicholson

Modern asymmetric naval technologies have not erased the effects of geography. As fortress fleets evolved from dominating harbors to dominating near-sea expanses, weaker naval powers continued to blend the land with the sea to overcome their relative weakness. In response, the stronger naval power must stand ready to win command of the sea through an equally blended strategy.
Naval History

Mission Command in the Age of Sail .................................................. 93
Josh Weiss
This article develops an analytical framework for mission command; proposes the full age of sail as an area for current military officers to mine for relevant lessons; and examines, through the mission-command lens, a case study from that era, involving a dispute between the British naval and land-force commanders in the Caribbean during the Hundred Days of Napoléon Bonaparte.

Book Reviews
Phase Line Attila: The Amphibious Campaign for Cyprus, 1974,
by Edward J. Erickson and Mesut Uyar
reviewed by Chris Deliso ............................................................... 129

Innovating Victory: Naval Technology in Three Wars,
by Vincent P. O’Hara and Leonard R. Heinz
reviewed by Timothy J. Demy ......................................................... 131

Military Virtues, ed. Michael Skerker, David Whetham, and Don Carrick
reviewed by Edward Erwin ............................................................ 132

Restoring Thucydides: Testing Familiar Lessons and Deriving New Ones, by Andrew R. Novo and Jay M. Parker
reviewed by Joshua Hammond ....................................................... 134

On Operations: Operational Art and Military Disciplines, by B. A. Friedman
reviewed by Edmund B. Hernandez ............................................... 135

Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and the End of China’s Last Golden Age, by Stephen R. Platt
reviewed by Benjamin E. Mainardi .................................................. 137

Admiral Gorshkov: The Man Who Challenged the U.S. Navy,
by Norman Polmar, Thomas A. Brooks, and George E. Fedoroff
reviewed by Richard Norton ......................................................... 139

In My View .................................................................................. 143

Reflections on Reading ................................................................. 149
American fascination with the High North is nothing new. The United States became an Arctic power in 1867 with its acquisition of Alaska, and intrepid American explorers helped map the new territory’s seas and islands. In “U.S. Maritime Strategy in the Arctic: Past, Present, and Future,” James G. Foggo III and Rachael Gosnell provide an informed look at this history and the present situation, with a focus on the Arctic as a challenging environment for military operations. It seems to be widely accepted that the inexorable progress of global warming will make northern waters a more welcoming and active military theater. Certainly the Russians seem to think so, as they continue to invest vast sums in refurbishing or expanding military and commercial infrastructure along their long Arctic frontier. Yet, as the authors stress, the unforgiving physical environment will not soon change, and our knowledge of that environment remains limited. The United States must commit itself, in cooperation with regional allies, to an upgraded naval presence in the High North, the development of innovative technologies, and the enhanced scientific knowledge to enable them. Admiral James G. Foggo III, USN (Ret.), is a former commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa. Commander Rachael Gosnell, USN, is a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland.

In “The Imperative of Political Navigation: India’s Strategy in the Indian Ocean and the Logic of Indo-U.S. Strategic Partnership,” Yogesh Joshi offers important insights into India’s strategic culture and behavior, using formerly classified materials and interviews with senior Indian officials. His argument is that, in spite of its well-advertised neutrality between East and West, India for many decades practiced what he calls “cryptic bandwagoning” with the United States, and the West generally, on issues such as law of the sea negotiations and Western naval operations in the Indian Ocean. However, more recently—as the Chinese threat to India’s land and sea borders has metastasized—the partnership with the United States (together now with Japan and Australia) has become a necessity rather than a luxury. It is, then, startling but not surprising that India and the United States are about to conduct joint military exercises in the foothills of the Himalayas. Yogesh Joshi is a research fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore.
Strategic culture, an elusive yet unavoidable concept in the theory of international relations, is also of considerable utility in understanding the evolution of the Russian/Soviet navy from the nineteenth century onward. In “Russia’s Twenty-First-Century Naval Strategy: Combining Admiral Gorshkov with the Jeune École,” Johannes Riber traces the somewhat schizophrenic course of that strategy’s development according to two distinct models, that of the French “Young School” of the late nineteenth century and Admiral Sergey Gorshkov’s blue-water Soviet navy of the 1970s and ’80s. He argues that in spite of Vladimir Putin’s rhetorical commitment to maintaining or reviving the Gorshkov model, Russia’s resources today (particularly given the ongoing Ukraine war) cannot sustain it; hence, the older model, using small ships, submarines, and cruise missiles for local sea control in the Black and Caspian Seas (and for sea denial in parts of the Mediterranean), will remain the key factor underlying Russian maritime strategy going forward. Commander Johannes Riber is a serving officer in the Royal Danish Navy.

The Jeune École developed as France’s response to the overwhelming superiority of Britain’s blue-water fleet—in other words, as an asymmetric strategy befitting a weaker power. In “How the Weak Can Beat the Strong in War at Sea,” Dustin J. Nicholson explores the options available to weaker naval powers to challenge the strong and prevail. Major Dustin J. Nicholson, USMC, is a recent graduate of the Naval War College.

Finally, in “Mission Command in the Age of Sail,” Josh Weiss develops an analytic model of mission command based on the relationship of commander to subordinate and illustrates it through a detailed case study of a little-known episode in British political-military operations in the Caribbean during Napoléon’s Hundred Days. He suggests that today’s sailors can find a rich store of such examples from that era that remain relevant for the present day. Josh Weiss is a serving submarine officer in the U.S. Navy.
Commander Robert M. Laske, USN (Ret.), 96, former editor of the Naval War College Review (NWCR), passed away peacefully at his home on 28 May 2022.

Bob served in the Army Air Corps toward the end of World War II, graduated from college in 1949, then joined the Naval Air Corps, earning his wings in 1951. His aviation career included assignments and deployments to Coronado, California; Whidbey Island, Washington; Kodiak, Alaska Territory; Japan (during the Korean War); Morocco; and Oklahoma and Texas, as a naval aviator recruiter.

Bob attended the Naval Justice School in Newport, Rhode Island, the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, and the Navy Communications School in Newport. He then served in USS Forrestal as communications officer.

In 1962, Bob was reassigned to Newport, first as a Naval War College (NWC) student, then as a member of the Correspondence School faculty. At this time he obtained a master’s degree in international relations from George Washington University. In 1964, he was called off the staff of the College to Saigon, South Vietnam.

Bob returned to the College in 1965, took over the duties of NWCR managing editor in 1968, and in 1970 was named the Review’s first full-time editor. He continued in that position until his retirement from the Navy in September 1975. He rejoined the Review in 1982, serving as a civilian employee from 1982 to 1988, when he retired.

Through Bob’s initiatives and professional outreach, the College’s publishing policy took a major turn when the Review began to publish articles by civilian academics. He also laid the initial plans for the Press to publish books, including the first volumes of the NWC Historical Monograph series.

Bob’s service to the Press, to the College, and to the nation set a high standard.

We offer our deep sympathies to his family and friends.
Rear Admiral Shoshana Chatfield is the fifty-seventh President of the U.S. Naval War College and a career naval helicopter pilot. A native of Garden Grove, California, she graduated from Boston University in 1987 with a bachelor of arts in international relations and French language and literature. She received her commission through the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps in 1988 and earned her wings of gold in 1989. Chatfield was awarded the Navy’s Political/Military Scholarship and attended the Kennedy School of Government, receiving a master in public administration from Harvard University in 1997. In 2009, the University of San Diego conferred on her a doctorate of education in leadership studies.
PRESIDENT’S FORUM

The Value of NWC’s International Programs

ALLIED NAVIES SAILING together in defense of common interests is a tradition going back centuries. The concept is as valid today as it was in the days of the great full-rigged sailing ships of the past. Throughout the College’s 138-year history, our institution has been at the forefront of encouraging and facilitating maritime-security cooperation. Our efforts in the twenty-first century reach around the globe and to all levels of leadership. The International Programs at the Naval War College (NWC) directly support developing and strengthening robust global maritime partnerships. We seek to emphasize the “Newport Connection” to enhance trust and confidence and promote cooperation among partner nations. World events confirm the value of developing and maintaining such friendships.

An international focus is not new to our College. The College’s first international officers—two commanders from the Royal Swedish Navy—arrived in 1894. But it was then–Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Arleigh A. Burke who, in 1956, provided the vision for our modern-era international programs. He was prescient in understanding the value of maritime engagements and fully cognizant that the global security environment presented an increasingly complex set of challenges and opportunities. Over the years, more than five thousand allied officers have graduated from NWC’s formal educational programs. More than 1,800 have gone on to earn flag or general officer rank, and several have become elected heads of state.

At the core of our twenty-first-century international education efforts are a series of rigorous and demanding resident courses taught on our Newport, Rhode Island, campus and in support of our fleet commanders globally. Currently, we educate approximately 150 international military students from around the world.
in Newport and dozens more away from our campus. We expect that number to grow to over two hundred within a few short years. The following five international courses appear in our catalog:

- **The Naval Command College** (NCC) course is an eleven-month program designed to prepare senior officers for the highest levels of command. It is open to international naval officers in the grades O-5 and O-6 (commanders and captains) from allied military forces that choose to accept an invitation from the CNO. Students pursue a senior-level core curriculum in classrooms alongside their American counterparts, studying Strategy and Policy, National Security Decision Making, Joint Military Operations, Leadership in the Profession of Arms, and specialized electives in their areas of interest. This multifaceted curriculum meets the requirements levied by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff through which American students earn Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) Phase II (JPME II) certification. Students also participate in a robust Field Studies Program that allows them to travel around the United States to gain an increased understanding of our American institutions, values, and way of life. All graduates earn an NWC diploma. Additionally, we offer the opportunity to pursue a master of arts degree in national security and strategic studies to a limited number of NCC students who meet all academic prerequisites and volunteer to undertake additional study requirements. The course convenes annually in July and concludes the following June.

- **The Naval Staff College** (NSC) course is an eleven-month program designed to prepare midcareer officers for the challenges of command and major-staff duty. It is open to international naval officers in the grades O-4 and O-5 (lieutenant commanders and commanders) from allied military forces that choose to accept an invitation from the CNO. In addition to participating alongside their American counterparts in the intermediate-level core curriculum—Strategy and War, Theater Security Decision Making, Joint Maritime Operations, and Leadership in the Profession of Arms—the students complete specialized electives in their areas of interest. This curriculum is based on requirements levied by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, through which American students earn JPME Phase I (JPME I) certification. NSC students also participate in a robust Field Studies Program that allows them to travel around the United States to gain an increased understanding of American institutions, values, and way of life. All graduates earn a Naval Staff College diploma. Additionally, we offer the opportunity to pursue a master of arts degree in defense and strategic studies to a limited number of NSC students who meet all academic prerequisites and volunteer to undertake additional
study requirements. The course convenes annually in July and concludes in June of the following year.

• The **International Maritime Staff Operators Course** (IMSOC) is a twelve-week course designed to provide international naval officers with the knowledge and skills needed to support the planning and execution of maritime operations and effectively integrate with existing operational planning teams on national, allied, and coalition staffs. The course enables students to comprehend, analyze, and apply maritime operational-level processes and procedures necessary to plan, prepare, execute, and assess combined maritime operations. Students also participate in a tailored Field Studies Program that includes traveling around the United States to understand our American institutions, values, and way of life. This course is open to officers in the ranks of O-3 to O-5 (lieutenants, lieutenant commanders, and commanders) from partner military forces that choose to accept an invitation from the CNO. This course convenes twice a year, running in the fall from August to November and in the spring from March to June.

• The **Maritime Security and Governance Staff Course** (MSGSC) is a new, five-month staff course designed specifically for officers from smaller navies, coast guards, and maritime-law-enforcement services. Rather than focusing on major combat operations, it provides graduates with the operational knowledge and strategic perspectives needed to conduct maritime-security operations effectively, evaluate a complex maritime threat environment, formulate effective maritime-security strategies, and achieve good maritime governance at national and regional levels. Students also participate in a tailored Field Studies Program that includes travel around the United States. The course is designed for midgrade naval officers but is open to all uniformed military personnel and government officials in the equivalent ranks / pay grades of O-3 to O-5. It convenes in January and July.

• The **Combined Force Maritime Component Commander** (CFMCC) course is a flag-level professional military education program focused on command and control of multinational maritime forces. The course is designed to prepare U.S. and partner-nation officers for regional leadership responsibilities and to give them a broad perspective of the operational level of war. Periodically, the CNO extends invitations to nations for selected students to participate in this program. Candidates are U.S. and international flag officers (O-7 and above) or service equivalent. The one-week course is taught three times a year at the site of a regional headquarters for U.S. forces. The desired goal is for CFMCC graduates to develop stronger international relationships among
partner nations while deepening their understanding of combined maritime command-and-control concepts and mechanisms.

In addition to formal coursework, NWC supports other major activities and initiatives designed to increase the effectiveness and interoperability of the free world’s maritime forces. These efforts include the following:

- The **International Seapower Symposium** (ISS), held in Newport biennially since 1969, offers a unique opportunity for the world’s maritime leaders to discuss and promote international maritime-security cooperation. These discussions provide opportunities for future voluntary regional and international collaboration in seeking solutions to challenges facing the global network of maritime nations. These landmark events often have been called “the largest gathering of maritime leaders in history.” ISS-24 was completed in September 2021, with delegates from over one hundred nations in attendance. CNO Admiral Mike Gilday, USN, hosted the chiefs of navies and coast guards from around the globe to seek their respective thoughts and proposals for enhancing regional and global maritime security. Reflecting on the event, Admiral Gilday noted the following:

  Providing a safe, secure, and stable maritime system is an imperative to all of mankind, and it is an essential part of what our navies do every day. I believe that robust, resilient, and responsible sea power is an international consortium of like-minded nations. We are the primary guarantors of peace, prosperity, and the open flow of goods along the oceans. Our navies provide these benefits to the citizens we serve every day in peacetime and especially during these times of competition—not just in rare moments of conflict.

- The **Regional Alumni Symposia** (RAS) are cohosted by the President of the NWC and a regional partner navy. Participation is open to all international and U.S. graduates of the College. These academic conferences reinforce the notion that military education continues long after students finish the formal, in-resident education programs at the College, as part of a lifelong pursuit of knowledge about the profession of arms. Symposia include keynote speeches by prominent military leaders and faculty-led panels addressing current strategic and operational issues. All participants are invited to exchange their insights and perspectives. Symposia also serve to facilitate professional interaction among rising military leaders and allow graduates to take advantage of and foster the Newport Connection across many classes. This networking develops professional linkages among military officers useful at critical junctures later in their careers when international relationships prove invaluable. World events continue to confirm the value of working with partners and friends. Our RASs have taken place in many
areas around the globe, including Brazil, Germany, Oman, Peru, Philippines, and here in Newport. We will hold our nineteenth annual Regional Alumni Symposium for African nations in Newport from 13 to 15 September 2022.

- The CNO Distinguished International Fellows provide critical support to all the NWC international courses and initiatives discussed in the previous paragraphs. We are fortunate to have former service chiefs from three of our oldest and most respected partner nations on our faculty: Admiral Guillermo Barrera, former commander of the Colombian navy; Admiral Nirmal Verma, former chief of the naval staff of the Indian navy; and Rear Admiral Lars Saunes, former chief of the Royal Norwegian Navy, provide in-depth knowledge of the regional areas in which they served, as well as providing insights into how decisions are made in an international context. This program, which was piloted in 2011 under the sponsorship of CNO Admiral Gary Roughead, is now an enduring and integral component of faculty engagements across the continuum of international programs.

Over the course of the past sixty years, Newport has become a neutral ground for the international maritime community, a place where naval officers from around the world can come to study and, working together, tackle the most pressing security and governance challenges. The Naval War College is the only institution in the world with the facilities, faculty, and reputation for impartiality required to play that critical role. Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro recently noted, “Meeting and working with our ally and partner nations to protect our mutual interests and sustain the open, rules-based international system continues to be an important and pressing challenge.” I salute everyone at the College who labors tirelessly to meet this challenge.

SHOSHANA S. CHATFIELD
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
President, U.S. Naval War College

Commander Rachael Gosnell, USN, is a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland. She holds a master’s degree in security studies from Georgetown University and a master’s in engineering management from Old Dominion University.
May I be allowed to wish the rising generation of American naval officers all success in the noble profession they are entering, and to express a hope that America, and especially the American Navy, will maintain the place she has won in the front rank of Arctic explorers.

LIEUTENANT JOHN W. DANENHOWER, "THE POLAR QUESTION," 1885

The U.S. Navy has an enduring legacy in the Arctic. From the earliest days of the United States as an Arctic nation following the purchase of Alaska in 1867, our Navy has patrolled the region to protect national interests. As the area becomes increasingly accessible to maritime traffic, the Arctic will form a crossroads where geopolitical, economic, climate, technological, and security trends meet. As noted in a document published in January 2021 laying out an Arctic strategy for the Navy, warming waters and the resultant melting sea ice will create new challenges off our northern shores, and the Navy and Marine Corps must be prepared. Aggressive Russian militarization and expanding Chinese interest in the region are giving rise to greater strategic competition in the Arctic. An American naval presence in the Arctic will ensure peace and prosperity.

Lessons from America’s Arctic past can illuminate what needs to be done to help meet the demands of the Arctic of the future, ensuring integrated deterrence while also enabling adherence to the international rules and norms that are the backbone of our global economy. The Navy has a robust history in the region, dating back to the earliest American Arctic explorers. From USS Nautilus (SSN 571) onward, the Arctic has played an important role in U.S. Navy operations. During the Cold War, Navy Secretary John F. Lehman Jr.’s Maritime Strategy provided a forward-thinking approach that served to stretch the Soviet navy.

The competitors of the future will present threats far more complex than those the Navy faced previously, given the emergence and prevalence of advanced technologies, the cyber and space domains, hybrid warfare, and
increasingly bold state and nonstate actors. Our Navy must continue to look northward to ensure regional stability and prevent competitors from dominating an increasingly blue (as opposed to white) Arctic. The international norms that enable global economic prosperity—particularly freedom of the seas—increasingly are being challenged in the Arctic, setting a disquieting precedent for other global hot spots.

But Arctic operations are challenging in themselves. Although the region is warming and the ice cover is diminishing, operating in the polar environment will continue to be arduous. Conditions of extreme cold, icing, frequent storms, and near-complete darkness during parts of the year all serve to challenge mariners. Adding to these complexities, there are few deepwater ports and there is limited infrastructure to support and sustain operations. Communications challenges, lack of adequate hydrographic surveys, and a paucity of airfield options for search-and-rescue (SAR) and other emergency diversions increase risk to those operating in the region.

Confronting these hostile operating conditions, the Navy is materially and operationally underprepared now compared with during the Cold War. To help the service regain lost proficiency—and send a clear message to any nation seeking to challenge international norms in the region—this article will reflect on the Navy’s history to gain innovative insights into ensuring maritime superiority in this challenging region. The article first will examine the service’s history in the Arctic; next it will consider current geopolitics and naval operations; then it will provide specific recommendations for ensuring the establishment and continuation of American naval superiority in the evolving Arctic region.

LESSONS FROM THE PAST
The U.S. Navy is no stranger to the Arctic. The Navy Department administered the newly acquired Department of Alaska from 1879 until the territory’s reorganization under civil administration in 1884. The Navy stationed the sloop of war USS Jamestown in Sitka, Alaska, to “preserve order among the Indians and to prevent threatened conflicts.” In an era of increasing exploration in the Far North, naval officers were eager to improve their Arctic expertise. The first article written in the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings about the Arctic, a discussion on ice navigation by Lieutenant Frederick G. Schwatka, USA, appeared in October 1880. Schwatka provided exceptional detail on the dangers posed by “ice-packs, ice-floes, icebergs, tides, storms, currents, and other obstacles,” as well as instructions for ships’ “care and preservation when securely anchored by the cold clutches of the ice, for the long dreary winter night of the Arctic, [and] their liberation when the summer’s sun has broken up the great ice fields.” Five years later, Lieutenant John W. Danenhower, USN, provided a comprehensive account
of Arctic exploration in *Proceedings.* This insightful piece discussed the difficult conditions mariners faced in the High North and which maritime routes were to be preferred in the region.

The Navy pioneered America’s earliest forays as an Arctic nation. The service’s archives and histories document both the perils of operating in the Arctic and how those challenges could be overcome. These were important topics for naval officers seeking to defend and promote U.S. national interests in the northern latitudes. Then-Commander Robert E. Peary Sr., USN, a Civil Engineer Corps officer, became the first explorer to reach the North Pole, on 6 April 1909. His motto—“I will find a way or make one!”—reflects his impressive resilience. He dedicated years to understanding the Arctic’s weather patterns and ice conditions, often relying on the indigenous Inuits’ extensive knowledge and experience. Less than two decades later, on 9 May 1926, Lieutenant Commander Richard E. Byrd Jr. navigated the first (although some dispute this) flight over the North Pole, beating Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen’s attempt by airship by a few days. Byrd and the pilot, Floyd Bennett—who had served in the Navy previously—received the Congressional Medal of Honor for their intrepid expedition.

The flight would not have been possible had it not departed from Svalbard, in Norway’s northernmost archipelago. This highlights the enduring importance of international cooperation and the value of regional partnerships. The Arctic long has fostered international interest and unique levels of cooperation. U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing discussed the “perplexing situation” encompassing the Spitsbergen (later called Svalbard) Archipelago—from which Byrd, Amundsen, and many other Arctic explorers launched their expeditions—in a 1917 article in the *American Journal of International Law,* “A Unique International Problem.” He noted that Spitsbergen’s sovereignty question arose “as a result of American enterprise and energy, which, overcoming Arctic ice and barrenness, proved to the world the wealth of the islands.” Lansing was referring to the successful Svalbard operations of the Arctic Coal Company, a U.S. mining company that later was purchased by a Norwegian concern. The secretary’s efforts to forge a resolution to Spitsbergen’s status while a member of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace and his participation at the 1919–20 peace conference at Versailles reflected American economic and political interests in the archipelago and the Arctic access it provided. In 1920, global leaders gathered in Paris to sign the Spitsbergen (Svalbard) Treaty, which recognized Norway’s sovereignty over the archipelago but stipulated that all signatories—fourteen originally, now forty-six—had equal rights to engage in commercial and research activities there. The archipelago was declared a visa-free zone and naval bases were prohibited, as was any use of Svalbard for warlike purposes. President Woodrow Wilson endorsed the treaty and the Senate ratified it in 1924.
Although many at first had called America’s 1867 purchase of Alaska “Seward’s Folly” (it was spearheaded by U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward), the Arctic territory’s economic potential became clear during the 1896–99 gold rush, and its strategic importance became clear during the lead-up to World War II. In 1935, General William L. “Billy” Mitchell, USAAC, declared to Congress that “he who holds Alaska will hold the world”; he famously proclaimed that Alaska was the “most strategic place in the world.” With his views colored by his assignment to Alaska as a junior officer, Mitchell urged the construction of military bases to enable a northern air defense. This argument later became more urgent during the Cold War, since the shortest and most likely route that Soviet bombers or intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) would take to attack the United States lay across the Arctic.

The Soviet government, meanwhile, was developing Arctic navigation and aviation capabilities. The Soviets opened the Northern Sea Route in the early 1930s as a means to resupply isolated coastal communities. British journalist H. P. Smolka noted in 1938 that “[o]nly in the last few months has the world begun to be conscious of Russia’s energetic efforts to push open her frozen window in the North and develop a Polar Empire.” Russian president Vladimir V. Putin’s modern polar-great-power ambitions reflect Russia’s historical interest in the region, but they are facilitated by a thawing Arctic.

At the time, Smolka also highlighted a perceived northern strength—one that today’s Arctic thawing is diminishing. Relying on his extensive travels in the region studying its geography and inhabitants, he assessed that in a potential conflict Russia could be “bottled up” on three sides, but that the north was an “independent, continuous and all-Russian coastline, unassailable by anyone.” Indeed, while World War II was devastating to the Soviet Union, the frozen north did provide an unassailable border. Smolka had identified an important component relevant to Russia’s present-day strategy in the High North. Russia’s Arctic border—the world’s longest national coastline—traditionally was considered impenetrable to invasion, but now the opening of the Arctic heightens the sense of paranoia that characterizes Russia’s views about potential invasions and has led to increased militarization in the region.

The 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty exemplified the spirit of international cooperation that has been a feature of the modern Arctic. Yet, not so long after it first was signed, growing wariness of Germany and the Soviet Union motivated the next round of Arctic diplomacy and military cooperation. The United States

U.S. strategic interests in the Arctic—including economic, military, and geopolitical—will increase as regional activity rises. The U.S. Navy must be prepared.
and Canada signed the Ogdensburg Agreement in August 1940 to provide for closer defense cooperation against airborne threats emanating from the polar region. Although devised even as another world war was engulfing the globe, it established a Permanent Joint Board on Defense that was intended to outlive the conflagration, which became important later as wariness of Soviet Communism grew and the Cold War emerged.

In June 1942, the Japanese bombed U.S. bases at Dutch Harbor and Fort Mears in Alaska and seized the Aleutian islands of Attu and Kiska, making the Aleutians the only World War II battleground where U.S. soil suffered foreign occupation. The Alaska Territory played an important role as a transfer site for executing Lend-Lease Act programs designed to bring desperately needed food, oil, and matériel to American allies during the war.11 The Allies used Arctic routes to resupply the Soviet Union, shipping nearly four million tons of cargo through the Barents Sea and nearly five hundred thousand tons through the Bering Strait during the war.12 German forces, also recognizing the strategic value of the High North, established naval and air bases in Norway after their successful invasion in April 1940.

Alaska’s strategic value prompted the construction of the Alaska-Canadian Highway and other significant infrastructure projects during World War II. The war made an enormous impact on Alaska’s population; thousands of people moved north to support the war effort, and many remained afterward. By 1945, the military population had skyrocketed to nearly sixty thousand, from around five hundred in 1940.13 Alaska’s total population in 1950 was nearly double its 1940 population of 129,000.14 The military expansion in Alaska during World War II, which was extended by the onset of the Cold War, fueled the state’s economic growth; by 1955, uniformed military personnel made up nearly a quarter of the population, and as much as 80 percent of Alaskan employment was related to the defense industry.15

During the Cold War, Alaska was key to implementing a so-called damage-limitation strategy to deter a potential Soviet nuclear attack against the United States. In theory, under such strategies nuclear attacks are deterred by providing the capability to limit the damage they could wreak sufficiently to render them strategically pointless. This would be achieved by providing an air defense robust enough to destroy a substantial portion of Soviet nuclear bombers and missiles before they reached the continental United States (CONUS). Alaska was (and remains) ideally situated to provide early warning of attacks against the United States from the Soviet Union (and Russia today) because the shortest air routes between the two countries cut across the Arctic Ocean. (It is instructive to reinforce this fact using a globe or by looking at a polar projection instead of the standard Mercator one.) Once the Arctic was deemed vulnerable to Soviet nuclear
bombers, the Distant Early Warning (i.e., DEW) Line—consisting of more than fifty radar and communication stations stretched across three thousand miles—was established to allow the Strategic Air Command (SAC) to respond appropriately to any threat.16

In 1957, the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD)—a combined U.S.-Canadian defense organization—assumed responsibility for continental air defense, focusing on Soviet threats from the polar region. Technological developments shifted the focus of defense efforts from bomber attacks toward ICBM threats. Alaska hosted one of NORAD's first ballistic-missile early-warning stations, designed to provide approximately fifteen minutes' warning of a missile attack against CONUS. The U.S. Arctic region became strategically critical for identifying inbound Soviet bombers and missiles and providing an opportunity for defense in depth against nuclear attack.

U.S. naval leadership in exploring the Arctic again became global news when Nautilus completed its record-breaking voyage, becoming the first submarine to circumnavigate the globe under the polar ice cap. On 3 August 1958, the boat's captain, Commander William R. Anderson, USN, addressed his crewmembers at the historic moment they reached the North Pole: “For the world, our country, and the Navy—the North Pole.” Once Nautilus was clear of the ice pack, the message “Nautilus 90 North” was relayed in Morse code to President Dwight D. Eisenhower via a Navy radio station in Hawaii. This demonstration by the nuclear-powered submarine made it clear that extensive under-ice operations were possible. Indeed, as Commander Robert D. McWethy, USN, one of the Navy's early advocates for the value of submarine operations in the Arctic to monitor the Soviet Union, noted in 1958, “The ice pack in the Arctic Ocean region lends itself to exploitation by submarine.”17 Commander Anderson later would envision the maritime shipping potential of the region, considering the shorter maritime route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. However, he did not anticipate a thawing Arctic, instead predicting a future in which cargo-laden submarines shipped goods along the Arctic route.18 Like many Arctic endeavors, his vision of submarine cargo vessels never was realized in a region that continually proves to be important strategically but challenging operationally.

Nautilus’s notable achievement of sailing successfully under the ice cap elicited great pride from Americans at the height of the Cold War—especially since the Soviets were pulling ahead in the space race. Its accomplishment highlighted American naval ingenuity and demonstrated to the Soviets that American submarines could operate in their icy back yard. In 1959, USS Skate (SSN 578) sailed north with the mission of breaking through the thick polar ice. Skate’s captain, Commander James F. Calvert, reflecting on the perilous task, claimed that his
crewmembers were “immune to fear and desperation” as a result of their training and their trust in one another.\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Nautilus’s} and \textit{Skate’s} polar successes built on American inventor Simon Lake’s early efforts to develop submarines capable of “navigating in water covered by surface ice.” Indeed, the Lake-designed submarine \textit{Protector} became the first submarine to cruise under, and to surface through, sea ice, in 1903, off the coast of Newport, Rhode Island.\textsuperscript{20} The submarine’s success attracted attention, and five years later, in 1908, the Lake-designed submarine \textit{Kefal}, built for tsarist Russia, became the first Russian submarine to surface through ice, near Vladivostok.\textsuperscript{21}

The Arctic saw a dramatic increase in military operations during the Cold War, primarily conducted by submarines. Soviet and U.S. submarine activity during the Cold War was robust, although details largely remain classified. U.S. submarines were tasked with tracking Soviet missile submarines from their northern bases on the Kola Peninsula east of Finland into Arctic waters, whose ice cover provided exceptional shelter from detection. The Arctic remained a critical strategic region throughout the Cold War, including playing a part in President Richard M. Nixon’s “madman theory” of deterrence. This theory originated with the nuclear brinkmanship practiced by President Eisenhower and was designed to sow doubt regarding the degree of irrationality and volatility that should be attributed to the United States. The intent was to diminish a potential Soviet provocation by raising the possibility of a stronger U.S. retaliation than Soviet leaders expected. To demonstrate both capability and unpredictability, SAC flew nuclear-armed airborne-alert flights over the Arctic Circle.\textsuperscript{22}

In December 1971, Henry A. Kissinger, then assistant to the president for national security affairs (i.e., national security advisor) under Nixon, promulgated a national security decision memorandum on U.S. Arctic policy. The memorandum stated that “the President has decided that the United States will support the sound and rational development of the Arctic, guided by the principle of minimizing any adverse effects to the environment; will promote mutually beneficial international cooperation in the Arctic; and will at the same time provide for the protection of essential security interests in the Arctic.”\textsuperscript{23} It further stated that these security interests included preservation of the principle of freedom of the seas and of airspace. The strategic importance of the Arctic region—primarily owing to the potential flight paths of strategic bombers and ICBMs—finally had warranted issuance of a defined U.S. Arctic policy. Yet the policy also reflected the growing understanding that the region was important for more than just strategic defense. Concern for environmental issues in the Arctic prompted the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears among the United States, the Soviet Union, Norway, Denmark, and Canada. Thus, scientific cooperation in the region continued despite ongoing strategic tensions.
The Arctic, in fact, long has seen the juxtaposition of cooperation and competition. Following Nixon’s efforts in the region, national attention largely turned elsewhere, although the Arctic remained strategically vital for early warning of ICBM threats. Then, in the 1980s, the Reagan administration redoubled American efforts to attain a strategic advantage over the Soviet Union, particularly in the maritime domain. The Maritime Strategy charted a bold new course for the Navy. Secretary of the Navy Lehman and Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral James D. Watkins, USN, proposed an innovative forward global strategy, in which the Arctic played a small but important role. With contributions from brilliant strategists such as Captain Peter M. Swartz, USN (now retired), the strategy was designed and implemented to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that the U.S. Navy and allied forces had the ability to defeat the Soviet navy in a potential conflict and strike hard into the Soviet homeland—namely, the Soviets’ strategic bastions in the High North. Improving the Navy’s ability to operate in the difficult region was critical to pressing the Soviets and deterring aggression through a cost-imposing strategy. This approach helped lead to the ultimate downfall of the Soviet Union.

This concept led to Exercise OCEAN VENTURE in August–October 1981, which brought together from fifteen nations about 120,000 personnel, 250 ships, and a thousand aircraft. The Navy exercised offensive and sea-control operations north of the Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom gap—through which Arctic-based Soviet fleets and ballistic-missile submarines would have to pass to break out into the North Atlantic to threaten NATO forces. Sustained operations in these frigid waters posed significant challenges to the naval forces, with sailors confronting reduced visibility, subzero temperatures, dangerous icing conditions, and freezing of equipment. These challenges complicated war fighting and made it more difficult for participating ships and aircraft to fulfill their missions. Using innovative tactics to overcome both the Arctic conditions and the challenges embedded in the exercise scenario, the fleet succeeded in sailing to within striking distance of Murmansk—the heart of the Soviet strategic-submarine fleet. Although the U.S. fleet had operated in the Arctic before, the principles of the developing strategy called for allied surface ships to operate in northern latitudes more frequently to balance the routine presence there of Soviet naval forces. Doing so would force Soviet planners to reconsider their own force deployments to ensure they had enough
assets available to protect their strategic bastions, which was vital to the cost-imposition strategy.

As the new strategy expanded the priority of Arctic naval operations, the Assistant Deputy CNO for Surface Warfare observed in 1985 that the Navy’s “limited operations in the Arctic have revealed a number of problems that must be overcome if we are to successfully send our ships into these waters on a routine basis.” Therefore the Navy established an Arctic / Cold Weather Program for Surface Ships to provide the fleet with instructions and hardware to operate effectively in the northernmost latitudes. The 1988 *U.S. Navy Cold Weather Handbook for Surface Ships* was published to establish procedures for Arctic operations; it provided guidance on everything from Arctic meteorological conditions to maneuvering in sea ice. It even noted the importance of ensuring excellent dental health prior to cold-weather operations, lest the thermal stresses on teeth from drinking hot coffee after being outside cause cracking!

While the Navy’s surface community was improving its ability to operate in the challenging Arctic region, underneath the seas its submarines remained dominant. During the Cold War, the Arctic quickly became a submarine playground, with the Russians deploying their ballistic-missile submarines into protected launch bastions in the High North. To operate in or close to Russia’s Arctic submarine bastions, the United States needed attack submarines that could operate effectively under the ice pack while eluding detection themselves. This required a significant investment in both infrastructure and training. The *Sturgeon*-class submarines were designed for the Arctic environment, with systems capable of prolonged operation in extreme cold, top and bottom sounders to enable navigation under the ice, and a hardened sail that worked as an “ice pick” to allow the boat to break through ice.

Crews that deployed in the Arctic Ocean and High North underwent months of predeployment training, and the submarines were assigned civilian ice pilots with significant experience navigating those waters. The training included theoretical, scientific, and practical exercises that introduced crews who were accustomed to much warmer waters to the idiosyncrasies of the general Arctic environment, such as differences in temperature and salinity—and the near-constant presence of bearded seals, whose moans could be heard through the hull and in the sonar.

For example, changes in salinity were not to be taken lightly on platforms that approached eight thousand tons submerged. A submarine’s neutral buoyancy is obtained by trimming the ship and loading or pumping off seawater ballast from trim tanks to maintain the diving officer’s ever-elusive “zero bubble,” or optimal trim. However, as a submarine approaches areas of melting
ice (which produces fresh water), the density of the ocean water changes, so buoyancy does as well. In such waters, watch teams had to be (and still must be) alert at all times and take quick action to avoid a sudden “depth excursion.” Keeping track of such environmental factors is essential to safe operation in the Arctic environment.

Likewise, sailors became proficient in wearing cold-weather gear and avoiding the perils of frostbite and hypothermia when exposed to Arctic conditions, whether on the bridge or out exploring on the ice. Commercial hunting ammunition was provided to personnel to defend themselves against any rogue polar bears or arctic foxes; the latter often suffered from rabies, which made their behavior erratic and unpredictable.

Operating a submarine in the open ocean is challenging enough for a well-trained crew, but in the Arctic crews did so in an environment in which the hazards above them when submerged were not limited to adversary aircraft and surface ships. Floating icebergs pose a danger owing to the considerable depth to which they extend beneath the surface. Additionally, surface ice can come in the form of either multiyear or first-year ice; the latter tends to be less difficult to break through. As part of the seasonal ice zone, the marginal ice zone, extending from the ice edge into the ice pack, varies in width from sixty to 120 miles. Simply put, ice is variable, and the uncertainties involved pose significant operational challenges to vessels operating both above and below the ice, requiring frequent updating of procedures. For instance, in temperate climates a submarine can refresh its air by raising its snorkel mast and ventilating, but this is problematic when there is pack ice overhead. In sum, standard operating procedures were no longer “standard” under the ice, so submariners had to find new ways to do normal things.

Navigation in the Arctic proved challenging as well. Magnetic compasses are useless at the polar ice cap, as crews discovered during the Cold War. Before GPS, existing radio-navigation systems used to obtain a ship’s position, such as LORAN-C and Omega, were unavailable in the Arctic. Even the service’s pioneering Navy Navigation Satellite System (known as NAVSAT) was unreliable in high latitudes, despite relying on satellites. These limitations resulted in the navigator’s best friend becoming the Mk 19 gyrocompass; a warship’s navigator and quartermasters would monitor the Mk 19 carefully as the boat approached the pole, hoping that the gyro did not tumble and lose its ability to provide a direction for the ship’s track.

Sailors faced many challenges to operating in the Arctic back then, more so than they do when operating up north today. But our Navy was innovative and determined, and the Soviet Union could not help but take note. Therefore, to protect their Arctic submarine bastions, the Soviets sought to build stealthier and
more-capable submarines to counter the threat of American fast-attack submarines in their back yard.

Although the Navy became proficient at operating in the High North even on the surface, the end of the Cold War left the Arctic largely to those operating in the undersea domain. The figure shows the members of the wardroom of USS Sea Devil (SSN 664) when the boat was surfaced in a polynya—an opening in the sea ice—on the first visit of one of the authors to the polar region. Fifteen years after the author’s first voyage to the High North, his second deployment, for LANTSUBICEX 2001, was less stressful. Training was about the same and an ice pilot was assigned to ensure safe Arctic operations. However, it was remarkable how much less ice there was in both the marginal ice zone and within the traditional demarcation of the pack-ice zone. Similarly, much to the author’s chagrin, man-made pollution, particularly in the form of plastics, was much more noticeable—a disconcerting shock amid the serene, azure-blue waters of the Arctic.
THE ARCTIC TODAY
The Arctic now resides at the intersection of rapidly evolving geopolitical, economic, climate, and security trends. Although the world’s polar sailors long characterized the region with the adage “High North, low tension,” today’s era of competition is casting doubt on the continued applicability of this catchphrase; instead, the Arctic is being catapulted into key security discussions. With just about four million inhabitants, the Arctic region accounts for only a small fraction of the global population, but its strategic location and economic potential and the stakeholders involved mean it has a disproportionate impact on global security. Despite including the world’s smallest ocean, the Arctic region has the potential to connect nearly 90 percent of the world’s economy. What happens in the Arctic will not stay there. Melting Arctic ice is causing significant worldwide changes, particularly in sea level / depth and salinity. The fragile Arctic ecosystem is changing as temperatures rise, bringing new fishing stocks north even as some regional flora and fauna face endangerment. Climate and technological trends are enabling greater access to abundant natural resources while also having a profound impact on human and military security. Geopolitical trends are shaping the region further, in such a way that the Arctic no longer will remain an isolated region of cooperation; some states will engage in competitive strategies to maximize their national interests.

Russia
Russia has pursued an aggressive strategy in the Arctic. About half the Arctic coastline and Arctic population lie within Russia’s borders, and the country is increasingly reliant on the Arctic for economic benefits, from which it derives about 10 percent of its gross domestic product and 20 percent of its exports. Russia established a joint strategic command (somewhat similar to the U.S. geographic combatant commands, but with boundaries aligned to Russian territory) for the Arctic in 2014, has refurbished old Soviet-era military bases, and has built fourteen new airfields and sixteen deepwater ports in the region. Russia has modernized both the Northern Fleet and its Arctic naval bases and has shifted additional military assets to the region, bringing the share of the country’s modern weapons, military, and special equipment in the Arctic zone from 41 percent in 2014 to 59 percent in 2019. The Northern Fleet remains Russia’s principal entity responsible for strategic deterrence, and it is committed to protecting the Arctic bastions to ensure it retains a credible retaliatory capability. Alongside Russia’s established defensive capabilities, which include the advanced S-400 missile system, the country also is pursuing more-disconcerting offensive capabilities, as demonstrated by its stated intent to station the first squadron of nuclear-capable Kinzhal-missile-equipped MiG-31K fighters on the Kola Peninsula.
Russia also has invested heavily in infrastructure, including building more than forty icebreakers to service its Arctic ports and towns, nearly a dozen of which are nuclear powered. The naval icebreaker *Ivan Papanin*—equipped to carry the highly capable Kalibr antiship cruise missile—was launched in October 2019 to much fanfare, which noted the ship’s multiple roles as a tug, icebreaker, and patrol vessel. These icebreakers will be employed heavily along the Northern Sea Route, which connects Asia and Europe across Russia’s northern border. Russia claims that the extent of its exclusive economic zone includes all the waters of the Northern Sea Route; even further, it considers the entire route to fall within its historic internal waters. Relying on article 234 of the 1984 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (known as UNCLOS), it justifies setting rules and regulations for the route—an exercise of authority that the United States and other nations do not recognize. Russia promotes the route as a shorter alternative to the traditional commercial sea route that goes through the Suez Canal and Strait of Malacca, although treacherous weather and sea conditions and water-depth limitations diminish the northern route’s attractiveness. Work along the route has provided Russia’s commercial and naval fleets extensive Arctic operational experience.

As of 1 January 2021, Russia elevated the Northern Fleet to constitute its own military district, the first time a fleet has held status equal to that of the existing four predominantly land-focused military districts (designated West, South, East, and Central). Military districts provide administrative and operational headquarters for Russian armed forces. The new district is tasked with ensuring Russian interests and territorial integrity in the Arctic, including Russia’s Arctic coast and the Northern Sea Route. Admiral Aleksandr A. Moiseyev, Russia’s Northern Fleet commander, noted that the joint strategic exercise ZAPAD, held annually in a different military district, most recently in September 2021, will continue to serve as the fleet’s main training effort. Russia’s prioritization of the Northern Fleet indicates that in the High North the Russian navy will have the primary responsibility for upholding Russian interests, in contrast to the prioritization that ground forces receive in the rest of the nation.

**China**

Russia is striving to hold on to its commanding position in the Arctic domain, but China is increasingly active in the region. The latter country long has maintained a research station on Svalbard, and increasingly it has invested in Arctic maritime capabilities, including building two icebreakers and making plans for additional
icebreaking capability. China’s interest in the Arctic has been rising for years; its January 2018 Arctic policy white paper introduces China as a near Arctic state—an undefined term—and makes it clear that China intends to pursue interests in the region, including adding to its Belt and Road Initiative a “Polar Silk Road” component, as a northern route to European markets.38

Western sanctions against Russia for its annexation of Crimea in 2014 have motivated increased cooperation between China and Russia in the Arctic, including significant Chinese investment in Russia’s Yamal Liquefied Natural Gas joint venture. The Chinese drilling rig Nan Hai VIII (also known as Nan Hai Ba Hao), in partnership with Gazprom (Russia’s state-owned energy corporation), has explored fields in the Kara Sea, discovering some of the region’s largest gas fields. To bring liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the Yamal terminal, the Christophe de Margerie-class icebreaking LNG carriers were constructed at South Korea’s Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering in a joint venture among Sovcomflot (Russia’s largest shipping company), Teekay Tankers of Bermuda (in partnership with China LNG Shipping), the Greek concern Dynagas, and Mitsui OSK Lines of Japan (in partnership with China Shipping Group).39

China has invested in infrastructure throughout the Arctic, with particular attention to natural resources and Arctic infrastructure. China has demonstrated special interest in the shipping potential of the region, sending a small number of commercial vessels through the Northern Sea Route each year, including fourteen in 2021, according to Russia’s Northern Sea Route Administration. A three-month expedition in the summer of 2021 by the indigenously built Chinese icebreaker Xue Long 2 marked China’s twelfth Arctic deployment for scientific research, and provided China ample additional opportunity to study the region’s characteristics to guide future civilian and military pursuits in the Arctic.40

Skepticism from Others
Although Russia and China are pursuing ambitious plans in the Arctic, the difficulties of operating in the region have tempered global commercial interest. While President Putin set a goal of 80 million tons of shipping through the Northern Sea Route by 2024, 2021 saw just 35 million tons. So far, shipments predominantly consist of natural resources heading to Asian and European markets rather than transit shipping of cargo, which totaled just 1.5 million tons in 2021 (compared with more than a billion tons through the Suez Canal).41

Yet there is no doubt that the thawing ice will continue to have effects. As new shipping corridors become more viable, maritime traffic increasingly will be drawn to the region. Fishing stocks will continue to move northward, and other natural resources will be explored.
THE OPENING ARCTIC IS A MARITIME DOMAIN

U.S. strategic interests in the Arctic—including economic, military, and geopolitical—will increase as regional activity rises. The U.S. Navy must be prepared to uphold national interests, demonstrate credible presence, and ensure freedom of navigation through the region. As the Arctic Ocean opens, strategic competition for regional sea control will increase. The Navy must be ready.

The Department of the Navy will continue to fulfill a critical role in the Arctic efforts of the Department of Defense. With their newly released Arctic Blueprint, the Navy and Marine Corps have taken a forward-leaning approach to improving regional presence, partnerships, and capabilities. The U.S. Navy needs to build on the lessons of the past to provide insights on how to compete more effectively in the High North, uphold international norms, and prepare to counter the increasingly aggressive polar ambitions of Russia and China. And it must prepare to defend American economic and strategic interests even more directly, if necessary.

Although not yet “full speed ahead” in the Arctic, the Navy clearly is learning. Inspired by the 1981 Exercise OCEAN VENTURE, Exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2018 provided significant learning opportunities, as more than fifty thousand sailors, soldiers, airmen, and Marines on nearly seventy warships, 250 aircraft, and ten thousand tracked or rolling vehicles, including assets from every NATO ally and two partner nations, conducted an article 5 collective-defense scenario in Norway and nearby Arctic waters.

The exercise, which was enabled by Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis’s “dynamic force employment” concept that sent the Truman carrier strike group north, was highly successful, but it also demonstrated the need to sharpen skill sets for those contending with harsh northern environments. No U.S. aircraft carrier had operated in the Arctic in nearly three decades. The weather was challenging, so aircraft were launching at the margins of permissible conditions: twelve-to-eighteen-foot seas and high winds. Yet sailors on board were innovative and found creative solutions to problems. When CNO Admiral John M. Richardson embarked in USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), he noticed Louisville Slugger baseball bats lined up in a passageway; curious, he inquired what they were for. One of the enterprising sailors explained that the bats were critically necessary—for breaking ice off the deck. But while TRIDENT JUNCTURE demonstrated the ingenuity of USN forces, it also revealed the complexity of Arctic operations. As USS Gunston Hall (LSD 44) transited through heavy seas from Iceland to Norway, the ship sustained damage to its well deck and several sailors were injured; instead of completing the exercise, Gunston Hall returned to Reykjavík and subsequently to the United States, escorted by USS New York (LPD 21) as a precautionary measure.

Aboard Truman, Rear Admiral Eugene H. Black III, the strike group commander,
noted the key lesson learned: “You’ve got to be agile.” The experience reinforced that extremely cold temperatures, frequent icing conditions, high sea states, unpredictable weather patterns, limited daylight, and greater distances to ports and emergency divert fields make even basic operations more dangerous in the Arctic than elsewhere.

The U.S. Navy must do more to remain competitive in the Arctic, given that Russia has maintained a clear focus on achieving dominance in a region that is strategically located but incredibly difficult to operate in—for both sides. Hostile environmental conditions demand updated operational procedures, cold-weather-tested gear, and special training to ensure not only war-fighting proficiency but survival.

Russia has been improving its military capabilities and adding bases in the region. In late April 2020, Russian paratroopers demonstrated operational proficiency in the challenging environment as they jumped out of an Il-76 transport plane at a height of ten thousand meters above the Eastern Hemisphere’s northernmost archipelago, Russia’s Franz Josef Land, then conducted three days of combat-training missions on Aleksandra Land, one of the archipelago’s largest islands. There, at 80 degrees north latitude, Russia’s Arctic forces have expanded Soviet-era Arctic infrastructure and built the world’s northernmost military complex. The expansion of the Nagurskoye air base was designed to better secure approaches to the Russian coastline, protect natural resources, and improve monitoring of Northern Sea Route traffic. The base includes a new 2,500-meter runway. It also is home to an S-300 antiaircraft missile system, as well as to troops equipped for Arctic warfare with snowmobiles, helicopters, radar systems, and unmanned aerial vehicles designed for the harsh environment. General Valery V. Gerasimov, Russia’s chief of general staff, has noted that the airport also can host the new hypersonic Kinzhal air-launched ballistic missile. The operating range of the missile is reported to be more than a thousand miles, which means it can hold many European capitals at risk with either a conventional or a nuclear-armed warhead. Indeed, Russia carefully is constructing a series of bases in the region to ensure its coverage of the country’s northern flank as well as the international waters of the Northern Sea Route.

While there is no issue with an independent state enacting defensive measures to protect its sovereignty, Russia’s buildup includes offensive capabilities that could hold not only the United States but also its regional allies and partners at risk. Russia’s aggressive actions elsewhere—particularly in Ukraine—and its clear prioritization of dominating the Arctic compel the United States to ensure its capability to counter Russia in any domain.

In May 2020, a couple of weeks after Russia’s April 2020 exercise, a surface action group (SAG) of four USN warships and a British Royal Navy frigate patrolled
the Barents Sea, the first such combined patrol since the Cold War. This was meant to signal to the Russians that—as one of the authors explained, in his capacity as commander of U.S. naval forces in Europe—the Arctic was “nobody’s lake.” He went on to warn Russia and China that access to the Arctic should be free and fair. The Barents Sea SAG displayed the strengthening U.S. commitment to operating in the Arctic, and USN warships operated in the Arctic consistently from May to November 2020.

NATO’s Exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE and other USN and U.S. Marine Corps exercises in the region have improved the services’ capabilities to operate in arduous conditions while demonstrating the need to build further on those foundations. The complexity involved in conducting military exercises in the region is increasing as other Arctic states prepare to protect their interests against potential security challenges.

During UMKA-21 in March 2021, Russia coordinated a first-ever surfacing of three ballistic-missile submarines within three hundred meters of one another off Aleksandra Land in the Franz Josef Land archipelago. The submarines carried a combined forty-eight ballistic missiles. Given the complexity and dangers of operating in such an environment, the simultaneous surfacing demonstrated a high level of crew training. The exercise—Russia’s most advanced military drill in the Arctic yet—included forty-three events that took place at Franz Josef Land and in nearby waters. Admiral Nikolay A. Yevmenov, commander of the Russian navy, announced that “[u]nder the leadership of the Headquarters of the Navy, the integrated Arctic expedition UMKA-2021 is being conducted. For the first time, in accordance with a single concept and plan, complex combat training, research, and practical measures of various directions is carried out in the circumpolar region.”

Since the region is attracting increasing global interest from states and corporations alike, the Navy must prepare to uphold U.S. strategic interests in the region, particularly protecting the homeland and ensuring freedom of navigation. While Russia long has been the most formidable Arctic state with which the United States and like-minded allies have contended, there is increasing alarm over China’s keen desire to be present in the Arctic. China’s issuance of its 2018 Arctic white paper, participation in Arctic forums, conduct of scientific research, and investment in the High North have demonstrated a firm commitment to exploring the region’s economic potential. Scientific research conducted from its Svalbard research
station and during icebreaker deployments yields data that will benefit both its commercial and military ambitions in the region. The Arctic deployment of China’s indigenously built (though Finnish-designed) icebreaker *Xue Long 2* in July 2020 marked China’s eleventh Arctic research expedition. It covered more than twelve thousand nautical miles and conducted hydrographic surveys and mapping of the ocean bottom—dual-use research that could signify preparation either to conduct natural-resource exploration or send Chinese submarines north.

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

Mariners throughout history have attested to the immense difficulty of operating in far-northern latitudes. The learning curve for Arctic operations is steep; mistakes can be costly. It is imperative that the U.S. Navy prepare now to be able to operate in a region that is increasingly important; to do so, the service must draw on the lessons of the past.

The Navy Department’s January 2021 *Arctic Blueprint* offers a thoughtful strategic approach to the region, and if the Navy and Marine Corps achieve the goals it lays out they will be positioned well for a thawing Arctic. The publication establishes three primary objectives: maintain enhanced presence, strengthen cooperative partnerships, and build a more capable naval force. The strategy provides a broad overview of each objective, and the relevant recommendations are both sound and necessary; the authors will not repeat them here.

However, there are key areas on which naval forces should focus in the Arctic, and as the strategy is implemented we must continue to do so if we are to achieve the stated objectives fully. Our survey of the Navy’s history in the Arctic suggests six areas of focus for naval forces today as they prepare to meet growing operational demands in the region.

*Prepare for the Cold.* The history of the Arctic is replete with stories of the devastating effects of the region’s notoriously harsh environment. Although the ice is diminishing, the Arctic remains hostile. Sailors must prepare for intense cold—dropping to minus forty degrees Celsius in winter—that hinders the functionality of machinery and poses dangers to personnel.

The increasingly open waters of the Arctic have amplified the unpredictability of ice floes; the rapid melting of one-year ice can cause large blocks of thicker multiyear ice to flow into sea-lanes, with conditions varying seasonally. Furthermore, weather conditions compound the challenges posed by ice, as severe storms often further hinder transits. In the summer, heavy fog is common, obscuring visibility and requiring vessels to slow down to avoid colliding with unexpected ice and one another.

The nearly four decades that have elapsed since the Navy published its *Cold Weather Handbook for Surface Ships* have seen extraordinary and rapid changes
to the Arctic environment and dramatic advances in maritime and cold-weather technology, and there has been a significant evolution in naval operations and procedures since the Cold War. These developments demand a comprehensive update to the handbook so that naval forces can invest in the right gear and focus their training to enable successful cold-weather operations.

**Innovate.** Early Arctic explorers were known for their resilience and innovation. When something went wrong—which it often did—the most successful explorers relied on their training and knowledge to apply or invent effective solutions. As Commander Calvert of USS *Skate* noted, to succeed in the harsh Arctic environment it is essential for crewmembers to have both the appropriate training and trust in one another.

The Navy should enhance support of similar innovation by sailors operating in the High North via enhanced training and professional military education opportunities. It also should reward innovators—including by forgiving mistakes made in the course of innovations attempted in good faith.

**Everyone Is a Scientist.** Intrepid naval officers who first explored the Arctic quickly realized the importance of understanding better the environment in which they were operating; early journal articles on the region are filled with scientific findings developed from naval voyages. Yet the Arctic remains one of the least understood regions of the world.

To improve understanding of the Arctic’s meteorological and hydrographic conditions, all Navy assets operating in the region should collect data, just as *Nautilus* and *Skate* did on their early voyages to the North Pole. Embarking Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command (referred to as METOC) detachments on Arctic-bound vessels would help to ensure rigorous observation of the Arctic environment. Data collected should be compiled into carefully managed databases, both to preserve historical records and to enable trend analyses to inform units operating in the region in the future.

**Enhance Presence.** As strategic competition among great powers intensifies, the Navy must protect national interests, reassure allies and partners, and provide a credible deterrence. Operations in the High North should be coordinated with allies and partners to achieve these goals. In particular, the U.S. Navy can learn from countries such as Norway and Denmark, which have the expertise that comes from centuries of Arctic maritime experience. Allies such as the United Kingdom will continue to sail alongside the United States into the frigid Arctic waters, and enhancing our exercises in the region will continue to improve our collective ability to operate there.

Key Arctic enabling capabilities such as icebreakers are “high-demand, low-density” assets, so the Navy must seek creative solutions, including by training
crews of surface ships and providing the technology necessary for them to operate their vessels safely while sailing in icy Arctic waters. The Danes and Norwegians have proved that non-ice-strengthened ships can operate safely in the region. Leasing civilian icebreaking assets could be considered to fill gaps until the U.S. Coast Guard’s new polar security cutters are operational; delivery of the first new U.S. heavy icebreaker has slipped to 2025. Creative options, such as a combination of manned and unmanned platforms, can enhance the American presence in the Arctic further.

**Allies and Partners Matter.** Early Arctic expeditions were known for their reliance on indigenous partners, owing to the latter’s knowledge and understanding of the region’s challenging environment. Just as Rear Admiral Peary relied on Inuit expertise during his successful mission to the North Pole, today’s Navy should increase exercises, operations, and personnel exchanges with Arctic allies and partners to enhance understanding of regional operations while building interoperability.

**Cooperation Is Essential.** The arduous environmental conditions of the Arctic long have made operations in the region conducive to cooperation. Whether sharing data from scientific missions or conducting SAR operations, mariners in the High North long have worked together to survive. Even among states engaged in great-power competition, it is necessary to build on cooperative mechanisms that can enhance transparency and reduce the potential for misunderstanding or misperception.

The U.S. Navy has an impressive history of operating in the Arctic. Admiral Peary, Admiral Byrd, and Captain Anderson achieved significant Arctic milestones, but their successes were enabled by the contributions of sailors such as Commander Henry Glass and Lieutenant Danenhower, who meticulously documented Arctic conditions during earlier Arctic expeditions. Given the complexities of today’s dynamic strategic environment, it is imperative that the Navy be prepared to operate in any domain—even the harshest region in the world.

The opening of the Arctic Ocean and the increasing interest in the High North by Arctic and non-Arctic states alike demand the application of past lessons to enhance operations in the future. To secure America’s long-term strategic interests while supporting the broader goal of collective defense among allies and partners, it is critical for the Navy to examine the lessons from its Arctic history and apply them to ensure maritime superiority.
NOTES

Authors’ note: Any factual descriptions or assertions regarding Arctic submarine operations that are not otherwise documented reflect the career knowledge and personal experiences of Admiral Foggo.


9. Ibid.

10. Canada also has a claim to the world’s longest border when the coasts of its many, heavily indented islands are counted.

11. Formally, Act to Promote the Defense of the United States (Pub. L. No. 77-11, 55 Stat., p. 31 [1941]).


32. Executive Order of the President of the Russian Federation on the Strategy for Developing the Russian Arctic Zone and Ensuring National Security until 2035, 26 October 2020, in authors’ possession.


36. Humpert, “Russia Elevates Importance of Northern Fleet.”


41. Malte Humpert, “Cargo Volume on Northern Sea Route Reaches 35m Tons, Record Number of Transits,” High North News, 26 January 2022, highnorthnews.com/.

42. U.S. Navy Dept., A Blue Arctic.

43. Under the North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington, DC, on 4 April 1949, the NATO allies codified collective defense in article 5, stating: “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

“Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.”


46. Megan Eckstein, “Truman CSG: Arctic Strike Group Operations Required Focus on

47. Nilsen, “Northern Fleet Commander Says *ZAPAD-2021*.”


54. People's Republic of China, “China’s Arctic Policy.”


56. U.S. Navy Dept., *A Blue Arctic*.

57. “All about Sea Ice,” *National Snow and Ice Data Center*, 3 April 2020, nsidc.org/.

When in April 2021 USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53) conducted a freedom-of-navigation operation (FONOP) in India’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ), a section of India’s highly vocal strategic community erupted with indignation and criticism. Steeped in the precepts of nonalignment, these passionate defenders of India’s strategic autonomy and modern purveyors of a Nehruvian foreign policy accused the Seventh Fleet of violating India’s domestic law.

The U.S. Navy (USN) actions raised significant doubts regarding India’s capability to safeguard its maritime interests. Some even argued that such FONOPs diminished India’s credibility to deter China’s encroachment into India’s maritime zone of influence. After all, the legitimacy of India’s position hinged on an equal application of the law to all, whether friend or foe. FONOPs challenged two salient aspirations of Nehruvian foreign policy: Indian leadership of the South Asian region and recognition of the same by other great powers. The Indian government’s pallid response to this unwanted foray into the country’s “sphere of influence” could signal to the region that New Delhi has forfeited its leadership role to Washington. As one commentator argued, by “encouraging the United States to assume a dominant role in South Asia, India might be on a path to relinquish its security commitments in the neighborhood.”

The furor the Nehruvians raised even rubbed raw the sensibilities of some of the more-pragmatic members of the Indian strategic community, who were equally embarrassed by the purported wounding of their country’s ego. Not only do Indian and American conceptions of the “rules-based
order” in the Indo-Pacific differ substantially, but, as Admiral Arun Prakash warned, instead of “deterring adversaries” FONOPs can “alienate friends” in the Indo-Pacific. For Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan, the FONOP in India’s EEZ reflected the propensity of the United States to “shoot itself in the foot,” considering the damage it had done to the otherwise rising trajectory of the bilateral relationship. The incident, therefore, was construed as highly detrimental to the Indo-U.S. strategic partnership.

As if these recriminations were not enough, the “breathtaking inanity” (as Prakash had dubbed it) of the Seventh Fleet’s actions managed to resurrect yet again the haunting memories of American gunboat diplomacy during the 1971 Bangladesh war, when President Nixon dispatched the Seventh Fleet to the Bay of Bengal in support of Pakistan. As Manish Tewari, a senior leader of the main opposition party, the Indian National Congress, observed, “In the fiftieth year of the creation of Bangladesh, to sail a Seventh Fleet vessel in defiance of Indian law through our EEZ, and then advertise it is downright obtuse, if not intended to send out a message to India and the larger Indo-Pacific region.”

Therefore, at stake were not only India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity but also its prestige as a major regional power in the Indian Ocean and the future of the Indo-U.S. strategic partnership.

Yet while the proponents of strategic autonomy and nonalignment within the strategic community wanted the Indian government, led by the right-of-center Bharatiya Janata Party, to save India’s honor and defend its interests, India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) merely conveyed concerns “regarding this passage through our EEZ to the Government of USA through diplomatic channels.” And Admiral Karambir Singh, the chief of naval staff, simultaneously was declaring the capability and intentions of the Indian navy to coordinate and interoperate with the navies of the other Quad countries, of which the United States is one. Seemingly, the Indian government neither shared the humiliation felt and expressed by the analytical community nor appeared to be concerned over the purported violation of India’s territorial integrity, sovereignty, or domestic law—or, for that matter, its material interests and status concerns in the Indian Ocean.

What can explain this dissonance between the positions of India’s highly vocal Nehruvian strategic community and those of the Indian strategic establishment? Or what explains “the enduring reluctance of Delhi’s foreign policy community,” as C. Raja Mohan puts it, to understand the praxis of Indian foreign and national-security policy, both in the Indian Ocean and vis-à-vis its relations with the United States?

The question acquires additional importance when one considers the following facts. First, given that the U.S. Navy has conducted FONOPs in India’s EEZ
regularly since 1992, successive Indian governments—of all ideological dispositions—can be considered complicit in not defending India's interests and honor; the absence of a firm response is not the policy of the current government alone. Second, the Indian government's statement clearly outlined that even though Washington had not notified New Delhi of the drill, the Indian navy “continuously monitored [USN ships] transiting from the Persian Gulf towards the Malacca Straits.” The FONOP was not conducted in secrecy. If the government had wanted to do so, it could have raised the issue diplomatically; and, given how seriously it takes such violations even by friendly navies, it might have “challenged” such navigation physically. Yet New Delhi was interested in doing neither.

The critics within the Indian strategic community fail to account for New Delhi's policies for four principal reasons. First, they underestimate the strength of the realpolitik tradition in India’s foreign and security policies in the Indian Ocean. Irrespective of the idealistic and normative overtones of India's foreign-policy pronouncements—whether on the presence of great-power navies in the Indian Ocean, the question of the so-called Indian Ocean Zone of Peace (IOZP), the matter of Diego Garcia, or, for that matter, the law of the sea—Indian foreign policy always has been highly pragmatic. This pragmatism is engendered by an acknowledgment of the incompatibility between the desirability and the feasibility of India's preferred position, by a similar disconnect regarding attempts to use normative arguments to secure India's material interests, and also by the realization that today's commitments could become tomorrow's constraints. India's strategic community regularly has underestimated New Delhi's “capacity to rework its great power relations to meet India's changing interests and circumstances.”

Second, those in this community misunderstand the relationship between international law and politics. Both the codification and the application of law are determined by what is politically desirable, negotiable, and feasible in a particular historical context. It is politics that determines how the law will be applied and, if need be, altered, depending on the state's interests. India's Maritime Zones Act of 1976, which lays out India's legal position on foreign military presence in the EEZ, is also subject to the vagaries of the country’s political interests. In international politics, the legal tail seldom wags the political dog.

Third, China's rise as a great power in India's immediate neighborhood has shifted New Delhi's motivation fundamentally toward a robust Indo-U.S. strategic partnership. Even during the Cold War, India leveraged the great powers—both the United States and the Soviet Union—to ensure that its security requirements were met, yet while doing so it could continue to feign nonalignment because both great powers were geographically distant in the maritime realm and had no fundamental conflict of interest with India. The rise of China has changed India's geopolitical imperative. For the first time in the history of the Republic of India,
it faces a hostile great power on its immediate borders. In the post–Cold War period, India “bandwagoned” with the United States for economic and military gains; today, however, the issues at stake are much more existential. Both Indian political survival and the avoidance of Chinese hegemony in Asia necessitate a closer alignment with the United States.

Last but not least is the lack of a deeper historical understanding of India’s foreign-policy positions. Any immersive engagement with archival sources reveals the inherent contradictions between India’s foreign-policy pronouncements and its practice, but in the absence of such careful study the analytical community often has erred by taking India’s public declarations as representing its intended policy and its foreign-policy principles as denoting the limits of potential behavior.

However, extensive documentary evidence from Indian archives is now available. Using those resources, along with interviews with government officials, this article aims to explain the above-mentioned dissonance between the students and the practitioners of Indian security policy in the Indian Ocean, especially with regard to the role of the United States in the region. It argues that, unlike those making up a large section of the strategic community, which remains embedded in the Nehruvian rhetoric of nonalignment and strategic autonomy, India’s foreign-policy mandarins and its national-security managers always have adopted a realpolitik approach to security concerns in the Indian Ocean and the involvement of great powers in the region. In doing so, the article also traces the many twists and turns in the Indo-U.S. relationship and explains the current trajectory of the two nations’ burgeoning partnership in the Indian Ocean.

GREAT-POWER PRESENCE AND INDIA’S REALPOLITIK IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

As India and China were engaged in a crisis over eastern Ladakh in July 2020, an aircraft carrier strike group (CSG) led by USS Nimitz (CVN 68) under the U.S. Navy’s Seventh Fleet transited through the Indian Ocean. Nimitz’s foray into the Bay of Bengal and the ensuing passing exercise (known as a PASSEX) with warships from the Indian navy’s Eastern Naval Command hardly was accidental. Irrespective of whether Nimitz’s transit had any direct impact on Beijing’s calculations on the Sino-Indian crisis, it did help to ventilate emotions stirred up by China’s heavy-handedness in the region. China should not commit the mistake of “underestimating the strength of free democracies,” warned then–U.S. Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper.

However, the significance of Nimitz’s passage through the Indian Ocean was far greater. The Seventh Fleet finally had “eclipsed” the emotional baggage weighing on Indo-American relations owing to its past actions. In December
1947  India gains independence, Indian navy established
1958  UNCLOS I held
1960  UNCLOS II held
1962  First assistance to India by USN CSG, during India-China war
1963  U.S. extends operational area of Seventh Fleet to include Indian Ocean; U.S. and India sign port visit MOU
1964  China explodes first nuclear device
1966–69  Britain withdraws naval forces from east of Suez
1967  India extends territorial sea claim to twelve miles
1971  U.S. begins rapprochement with China
1971  Bangladesh war partitions Pakistan; India intervenes in Bangladesh; USS Enterprise CSG enters Bay of Bengal, attempting to coerce cessation
1971  India and USSR conclude treaty of friendship
1971  IOZP proposed in UN General Assembly
1973–82  UNCLOS III held
1974–76  USN aircraft buzz Indian navy ships
1977  India’s Maritime Zones Act goes into effect
1982  UNCLOS completed and ratification begins
1986, 1988  India intervenes in Seychelles/Maldives
1989–92  End of Cold War and USSR
1992  First Exercise MALABAR held, between U.S. and India in Indian Ocean
1992  USN begins regular FONOPs in India’s prospective EEZ
1995  India ratifies and issues declaration on UNCLOS
2007  India, U.S., Japan, and Australia establish the Quad and hold Exercise MALABAR-2007 in Bay of Bengal; China protests
2010–13  The Quad quiescent
2013  India scuttles U.S.-Maldives agreement
2014  PLAN nuclear submarine transits Indian Ocean en route to Pakistan
2017  Members agree to revive Quad
2019  Indian navy forces PLAN research vessel to depart Andaman Sea
2020  Galwan / eastern Ladakh crisis between India and China; USS Nimitz CSG conducts PASSEX with Indian navy in Bay of Bengal
2020  India fosters U.S.-Maldives agreement
2021  USS John Paul Jones CSG conducts FONOP in India’s EEZ

Notes: CSG = carrier strike group; EEZ = exclusive economic zone; FONOP = freedom-of-navigation operation; IOZP = Indian Ocean Zone of Peace; MOU = memorandum of understanding; PASSEX = passing exercise; PLAN = People’s Liberation Army Navy (China); UNCLOS = UN Convention on the Law of the Sea; UNCLOS I, II, III = First, Second, Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea; USN = U.S. Navy; USSR = Soviet Union
1971, President Richard M. Nixon ordered USS *Enterprise* (CVN 65) to sail into the Bay of Bengal to coerce India to cease its intervention in Bangladesh.\(^\text{24}\) Nixon’s gunboat diplomacy could not stop Pakistan’s dismemberment; however, ever since then the Seventh Fleet has retained an infamous reputation in India’s strategic consciousness. Nixon’s actions ensured that New Delhi remained both disagreeable and distrustful regarding any U.S. military presence in the Indian Ocean. And in the post–Cold War period, the incident has provided the reference point for domestic opposition to the strengthening Indo-U.S. strategic partnership. In this context, the show of solidarity by the *Nimitz* CSG during the Galwan crisis was perceived not merely as an act of support for India’s resistance to China but also as granting the Seventh Fleet absolution for the sins committed in December 1971. Even so, against the backdrop of the recent FONOPs, comparisons to the 1971 *Enterprise* incident were back in vogue. For the domestic critics of the Indo-U.S. strategic partnership, Nixon’s gunboat diplomacy remains the gift that simply keeps on giving.

However, considering December 1971 to be the reference point for the Seventh Fleet’s entry into the Indian Ocean—and India’s strategic memory—is erroneous. The Seventh Fleet first was ordered to the Indian Ocean by President John F. Kennedy in November 1962, in response to an explicit request from Indian prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to provide air support against Communist China.\(^\text{25}\) On receiving Nehru’s request for assistance, the “aircraft carrier [USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63)] of the Seventh Fleet was detailed to steam at full speed for the Bay of Bengal.”\(^\text{26}\) However, the war ended before the Seventh Fleet units could arrive in the region.

Although this was the first time since independence that India had welcomed American intervention in the region, the presence of friendly great powers in the Indian Ocean on which New Delhi could bandwagon for the sake of Indian maritime security was part and parcel of the government’s security policy in the Indian Ocean from the very beginning.\(^\text{27}\) In August 1947, the Royal Indian Navy prepared its first planning paper for postindependence India. For Naval Headquarters in New Delhi, “a navy commanding the respect of the world” was not a “luxury” but an “essential” prerequisite for “pre-eminence and leadership” in South and Southeast Asia and for maintaining its “position in world strategy as the focal country of the Indian Ocean.” The navy’s outlook was driven by a Mahanian vision of the service’s role in India’s future wars and the country’s aspiration to take over the British mantle in the Indian Ocean; India’s maritime security could be achieved best by “destroying or neutralising the enemy naval forces and by ensuring that enemy shipping is deprived [of] the use of the seas.”\(^\text{28}\)

The plan prepared by Naval Headquarters was one of the most ambitious in the entire Third World; it also was detached entirely from India’s political, economic,
and strategic realities. Politically, Indian decision makers neither shared the navy’s vision of India’s strategic objectives nor appreciated the role of the navy in India’s military strategy. Skeptical of the claims that India would become a significant military power in the next decade, Nehru limited the country’s military objectives to ensuring “internal and frontier security.” For such limited aims, India required “land forces not greater than the pre-war level,” and of course “the air forces,” which Nehru saw as the “most efficient weapon” for “immediate action” against any external “aggression.” The navy did not fit into Nehru’s vision for the future of India’s armed forces, mainly owing to the absence of any specific maritime threat and the presence of friendly great powers in the Indian Ocean. British military strategists such as Patrick M. S. Blackett, to whom Nehru often turned for advice regarding India’s defense requirements and posture, reinforced this belief. In a top secret report submitted to the Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD) in September 1948, Blackett argued that the Indian navy should “look after the coastal and local defences, and the escort of convoys in the Indian Ocean, leaving the major fighting units to be provided by the great powers.”

It also was easy for New Delhi to adopt a “cryptic,” or unstated, bandwagoning strategy because there were only minimal associated costs to pay. In public, Nehru continued to oppose any great-power presence in the Indian Ocean; proclaim the policy of nonalignment; and refuse to sanction explicit security cooperation with the British and the Americans, not only because of their existing presence in the region, but also owing to a belief that, if need be, they would come to India’s aid anyway. Nehru, therefore, rejected any explicit defense talks with the British and the idea of a Commonwealth security pact. However, the inherent dichotomy in India’s nonalignment policy—that the political leadership in New Delhi considered India “too important to be a junior partner in a military alliance yet too weak to be left alone to its resources”—was captured in Nehru’s defense minister Baldev Singh’s reassurance to the British that, irrespective of the Indian prime minister’s public position, “his colleagues in the cabinet fully realise that India cannot stand alone in defence matters.” Therefore, in the postindependence period India chose to bandwagon on the dominant Western naval forces instead of developing itself into an independent naval power. However, the perceived absence of maritime threats was reassuring only in a context in which no threat could materialize from over the horizon, given the dominance of Western naval forces in the Indian Ocean.

India’s dichotomous approach toward Western naval powers in the region also was evident in the positions its government took during the first United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, in 1958. India’s diplomatic position was torn between its cryptic bandwagoning strategy and its public rhetoric supporting Third World solidarity and sovereignty. On three major dimensions of the debate
during the 1958 conference, India opted for a course closer to that of the Western states than of its Third World colleagues. The first concerned the expansion of the limits of territorial seas from three to twelve nautical miles. The second pertained to the right of innocent passage and the requirement for “authorisation and/or notification” by foreign warships sailing through the territorial seas. The third concerned the rights of coastal states in the contiguous zone adjoining the territorial seas, and the status of those waters as high seas.

Whereas the major maritime powers, led by the United States, wanted to limit the extent of territorial seas to three nautical miles, many Latin American and Afro-Asian countries wanted to assert their sovereignty to twelve nautical miles, and even beyond. The Soviet Union had lobbied vigorously for the new limits, as they would complicate the projection of naval power by the Western maritime powers. India, however, supported a compromise advanced by the United States and Britain to limit the extent of territorial seas to six nautical miles. Although the compromise solution was defeated by a narrow margin and none other could be agreed on under the 1958 convention, President Dwight D. Eisenhower fulsomely stated American appreciation for India’s position, asserting that it was owing only to that country’s “gratifying support” that “such a proposal came close to adoption at the last conference.”

On the question of innocent passage, during the deliberations at the 1958 Geneva summit India supported the requirement for “authorisation [of] and/or notification [by]” foreign warships and commercial ships passing through a state’s territorial waters. Scholars have claimed that this was India’s position, and that it was one of the primary reasons for the government’s nonsignature. However, archival documents now available indicate that both the MoD and the MEA instead had recommended signing the Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, which required only notification, not authorization. The Indian government delayed taking a firm position on this requirement even after the 1958 convention. This was both because “they [the conventions] were incomplete” and because the forthcoming second conference, in 1960, could look at these “unsettled questions,” so there was no need to sign the conventions “in haste.” Moreover, during the deliberations in Geneva the Indian representative had urged caution on the drafters regarding some of the provisions sought by other developing countries, arguing that “the coastal state could not act with impunity” to restrict innocent passage, as any such “suspension” had to be “bonafide,” and the “burden of proof” lay with the coastal state.

Lastly, India also argued against extending the full rights of the coastal state to the contiguous zone. The government held that “the contiguous zone was not part of the territorial sea of the coastal state.”
One of the main reasons for this alignment closer to the Western states during the Geneva conference was the fear of misuse of territorial seas by both adversaries and other coastal states. India’s MEA reasoned that many developing states with very few naval resources would not be able to shoulder the responsibility “to prevent any violation of their territorial sea by other states, particularly in wartime when the territorial waters of the neutral states could give refuge to unscrupulous belligerents.” Second, even though “innocent passage” through territorial waters might be codified in law, “different states interpret these rights differently,” which might lead to “considerable harassment” of foreign ships sailing through a state’s waters. Lastly, extending the territorial seas to twelve nautical miles would incorporate many areas of the high seas into national jurisdictions. This was particularly problematic for crucial international waterways such as the Red Sea and Strait of Malacca, “which would remain high seas under a 6-mile width” but “would become closed by an extension of territorial waters to 12 miles.” For the MEA, the “fears of harassment” in connection with Indonesian claims along the Strait of Malacca, which historically have become more vociferous during internal troubles in the country, were of particular concern.37

New Delhi demurred from signing any of the four proffered conventions or the optional protocol, even though all the ministries concerned—Defence, External Affairs, Agriculture, and Law—“recommended signatures without reservations.” Even Nehru had assured Eisenhower, during the president’s trip to India in 1959, of India’s support in the forthcoming second conference, in 1960.38 This (negative) action was taken largely because of the blowback received from the Soviet Union and Afro-Asian countries, and the criticism the 1958 document received from Nehru’s newly appointed—and influential—defense minister, V. K. Krishna Menon. As Menon wrote to Nehru, “in this battle between haves and have-nots,” India’s position should not constitute a “considerable departure” from our policy of not “lining up with the power alignment with the powerful nations [sic].” Menon built his central thesis on the assumption that the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) process supported the interests of major maritime powers and was not in the long-term interests of a large coastal state such as India.39

As we will see in the next section, India’s rise as a naval power in the 1970s and ’80s fundamentally contradicted Menon’s thesis; however, during the 1960s India’s approach to UNCLOS remained ambivalent. India neither created a domestic law to assert its sovereignty within its territorial seas nor extended its territorial seas to twelve nautical miles (until 1967, as a reaction to Pakistani claims), in contrast to the actions of many other Afro-Asian and Latin American states. As one scholar of India’s international legal practice has argued, “India, unlike [with] disarmament and other regimes, at various junctures, maintained a low profile in the Law of Sea Convention negotiations because its interests in
freedom of navigation and security were identical to the interests of the major maritime powers.\textsuperscript{40}

Yet to come to this realization entirely, India still had to experience the trauma of defeat at the hands of China and the exultation of victory at Pakistan's expense. As Srinath Raghavan has argued, Nehru's unfounded realism—the belief that the great powers would not let India fall by the wayside even without security commitments—came crashing down during the Sino-Indian border war of 1962.\textsuperscript{41} If New Delhi's strategy of bandwagoning with friendly great powers in the Indian Ocean had been driven earlier by an assessment of their interests and of India's place in the Cold War, the China threat, along with the emergence of the Pakistani and Indonesian navies, lent a sense of desperation to India's perception of its security requirements in the Indian Ocean. Therefore, when in December 1963 Washington formally announced its decision to "extend the operational area of the Seventh Fleet to the Indian Ocean," Nehru welcomed American ships to Indian ports gladly.\textsuperscript{42} India and the United States also signed a memorandum of understanding that facilitated visits by USN warships to Indian ports every six months.\textsuperscript{43} By 1964, when China conducted its first nuclear test, India's security reliance on the U.S. Navy extended from conventional deterrence even to nuclear deterrence. The presence of nuclear-weapons-capable U.S. ships and submarines was construed as providing an implicit nuclear deterrent and was perceived as reassurance vis-à-vis India's hostile Himalayan neighbor.\textsuperscript{44}

Even so, New Delhi could not support the U.S. presence explicitly, in public, for three reasons.\textsuperscript{45} First, it needed to retain a semblance of the nonaligned foreign policy it supposedly shared with its Third World colleagues. Second, China already had started canvassing for a more significant role in Indian Ocean politics by championing the cause of anti-imperialism in the region. Not only did the issue of foreign military bases rankle within the domestic politics of Indian Ocean states; it also provided fertile ground for Maoist revolutionary ideas exported into Afro-Asia.\textsuperscript{46} Lastly, Moscow had warned New Delhi against providing any justification for the "US to consolidate its nuclear presence in the Indian Ocean area on the pretext of offering nuclear protection to India [and other countries]."\textsuperscript{47}

In private, however, New Delhi not only encouraged the U.S. Navy to bolster its presence in the region; it also rejected the suggestions of Afro-Asian countries to oppose actively the movements of USN ships within the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{48} As L. K. Jha, principal secretary to India's second prime minister, L. B. Shastri, advised in a top secret note of March 1965, even when the "Afro-Asian powers are averse to the idea of nuclear weapons being carried in the Ocean close to their borders," India has to "live with a hostile nuclear power on its borders." For India, therefore, it was "difficult" to be "equally averse to movements of nuclear weapons of Powers more friendly to us in the Indian Ocean."\textsuperscript{49} Y. D. Gundevia, India's then
foreign secretary, took a similar position on the issue of the U.S. military base on Diego Garcia, a British-controlled island in the Indian Ocean. In a strongly worded memo, he argued against those of his colleagues favoring more-robust opposition against the U.S. base: “If Mrs. Bhandaranaik shouts about Chagos because it is nearer to Ceylon than Lop Nor; the same argument must apply, in reverse, to Lop Nor, which is a slap across our northern borders. We cannot talk about islands in the Indian Ocean, without condemning Chinese Nuclear land bases, nearer to our borders; and if our friends want us to join in the howl against Indian Ocean bases, we must expect them to not remain silent on the Chinese nuclear bases, much closer to us.”

For many in India, the Diego Garcia base and the subsequent stationing of Polaris submarines in the Indian Ocean reflected a joint Western understanding to provide a nuclear umbrella against the Chinese. Rather than reeking of anti-Americanism, India’s approach to the Indian Ocean was premised principally on bandwagoning with the great powers.

The policy of cryptic bandwagoning continued even after the British withdrawal from the Indian Ocean. Britain’s 1966 defense white paper recommended relocating British naval assets then operating east of Suez. As the British prepared to leave the Indian Ocean in the late 1960s, the Indian navy feared that hostile powers would try to gain a toehold in the Indian Ocean. The British move motivated the Indian naval staff to argue a “vacuum of maritime power” theory: that in the face of British withdrawal inimical forces would take over custody of the Indian Ocean. The concern was whether the vacuum the British left would allow China to “extend her influence” by cooperating with Pakistan in the region. Not without reason, therefore, Indian naval chief Admiral A. K. Chatterji suggested a forward naval policy in the Indian Ocean, including the establishment of a fueling base in Mauritius.

Indian decision makers, however, were not in favor of extending India’s sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, as far as deterring China was concerned, the presence of great powers in the Indian Ocean remained highly reassuring. As a top secret assessment emanating from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s office in April 1970 stated, “[J]ust as nobody in India can be certain that the United States would use its nuclear weapons against China in the event of a Chinese threat to India, nobody in China can be certain that the United States, in fact, will not use its nuclear weapons against her.” U.S. naval operations in the Indian Ocean buttressed India’s perceptual deterrence vis-à-vis China. Therefore, Indian decision makers ignored the Indian navy’s call to fill the power vacuum the British left in the Indian Ocean; the quest to balance China’s conventional and nuclear threat dominated India’s approach to the Indian Ocean, and the presence of great powers provided a cheaper policy alternative.
As the historical narrative offered above shows, India’s first encounters with the Seventh Fleet, or more broadly with great powers such as the United States in the Indian Ocean, hardly can be characterized uniformly by feelings of anxiety, insecurity, humiliation, and distrust; rather, it reveals how New Delhi early on actually came to love the Seventh Fleet and the U.S. naval presence. Post-1971 sentimentalities notwithstanding, the relationship between India and the U.S. Navy (and Britain’s Royal Navy before that) was one of “friends with benefits,” so to speak. The American presence in the Indian Ocean and in the larger Indo-Pacific region serves a similar purpose today.

THE LAW OF THE SEA AND THE FREEDOM OF POLITICAL NAVIGATION

India’s strategy in the Indian Ocean during the 1960s suffered from the basic weakness of any bandwagoning approach: What should the bandwagoner do if the great power turns hostile? President Nixon’s embrace of China to outflank the Soviet Union in the bipolar contest of the Cold War created a dilemma for India. As a top secret MEA report in February 1970 stated, “[E]stablishment of a working relationship between USA and China is likely to work to our detriment, politically and economically.”\(^{55}\) Whereas India had banked on an implicit U.S., or at least U.S.-sponsored, deterrent vis-à-vis China, by early 1971 Washington had conveyed to New Delhi that “if the Chinese were to come to Pakistan’s assistance in an attack on India, the U.S. would not find it possible to help us.” With one superpower turning hostile (or at least less supportive), India’s cryptic bandwagoning strategy had to give way; New Delhi instead signed an Indo-Soviet treaty in August 1971. As India’s ambassador to the United States told U.S. Secretary of State William P. Rogers, nonalignment does not mean that “in facing aggression and/or threats of aggression, we will be alone and single-handed.”\(^{56}\)

The 1971 war with Pakistan over the creation of Bangladesh resulted in contradictory impulses, of both exultation and anxiety. First, it entrenched a belief of regional supremacy, or at least an aspiration toward it, in New Delhi. The war laid the ideological, if not the material, edifice of India’s equivalent of the Monroe Doctrine.\(^{57}\) However, the previously discussed actions of the Seventh Fleet toward the end of the war left a distinct impression of vulnerability on the Indian psyche. Henceforth, the aspiration to establish the country’s supremacy within the region and reduce its vulnerability against extraregional powers drove India’s approach to the Indian Ocean. Given the country’s lack of material resources, the tools of diplomacy, law, and morality became India’s primary instruments to achieve its interests in the region.

The impact of this policy imperative first became evident in India’s approach to the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace.\(^{58}\) If India earlier had conspired against its
fellow nonaligned states silently, now it led that opposition from the front. As new archival research shows, “[h]olding the Great Powers responsible solely for IOR’s [Indian Ocean region’s] militarization and restricting the IOZP from addressing any local imbalances of power assured that India’s regional primacy, achieved in the aftermath of the 1971 war, would remain intact.”59 The same was true for India’s position on Diego Garcia. In the 1960s, Indian diplomats had promised their British counterparts that the “Indian government did not propose to push their protest [regarding the Anglo-American understanding on Diego Garcia] beyond a formal objection. British base in the Indian Ocean might well in the long term be of advantage to India.”60 However, the change in India’s political circumstances transformed what once may have been perceived as a security asset into a manifest threat.

Therefore, India’s approach to the evolving legal regime on the law of the sea in the 1970s cannot be divorced from India’s political-strategic imperatives. And, as in the cases of both the IOZP and Diego Garcia, India’s position on freedom of navigation in the EEZ was driven by two competing logics: power and vulnerability.

In South Asia, India was one of the first states to endorse openly the EEZ provision in the draft UNCLOS. With a total of 587,600 square nautical miles in its nascent EEZ, India would be one of the top beneficiaries of the emerging resource jurisdiction in the high seas. The discovery in the early 1970s of oil resources off the coast of Bombay and technological breakthroughs in seabed mining only heightened India’s interest in the concept. As was the case everywhere else in the developing world, the fundamental impulse to claim an Indian EEZ was “resource-oriented.”61

However, the motivation to claim EEZs was not purely economic. Like the rest of the Third World, India was equally enthused by the prospect that the global political-legal trend on EEZs might help extend the territorial sovereignty of coastal states into the high seas. For India, such an extension of territorial jurisdiction could engender new “psycho-legal boundaries” against the military presence of hostile great powers in the Indian Ocean.62 As Elizabeth Young argued in a 1974 article, “The great navies will find their traditional roaming of the open seas, ‘showing the flag’ in their nation’s interest, constrained, psychologically where not physically, by the multitude of new jurisdictional boundaries.”63 In the face of material constraints on India’s naval power, the law of the sea provided a perfect combination of diplomacy, legality, and morality for New Delhi to use to achieve its immediate objectives in the region.

A concrete example of such thinking within the Indian establishment is available in a top secret note made by the Legal Treaties Division of the MEA in July 1976.64 Between 1974 and 1976, several incidents occurred in which Indian navy ships were buzzed and harassed by USN aircraft on what were then the high seas
of the Indian Ocean, but which prospectively would fall within the Indian EEZ under UNCLOS.\textsuperscript{65} The MoD requested that the MEA take up the matter with the American embassy in New Delhi, but it also sought a legal opinion on “whether such acts of snooping and buzzing by the US Aircraft amount to a violation of rights of the Indian Navy to conduct its operations on the high seas or any right it may have in this regard.”

In the event, although India communicated its concerns to the U.S. embassy, the foreign secretary cautioned the MoD that “New Delhi should not make much of an issue.”\textsuperscript{66} The MEA believed that unnecessary publicity of these events could create a political crisis for the government and “put a strain” on bilateral Indo-U.S. relations.\textsuperscript{67}

Second—and more interestingly—the MEA believed that U.S. actions did not violate any international law. As the Legal Treaties Division explained, the 1958 Geneva Convention on the High Seas “allows such action under the freedom of the high seas.” Furthermore, the note accepted that “even in the context of current negotiations on the law of the sea, the freedom of navigation and freedom to fly over the oceans beyond the limits of the territorial sea are unchallenged.” The issue, therefore, was not a matter of legal rights—which were nonexistent—but of avoiding serious accidents on the high seas. Therefore, the practical solution was to subject the interactions between the two navies to standards similar to those the Soviet Union and United States had negotiated in their agreement on the prevention of incidents on the high seas.\textsuperscript{68} Looking to the future, however, the division pointed out that the ongoing negotiations in the United Nations could create new legal boundaries to the U.S. presence in India’s adjacent high seas: “[I]f these incidents occur in the maritime areas over which India could gain “sovereignty or sovereign rights or special rights, they may be regarded as interference with or violation of our rights thereunder.”\textsuperscript{69}

India’s interests and expectations concerning the ongoing negotiations on the law of the sea were principally responsible for the enactment—even before UNCLOS was negotiated fully—of its domestic law on the subject, the previously mentioned Maritime Zones Act of 1976. As one of the Indian negotiators of UNCLOS has argued, the act was “umbrella legislation” that asserted India’s claims in anticipation of their acceptance at the third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III).\textsuperscript{70} Thus, the domestic law prefigured, rather than followed, the international treaty on the law of the sea. The law laid out the maximum extent of India’s interests—not its obligations—projected to flow from the conclusion of the 1982 treaty, UNCLOS. When the domestic law came into effect in 1977, India also created a police force—the Indian Coast Guard—to implement its domestic laws in its EEZ.

The terms of the Maritime Zones Act not only required any foreign warships to provide prior notification of movement in India’s EEZ; it also declared that the
government of India could restrict or regulate freedom of navigation in “designated areas” of its EEZ if deemed necessary in the “interests of the peace, good order, or security of India.”

Prima facie, both of these provisions in domestic law were in contravention of the customary law of freedom of navigation on the high seas. During the negotiation of UNCLOS India’s appeal to have these provisions accepted was rejected, and the final version of UNCLOS upheld the freedom of navigation of foreign warships.

Considering the final treaty terms, O. P. Sharma argues that “India had an obligation to modify [its relevant domestic legislation] after India formally ratified the treaty.” However, once India had codified its maximalist position in domestic law it could not revise it without entailing high political costs for the government. Thus, democratic politics ensured that India would remain in violation of its treaty commitments. The legal incompatibility between India’s domestic law and its international treaty commitments can be traced easily to resource nationalism, ideological adherence to Third World solidarity, and a belief that the momentum of global politics was shifting in favor of the nonaligned.

However, India’s policy position was driven equally by the imperative to reduce the country’s vulnerability to political intimidation by hostile great powers and the aspiration to establish its regional supremacy. The overall strategic context within which India conducted, and continues to conduct, its legal maneuverings is vital to understanding why the Indian government has remained relatively silent on the presence of foreign navies in the Indian Ocean in general and the issue of FONOPs in particular. While reducing the country’s vulnerability to political intimidation by hostile great powers may have been India’s immediate interest, its own longtime goal of establishing regional supremacy would necessitate its rise as a naval power. These contradictory interests played out both in the debate surrounding the enactment of the Maritime Zones Act of 1976 and in the act’s subsequent implementation. India may have been materially weak, but it aspired to be a great power, so insofar as today’s legal commitments could become tomorrow’s constraints, India had to tread carefully; the possibility that it someday might become a significant naval power could shift the balance of India’s interests closer to those of the established maritime powers. Such a possibility was given due recognition within both the MEA and the MoD. The top secret assessment made by the Legal Treaties Division in 1976 mentioned the Indian navy’s “right to navigation” and the right to “exercise of freedom of navigation” on the high seas.

However, the emergence of the EEZ regime created complications for the Indian navy vis-à-vis its smaller littoral neighbors in the Indian Ocean. If India used the logic of the law to restrict great-power presence in its surrounding waters, the smaller states could request that New Delhi extend them the same courtesy. Moreover, while a state with a mediocre navy could ignore these restrictions, the
situation could become a headache once that state achieved maritime greatness, as India aimed to accomplish eventually. The MoD’s view soon was validated; during the mid-1970s, Bangladesh, Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, and Sri Lanka enacted maritime laws requiring prior consent, resulting in restrictions on India’s maneuverability within the region.\textsuperscript{74} For example, even though India offered a reciprocal requirement of notification for the movement of both Indian and Sri Lankan warships in the Palk Strait, Sri Lanka continuously has demanded that India acquire consent for the movement of its warships.\textsuperscript{75} Moreover, Malaysia and Indonesia could use the new construct of international law, in the form of UNCLOS, to claim sovereignty over major navigational choke points such as the Malacca Strait.

These concerns were incorporated into India’s domestic law, its negotiating strategy in the UNCLOS conference, and the implementation of its domestic maritime law regarding the presence of foreign navies in its EEZ. First, as was discussed earlier, during the first law-of-the-sea conference, held in Geneva in 1958, India had gone along with the rest of the Third World, insisting on both notification and authorization for the passage of foreign warships through a state’s territorial waters.\textsuperscript{76} However, the provision was defeated at the insistence of the major maritime powers. As New Delhi prepared to participate in negotiations for UNCLOS III, it confronted a dilemma regarding the passage of foreign warships through its EEZ. Given the growth of Indian naval power during the interim, the country’s material situation had changed significantly since 1958. Therefore, unlike in 1958, on the advice of the MoD, New Delhi dropped its support for requiring consent. This change in India’s position was motivated primarily by the prospect of the country’s maritime rise and its possible future naval operations in other countries’ EEZs. As O. P. Sharma explains, “On the eve of the convening of the UNCLOS III, an in-depth examination of this issue [i.e., authorization and notification] was carried out by the Ministry of Defence and it was concluded that India, being herself a growing maritime power, should not insist on the requirement of prior authorization but should support only the less restrictive requirement of prior notification.”\textsuperscript{77} Thus, India’s approach was driven neither by legalism nor by notions of right and wrong; New Delhi was trying to juggle its immediate against its prospective political interests. India’s immediate interests supported the notion of mare clausum; its prospective rise required mare liberum. The thinking within the establishment was relatively straightforward: because India’s interests and power might shift, today’s legal commitments should not become tomorrow’s constraints.

Therefore, as Indian naval capabilities grew, the MoD’s insistence on demanding a “less restrictive requirement” from foreign navies also gained greater currency in India’s approach.\textsuperscript{78} If the 1976 act requires consent by all foreign warships
to “enter and pass through” India’s EEZ, India’s 1995 declaration on the subject simply states an “understanding” that the “provisions of the Convention do not authorize other States to carry out in the exclusive economic zone and on the continental shelf military exercises or manoeuvres, in particular those involving the use of weapons or explosives, without the consent of the coastal state.”

The 1995 declaration is less restrictive than the 1976 act in two ways. First, as Commodore Lalit Kapur points out, India’s interpretation of UNCLOS does not result in a legal obligation: “An understanding is not a requirement. . . . India has never sought to enforce this understanding against any USN ships.”

Second, from the “all foreign warships” addressed under the 1976 act, the 1995 declaration pulls back to target only those involved in “military exercises or manoeuvres.” The shift creates a higher bar before Indian law can be applied to the presence of foreign warships, and it creates a distinction between navies that India may perceive to be friendly and those it deems hostile to its interests. The declaration concerning India’s position on foreign warships in EEZs represents an evolution toward greater support for, rather than restrictions on, freedom of navigation on the high seas. Just as politics rather than law guided India’s behavior on the law of the sea in the 1970s, it has continued to do so since then.

Second, similar reasoning applied to India’s position on major navigational pathways or choke points, such as the Malacca Strait. Given the general trend in the UNCLOS progression toward extending the limits of territorial sovereignty into what had been the high seas, “creeping territorial sea[s]” threatened to restrict the “access of warships through straits used for international navigation where passage had previously been free.” The extension of territorial seas to twelve nautical miles may have allowed countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia to challenge the status of the Malacca Strait as a high-seas corridor and thereby claim sovereignty over it. This was one of the principal worries of the Indian establishment even during the 1958 Geneva conference. Among India’s fundamental interests in Southeast Asia, as a secret report prepared by the MEA argued in February 1976, was that the “Malacca straits remain free and open to the Indian Navy.” India, therefore, agreed with the major maritime powers over the incorporation into UNCLOS of a new regime of “unimpeded transit passage,” which was an improvement over the earlier right of “innocent passage” in the territorial seas. It is enshrined in article 38(2) of the 1982 UNCLOS treaty.

Third, India’s realpolitik also was visible in its implementation of its domestic laws in its EEZ. Even though the Maritime Zones Act of 1976 claimed for India the right to close parts of its EEZs to foreign warships, New Delhi never has implemented the law in practice. It hardly ever has declared any special or designated areas as being out of bounds to navigation by foreign warships. Instead, to protect its offshore oil installations, it has declared “cautionary
zones” in which foreign navies could submit voluntarily to regulation of their movements. As one official from India’s National Security Council argued in an interview, “[T]he Navy has seldom employed coercive measures against foreign navies transiting or operating through India’s EEZs.” The only public account of the Indian navy physically challenging a foreign navy ship relates to an incident of November 2019, when the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) oceanic research vessel *Shi Yan–1* was forced to leave the Andaman Sea. The Indian navy justified its actions by declaring that the activities of *Shi Yan–1* violated India’s 1995 declaration. “EEZs are international waters, but if we find Chinese ships engaging in what we perceive to be military manoeuvres, we chase them away.” Perception, not the letter of the law, is the most critical element of India’s practice.

Some Indian analysts have called out India for its legal hypocrisy in differentiating between USN ships and PLAN ships operating in India’s EEZ. This criticism is mistaken, for two reasons. First, accepting either the letter of India’s domestic law or its declaration of reservations on the eve of its ratification of UNCLOS in 1995 as being the “gospel truth” of India’s position would be highly erroneous. As the discussion above underlines, the question of foreign warships in India’s EEZ was never about legalities but about political interests. Today, India’s political interests align with those of the United States and clash with China’s. U.S. naval movement in the Indian Ocean does not threaten India’s interests, whereas the PLAN constitutes the Indian navy’s primary challenge. Second, India’s domestic law leaves enough space for Indian decision makers to make a judgment on the *intent* of foreign warships transiting through or operating in the Indian Ocean. The law allows for the benign passage of ships not involved in hostile military exercises or maneuvers—and the distinction between benign and hostile intentions is the result of a political, not a legal, determination.

In the end, how India implements its laws depends primarily on two factors: whether it is interested in physically challenging those who technically may be in violation of its domestic laws, and whether it has the power to do so. As to the first, India has no interest in stopping the Americans, and it has every reason to challenge the PLAN in its back yard.

However, as to the second: If a state lacks the capacity to surveil the high seas and physically to escort violators out of its EEZ, regurgitating legalities is futile. For India to take such action, it first must develop the requisite capability to establish maritime domain awareness so it can identify violations, and it must build enough naval muscle to be able to challenge the perpetrators thereafter. Until India has both capabilities, the law is meaningless. This was evident in 2014 when a Chinese nuclear submarine transited through the Indian Ocean on its way to the Pakistani port of Gwadar. Chinese authorities did notify the Indian
defense attaché in Beijing, but only after the passage had been completed. In any case, India would be foolish to believe that China will be deterred from conducting naval movements in the Indian Ocean simply because India holds a certain interpretation of its own law. China will do what is in its best interests, and it will be deterred only by India’s military capacity to safeguard its interests and enforce its version of the law. The capability to perform the latter is augmented greatly by India’s close military cooperation with the United States. India’s balance of interests dictates that the passage of USS John Paul Jones be seen merely as a tempest in a teapot rather than a major crisis in Indo-U.S. relations.

The history of India’s legal positioning during the UNCLOS negotiations, the process of enacting its domestic laws, and the way it implements those laws all attest to the fact that Indian decision makers never have allowed the legal tail to wag the political dog. Notwithstanding anyone’s idealistic perceptions of Indian foreign policy, the country has a tradition of safeguarding its interests in the Indian Ocean through the practice of realpolitik. Because India is lacking in material power, New Delhi at different times has employed diplomacy, law, and norms to attempt to secure its interests; however, the Indian government seldom could be accused of remaining blind to the fundamental forces of international politics: power and interests. The same logic drives India’s contemporary approach to the Indian Ocean and the Indo-U.S. strategic partnership.

**EYE ON THE DRAGON AND THE LARGER DYNAMICS OF INDO-U.S. RELATIONS**

By the mid-1980s, New Delhi had become convinced that the side India had chosen in the Cold War superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union (i.e., the latter) was “declining.” There also was a realization that even though “India’s relations with the US have fluctuated from time to time” and “US foreign and strategic objectives have often militated against India’s security concerns in South Asia and the Indian Ocean,” the two countries’ interests were complementary enough to achieve a “mutually beneficial relationship.” The rise of the Indian navy as the region’s preeminent naval force also enticed the Americans to work with the Indians once again. Not without reason, therefore, naval cooperation in the Indian Ocean was deemed to be one of the most promising avenues for productive Indo-U.S. bilateral relations. As the report of an Indo-U.S. task force on the Indian Ocean argued, “A more mature relationship is developing as India becomes increasingly strong and self-confident in its role as a major self-reliant power with acknowledged maritime capabilities in the Indian Ocean region.” India long had desired to gain recognition of its primacy in the region, and U.S. support for a few interventions India conducted in the Seychelles and Maldives in the late 1980s fulfilled this long-held desire of New Delhi.
The formal end of the Cold War greatly facilitated this dynamic. An editorial in India’s leading English-language daily, the *Indian Express*, stated in 1992 that “whether one likes it or not, there is no other country with which India has so much in common as far as naval perceptions are concerned.” Given the absence of a fundamental conflict of interest between the two countries, New Delhi had no qualms about once again pursuing a bandwagoning strategy. U.S. unipolarity also left no other recourse available to Indian decision makers. India required American support for its economic growth and to realize its fundamental foreign-policy goals, particularly gaining acceptance as a rising major power in the international system. The most precise summary describing U.S. unipolarity and India’s consequent strategy appeared in the report submitted by the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) that the Vajpayee government set up in 2000 to review national security. The report, titled “Reforming National Security,” observed that the “pre-eminence of the USA in political, economic, military and technological fields is more in evidence today than ever before. Its capabilities to forge coalitions and alliances and have its way on any issue is [sic] unmatched. . . . US pre-eminence in the global strategic architecture is unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future.”

Therefore, the GoM report, in its recommendations, argued that India should embrace wholeheartedly a bandwagoning strategy: “Meaningful, broad-based engagement with the United States spanning political, economic and technological interests and commonalities will impact beneficially on our external security concerns with a resultant albeit less visible impact on our internal security environment. Conversely, an adversarial relationship with that State can have significant negative repercussions across the same broad range of issues and concerns.” If the issue of India’s nuclear status can be taken as reflective of New Delhi’s ability to accomplish foreign-policy priorities overall during the first two decades after the Cold War ended, India still would be an outcast among the world’s global nuclear powers—if it had not received support from the United States. The inertia of India’s foreign-policy idealism may have forced it to propagate a vision of a multipolar world order, but the country’s rise occurred within a unipolar system.

Yet India’s “bandwagoning for gain” strategy was premised on three major assumptions: the absence of a serious security threat in its neighborhood, the continuity of an American-centered unipolar world order, and the expectation of India’s economic rise. In the last decade, all these assumptions have “come a cropper.”

First, China’s rise as a significant economic and military power located in India’s immediate neighborhood has created a unique political challenge for India. For the first time since independence, India has witnessed the rise of a great power not only located in its immediate vicinity but with which it has
fundamental conflicts of interest—in particular, the two countries’ unresolved border disputes.\textsuperscript{96} The bipolar order of the Cold War was comparatively benign, not only because India was distant in the maritime realm from both the Soviet Union and the United States, but also because it had no major disputes with either of those great powers. The resulting bipolar world order was not a liability but an asset, insofar as India could rely on one or the other or both of these powers to protect its interests in the region. Therefore, India desired détente between the United States and the Soviet Union and strove to support it when possible, as in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{97} India’s fallback option was to gain the support of either great power if the other turned hostile, as when it sided with the Soviet Union in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{98} Yet given the distance factor and the lack of physical hostility, India could embrace unipolarity with equal ease. However, the new bipolar order with China as one of the two major poles threatens India’s fundamental interests, reduces its strategic maneuverability, and limits the prospects for its global rise.

Second, a necessary corollary of China’s rise is the relative decline of the United States in global affairs. As China rises, U.S. influence on international politics wanes correspondingly. As long as the United States was willing to accommodate India as a rising power, the liberal world order—an anodyne representation of global rules serving American interests and supported by American power—was in India’s interests as well.\textsuperscript{99} China has shown no such regard for India’s place in the sun, an attitude manifested in Beijing’s reactions to Indian exercise of influence in South Asia and to its membership on the United Nations Security Council or the Nuclear Suppliers Group.\textsuperscript{100} India remains deeply ambivalent toward a China-centric Asian or global order. It is becoming highly doubtful that New Delhi will be able to reach any respectful accommodation with Beijing, whether on the border issues or on India’s status in the world.

Lastly, the bandwagoning-for-gain strategy assumed that as long as India generated enough economic and military power from within, New Delhi would not require external support to fulfill its immediate security requirements. Moreover, if India’s material power increased, other states by necessity could be expected to accommodate its interests both in the region and across the world. However, the impressive economic performance that India achieved late in the first decade of the twenty-first century has been replaced by a mediocre one. India currently is growing economically, but not at a rate that will enable it to stand up to China on its own while also impressing the world with its arrival as a power with which to be reckoned.\textsuperscript{101} It is these circumstances that have altered India’s approach to the United States. Previously, gain was the motive; today, the logic for India to increase its strategic closeness with the United States is the country’s survival, security, and future position within the Asian and global orders. Balancing China’s rise has become
India’s foremost foreign-policy priority. And, given the realization that such balancing may not be achievable through the country’s internal resources alone, the importance of the United States in India’s strategic calculus has increased significantly.

This external balancing strategy is evident, first and foremost, in the growth of Indo-U.S. military relations. In the last decade of the twentieth century and the first of the twenty-first, the defense aspect of the relationship with the United States helped deepen the two countries’ bilateral ties overall and build India’s trust therein. Still, India’s primary motivation was to gain U.S. support for its foreign-policy goals in general rather than to respond to a specific threat. However, in the last decade the tone and tenor of the Indo-U.S. military relationship have been driven by India’s insecurity vis-à-vis China. Not only is the bulk of the defense equipment India has purchased from the United States being employed in deterring India’s northern neighbor, but the enthusiasm with which India has signed the foundational defense agreements with the United States over the last five years is evidence enough that it seeks greater assistance in upgrading its military capabilities. These foundational agreements have helped India fill some major gaps in its military preparedness, particularly its surveillance of, as well as its acquisition of other intelligence concerning, Chinese military capabilities along the Himalayan frontier and throughout the Indian Ocean region. Although these developments escape the classic definition of external balancing, which may be considered to require explicit military commitments between allies, the objective of India’s interest in pursuing a robust military relationship with the United States has changed fundamentally, from being merely an instrument to achieve a greater bilateral partnership to becoming an essential component of India’s deterrent strategy vis-à-vis China. Skepticism regarding the Indo-U.S. military relationship often touches on the remote possibility of India ever signing a security treaty with the United States and of American soldiers ever fighting on Indian soil. However, a more formal security partnership cannot be dismissed a priori. Given the nature of India’s security requirements, New Delhi’s foreign-policy practice suggests that it has used formal security pacts—for example, the 1971 Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union—to signal deterrence to its adversaries. The process of moving toward a formalization of the Indo-U.S. strategic partnership continues to unfold, adding to India’s internal capabilities to deter China and producing a “force in being” that could be employed in the service of India’s interests in the future. Much of the course of this continuing dynamic will depend on China’s assertiveness and how ably India could cope with any Chinese military pressure on its own.

The second evidence of India’s shift away from a bandwagoning-for-gain strategy to an external-balancing-for-security strategy is the increasing intensity of its
support for the Quad. India’s approach to the Quad again can be classified into two distinct periods: the pre-2007 and the post-2017 phases. In the face of China’s discomfort and ire in response to Exercise MALABAR-2007, India readily folded the tents of its support for the Quad, because it viewed the grouping primarily as an instrument of gain rather than of survival. The Quad offered an opportunity to extend Indo-U.S. relations; build relations with otherwise estranged maritime democracies, such as Japan and Australia; and increase India’s status and raise its profile in the region. However, the balance of India’s interests dictated that if the Quad became an obstacle in the country’s quest to reach an accommodation with China, New Delhi should abandon the concept with no qualms.\textsuperscript{105}

But over the course of the Quad’s dormant decade, the manifest changes in Beijing’s power, interests, and conduct were sufficient for New Delhi to revise its approach to operationalizing a local balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. India’s halting economic progress during that period only underlined the country’s need for external assistance in countering China’s diplomatic, economic, and military assertiveness in India’s back yard. China’s conduct in Galwan was the last straw. At present, in light of the June 2020 Sino-Indian border crisis, any hope of reaching a separate peace or accommodation with China appears forlorn.\textsuperscript{106}

The resurgence of the Quad in India’s strategy therefore is linked to its balancing requirements. Technological and resource cooperation with Quad countries may assist India in challenging China’s monopoly on global supply chains, 5G infrastructure, and rare earths.\textsuperscript{107} Militarily, the Quad not only helps to augment India’s military capabilities and efficiency but—like bilateral Indo-U.S. military cooperation—also signals the formation of a force in being that may prove useful at a later date. If the Quad navies have achieved the capability “to plug and play” in the Indo-Pacific, as the Indian navy chief argued in July 2020, the Indo-Pacific naval entente surely is going to make heads turn in Beijing.\textsuperscript{108}

The third indicator of India’s embrace of external balancing is its shifting policy regarding the role of the United States and its allies in South Asian and Indian Ocean region affairs.\textsuperscript{109} For the first time in its history, India is welcoming enthusiastically a greater American presence in the subcontinent and the northern Indian Ocean region.\textsuperscript{110} Perhaps no other state in the region was hurt more by the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan than India.\textsuperscript{111} India also was instrumental in brokering a defense pact between the United States and the Maldives. Signed in September 2020, the Framework for U.S. Department of Defense–Maldives Ministry of Defence Defense and Security Relationship would not have come about without New Delhi’s active encouragement, given the close strategic ties between New Delhi and Male.\textsuperscript{112} In contrast, back in 2013 India was instrumental in scuttling a “status of forces” agreement between the Maldives and the United States.\textsuperscript{113} During the recent negotiating process, both Male and Washington kept
New Delhi constantly engaged, to the extent that the draft agreement was shown to Indian leadership before it was signed. Similarly, India has encouraged greater military cooperation between the United States and its allies, such as Japan and Australia, and other South Asian states. American allies, particularly Japan and Australia, also have become central to India’s anti-China diplomacy in the South Asian region. Japan and India have collaborated to compete with China for major infrastructure projects, such as the West Container Terminal project in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and the Dhaka Metro Rail project in Bangladesh. Australia also launched the South Asia Regional Infrastructure Connectivity Project (known as SARIC) in 2019, with India as a critical partner. India’s volte-face on a greater U.S. role in what it previously had considered to be its traditional sphere of influence is driven directly by, as one senior Indian official stated, the “imperative not to provide space to China here.”

The reality of Indo-U.S. relations is simple. In the current geopolitical environment, India needs the United States much more than the reverse. Given India’s strategic vulnerabilities, New Delhi needs to focus its attention firmly on Beijing. If that requires ignoring a few American inanities, it is definitely worth the benefits. P. N. Haksar, Indira Gandhi’s principal secretary, once advised her that foreign relations are a “balance sheet of credits and debits.” Even with the Seventh Fleet’s April 2021 FONOP falling on the debit side, overall Indo-U.S. relations remain hugely beneficial to India.

This article has explicated the discrepancy between the expectations of India’s strategic community and the country’s foreign and national-security policies in practice, concerning the Indian Ocean, the presence of great powers in the region, and the role of Indo-U.S. relations in India’s geopolitical strategy. It argues that many students of Indian foreign policy have been overly idealistic, legalistic, and principled when it comes to understanding India’s strategic behavior. In practice, India’s foreign-policy mandarins seldom have been impelled by public pronouncements, legal obligations, or rhetorical principles. The article’s analysis underlines the strength of the realpolitik tradition in Indian foreign policy and the capacity of successive Indian governments to pursue their interests even under severe material constraints by deploying tools of diplomacy and international law. Marshaling recently declassified documents from Indian archives, it reveals how Indian decision makers used the presence of great powers in the Indian Ocean to fulfill their country’s security requirements, adroitly shifting from one balancing coalition to another according to the geopolitical situation. It also lays bare the political underpinnings of India’s engagement with international law, particularly the law of the sea, and the enactment and implementation of domestic law concerning the country’s maritime responsibilities. India seldom has
allowed the law to determine its political behavior; instead, its national interests define its negotiating behavior in legal forums, the scope of the laws it pursues or enacts, and the laws’ application within India’s maritime sphere of influence. Lastly, the article highlights the logic of India’s stronger emphasis on its strategic partnership with the United States as it confronts the peril of China’s ascendance as a great power in Asia.

Without an appreciation of the history of India’s strategic behavior and the pressing reality of India’s strategic requirements in the contemporary age of great-power politics, students of Indian foreign policy always will remain a couple of steps behind the curve in understanding the substantive reality of the Indo-U.S. relationship.

NOTES


2. Jawaharlal Nehru was India’s first prime minister, serving from 1950 to 1964, noted for his anticolonialist and proneutrality stances. See Pratap Bhanu Mehta, “Still under Nehru’s Shadow? The Absence of Foreign Policy Frameworks in India,” India Review 8, no. 3 (July–September 2009), pp. 209–33.


11. Sneho Alex Philip, “Quad Navies Can Come Together If Needed in Almost ‘Plug and Play’ Manner, Navy Chief Says,” The Print, 14 April 2021, theprint.in/. The Quad countries are Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, and the name comes from the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. The Quad will be discussed in more detail later.

13. On only a few occasions, India has directed diplomatic anguish against the U.S. Navy’s FONOPs in the Indian Ocean. See Swami, “FONOPS: Furore Raises Tough Questions.” Also see Jeff M. Smith, “America and India Need a Little Flexibility at Sea,” Foreign Policy, 15 April 2021, foreignpolicy.com/.

14. Ministry of External Affairs, “Passage of USS John Paul Jones through India’s EEZ.”


16. The IOZP refers to a proposal introduced in the Twenty-Sixth United Nations General Assembly in 1971 by Sri Lanka and Tanzania. It is known more formally as the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

17. Mohan, “Why Does the Deepening?”

18. The Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976 (India), available at legislative.gov.in/.


21. A PASSEX occurs when the ships of two navies operate in proximity to practice cooperation, especially in exchanging signals using various media.


23. Ibid.


25. Prime Minister Nehru to President Kennedy, 19 November 1962, available at historyinpieces.com/.

26. “Mr. Chester Bowles Interview with Foreign Minister on Tuesday the 13th April, 1965,” 14 April 1965, Ministry of External Affairs, file no. WII-104(17)/65, National Archives of India, New Delhi, India [hereafter NA1].


29. Jawaharlal Nehru, “Armed Forces in India in the Post-war Period;” 5 February 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, file no. 2, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, India [hereafter NMML].

30. “Report for Defence Sciences for India’s Armed Forces,” 10 September 1948, PMS Blackett Collection, microfilm roll no. 3, NMML.


33. President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Nehru, 5 February 1960, V. K. Krishna Menon Papers, file no. 972, NMML.


37. “Summary of Arguments for and against the 6 and 12 Miles Width of the Territorial Sea and the Main Proposals regarding a 12 Miles Fishing Zone,” n.d., V. K. Krishna Menon Papers, file no. 972, NMML.

38. President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Nehru.

39. Defence Minister V. K. Krishna Menon to Prime Minister Nehru, 18 February 1960, V. K. Krishna Menon Papers, file no. 972, NMML.


43. “Note for Supplementary for Lok Sabha Question No. 1719 or 16.5.66 by Shri Boroah regarding American Military Bases,” Ministry of External Affairs, file no. WII/125/47/66, NAI.


45. Ibid.


47. “Note by AS Gonsalves to Joint Secretary (United Nations), MEA,” 7 July 1965, Prime Minister’s Secretariat, file no. 30(36)/65 PMS, NAI.

48. Ibid.

49. “Note by LK Jha (Principal Secretary) to the Foreign Secretary,” 23 March 1965, Prime Minister’s Secretariat, file no. 30(36)/65 PMS, NAI.

50. “Untitled Memo by YD Gundevia (Foreign Secretary),” 6 February 1965, Ministry of External Affairs, file no. U.IV/125/24/1965, NAI.

51. “Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 321 (Final List) for 11.5.65 regarding Air and Naval Cover in Indian Ocean,” Ministry of External Affairs, file no. U.IV/125/36/65, NAI.


58. Ibid.


64. “Incidents of Snooping/Buzzing by US Orion (MR/ASW Aircraft) over Indian Naval Ships,” 3 July 1976, Ministry of External Affairs, Legal and Treaties Division, file no. WII/109/9/9/75, NAI.
65. “Note by Defence Secretary D. R. Kohli: Sighting of US Orions,” 22 November 1975, Ministry of External Affairs, file no. WII/109/9/7/5, NAI.

66. “Note by Foreign Secretary Kewal Singh,” 29 November 1975, Ministry of External Affairs, file no. WII/109/9/7/5, NAI.

67. “Record of Discussion with US Deputy Chief of Mission, David Schneider and JS (AMS) JS Teja,” 3 December 1975, Ministry of External Affairs, file no. WII/109/9/7/5, NAI.


69. “Incidents of Snooping/Buzzing by US Orion (MR/ASW Aircraft).”


71. The Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976.


73. “Incidents of Snooping/Buzzing by US Orion (MR/ASW Aircraft).”


78. Ibid.


81. A senior naval officer, interview by author, 22 April 2021, New Delhi.

82. Sharma, The International Law of the Sea, p. 213.

83. “India’s Policy toward Southeast Asia,” 24 February 1976, Ministry of External Affairs, file no. HI/103(5)/76, NAI.


85. An official from the National Security Council, New Delhi, telephone interview by author, 20 April 2021.


88. Senior naval officer interview.


95. The Group of Ministers consisted of L. K. Advani (Minister of Home Affairs), Jaswant Singh (Minister of External Relations), Yashwant Sinha (Minister of Finance), and George


108. Dutta, “Indian Warships Conduct Exercise.”


115. Krzysztof Iwanek, “Japan Steps In to Support India against China in South Asia,” The Diplomat, 6 December 2021, thediplomat.com/.


117. Mitra, “Seven Years On, India Now Backs.”


RUSSIA’S TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY NAVAL STRATEGY

Combining Admiral Gorshkov with the Jeune École

Johannes Riber

After the Cold War, the Russian navy quickly disintegrated; new-construction programs were postponed or canceled, while many existing units were abandoned or provided only limited maintenance. However, over the course of Vladimir V. Putin’s political ascendancy since 1999, the Russian navy slowly has been resurrected. This development escaped much international notice—until September 2015, when Russia intervened in the Syrian civil war. As part of that intervention, Russia’s Caspian Flotilla launched its first-ever cruise-missile attack, firing twenty-six missiles at targets over 750 miles away. Two months later, a Russian submarine similarly fired missiles into Syria from the Mediterranean, and other Russian submarines repeated those attacks in 2017. Most recently, the Black Sea Fleet has fired cruise missiles into Ukraine.

The development of cruise missiles, together with other naval improvements and innovations, has raised concerns in the West about the resurrection of Russian sea power. Both the reestablishment of the U.S. Navy’s Second Fleet—responsible for the North Atlantic—and the reopening of the military part of Keflavík Airport in Iceland are clear reactions to Russia’s naval developments and its worrying political posturing.

While the Russo-Ukrainian war since February 2022 has called into question Russian military abilities in general, including at sea, it would be careless to assume—regardless of the future course of that conflict—that Russia will not continue to be a significant security factor in the future. Yes, Russia runs the risk of total defeat in Ukraine,
yet that only underlines this article's main observation: the similarities between France after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 and the Russia of today, each squeezed in a multipolar world, with a poor economy and a diminishment of its industrial power.

To make this comparison, the article will analyze the contemporary Russian navy to offer a better understanding of the service's thinking and strategy—a strategy whose execution the Ukraine war only will speed up. On paper, Russia harbors the ambition to become the world’s second-largest sea power—the position the Soviet Union held during the Cold War. However, both Russia’s economy and its political geography have changed since that era, and Russia is dividing its naval development along two separate lines of effort. The first is influenced by Russian strategic culture and ideas about nuclear deterrence inherited from Admiral Sergey G. Gorshkov (1910–88), the longtime head of the Soviet navy (1956–85); this line of effort centers on bastion defense and submarine warfare in the North Atlantic area. The second line is a Russian version of the French Jeune École, sometimes referred to as a naval strategy of the weak; it centers on building smaller units with offensive weapon capabilities, with the aim of deterring adversaries—in Russia’s case, to enable it to establish sea control in the Baltic and Black Seas and sea denial in parts of the Mediterranean Sea. This second line of development will be increasingly important in a context that includes the war in Ukraine and Russia’s resultant naval losses.

The biggest evolution in Russian naval thinking has been toward this second emphasis, on smaller surface units armed with advanced capabilities such as cruise missiles. Such an approach contrasts with that characteristic of the Soviet era, when the Soviet navy would have been capable of fighting larger sea battles in the North Atlantic. To force an adversary to divide its fleet as it attempts to overbalance the new Russian navy locally, today’s service likely will focus on conducting multiple smaller, geographically dispersed engagements in the North Atlantic while exercising sea control in the Baltic and Black Seas.

This article first will analyze Soviet and Russian naval histories, to establish Russia’s strategic culture and Admiral Gorshkov’s continuing influence on modern Russian naval thinking. Next will come a discussion of the French Jeune École and its development at the end of the nineteenth century, highlighting the similarities between France’s strategic position then and Russia’s today. That will be followed by an analysis of the two parts of current Russian naval strategy: first, the implications of Russia’s traditional strategic culture; second, how Russia’s naval strategic ambitions, combined with the country’s financial constraints and its current and projected diplomatic and economic isolation, have and will put its conventional surface navy on a course similar to that suggested by the Jeune École concept. The last-mentioned analysis examines the naval development of
the Caspian Flotilla and Black Sea Fleet since 2008. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of these developments for the Baltic Sea and how Western naval and defense planning should address Russia's naval development.

RUSSIA AS A SEA POWER—A “STRATEGIC CULTURE” PERSPECTIVE
In his 1976 book The Sea Power of the State, Admiral Gorshkov argues that Russia's historical successes and failures in war were linked to the successes and failures of the Russian navy, either directly or indirectly. The validity of his argument can be questioned, but his overall message is clear: Russia has an important sea-power history. Other prominent sea-power scholars echo this point. Russian naval officers often remind audiences that Peter the Great (1672–1725) founded both the Russian navy and its naval academy, making the latter one of the oldest in the world, and that sea power subsequently had profound impacts on Russian history, especially with victories in the battles of Gangut (1714), Chesma (1770), and Sinop (1853).

However, despite this early imperial history, Russia's contemporary strategic and sea-power culture is influenced more directly by the later tsarist navy and subsequently by the Soviet one. Thus, the historical sketch that follows will concentrate on Russia's naval history in the twentieth century and the navy's development—driven by Admiral Gorshkov's vision—from a coastal-defense fleet into a great sea power, then the Russian fleet's disintegration after the Cold War.

The Russian navy suffered two significant setbacks in the twentieth century: its devastating defeat by Japan at the Battle of Tsushima in 1905 and the Russian Revolution in 1917. Emerging from these disasters in the 1920s, the Soviet navy developed the “Russian New School.” This school of thought held that the navy should play a principally defensive role, protecting the Soviet coast and supporting Soviet land operations. This meant that the Soviet fleet would focus on submarines, sea mines, coastal batteries, and similar near-seas capabilities. With no large surface combatants, the Soviet navy made the submarine its principal offensive platform. The L-class submarines of the early 1930s were part of the service's first large submarine-construction program after the revolution. The first two submarines of the class were Leninets and Stalinets (meaning the followers of Lenin and Stalin, respectively)—heavily politically freighted names that suggest the program's political and institutional importance at the time.

Several attempts were made to move away from the Russian New School. Joseph Stalin (1878–1953), for one, supported a more traditional view on naval development that emphasized large warships, but new-construction programs were postponed by more-pressing military needs at the outset of the Second World War and by subsequent economic restraints. The Russian New School regained political prominence under Nikita S. Khrushchev's leadership (1953–64).
Khrushchev (1894–1971) opposed the idea of large surface combatants, viewing them as dinosaurs in a world dominated by nuclear conflict; he called them nothing more than “big metal eaters.”

While Stalin may have understood the need for large warships and Khrushchev did not, neither of them fully understood the navy’s potential role in diplomacy. The whole idea of maritime or “gunboat” diplomacy was absent from Soviet naval thinking up to the 1960s—a deficit put on stark display during the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. It has been argued that Russia did not have enough large, modern warships to escort the merchant vessels bound for Cuba, which forced those ships to attempt individual clandestine transits. This is not entirely true; Russia did have cruisers, and, while they were not as modern as the U.S. Navy’s, they were sufficient to make a clear statement of Soviet strategic will. Instead, the Soviet navy’s biggest shortcoming was in auxiliary vessels, especially oceangoing oilers, to support such a deployment. The Soviet navy therefore could not replenish its warships at sea during long transits. In the case of Cuba, the Soviet navy planned to use shore-based logistical support, but for this to work the initial phase of the missile transportation had to remain secret; the Soviet navy would not begin operating overtly from Cuba before a deterrence capability had been installed on the island. In this crisis, the Soviet navy demonstrated that it had neither the ability nor the experience to deploy naval task groups in the absence of logistical support from shore—a clear indication that Russian naval strategic thinking at the time largely was limited to coastal-defense and nuclear-second-strike capabilities.

In the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis, this orientation changed completely, as the Soviet navy realized it needed large surface combatants. Admiral Gorshkov started an ambitious shipbuilding program. However, he argued that the most important function of a modern navy was not to engage in decisive sea battles against enemy fleets but to maintain the capability to strike an adversary’s homeland with nuclear missiles; the mission of the rest of the navy was to protect Russia’s submarine-based second-strike deterrent. In the 1970s, this idea gave birth to the strategic concept of bastion defense: creating protected enclaves where the Soviet Union’s nuclear-missile-armed submarines could operate safe from American attack submarines. Gorshkov also saw the Soviet navy’s ability to threaten the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) from North America as an important support operation during any war in Europe. Finally, Gorshkov understood a navy’s potential diplomatic importance. Gorshkov was particularly inspired by British naval strategist Sir Julian S. Corbett (1854–1922). This was especially so with respect to the importance of avoiding needless decisive battles, using blockades, and understanding the role of navies during crises or proxy wars.
Five years after the Cuban missile crisis, during the Six-Day War of June 1967 between Israel and its Arab adversaries, the Soviet navy deployed significant forces to the Mediterranean, and it did so again during the Yom Kippur War in 1973, both times to balance U.S. involvement and show political support for the USSR's Egyptian and Syrian allies. Similarly, beginning in 1964 the Black Sea Fleet conducted regular deployments into the Mediterranean; ten years on, the fleet averaged forty warships. The Soviet navy also maintained a permanent presence in the Indian Ocean and made regular visits to client states such as Angola. Thus, the Soviet Union had learned its lessons during the Cuban missile crisis, including the value of navies as diplomatic tools.

Even though by the 1970s the Soviet navy surpassed the U.S. Navy in number of ships, it was not designed to fight large, decisive sea battles far from Russia's shores. The Soviet navy could not wage such a battle in the middle of the North Atlantic without organic tactical air support. Yet while it remained a continuing Soviet ambition to build aircraft carriers similar to those of the U.S. Navy, the costs were too high. Therefore, the Soviet Union developed long-range bombers that it could send to the Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom (GIUK) gap, as an integrated part of its sea-denial strategy—a strategy so important that its naval air force became one of the largest air forces in the world. This focus on accomplishing sea denial in the North Atlantic was intended partly to prevent reinforcements from reaching Europe from North America and partly to protect the Soviet submarine-based nuclear-second-strike capability residing in the North Sea and Arctic Ocean. Beyond exercising a degree of sea denial in the North Atlantic, the Soviet naval strategy aimed to establish local sea control in the Baltic and Black Seas. It sought to accomplish all this with a combination of submarines, large surface combatants, and long-range bombers.

But with the end of the Cold War the Soviet navy went from zenith to nadir. The Russian navy quickly disintegrated and returned to being a coastal-defense navy, although it retained a capability for nuclear deterrence. The service was forced to readopt the strategy of the New Russian School, from which it had escaped in the 1960s. It was not until the presidency of Vladimir Putin (1952–) that the Russian navy, together with the other military services, experienced significant rearmament. This rearmament was influenced heavily by Russian strategic culture—not least the lessons of the Cold War—but also by the necessity to accept heavy compromises that can be explained best by reference to the Jeune École.

THE JEUNE ÉCOLE AND RUSSIA
The Jeune École is an alternative approach to naval strategy, in that it offers a different path for states that cannot establish themselves as dominant sea
powers but nonetheless have global political ambitions. Reference to the Jeune École therefore can contribute to an understanding of Russia’s present naval strategy.

As a naval strategic theory, the Jeune École originated from a French debate on how to balance a superior British Royal Navy in the 1880s and 1890s. The theory therefore was labeled a strategy of the weak, suggesting an intent to avoid decisive (Mahanian) sea battles against a superior force.30

While the ideas of Corbett and Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914) were presented in one or more of their respective books and spread from there, the Jeune École originated in a variety of writings by multiple authors and debates among many on the future of the French navy, spearheaded by Admiral H. L. Théophile Aube (1826–90) and journalist Gabriel Charmes (1850–86).31 The Jeune École therefore is not a strategic theory originated by a single intellect and propounded by a single author but rather the result of a dynamic debate at the end of the nineteenth century in France.

The debate was motivated partly by the costly naval competition with Great Britain, and partly by geostrategic changes in continental Europe. The France of the 1890s inhabited a multipolar world presenting various strategic challenges. In 1871, the country had been defeated in the Franco-Prussian War, resulting in enormous financial losses. France also suffered an 8 percent loss of industrial capacity because it had to cede Alsace-Lorraine to Germany.32 Furthermore, the Triple Alliance, created in 1882 among the German Empire, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, was aimed primarily at France.33 And while France did not see Britain as having any territorial ambitions in continental Europe, it did view it as the single largest threat to French colonies.34 Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century France was squeezed in a geostrategically multipolar world with Britain on one side and its rival continental powers on the opposite side, while it lacked the economic strength to balance them all.

It was out of these conditions and constraints that the Jeune École developed. Admiral Aube argued that the only way the French navy could afford to fight both in the Mediterranean and against Britain was by taking advantage of technical innovations (steam, steel, submarines, torpedoes, communications, etc.) that the Industrial Revolution had brought to navies. Technology would be a force multiplier in that it could make even large battleships vulnerable. Naval blockades would be a thing of the past because large warships no longer could defend themselves against submarines and high-speed torpedo boats. Technology would substitute for the battleships that France could not afford.35

Aube was aware that change in technological means could not do the job alone; to make the change work, new strategic and tactical ways were required as well. The French navy still should be able to face and defeat, say, the Italian
The French focus on the Italian navy arose from the strategic need to deny Italy sea control of the Mediterranean. Therefore, a part of the Jeune École argued in favor of a naval strategy of defeating the Italian fleet before it could leave its harbors, by taking offensive action that combined harbor bombardment with naval maneuvers by small units such as torpedo boats.  

However, the strategic approach to the Royal Navy needed to be completely different. Here, France would focus on attacking British merchant ships with high-speed cruisers in an unlimited guerre de course. The aim of the guerre de course was to raise the costs of sea transportation so high that the British public would consider the price of continuing the war too great. At the same time, French colonies should be protected by modern coastal batteries and small, fast units such as torpedo boats.

Thus, the ideas of the Jeune École were distilled into a two-pronged strategy. An inferior enemy navy should be attacked preemptively, while a superior fleet should be addressed with an effect-based, asymmetric approach.

The Jeune École faced some obvious challenges. Range was an issue with regard to commerce raiding; while cruisers could travel a fair distance, they needed coal, just like any other ship. The French answer to this problem was to operate a dispersed fleet from multiple bases that were placed such that the navy could concentrate its power at a given time, then disperse its units again.

The Jeune École constituted a completely new way of naval strategic thinking. While the ends (winning the war) were the same, the means and ways were completely different. Abandoning the concept of the decisive sea battle meant that the means could be in the form of smaller but highly technical units; the ways were either preemptive or asymmetric attacks, depending on the opponent.

For the concepts of the Jeune École to work today, a number of strategic pre-conditions would need to be present.

- A state would need to have the ambition of maintaining a position as a dominant sea power. It was France’s relative loss of power, including sea power, that changed its mode of thinking, in hopes of regaining its position.
- There must be a geostrategic need to divide military forces. France saw itself surrounded by enemies and felt it had to divide its forces.
- There must be economic constraints, a geographical loss, or both. France had lost the Franco-Prussian War, resulting in enormous financial and territorial losses, which put financial restraints on its naval-construction programs.
- The technological revolution has to be so significant that a state can seek to incorporate alternative ways and means into its naval strategy.
Combined, these strategic preconditions would result in a navy consisting mainly of smaller but heavily armed and technologically advanced units operating from multiple harbors, in combination with robust coastal defenses.

Russia’s present strategic environment is similar in many ways to that of France during the era of Admiral Aube. Russia clearly is ambitious to return to a great-power position similar to the Soviet Union’s during the Cold War; its invasions of Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014), together with its intervention in Syria (2015), make this clear. Furthermore, Russia sees a world that is multipolar, and thus perceives a need to divide its navy among the various relevant seas. While this also was the case during the Cold War, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, combined with enlargements of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), has underlined Russia’s need to maintain a credible naval presence in both the Black and Baltic Seas.41 A more independent Turkey and a rising China only add to the multipolarity and therefore to the naval complexity.

On top of these geostrategic challenges, the Russian economy went into a big decline in the first decade after the Cold War, and the country still struggles to compete with the United States, China, and the EU; while Russian gross domestic product (GDP) per capita had been increasing prior to the Ukraine war, Russia’s share of the global GDP has been decreasing since 2008.42 While the full, long-term impacts on the Russian economy of the sanctions the West has imposed in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine remain to be seen, there is little doubt they will be severe.

Finally, in recent decades the world has seen a digital and technological revolution in military affairs, similar to the industrial development experienced a century ago.43 Since Russian defense spending began to increase in 2008, the Russian armed forces have benefited significantly from this technological revolution.44

Thus, Russia’s present strategic ambitions and environment, combined with the economic restraints to which it is and will continue to be subject, offer clear similarities to France’s challenging situation a century ago. But the global digital revolution makes it possible for Russia to investigate new strategic naval ways and means, providing alternatives to building a traditional, conventional, great-power, blue-water navy—which it remains incapable of doing.

THE CONTINUING INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC CULTURE ON CURRENT RUSSIAN NAVAL STRATEGY

Russian strategic culture is influenced heavily by mistrust of the West and a feeling of humiliation since the end of the Cold War, when the country lost its status as one of the world’s two superpowers.45 Russian security and global influence
were never better than during the Cold War, and Russia looks back to what made it a great power following the Second World War.

Therefore, from a naval perspective it was no coincidence that President Putin approved the country’s most recently issued maritime doctrine on board the frigate Admiral Gorshkov, named after the founder of the modern Soviet navy. The doctrine leaves little doubt regarding Russian naval ambitions and lays the groundwork for a revised naval policy paper issued two years later. The latter document includes verbiage such as the following:

The Russian Federation still maintains the status of a great maritime power, possessing maritime potential that supports the implementation and defense of its national interests in any area of the World Ocean. The Russian Federation will not allow significant superiority of naval forces of other states over its Navy and will strive to secure its position as the second most combat capable Navy in the world. [It would possess] powerful balanced fleets in all strategic areas consisting of ships intended to carry out missions in near and far sea zones and ocean areas, as well as naval aviation and coastal forces equipped with effective high-precision strike weapons, and an advanced basing and supply system.

Plans included replacement of the majority of Russian naval units by 2030.

Both the maritime and naval doctrines aim to develop the Russian navy, if not into a Mahanian navy, then at least into a tool of sea power equal to that of the United States. Admiral Gorshkov would have no objections to these ambitions. Thus, Russia’s heritage as a naval great power sets the frame for the country’s naval strategic goals: nuclear deterrence, bastion defense, credible blue-water war-fighting capabilities, and global reach in maritime diplomacy.

However, today’s economic challenges remain, and Russia’s ambition to build a navy in the image of the former Soviet fleet poses an extremely difficult challenge. According to a RAND analysis from 2019, the Russian navy can perform three overall functions: strategic deterrence, coastal defense, and short-term ocean-presence operations. But another study emphasizes that Russian financing and shipbuilding capacities are incapable of rebuilding a blue-water navy while simultaneously maintaining Russian strategic nuclear deterrence. As an example, the Crimea conflict caused a significant setback in the Admiral Grigorovich–class frigate program—the necessary gas turbines were produced in Ukraine.

Since Russia appears unwilling to compromise on its strategic ambitions, it must find a path forward that will align those ambitions with the existing economic constraints. Submarines, both nuclear and conventional, always have had a prominent position in the Russian navy. While large-scale construction of large, modern surface warships started only in the 1960s, submarines have had a presence in the Russian naval inventory since imperial times, and they were an important naval asset during the eras of both the Russian New School and Admiral...
Gorshkov. As an example, the fraction of total Russian naval tonnage consisting of submarines increased from one-fifth at the beginning of the 1960s to nearly half in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{51} Importantly, submarines long have provided and continue to form an integral part of Russia’s naval culture, not simply a component of its fleet. They are connected closely to Soviet-era nuclear deterrence and bastion defense, and thus form a link back to the country’s history as a great power. Therefore, Russia’s focus today on submarines comes as no surprise. As discussed below, the commissioning of new and the updating of existing submarines constitute the highest priorities for the Russian navy.

Russia plans to replace its present second-strike capability with ten Borey-class, nuclear-powered, ballistic-missile-carrying submarines (i.e., SSBNs) by 2027.\textsuperscript{52} While the Russian shipbuilding industry is renowned for its delays, four Borey boats have been commissioned, with an additional four under construction.\textsuperscript{53} Similarly, Russia is planning a significant upgrade of its Akula-class attack submarines.\textsuperscript{54} The Russian navy also is expecting nine Yasen-class guided-missile submarines by 2027, with six commissioned by the end of 2022.\textsuperscript{55} These heavy Russian investments in submarines, nuclear as well as conventional, seem to be an echo from the Gorshkov era four-plus decades ago, partly because they modernize Russia’s nuclear-second-strike capability and partly because of the similarities to the naval leg of the Soviet bastion defense of the 1970s.

However, these submarines come at a steep financial cost, and the scale of these investments will limit the Russian navy’s ability to fulfill its other ambitions, including building large surface combatants. Pre-Russo-Ukrainian war estimates indicated that it would take decades for Russia to commission ships above frigate size (seven-thousand-plus tons); the various costs of the war in Ukraine have moved attainment of such an ambition even further away.\textsuperscript{56}

Russia therefore must find new ways either to increase its available resources or to mitigate its shortcomings when it comes to blue-water operations and maritime diplomacy. Russia will have to rethink its naval strategy because its navy, including both its fleet and its naval air force, will not have the power to threaten North Atlantic SLOCs as it could during Soviet times. Russia also is well aware that great-power status requires maintaining the capability both to establish sea control in adjacent waters and to conduct maritime diplomacy.

This combination of requirements dictates a strategy similar to that of the Jeune École for the Russian fleet, its naval air force, and the country’s coastal batteries. It is an incremental strategy, with naval power increasing in steps, enabling the gradual establishment of a broader naval presence without compromising a continuing strong defensive role. The Black Sea Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla are prominent examples of Russia’s pursuit of this strategy and of how the country intends to use its conventional fleet abroad.
The Caspian Flotilla and Gunboat Diplomacy

The Caspian Flotilla normally lives a quiet life on its own, attracting little international notice. However, in 2015 the flotilla for the first time engaged targets in Syria, employing cruise missiles from a range of at least 1,200 kilometers.\(^\text{57}\) From a military, tactical perspective, attacking rebel groups in Syria with cruise missiles did not make much sense; the Syrian rebel groups had no effective antiair systems, so Russia just as well could have continued using aircraft and bombs—a far cheaper solution.

But the attack had an important strategic purpose. By firing missiles from the Caspian Sea, Russia demonstrated its new capability to exercise gunboat diplomacy toward the coastal states in the Caspian region. In 2014, Russia had signed a political declaration with the Caspian coastal states of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan to keep the Caspian Sea NATO-free.\(^\text{58}\) Four years later—after the Syria strikes—the same coastal states signed the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, which, among other things, allows military presence in the Caspian Sea only by Caspian coastal states.\(^\text{59}\)

Given Russia’s perpetual concern over NATO enlargement, these agreements can be interpreted only as an attempt to vitiate NATO’s individual partnership agreements, such as the Partnership for Peace programs it has with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan.\(^\text{60}\) Since the Caspian Sea is a lake and can be reached only through Russian rivers, future access for NATO forces would have to be provided through membership in the organization by or partnership with one or more Caspian states. Installation by Russia of modern cruise missiles on its modern (albeit small—just under one-thousand-tons-displacement) corvettes hardly would be necessary, given that the area in question is reachable by the Russian air force; however, the action sends a clear message about Russia’s strategic will and its capability to practice gunboat diplomacy. The Caspian Flotilla’s engagement in Syria sent exactly this type of message, providing a reminder of what might happen if any Caspian state should question Russian hegemony in the region.

The Black Sea Fleet: From the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and Beyond

The first indication since the Cold War of the increased importance of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet was seen during the Russo-Georgian conflict in 2008, during which a naval task group conducted amphibious landings in Abkhazia.\(^\text{61}\) These landings in themselves had little if any significant effect on the opponent; plus, given that Georgia’s navy was almost nonexistent and Russia’s Black Sea Fleet was then in a poor state overall, the naval aspect as a whole had little influence on the outcome of the larger conflict. Yet the landing served as an important signal to other Black Sea coastal states, such as Ukraine, that Russia still could conduct
offensive naval, including amphibious, operations. Russia used the intervention in Georgia to reestablish itself as a naval power in the Black Sea. More importantly, it was the first clear example since the Cold War of Russia using coercive maritime, or “gunboat,” diplomacy.62

Russia’s position as a naval power in the Black Sea was strengthened further during the annexation of Crimea in 2014. While Russia, in the Kharkiv Accords, had rented the naval facilities in Crimea from Ukraine until 2042, its annexation of the peninsula allowed it to establish a larger military presence and eradicate any uncertainty regarding Russian access to those naval facilities in the future.63 With the annexation, Russia could strengthen its naval-deterrence profile, in combination with all its military assets, including air and land forces. It better could support its ambitions of establishing sea control in the Black Sea and a jumping-off place for operations in southern Ukraine.

Similarly, it better could support its ambitions of developing a permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean. Since the annexation of Crimea, the Black Sea Fleet has played an increasingly important role in Russia’s larger military strategy. In the Russian intervention in Syria in 2015, the Black Sea Fleet’s main task was to provide supplies to Syria and protect those shipments, which included significant amounts of military equipment. This function became known as the “Syrian Express.”64 Beyond that, however, also in 2015, the Russian submarine Rostov-on-Don fired a number of cruise missiles from the Mediterranean before it joined the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol.65 Two years later, an additional four Russian submarines (Krasnodar, Velikiy, Novgorod, and Kolpino) did the same.66 All the submarines were newly built, modernized, Kilo-class boats. Six of these have been delivered to the Black Sea Fleet, accomplishing a complete refit of its submarine forces.67

The Black Sea Fleet also is undergoing a large renovation of its surface units. Apart from its older units, some of which will be decommissioned before 2023, it is projected to have three new frigates and approximately twenty corvettes (displacement 800–1,800 tons) by 2030. All these units are capable of firing Kalibr cruise missiles, and some can switch roles, owing to their modular design and systems. A common denominator is the vessels’ relatively small size, measured by displacement and complement, but they are heavily armed and capable of conducting offensive naval operations. Finally, on the land and air sides, Russia has developed mobile antiship and surface-to-surface systems for coastal defense, and it has modernized its naval airframes to carry and deliver different types of new air-to-surface missiles, including the Kalibr.68

Russian naval strategy in the Black Sea aims to use the Black Sea Fleet to establish sea control by combining submarines, smaller units, aircraft, and coastal defenses, all armed with modern weapon systems such as long-range cruise
Beyond the Black Sea, Russia aims to establish a level of sea denial in the Mediterranean, using mainly the Black Sea Fleet but supported by units from other parts of the Russian navy; the latter aspect is exemplified best by the deployment in recent years of submarines and the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov from the Northern Fleet. However, an important limitation on the Black Sea Fleet is its (in)ability to sustain operations. First, the Montreux Convention (1936) puts restrictions on Russian submarines’ transits through the Bosporus Strait. Second, sustained operations outside the Black Sea require some sort of logistical setup, with resupply and the like provided either afloat or from Russian bases abroad.

Russia has plans to establish the latter, and in January 2018 it signed a forty-nine-year rental agreement with Syria regarding the naval base in Tartus and a similar agreement on a military airport. In December 2020, Russia also signed a twenty-five-year agreement with Sudan to build a base at Port Sudan on the Red Sea. The symbolism of a frigate from the Black Sea Fleet conducting a port call in Port Sudan two months later cannot be mistaken. The base in Tartus will ease Russian naval operations in the Mediterranean, especially submarine operations, given the limitations imposed by the Montreux Convention. The importance of this has been underlined during the present war in Ukraine, in response to which Turkey has prohibited Russian naval units from transiting the Bosporus. Without the naval base in Tartus, Russian units in the Mediterranean would have been forced to return either to the Northern Fleet or to the Baltic Sea.

While the availability of the Tartus base may not enable Russia to exercise sea control over the eastern Mediterranean for any prolonged period, it will make sea denial possible by facilitating the combination of contributions from submarines, aircraft, smaller combat units, and coastal-defense systems. Similarly, the naval base in Port Sudan will make it possible for Russia to deploy and sustain its most modern surface units—its corvettes—to the Red Sea, as well as its submarines. A corvette berthed in Port Sudan will enable Russia to engage any target in the Red Sea with Kalibr missiles without the ship even leaving harbor, and while there it can serve as a coastal battery system.

**RUSSIAN NAVAL STRATEGY: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Even as Russia modernizes its surface fleet with a large number of smaller, technologically capable units, it will maintain a limited number of older, larger units such as those of the Kirov, Slava, and Udaloy classes. Being a global sea power—as called for in Russia’s published maritime strategy—requires having large warships that can deploy on a global scale. It was the large warships—in addition to the powerful submarines—that Admiral Gorshkov saw as crucial to the Soviet Union becoming a major sea power. For Russia now to abandon large surface
combatants would be the same as rejecting Gorshkov’s ideas and the legacy of the Soviet navy. Therefore, Ukraine’s sinking of the Russian cruiser Moskva in April 2022 was not just a matter of depriving the Russian navy of lives and capability but equally an attack on Russia’s perception of itself as a sea power.74

Yet Russia cannot afford to build new, large, warships of greater than seven thousand tons displacement. Therefore the only option is to maintain and modernize its current units. For example, Russia’s sole aircraft carrier, Admiral Kuznetsov, seems to be “kept alive” despite years of challenges to keep it operational and a number of severe setbacks during its recent refit in Murmansk.75 As noted, scrapping Kuznetsov would be the same as scrapping the idea of Russia being a great sea power. Therefore the Russian navy will go far to retain its only aircraft carrier, even if only on paper. If nothing else, Kuznetsov is a clear symbol of the continuing influence of Soviet strategic culture on current Russian naval strategy.

Russia will continue to prioritize its nuclear-second-strike capability and bastion defense. As discussed previously, submarines have played and continue to play a crucial role in Russian strategy; however, the Russian navy, in contrast to the Soviet service, is not designed to threaten NATO’s SLOCs in the North Atlantic by marshaling those submarines with large surface combatants and long-range bombers, because the modern service has fewer boats.76 Therefore, while the Russian navy’s bastion defense will continue to focus on protecting the service’s nuclear submarines, it will do so from a more drawn-in position.

This change will allow far-more-unhindered transit by American, other NATO, and other allied shipping across the North Atlantic SLOCs than was true during Soviet times. Russia instead has focused on developing and deploying long-range air-to-surface and surface-to-surface missiles, and it intends to replace the old Soviet strategy of high-seas naval attacks with one aimed at threatening harbor approaches in the northeastern Atlantic—a strategy more similar to the ideas of the Jeune École than to those of Admiral Gorshkov. Such missiles could be fired from ground batteries, submarines, and air and surface units in the Norwegian and Barents Seas. A Tsirkon missile fired from the Norwegian Sea would take around seven minutes to travel a thousand kilometers to a target located near the Faeroe Islands.77 Western naval strategists should be more concerned with air and submarine threats in the eastern North Atlantic and with protecting SLOCs near the European approaches than with a Russian submarine threat to the GIUK gap; therefore, NATO’s capability to conduct antisubmarine warfare must be shifted from the GIUK gap to the Norwegian Sea and the United Kingdom–Faeroes–Norway gap. This will be necessary to suppress Russian submarines that can threaten high-value targets, while remaining prepared to conduct multidomain defense.
Russia’s other strategic focus—on smaller naval combat units and foreign naval bases—is linked closely with the country’s broader global naval ambitions. While the Ukraine war will result in a setback for these ambitions, the future economic constraints on Russia’s economy will mean that the combination of smaller naval units with foreign bases will constitute the country’s primary naval option for years to come.

Once the Russian armed forces have established (or reestablished) the capability to exercise sea control in the Black Sea, the next step will be the Mediterranean, then beyond. The naval bases in Tartus and Port Sudan are the first examples of this incremental effort. Strategists should ask themselves where else Russia might extend its network of naval bases. An obvious candidate is Libya, where Russia first supported Khalifa Haftar, leader of the Libyan National Army, then contributed to the negotiation of a cease-fire. While Russia’s present role and influence in Libya are unclear, access to a naval base there would give the Russian navy a strategic presence in the center of the Mediterranean that it lacks today. Preventing Russia from establishing new naval bases abroad would be one of the most effective ways to restrain Russian sea power, because Russia’s most capable but smaller units must depend entirely on their support.

In the Baltic, Russia cannot establish bases similar to those in the Mediterranean or Red Sea. Just as important, however, there is not the same necessity for them, since Russia’s Northern Fleet can provide the navy’s main access to the North Sea and North Atlantic. Therefore Russia can establish sea control in the Baltic using long-range shore batteries and aircraft, in combination with minor surface units. Russia already has brought about this situation.

Finally, Russia’s ability to establish sea control in coastal regions using a combination of shore batteries, aircraft, and smaller units—all armed with long-range missiles—will require NATO naval strategists to rely on strike warfare using cruise missiles as the most effective way to reduce Russian sea control there. The idea of “classic sea battles” in confined waters between opposing naval units is gone, and—with the exception of submarine warfare—sea control will determine how power is projected to and from the shore.

Western naval strategists looking into the future should focus on three overall areas: first, how to restrain Russia’s establishment of foreign bases; second, how to establish sea control, when needed, in the Baltic, Black, and Mediterranean Seas; and third, how to deter and counter Russian submarine and missile threats in the North Atlantic. While the first task resides at the political-strategic level, the other two tasks are naval-strategic considerations. Achieving those objectives will require navies able to fight in a multidomain environment, mainly against submarines, smaller surface units, and aircraft, while protecting high-value units.
from long-range missile engagements. Allied navies also should be capable of conducting long-range strike warfare with cruise missiles to engage land-based missile batteries and naval and air force bases as an integrated part of establishing sea control in confined waters such as the Baltic, Black, and Mediterranean Seas.

In the future, the responsibility to meet such demands should fall not only on large, global or regional sea powers such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France but also on any navy that considers the Baltic, Black, or Mediterranean Sea its home waters. Such naval services must maintain the capabilities and readiness necessary to balance and deter Russia’s sea-power ambitions.

NOTES

9. The battle of Gangut in 1714 marked the first major naval victory for the Imperial Russian Navy and established Russia as the major sea power in the Baltic Sea during the Great Northern War (1700–21). The Battle of Chesma, 1770, was the first major naval victory against the Ottoman Empire. In the battle of Sinop, 1853, Russia won full control of the Black Sea. It also was the first time that guns fired explosive shells during a naval battle, which resulted in the total destruction of the Ottoman Black Sea fleet.


22. Ibid.


31. Ibid., p. xii.


36. Ibid., pp. 100–105.


40. Ibid., pp. 156–57.

41. Riber, “Russia’s Black Sea Fleet and a New Russian Naval Strategy.”


45. Jørgen Staun, “I krig med Vesten: Russisk militær-strategisk kultur” [In war with the West: Russian military-strategic culture], in Rusland som militær stormagt [Russia as military great power], ed. Niels Bo Poulsen and Jørgen Staun (Copenhagen: Djøf, 2021), available at www.djøf-forlag.dk/.


47. Anna Davis, trans., Fundamentals of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the
Field of Naval Operations for the Period until 2030, RMSI Research 2 (Newport, RI: Russia Maritime Studies Institute, 2017), available at digital-commons.usnwc.edu/.


57. “Russian Missiles ‘Hit IS in Syria from Caspian Sea.’”


68. Ibid.

69. Convention concernant le régime des Détroits [Convention regarding the regime of the Straits], 20 July 1936, 173 L.N.T.S., p. 214.


75. “Kuznetsov (Orel) Class (Project 1143.5/6),” Fighting Ships, 2021, Janes.


HOW THE WEAK CAN BEAT THE STRONG IN WAR AT SEA

Dustin J. Nicholson

Throughout history, weaker naval powers have sought to overcome their relative weakness to contest command of the sea. This inclination represents a clear continuity in naval warfare that remains ever present today.

CONTESTING COMMAND OF THE SEA

Weaker naval powers can contest command of the sea either through alliances with third-party naval powers or through asymmetric naval strategies. In the first case, weaker powers form alliances with third parties to mount a combined capability to contest command of the sea; in the second, weaker naval powers employ asymmetric strategies that leverage fortress fleets and commerce raiding to their advantage.

Rent a Navy

History shows that weaker naval powers can contest command of the sea by forming alliances with other sea powers. This “rent a navy” strategy enabled Sparta, a classic land power, to go to sea in the Peloponnesian War and defeat Athens, the dominant sea power of the day. In the American Revolution, American insurgents pursued a similar strategy under which Franco-American forces on land, buttressed by a French fleet at sea, surrounded and defeated British forces on the coast, even though Britannia ruled the waves in that era. Lastly, Japan pursued this strategy with a twist in

Major Dustin J. Nicholson, USMC, graduated with highest distinction from the College of Naval Command and Staff in June 2022. Upon graduation from the Maritime Advanced Warfighting School in September 2022, he will serve as a plans officer in III Marine Expeditionary Force, Okinawa, Japan. The paper on which this article is based won the John J. D’Luhy Prize honoring excellence in strategic analysis and thought.
the Russo-Japanese War when it formed an alliance with Britain to “rent” sufficient naval deterrence to keep Japan’s war with Russia geopolitically isolated.

**Sparta in the Peloponnesian War.** The Peloponnesian War, which spanned nearly three decades, reached a decisive outcome only when Sparta acquired a fleet through its long-sought alliance with Persia.

From the start of the war, the “elephant” knew that it would have to put to sea to beat the “whale.” Archidamus, one of Sparta’s kings at the war’s opening, recognized in his prewar net assessment that Sparta needed to ally with a whale; “Hellenic or barbarian it matters not.”1 While Sparta made initial attempts to beat Athens on land, “it was only when Sparta embraced sea power that it defeated Athens—not in the fields of Attica, but on the seas from which Athens derived its power.”2 Once Sparta had access to a Persian fleet to take its hoplites to sea, it could project its power across the Aegean to seize territory in the Hellespont, the narrow straits through which Athens imported grain from distant markets.3

Sparta’s strategy threatened the commercial access on which Athens relied—a move that would have resonated with Alfred Thayer Mahan—thereby forcing Athens to give battle in faraway waters. And this is where fighting with a rented navy offers its greatest advantage; a loss at sea would amount to a setback for Sparta but would spell defeat for Athens.4 The elephant won because it grew disposable fins before the whale could grow disposable legs.

**The United States in the Revolutionary War.** Some twenty-two centuries later, a new nation would win its independence from the world’s reigning maritime hegemon by allying with a third party that could compete for command of the sea. Much as Sparta eagerly allied with a “barbarian” sea power, the nascent American republic warmly embraced the naval might of a French despot.

General George Washington wrote a letter to the Marquis de Lafayette in November 1781 in which he echoed what Archidamus long before had told his Spartan audience: “No land force can act decisively unless accompanied by a maritime superiority.”5 By securing an alliance with Britain’s leading naval rival, the Americans transformed London’s domestic affair into a global contest. “By its presence alone,” France’s navy “had reduced British counterinsurgency to a secondary priority.”6

Strategically unhinged, the Royal Navy now sought to defend all the British Empire’s interests with inferior forces at every location—creating opportunities for Franco-American exploitation, and later providing Mahan the impetus for much of his naval theory.7 Although the United States was the far weaker naval power, it leveraged third-party alliances to leave Britain “more isolated than at any other time in its history, even more than in 1940.”8

**Japan in the Russo-Japanese War.** More than a century later, Japan deftly leveraged its alliance with Britain to keep Russia’s fleet isolated, both diplomatically
and logistically. The Russo-Japanese War illustrated how a weaker naval power, in this case Japan, could overcome its relative weakness by shaping the strategic and operational environment in its favor. Rather than renting Britain’s Royal Navy to fight tsarist Russia, Japan instead sought to “rent” the Royal Navy’s deterrent effect to keep France (Russia’s ally) out of the war.

Absent aid from France and the use of the numerous ports that country could have made available along the route to the Far East, Russia’s Baltic Fleet sailed more than eighteen thousand miles in isolation. Japan’s strategy combined distance with diplomacy to erode Russia’s prewar naval superiority, to the point that the Baltic Fleet’s admiral messaged home: “I have not the slightest prospect of recovering command of the sea.”

Although separated by thousands of years and thousands of miles, Aegospotami, Yorktown, and Tsushima all intersect in an important way. Each was the final naval battle of a war wherein the weaker sea power leveraged its naval allies to win.

**Impose Asymmetric Costs**

Absence the intervention of third-party navies, weaker naval powers still can seek to contest command of the sea directly through asymmetric strategies that leverage fortress fleets and commerce raiding. For these strategies to work, the costs imposed on the stronger adversary must be higher than those incurred by the weaker naval power.

World War I illustrated both the strengths and weaknesses of fortress fleets, while World War II demonstrated the extreme costs that a weaker naval power could impose through asymmetric commerce raiding. Lastly, case studies from the post–World War II era prove that these strategies remain a fixture of naval warfare.

**Germany in World War I.** When facing a superior naval opponent during World War I, Germany and the Ottoman Empire each employed fortress-fleet strategies. They experienced divergent operational outcomes.

Frequently asserted to constitute the beginning of a classic Thucydides trap, the unification of the German states in 1871 “brought about a structural change” in Europe that placed Germany on a collision course with Britain. Although Kaiser Wilhelm II endeavored to come out ahead in a prewar naval arms race, war intervened in 1914 with Germany’s High Seas Fleet still weaker by any measure compared with Britain’s Grand Fleet. Therefore, Germany pursued a fortress-fleet strategy as propounded by the French Jeune École, which emphasized the cost-imposition advantages that emerging technologies afforded to weaker naval powers—namely, small mines and little torpedo boats now could sink big battleships. With the High Seas Fleet as a fortressed fleet in being, German strategy
aligned with the adage attributed to Britain’s most famous admiral: “A ship’s a
fool to fight a fort.”

The logic of this strategy, however, required the Royal Navy to be “foolish
enough to rush into the Heligoland Bight.” Yet with the stalemate in the North
Sea playing to Britain’s favor, the Grand Fleet had no need to rush in, and this in
turn eventually forced Germany’s High Seas Fleet to sally forth to Jutland.

_Turkey in World War I._ The key difference with the Ottoman Empire’s employ-
ment of a fortress-fleet strategy in the Dardanelles campaign of 1915 was that
the British did _not_ have time on their side; in short, rushing in was thought the
least-foolish option. And in reality, had an ill-fated series of mine explosions not
occurred, the outcome for Britain might have proved very different.

Yet history records how the Ottomans successfully wielded a force that was far
more fortress than fleet to impose greater naval costs on their mightier adversary,
pushing the Allied powers back out to sea after suffering a quarter-million casu-
alties. The Turkish fortress fleet had been underestimated beforehand, and sub-
sequently it denied the world’s most capable naval power access to the straits.

_Germany in World War II._ The Second World War surpassed in destructiveness
the First World War by most measures, and this held true for the destructive
capacities of weaker naval powers as they implemented asymmetric strategies to
contest command of the sea. Nazi Germany waged a commerce-raiding cam-
paign in the Battle of the Atlantic that nearly succeeded in preventing Allied in-
dustrial power from being projected onto the European continent.

Although Germany was the “weaker” naval power, its level of effort was stag-
gering, from several perspectives. In terms of time, “the Battle of the Atlantic
lasted from 3 September 1939 through the end of the war in Europe.” In terms
of scale, “the Allies lost three million tons of shipping in American waters” in
just the first six months of 1942 alone. Having “woefully underestimated the
U-boat menace” during the interwar period, the Anglo-American navies entered
another world war lacking adequate countermeasures to unrestricted submarine
warfare. Only significant wartime adaptation got the Allied navies back on the
winning side of a grim cost-imposition contest.

_Other Case Studies._ From the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Gulf War to
America’s ongoing strategic rivalry with the People’s Republic of China, weaker
naval powers of the post–World War II era have continued to embrace asym-
metric strategies to contest command of the sea. In October 1950, North Ko-
rean mines in Wonsan harbor delayed the U.S. X Corps’s amphibious assault long
enough “that even Bob Hope’s USO show had beaten them to Wonsan, much to
MacArthur’s embarrassment and chagrin.” As a prelude to the opening of Amer-
ica’s next war, North Vietnamese patrol craft launched torpedoes at an American
destroyer in the Tonkin Gulf on 2 August 1965. A second attack was thought to have occurred two days later, leading Congress to pass, “with near-unanimity, the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.”21 In the next major war the United States fought, Iraq’s coastal defenses posed enough of an asymmetric threat to make gaining approval for Operation TIGER—the proposed amphibious assault from the waters of the Persian Gulf—“an all-but-impossible task.”22

Although each of these post–World War II case studies offers a glimpse of a weaker naval power’s attempt to contest America’s command of the sea, those efforts pale in comparison with the unprecedented fortress fleet that China is building today within its ever-expanding antiaccess/area-denial zone. China’s rapid naval expansion and maturing precision-strike regime have renewed vigorous interest in the very question this article aims to answer.

COUNTERARGUMENT: GEOGRAPHY TENDS TO PREVAIL

Some may argue that asymmetric naval strategies are inherently futile, since the side employing them seldom wins the war. In short, the only consistent way for a weaker naval power to overcome its relative weakness and win is by alloying with a third-party sea power. Such critics would be correct to point out that each of the weaker naval powers mentioned in the first section of this article—that is, those that allied with other sea powers—were victorious. Conversely, all the weaker sea powers in the second section of this article—those that built coastal defenses or fortress fleets or depended principally on guerre de course—were vanquished.23 One might conclude that the distinction lies in the reality that the weaker naval power in any given war is most likely at a geographic disadvantage. In other words, the only way for a weaker naval power to overcome its deficit in the geographic elements of sea power is to ally with a third power that maintains a relative surplus in such elements.

Although Themistocles was able to set ancient Athens onto a trajectory toward maritime hegemony by building walls that “fastened [his] city to the Piraeus and the land to the sea,” this degree of geographic conversion remains historically anomalous.24 Germany discovered—and then rediscovered—through each world war just how difficult it is to convert inherent land power into unnatural sea power. Simply put, Germany wasted much of its finite resources in attempting to overcome the limitations of its geography. “Germany suffered a severe handicap” in geographic terms, as “all its sea-borne commerce had to pass through either the North Sea or the English Channel, almost literally under the guns of the British navy.”25 In fact, few even in Britain realized “how great a role geography played in the checking of the German challenge.”26 Sharing land borders with powerful and hostile neighbors on the continent only made it more “improbable, as Mahan pointed out,” for Germany to “ever divert from its army enough of its human and
material resources to win primacy at sea.”

In stark contrast, Britain maintained a clear sea-power advantage—one that was elemental—in times of peace and war through the natural insularity its geographic disposition provided.

Those who emphasize the geographic elements of sea power above the asymmetric tendencies of weaker naval powers likely would draw many parallels between the Anglo-German imbalance of the early twentieth century and the Sino-American imbalance taking shape today. “Before you decide for war, look at geography”—sound advice in any situation, and it ought to ring loudly in Chinese ears.

A chain of island nation-states, all of which are either allies or defense partners of the United States, encloses China’s coastline, from end to end. Provided that the United States can maintain access to and basing rights on the first island chain, when China looks seaward it will continue to see the equivalent of thousands of unsinkable aircraft carriers that could impose high costs on its new navy. Until China achieves its aim of “breaking the island chain so it can prosper,” it remains more a contested near-sea power than an uncontested oceanic power.

More to the point, whereas Britain could leverage its insularity as a small island power over Germany to great effect, the United States can do so on a continental scale. It is arguably America’s greatest geostrategic advantage that it remains the world’s only great power not found within the densely packed Eurasian mass. Much as Wilhelmine Germany had to contend with maritime geography that handicapped its otherwise grand maritime aspirations, so too must Xi’s China.

REBUTTAL: A LOT CAN HAPPEN IN ONE AFTERNOON

Consideration of the geographic elements of sea power, viewed from America’s perspective, can be encouraging, given that the United States of today meets Mahan’s criteria on a scale that even he could not have anticipated fully in 1890. Yet if geography were a panacea, war would be predictable and strategy would be irrelevant. When imagining a high-end war between China and the United States, one ugly truth comes to light as a succinct rebuttal to the counterargument: only an American admiral could lose that war in an afternoon.

Just as Britain’s decades of sea-power advantages over Germany came with an added burden for the Royal Navy in the First World War, so too will America’s navy carry such a burden in any future contest for command of the sea, especially one with China. And, just as Britain had to adapt its maritime strategy toward Germany by shifting from a close blockade to a distant blockade, so too must the United States pursue a naval strategy that manages risk through appropriate standoff. To be clear: Modern asymmetric naval technologies have not erased the effects of geography; if anything, geography holds an even more prominent position in maritime strategy today. As fortress fleets evolved from dominating harbors to dominating territorial waters to dominating near-sea expanses,
Weaker naval powers continued to blend the land with the sea to overcome their relative weakness. In response, the stronger naval power must stand ready to win a contest for command of the sea through an equally blended strategy.

Therefore, geography must be at the center of American naval strategy. The first island chain holds Sino-American attention, and for good reason. As Sir Julian Corbett professed to his seagoing countrymen more than a century ago, wars are “settled on dry land.” Any future Sino-American contest for command of the sea will be settled on dry land by troops with wet boots. When Sparta and Athens clashed as two titans long ago, it was the littoral bits of land throughout the ancient Greek world that bore the brunt of the fighting. From that viewpoint, there is perhaps much that remains unchanged.

NOTES


18. Ibid., p. 252.
19. Ibid., p. 236.
23. The Korean War stalemated and the Vietnam War certainly was not a U.S. victory. Those important points aside, the focus here is on the contest for command of the sea, in which the United States remained unrivaled.
30. Ibid.
MISSION COMMAND IN THE AGE OF SAIL

Josh Weiss

Mission command is a command-and-control philosophy characterized by trust between senior and junior leaders and independent execution of orders on the basis of a common understanding of purpose and intent. While the concept has been part of the U.S. military’s joint doctrine since the 1980s, recently it has received more attention from senior leaders. In 2012, General Martin E. Dempsey, USA, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argued that the rapidly changing and increasingly complex security environment, especially when paired with an enduring period of constrained fiscal resources, requires the joint force to be able to leverage any and all advantages presented by “smaller units enabled to conduct decentralized operations at the tactical level with operational/strategic implications.” In January 2021, Admiral Michael M. Gilday’s Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Navigation Plan (NAVPLAN) also called for the Navy to orient around commander’s intent and to learn to “foster initiative, flexibility, and trust” throughout the force. Notably, however—and appropriately, given the CNO’s central theme of providing commander’s intent without specific direction—Gilday’s NAVPLAN does not supply a method to achieve this goal.

Building a culture of mission command in the joint force requires a formal and continual education process. While practical exercises and training would be crucial to such a program, much would be gained from a solid foundation in theory and study. Fortunately, there exists an extensively studied area of history that possesses...
still-untapped potential to aid in building a mission-command-education program: the age of sail.

This is not a new idea. Even though the term mission command is an anachronism relative to that era, several historians already have used the concept to examine the age of sail. However, most of them, as well as practitioners seeking to apply the mission-command framework better, have done so primarily by examining Vice Admiral Lord Nelson's tactical brilliance, as well as the idea of the so-called Nelson Touch. That is a productive approach, and the Nelson Touch does anticipate many of the core aspects of contemporary mission command. But we should not limit ourselves to Nelson's tactics; the age of sail offers many other useful examples of mission command, and it does so at all levels of warfare. An analytical framework based on mission command can help discover, develop, and present effectively these lessons for the many modern practitioners seeking to apply mission command in the context of ongoing great-power competition.

This article answers General Dempsey's and Admiral Gilday's calls by developing an analytical framework for mission command and proposing the full age of sail as an area for current military officers to mine for case studies and lessons to learn. It further demonstrates the value of this novel approach by examining a case study from the age of sail through the lens of mission command. The resulting analysis not only exemplifies the value to practitioners of studying the age of sail; it also suggests some ways in which the current discourse on mission command could be extended productively.

A MISSION-COMMAND FRAMEWORK
At its heart, mission command is about the relationship between commander and subordinate.

The Relationship
The commander has a particular end state or specific goal in mind and must rely on the subordinate to achieve that objective. Ideally, the commander also can count on the subordinate to exercise discretion on the scene to take advantage of local conditions or react to unforeseen changes in the operating environment. This is the primary benefit of mission command. The commander also has an idea of the boundaries or limits within which the subordinate should operate when executing orders. Another way to say this is that the commander has an idea of an appropriate decision space within which a subordinate can create and choose a particular course of action.

The subordinate relies on the commander to provide the overall goal, as well as the intent behind the objective and any limits on or boundaries to the courses of action the subordinate may choose to achieve the desired ends. The commander
may provide the mission orders in written or oral form, depending on the situation. The subordinate then leverages the advantage of being on the scene, as well as an understanding of the implicit and explicit limits conveyed by the commander’s intent and orders, to develop his or her own perception of the decision space from which to choose a particular course of action. The desired end state of correctly executed mission command is a subordinate who, even in an environment of imperfect or incomplete information, is able confidently to leverage any advantage deriving from proximity to the task or issue by independently interpreting and executing orders without further guidance. Of course, this is incredibly difficult to execute in the real world and requires significant effort on the part of both commander and subordinate.

Understandably, the commander has the more difficult job with respect to mission command. He or she must convey the objective or desired end state clearly while also conveying sufficiently understandable and workable boundaries within which the subordinate may operate. If these boundaries overly constrict the subordinate, the commander risks negating the ability of the subordinate to take advantage of local conditions or changes in the battle space. Put another way, simply conveying a directive or objective—for example, “Avoid hostilities with another nation’s naval forces”—is insufficient, because it can overly constrain a subordinate and negate any advantage provided by that subordinate’s ability to react to local conditions. On one hand, a subordinate may interpret such direction so strictly that it precludes protecting allies from attack; on the other hand, it could prevent the subordinate from taking advantage of a rapidly developing or unforeseen situation. Therefore, to leverage mission command fully, a commander must create and communicate clearly an acceptable and appropriate decision space within which the subordinate can act.

When creating the limits of such a decision space, the commander must consider three interrelated areas:

1. First and most importantly, the commander must explain to the subordinate the intent behind the orders. A shared understanding of why the commander wants something done, and any other reasoning behind the orders, will help align the commander’s and the subordinate’s decision spaces, minimizing the potential that the subordinate will select a course of action that is unacceptable to the commander. It also will provide maximum opportunity for a subordinate to take advantage of opportunities on scene.

2. Second, the commander must understand and incorporate the subordinate’s personal history, personality, and other factors contributing to his or her mind-set when both explaining intent and issuing orders.
This will help the commander shape the orders to the particular strengths and weaknesses of the subordinate.

3. Finally, the commander must consider the specific language of the orders. Informed by an understanding of the subordinate to whom the orders will be issued, the commander must take care to use language that provides the subordinate sufficient maneuvering room while not allowing too free a hand.

Careful analysis and consideration of these three areas will help a commander issue effective mission-style orders and shape an appropriate decision space for the subordinate.

The subordinate’s job is less complicated but still difficult. On receipt of orders, the subordinate must filter the language of those orders through his or her understanding of the commander’s intent and the desired end state to create a perceived decision space from which to choose a particular course of action. Appropriately executed mission command ensures that the two decision spaces overlap to a significant degree, even if not completely. If needed, and if time and communications permit, the subordinate should seek clarification or further guidance. The subordinate should take advantage of any information or circumstances available on scene and select a course of action that stays within the bounds of the intended decision space.

Trust is the most significant prerequisite for successful execution of mission command. Both the commander issuing the orders and the subordinate executing

---

**FIGURE 1**

THE MISSION-COMMAND RELATIONSHIP

- Knowledge of Subordinate
- Trust in Commander
- Objective or Desired End State
- Mission Orders
- Desired Decision Space
- Perceived Decision Space
- Commander
- Subordinate
- Intent

---

https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol75/iss3/1
them must accept the risk of all possible outcomes. In other words, mission command is not a panacea; it does not guarantee success. Even a subordinate with a perfect understanding of commander's intent and executing beautifully written orders still may choose an improper or ineffective course of action. The subordinate may fail to achieve an objective or may do so in a manner contradictory to what the commander intended. So, both commander and subordinate must trust each other. In mission command, the commander's trust of the subordinate should be considered part of his or her knowledge of the subordinate, as previously discussed. An extra dimension exists for the subordinate, however. Subordinates must trust that commanders will understand their actions and protect them from irrational or excessive punishment resulting from the subordinates exercising discretion or interpreting commanders’ orders. If subordinates do not have this trust in their commanders, they naturally will be unwilling to take risks or exercise initiative—effectively negating the prime benefit that mission command provides.

The Possibilities

A matrix of four mission-command possibilities can be developed for application to events, including during the age of sail, by laying out the roles of and requirements for both the commander and the subordinate. Each of the four elements in the matrix represents a possible combination of circumstances in the application of mission command, and therefore a unique framework by which to question, understand, and teach. None of the questions offered below should be taken to apply only to the possibility alongside which it is presented; in many cases, the questions will apply to multiple possibilities. Nor should the questions presented below be considered exhaustive; they are presented merely to show the outline of a possible framework for historical analysis.

The first possibility represents the best execution of mission command. In such scenarios, the subordinate’s derived decision space overlaps significantly with the intended decision space the commander provided through mission orders and explanation of intent. The subordinate then chooses a course of action from this shared decision space that leads to the commander’s desired outcome. Historians and practitioners should apply several questions to scenarios that fall into this category. What factors led to the two decision spaces overlapping so well? Was it in the way the commander understood the subordinate’s limitations? Was it because the subordinate trusted the commander to provide protection from unintended consequences? Did the overlap of the decision spaces lead to the successful outcome, or was it some other factor?

The second possibility is best described as an adequate exercise of mission command. In such scenarios, the subordinate chooses a course of action from his or her decision space that leads to the commander’s desired outcome. However, the chosen course of action lies outside the decision space from which the commander
intended the subordinate to choose. In other words, the subordinate got the job done, but did so in a manner that the commander did not intend. This possibility should not be confused with the best execution of mission command simply because the subordinate achieved the desired outcome. Because mission command involves a relationship, it is at its best when the chosen course of action comes from a shared decision space. Historians and practitioners should ask why the two decision spaces did not overlap to include the successful course of action ultimately chosen. Did the commander convey intent poorly, or did the words of the orders overly constrain the subordinate from exercising initiative? Was there a viable course of action that lay within the shared decision space? Why did the subordinate choose a course of action that lay outside the decision space the commander had provided?

The third possibility is similar to the second in that the subordinate chooses a course of action inside his or her own decision space but outside that intended by the commander. However, in this case, the subordinate fails to achieve the commander’s desired outcome. This is best described as a failure of mission command. In addition to the questions presented for the second possibility, here practitioners and historians should focus on whether mission-command-related issues contributed to the failure to achieve the desired outcome. Would the desired outcome have been achieved if the subordinate had chosen a particular course of action within the commander’s intended decision space? Or was the failure unrelated to a mission-command issue?
The fourth possibility likely does not relate to mission command at all. Here, the subordinate chooses a course of action from a decision space that overlaps with the commander’s intended decision space yet fails to achieve the desired outcome. In other words, these scenarios may involve issues that even mission command could not have solved, such as those caused by chance or the fog of war. Here practitioners and historians should attempt to identify the factors that caused the chosen course of action to fail. Was it simply that, in war, bad things sometimes happen? Did the shared decision space contain a course of action that might have led to the desired outcome? If so, why was it not chosen?

Taken together, these four possibilities create a useful framework by which to analyze events from the age of sail.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE AGE OF SAIL

The age of sail is a particularly useful era to mine for mission-command-related lessons, because of the challenges inherent in the age. The communications and strictly military-related challenges at the tactical level are well known and have been explored. However, the same challenges existed at the operational and strategic levels of war as well, and those are particularly relevant to the political and diplomatic challenges facing today’s military leaders in a renewed great-power competition. Because of slow communication during the age of sail and the global nature of many of the wars fought, officers on station—that is, the subordinates—frequently were required to use their initiative and to make decisions at the operational and strategic levels of war in an environment characterized by incomplete or imperfect information. Likewise, ministers at home—that is, the commanders—had to try to shape those officers’ behavior through orders that could take months to arrive, if they did at all, and which could have become irrelevant by the time they did. There are clear parallels from this information environment to modern militaries’ concerns with disruption of today’s communication and coordination capabilities at all levels of war. The case study examined here demonstrates those parallels and provides both a particularly rigorous test of the developed mission-command framework and an excellent example of the valuable lessons that such complicated events can yield.

Less clear but no less important are the parallels from the age of sail to today’s information-rich environment. The same constant-communication capabilities that militaries worry about losing in the opening days of modern combat likely are acting to degrade subordinates’ abilities to exercise initiative. John Nelsen neatly demonstrated this in his 1987 article “Auftragstaktik: A Case for Decentralized Battle.” The situation he anticipated then—which has come to pass today—was that newly developed communications technology both allows and incentivizes commanders to micromanage subordinates, to the detriment of
the subordinates’ abilities and willingness to practice initiative to advantage.\textsuperscript{11} Because commanders in the age of sail did not have the option of constant communications, they naturally developed methods to communicate within, and to develop subordinates’ abilities to deal with, a sparse information environment.

Modern commanders seeking to prepare their subordinates for a severely degraded communications and information environment in a future conflict can learn from their predecessors in the age of sail. It is time, then, to apply the analytical framework to a specific case study and demonstrate the value of this approach.

THE CASE STUDY
Between 30 June and 11 July 1815, Rear Admiral Sir Philip Durham and Lieutenant General Sir James Leith, respectively the British naval and land-force commanders in chief of the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean Sea, engaged in a remarkable dispute regarding the island of Guadeloupe, whose governor had declared allegiance to the recently returned Napoléon Bonaparte. The dispute was carried out via a series of lengthy and legalistic letters between the two officers.

The correspondence between the commanders makes clear that each was attempting to interpret imprecisely worded orders to fit a novel situation, and that this effort was complicated significantly by their inability to communicate quickly with ministers back in Britain. The fundamental problem was that the two commanders reported to different ministers in London, and the two ministers had issued them different orders. Leith’s orders came from the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Henry, Earl Bathurst, while Durham reported to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Robert Dundas, Viscount Melville. Bathurst communicated effectively to Leith the end state he envisioned—provision of support to the Bourbon forces in the West Indies—while Melville constrained Durham, forcing him to wait for a positive order to engage in any hostilities. In other words, the two commanders on the scene were operating in two different mission-command scenarios.

As will become clear, though, the episode is not as simple as a case of two commanders with two different sets of orders. A close reading of the correspondence between Durham and Leith demonstrates that Durham did not understand Melville’s desired end state and Melville did not understand the pressures that were weighing on Durham. Herein lies the value of mission command as an analytical tool; it encourages historians to delve into the mind-sets of the commanders on the spot, as well as those higher in the chain of command, and it does so in a language familiar to modern-day practitioners. When we do so here, not only do
we plumb useful depths for mission-command-related lessons, but we also revise our historical understanding of the particulars of this case.

Events in the West Indies during and after Napoléon’s escape from Elba in February 1815 have received very little attention. Recent accounts of the naval history in the West Indies during this period either focus on American commerce raiding toward the end of the War of 1812 or do not touch on events in the West Indies at all. Nor is the nineteenth-century historiography much better. In both cases, the lack of interest in the region is understandable, given the enormity of the shadow cast by Napoléon’s return to France, his defeat at Waterloo, and his exile to Saint Helena.

The Commanders
The few accounts we have of the dispute between Durham and Leith flow entirely from Durham’s version of the events. James Ralfe’s 1828 biography of Durham—very likely sourced from the admiral himself—blames the dispute on Leith and concludes that the root cause was “an excess of zeal on one part [Leith’s], and the exercise of sound discretion on the other.” Durham’s memoirs, published posthumously in 1846, come to a similar conclusion, although they do not attack Leith directly. The only modern analysis of the dispute relies heavily on both these sources, as well as three letters from Durham to Leith. It concludes that it was “Leith’s belief that his letter from Bathurst clearly obligated him to restore by force of arms the usurped royal authority on [Guadeloupe], and Durham’s insistence that his instructions dated 26 March prevented him from co-operating” that caused the dispute. In fact, a closer examination of the events in question suggests a different conclusion, as this article will demonstrate. In addition to applying a mission-command framework, the analysis relies on additional correspondence from Durham and other previously unconsidered perspectives of the events on Guadeloupe and Martinique during Napoléon’s return.

One new perspective on the dispute between Durham and Leith is that of the French general Eugène Édouard Boyer de Peyreleau, who was the principal deputy to the governor of Guadeloupe, Charles Alexandre Léon Durand, comte de Linois. In a pamphlet published in 1849, General Boyer provided commentary on the internal deliberations and a detailed view of the events leading up to the government of Guadeloupe declaring allegiance to the restored Bonapartist government on 18 June—the event that was the chief cause of the Durham-Leith dispute (occurring, coincidentally, on the same day as the Battle of Waterloo). When considering Boyer’s account, however, it is important to consider that, while both he and Linois were sent home to face trial after Napoléon’s final defeat, he was the only one to face any blame. He was sentenced to death for his role, although this quickly was commuted to a lifetime prison sentence, of which he actually
served only three years. As Boyer indirectly makes clear in his introduction, he published his pamphlet primarily to reclaim his reputation and to set the “public record” straight after Linois’s death. Therefore, aside from particulars such as dates, places, and names of participants, his account should be treated skeptically. Nevertheless, it provides a helpful French perspective on the dispute—which, after all, hinged on the behavior of the French in the West Indies.

In addition to ignoring the French perspective, the existing studies of the dispute also have failed to examine how the backgrounds of the British and French commanders in chief shaped their actions in the summer of 1815. When he was appointed to command Royal Navy (RN) forces in the Leeward Islands in November 1813, Rear Admiral Durham’s career was approaching its apex. In the thirty-seven years since he joined the Royal Navy, he had survived the disastrous sinking of Royal George, successfully commanded several ships and a squadron, fought and been wounded at Trafalgar in 1805, and amassed considerable fame and fortune. He had made an excellent first impression in the Leeward Islands by capturing two French frigates while en route to his new command. American privateers were preying on shipping throughout the station, so Durham immediately set about employing his squadron to capture them, and his efforts earned lavish praise from the British merchants in the Caribbean.

But Durham was eager to return to England to commence his postwar career, so shortly after the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1814 he applied for relief. While waiting for the identified officer to arrive and relieve him, including through the winter and early spring of 1814–15, Durham occupied his time and his squadron with several tasks. These included continuing protection of merchant ships while the Treaty of Ghent awaited ratification and implementation, removing British troops and colonists from the West Indian islands being returned to Denmark and France, and sending several ships of his squadron home to England as part of the general drawdown of the Royal Navy.

As governor in chief and commander of the British land forces in the Leeward Islands, Leith found himself in a position similar to Durham’s. Having served with distinction in the Peninsular War at Bussaco, Badajoz, and Salamanca, he received his appointment to the Leeward Islands on 15 February 1814. Arriving in the islands later that spring, Leith’s primary concern was handing over the administration and control of the captured islands to the newly arriving Danish and French authorities—not a simple task. The handover of Guadeloupe, which was completed in early December 1814, proved particularly challenging for all involved; apparently Leith’s personal intervention was required to overcome disagreements between the outgoing British governor and the incoming French administration. Adding to Leith’s difficulties in carrying out his duties was the fact that he had no legal authority over his naval counterpart or the troopships

https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol75/iss3/1
in the region, and therefore he could not move troops around the station unless Durham agreed to supply the means to do so.\textsuperscript{23}

On the French side, the governors of Martinique and Guadeloupe appointed by Louis XVIII's newly restored Bourbon government were reliant on a prerevolutionary ordinance for the organization of the colonies. The two governors were in charge of military matters, while administration and finances were left to an intendant and a superior counsel. The first French ships of the expedition to reclaim the West Indies for the Bourbons left France on 1 September 1814, while the governors set sail in late October.\textsuperscript{24}

The new governor of Guadeloupe, the comte de Linois, had served in the Bourbon, revolutionary, and Imperial French navies, seeing notable service in the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean as part of the last two. Linois's active service ended when he was injured in a battle with Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, RN, during his return to France in March 1806 and taken prisoner to England. Linois spent the remainder of the war there, until Napoléon's abdication in 1814. While captive in England he was created Baron of the Empire and awarded a pension of four thousand livres per year. Linois arrived on Guadeloupe and assumed his post as governor on 14 December 1814.\textsuperscript{25}

Unlike Linois, Pierre René Charles Marie, comte de Vaugiraud, was a staunch royalist. He was made a vice admiral and appointed governor of Martinique in June 1814 after having spent the previous twenty-four years in exile in London. It also is worth noting that in 1795 Vaugiraud was serving as the pilot on Durham's Anson off Noirmoutier when the ship ran aground—resulting in a threat from Durham to hang him. Vaugiraud arrived on the island in early December. His first several months there appear to have been fairly routine, concerned mostly with the mechanics of the restoration of Bourbon rule and the reestablishment of commerce to and from the island. However, Vaugiraud's knowledge of Linois's background likely played a part in his decision to order the captain of the royalist ship L'Hermione on 15 December 1814 to bring him an account of the situation on Guadeloupe, Linois's attitude, and any Bonapartist activities there.\textsuperscript{26} Clearly, during the winter and early spring of 1815 some tension existed between the two French governors.

\textit{The Islands}

It is important next to understand the relative economic and strategic unimportance of the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique compared with other islands in the West Indies. It is true that sugar, and the ability to produce it inexpensively using enslaved labor, made West Indian colonies very valuable possessions throughout the eighteenth century. Furthermore, strategically, the West Indies provided a convenient peripheral theater in which a nation could distract its
opponent or force a diversion of forces away from another theater. In fact, in every war between 1748 and 1815 the British conducted major operations there to disrupt French and Spanish trade. From Britain's wartime perspective, the importance of Guadeloupe and Martinique was not in bringing their cane land under British rule but in bolstering Britain's domestic sugar market by destroying the islands' capacity to produce sugar, and thereby denying the French the ability to profit from them. Later, the possessions could be used as diplomatic bargaining chips in peace negotiations. So, for instance, at the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, Britain effectively traded both islands, along with a number of other West Indian possessions, back to France in exchange for Canada, and in the 1802 Treaty of Amiens it gave back Martinique for no directly related concessions.  

A similar line of thinking seems to have influenced the decision by Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, Britain's foreign secretary, to return the islands to Louis XVIII in the 1814 Treaty of Paris. Castlereagh appears to have returned Martinique and Guadeloupe solely as a salve for France's national pride, as that country's borders on the continent were being driven back to the status quo ante bellum, and British sugar production on Jamaica, Trinidad, and Saint Lucia and at Demerara was not threatened by the resumption of French production on Guadeloupe and Martinique. As a result of the treaty, during the winter and spring of 1815 Leith and Durham busied themselves redistributing colonists and naval and land forces to restore French control over the islands. 

The French merchant interest, on the other hand, assigned more economic and strategic importance to returning the islands to their control, maintaining peace, and restarting trade. The 1814 Treaty of Paris also gave the French government the right to attempt to reconquer Saint-Domingue (Haiti) from the regime that had held control of the island since a successful slave revolt during the early days of the French Revolution. This possibility gave the traders and merchants who had suffered since the onset of the French Revolution, both in France and in the colonies, hope of restoring their former glory and prosperity. They were eager to be rid of their overbearing former British overlords; they hoped to resume a more profitable life under the rule of Louis XVIII's newly installed government. 

**Napoléon's Return**

Napoléon's unanticipated return from Elba, and the response of the French armed forces to that return, had global implications. While the allies meeting in Vienna were quick to declare Napoléon an outlaw and to ratify the seventh coalition on 13 March, a week after learning of his escape, Napoléon's return nonetheless caused significant angst and debate within the British government. The debate did not center on whether Britain should oppose Napoléon's resumption of his
throne; in fact, on 18 March, even before Napoléon arrived in Paris, the Duke of Wellington was able to inform Castlereagh of the allies’ decision to renew the Treaty of Chaumont, which bound each signatory to supply 150,000 troops for a common defense against Napoléon’s expected aggression. The military provisions of the treaty were “instantly accepted” by the British government after it was signed on 25 March, with an immediate commitment of £2 million in subsidies to be paid to continental powers for the raising of one hundred thousand troops to help Britain meet its quota.33

Instead, the debate focused on what ends the British government publicly could commit itself to attempting to achieve through the use of military force against Bonaparte. The government was particularly concerned with whether the Bourbon monarchy was worth restoring. Louis XVIII’s abrupt flight from Paris to Lille and then to Belgium within a span of nineteen days did not help his supporters in Britain.34 Neither, however, did his flight soften the British government’s intent to fight Napoléon. After hearing the news of Louis’s departure, Castlereagh wrote to Wellington that Britain’s involvement must be of “the largest scale. . . . [Y]ou must inundate France with force in all directions.”35

The final results of this debate, and the fate of Napoléon himself, have been studied extensively and need not be addressed further here. However, the fact that this debate occurred from the moment the British government and its ministers learned of Napoléon’s return on 10 March until the end of May serves as an important backdrop to the orders those ministers sent to their respective commanders in the West Indies during this period.36

The Orders

The first letter that Melville wrote to Durham after Napoléon’s escape was a cancellation of his relief as naval commander in chief of the Leeward Islands station. Writing shortly after news of Napoléon’s return reached London on 10 March, Melville told him about Napoléon’s escape, praised Durham’s conduct, and specifically mentioned that the admiral had given “such great satisfaction” to the merchants on his station. Melville concluded, “Should, however, peace not be disturbed, I will take care to send out an officer to relieve you.”37

Having disappointed Durham’s hopes of a return to England, Melville then wrote the order that would drive and guide Durham’s conduct for the next four months. Because a subordinate’s understanding of the intent behind a commander’s orders and how the commander conveys that intent are so important, Melville’s orders of 26 March are worth quoting in their entirety here.

The vessel that conveys this letter and other despatches for you, carries out orders from Louis XVIII to the Governments of Martinique and Guadaloupe [sic], to hold those islands in his name.
I hope they will obey the requisition, but if they should not, and if on the contrary they declare for Bonaparte, it will nevertheless be your duty (indeed it is scarcely necessary for me to remind you of it) to abstain from any hostile acts against his flag, unless the vessels which carry it should commit any act of aggression against British ships, or until you learn hostilities between France and this country have actually commenced. If Martinique and Guadaloupe continue faithful to Louis XVIII, and their vessels carry his flag, they must of course be treated as friends.\textsuperscript{38}

On the face of it, Melville’s orders seem to differ significantly from the attitude of the rest of the British government. He wrote them two weeks after the allies in Vienna had declared Napoléon an outlaw and a week after Wellington had informed Castlereagh of the allies’ intent to renew the Treaty of Chaumont and commit 150,000 troops to Napoléon’s defeat. However, Melville’s orders still fit within the overall response of the government. During this period, even as the navy continued to deal with the ongoing postwar reduction in the strength of its squadrons around the world, including in the Leeward Islands, the service, like the rest of the British government, was dealing with the shock of Napoléon’s return, and Melville faced the growing potential of a renewal of a worldwide war in which the Royal Navy was likely again to play a major part in protecting the British homeland and its possessions overseas.

Looked at this way—with the benefit of hindsight and the knowledge of how the greater conflict concluded—Melville’s desired end state seems clear; he did not want to provoke unnecessary conflict in the West Indies.\textsuperscript{39} However, his guidelines for acceptable action by Durham are less clear, serving to obscure his true intent. Durham was neither to act aggressively nor to allow his actions to start an unprovoked conflict with any French ship, regardless of whether it flew the white Bourbon flag or the imperial tricolor. Crucially, what was less clear was what Durham should do, or even was permitted to do, if events in the West Indies exceeded the scope of Melville’s orders before new ones could be sent across the Atlantic. In the end, Melville’s language is extremely rigid; it is that of a commander restricting too severely the options available to a subordinate in the field. “[T]o abstain from any hostile acts” gave Durham very little room to maneuver as circumstances changed, and the focus on “hostilities between France and this country” only confused matters. After all, the allies claimed to be taking up arms against French forces as allies of France—they merely were seeking to capture the outlaw Napoléon Bonaparte. Whether France and Britain actually were at war seems a simple question on its face, but in the context of Napoléon’s return Melville severely limited Durham’s available courses of action and confused his understanding of the evolving events in Europe.
On 10 April, amid efforts to supply and prepare the Duke of Wellington’s army on the Continent after Britain’s official commitment to the renewed Treaty of Chaumont on 25 March, Bathurst wrote his orders to Leith. As with Melville’s orders to Durham, they are worth quoting in their entirety here.

The events which have recently taken place in France give too much reason to believe that some endeavours may be made by the party attached to Bonaparte to gain possession of the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique and there is ground for apprehension that the governors of those islands may not be able without assistance to maintain the authority of His Most Christian Majesty.

Under these circumstances I am commanded to signify to you the pleasure of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent that in the event of any requisition being made to you for assistance for such a purpose from the officers in command in those islands you should without delay afford from the force under your command such assistance as the means placed at your disposal may be able to furnish.  

Unlike Melville’s orders, these clearly communicate Bathurst’s desired end state to Leith: retention of the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique under the control of Louis XVIII. In further contrast to Melville’s orders, Bathurst’s are those of a commander setting a goal for the on-scene subordinate while leaving significant room for that subordinate to choose how best to accomplish that goal. His full intention is clear: the islands must be retained for the king of France without removing Leith’s ability to do his job, which included protecting the British colonies under his charge. By using open and permissive language, Bathurst gave Leith significant room to maneuver and to match his actions to the situation. This will become important later.

As evidenced by the first sentence of Melville’s orders of 26 March to Durham, the French ministers also felt the need to send prescriptive orders to Vaugiraud and Linois in the immediate aftermath of Napoléon’s return. The Bourbon minister of the navy and the colonies wrote to Vaugiraud on 12 March, sending him copies of newspapers announcing the return of “l’usurpateur” Louis’s ambassador in London wrote to both governors on 24 March urging them to hold their islands in the name of Louis XVIII. However—likely understanding the different backgrounds of the two governors—the ambassador gave additional instructions that neither of them should permit any new forces to enter Guadeloupe, nor should they hand over the administration of the colony without a personal order from the king countersigned by Blacas d’Aulps, the minister of the king’s household. Another potential reason for the firm tone of the ambassador’s order is that the king apparently was considering permanent retirement to Guadeloupe and Martinique if Bonaparte was ultimately successful in his return. Much like Melville’s, these orders served to box in the French commanders on station rigidly.
As the Bourbons’ situation in France worsened, however, even those prescriptive orders did not provide sufficient confidence to Louis’s government. On 18 April, Blacas wrote to Vaugiraud and Linois, as well as to the intendant of Guadeloupe, to inform them that the king had appointed Vaugiraud governor general of both Martinique and Guadeloupe. He gave Louis’s reasoning for this change to be the events that had come to pass in France. Implicit, however, is Louis’s ministers’ concern that military and government leaders continued to declare for Napoléon, leaving the royal court anxious to consolidate power in the West Indies in the French commander that it trusted. 42

The Orders Delivered

By the third week of April, then, both the British and French ministers in Europe had cast their dice, from a mission-command perspective. On both sides, intent was imbued, intentionally or otherwise, into orders. On the French side, Louis XVIII’s government decided it did not have the right military commander on Guadeloupe for the unfolding situation. All the orders and commands then were sent on the long journey to the West Indies, to be interpreted and carried out by the disparate group of commanders.

In this period, instructions from ministers in Europe took between one and two months to reach their intended recipients in the West Indies. For the British, the primary mail route to the West Indies originated, like all other wartime mail service to overseas destinations, from Falmouth in the southwest of England. The service followed a relatively consistent path from Britain to the West Indies that was designed to take advantage of prevailing winds and geography. Occasionally, the first stop for the ships after their departure from Britain was Lisbon—three of the twelve packets called there in 1815. Next, the ships would sail to the northeast coast of South America before proceeding into the Leeward Islands, where typically they would stop at the various colonies in the region. Barbados, followed by Dominica and Antigua, were the colonies visited most often in 1815. Finally, from the West Indies the packets would take about a month to return by a more northerly route to Falmouth, where they would start the cycle again. 43

Between the fall of 1814 and the end of 1815, the route to the West Indies was serviced by approximately a dozen packets that departed on a roughly monthly schedule. On all the routes that the packet service maintained, the primary determinant of the scheduling seems to have been the availability of the packet ships themselves; however, if important mail needed to be sent and no packets were available, mail also could be consigned to any available RN vessels. 44

On the French side, Louis XVIII’s flight to Ghent meant that his government would not be able to rely on the French postal service to relay instructions to his commanders in the West Indies; instead, his ministers would have to rely on the British postal system for assistance. As the opening line of Melville’s 26 March
orders to Durham points out, the packet carrying his orders also carried orders to the governors of Guadeloupe and Martinique. This also is likely why Blacas, when notifying Vaugiraud of his appointment as governor general in the West Indies, directed him to relay all reports on the colonies through Louis XVIII’s ambassador in London. Constrained by similar difficulties, Bonaparte’s newly restored imperial minister of the navy and the colonies sent his first letter to Vaugiraud and Linois via a French armed schooner.\(^{45}\)

Also inherent in this timeline is the assumption that the packet ship, warship, or merchant vessel entrusted with the mail makes it to its destination safely. However, packets faced many risks in the early nineteenth century, including falling victim to a competing nation’s warships or privateers, or simply to the elements. This was true especially for transatlantic packets during the War of 1812, which saw the average loss of mail-carrying ships at sea jump from two a year to seven after June 1812. Luckily for Leith and Durham, however, the last loss of packets to any source in the West Indies in 1815 occurred in February, when an American privateer took *Lady Mary Pelham* on the latter’s return trip to Falmouth, and in April, when *Duke of Montrose* foundered on rocks off Barbados, managing nonetheless to save the mailbags. Correspondence successfully and regularly arrived in the West Indies throughout the entirety of the Hundred Days.\(^{46}\) Of course, neither Bathurst nor Melville, nor Leith nor Durham, could have known this during the spring and summer of 1815; instead, they would have been used to the opposite, with the timely arrival of guidance being something on which they could not depend.

From a mission-command perspective, the slow and semireliable system responsible for conveying orders and guidance from ministers and commanders at home to subordinates in the West Indies created a dangerous information environment in the spring and summer of 1815. Despite the generally reliable, stable, and periodic arrival of mail from Britain, the potential for the loss of orders, combined with the significant travel time, meant that the British and French commanders in chief were operating in an environment characterized by incomplete and imperfect information—or at least the fear of flawed and late information. This, in turn, placed even greater emphasis on the latitude provided to those commanders in the orders that were about to begin arriving.

**The Course of Events in the Islands**

The orders and other communications arrived in quick succession. Newspapers carrying the first reports of Napoléon’s escape from Elba and the upheaval in France reached Barbados on 28 April in the mailbags saved by the crew of the sinking packet *Duke of Montrose*.\(^{47}\) The news reached Guadeloupe on 29 April. A few days later, on 2 May, after having stopped at Martinique, HMS *Badger* arrived at Guadeloupe with the 24 March orders from Louis XVIII’s ambassador in...
London, before the ship proceeded on to Barbados. Melville’s orders to Durham of 26 March also arrived in Badger, reaching Barbados on 8 May, but Durham actually did not receive them until a few days later, as he was off on an initial reconnoiter of the situation on Guadeloupe. It is not known exactly when Leith received his 10 April orders from Bathurst or by what means he received them. However, Durham, in a letter to the Admiralty dated 28 May, stated that Leith had received instructions to help Linois and Vaugiraud maintain their islands loyal to Louis XVIII. On the basis of recorded packet sailing and arrival dates during this period, these instructions could have been delivered only by warship or private vessel, and they likely arrived shortly after Durham’s orders from Melville.48

On Martinique and Guadeloupe, as in France, news of Napoléon’s return created immediate difficulties for the Bourbon governments. In early May, both governors, fearful of their respective populations’ increasingly pro-Napoléon sentiments, reached out to Leith to ask for assistance. Vaugiraud, facing imminent mutiny from two-thirds of the 1,300-man garrison on Martinique, swiftly communicated with Leith and concluded a signed agreement with the British governor on 20 May to allow British troops to garrison forts on Martinique as auxiliary forces for the preservation of Louis XVIII’s authority.49

On Guadeloupe, Linois, concerned with rumors spreading across the island of the return of the hated “Anglais” and with his government’s inability to keep news from the inhabitants about Napoléon’s increasing success in France, wrote to Leith on 3 May asking for a British man-of-war to patrol off both Martinique and Guadeloupe.50 He requested that this patrol “intercept any vessels with the tri-coloured flag,” and Durham, not yet having received the 26 March orders from Melville, complied with the request immediately.51 Durham and Leith then both sailed at once for Guadeloupe, arriving 13 May, to inform Linois that the requested patrol would be established, to offer him assistance, and to request an in-person interview. Likely fearing the effect of his being seen conferring with British commanders in chief, subsequent to rumors among the general population of an imminent reinvasion of the island by the hated British, Linois refused an in-person interview. However, he and Leith continued to communicate by letter for the remainder of May, culminating with Leith’s offer on 26 May to send an auxiliary force to garrison the forts of Guadeloupe. Linois declined the offer, citing his orders from Louis XVIII’s ambassador in London to allow no new forces to enter the colony without express permission. On hearing of his refusal, Vaugiraud wrote to Linois on 6 June counseling him that the ambassador’s orders were intended solely to exclude any new French troops from Europe, and that he should allow British help in maintaining the colony’s loyalty to the French king. Linois refused again.52
Durham and Leith, both newly in receipt of guidance from their respective ministers in England, swiftly made preparations to assist Vaugiraud. By 27 May, Leith had assembled two thousand soldiers, along with artillery, provisions, and other stores, at Saint Lucia. Having no authority over the troopships or Durham himself, Leith requested the admiral’s assistance to ferry the British troops from Saint Lucia to Martinique as soon as Vaugiraud was ready to receive them.\(^{53}\) Durham readily, and without any apparent argument, agreed, arriving at Saint Lucia with the required transports on 31 May.\(^ {54}\)

While making preparations to deliver the British troops to Vaugiraud on 31 May, Durham reported to the Admiralty Linois’s refusal of Leith’s similar offer of an auxiliary force. In his missive, Durham described the deteriorating situation on Guadeloupe yet defended Linois’s loyalty. He believed that Linois was basing his refusal on his inability “to permit an English Soldier to land[,] as almost every Man on that Island ‘is attached to Buonaparte,’ to ‘Privateering,’ and ‘Plunder’ and are the most disorderly set in the West Indies.” He also noted—with the concern of a man whose reputation in the West Indies to this point had been built on his success in defending the merchant trade from attack—that he had received reports of a force of up to twenty privateers waiting in the harbor at Pointe-à-Pitre (the main anchorage of Guadeloupe). He believed they were waiting only for the “moment the tri-colored flag is hoisted or that they hear of Hostilities having commenced” to begin wreaking havoc on British trade. Durham then went on to assure the Admiralty that he would do everything in his power to avoid being the first aggressor in the region. He also reported to the Admiralty that he had asked for and received Linois’s promise that the governor would not endorse any expedition to occupy two valuable islands to the south of Guadeloupe, the Saintes. Finally, in a postscript Durham warned that Duchesse d’Angoulême, a French frigate, had departed for France, leaving only one French warship in the area. It is clear that at this point Durham understood the fragile situation on and around Guadeloupe, especially the weakness of its government, and the potential consequences of that island declaring for Napoléon. Despite having received Melville’s direction to engage in no hostile act against a ship carrying the tricolor flag, Durham left four brigs—the maximum amount of force he could spare—to watch both for any indication that privateers had begun to attack shipping and for the arrival of any ships from the French mainland.\(^ {55}\)

Both Durham and Leith expected Vaugiraud to take immediate advantage of the agreement but were surprised when, after being notified of Durham’s readiness to land troops, the governor balked. Durham’s report to the Admiralty describes the governor’s hesitation as resulting from fear of the reaction of the inhabitants to the arrival of the British. However, in two letters to Durham, on
29 May and 1 June, Vaugiraud asks Durham to postpone the arrival of the troops until he can make proper arrangements to receive them, mentioning concerns that some of the more recalcitrant Bonapartist soldiers should be sent back to France first. Durham and Leith, both of them concerned about the health of the British troops packed together in ships, were understandably upset, and they leaned heavily on Vaugiraud to accept the troops.\textsuperscript{56}

It also is worth noting that while Durham and Leith were exchanging letters with Vaugiraud, Durham began to dictate a summary of his career-long exploits and the several plaudits he had received for his service to king and country. As Hilary Rubinstein observes in her book \textit{Trafalgar Captain}, it appears that amid preparations for an occupation of French territory and the potential onset of another world war, Durham was focused on memorializing himself.\textsuperscript{57}

Ultimately, on 5 June the British auxiliary force landed safely on Martinique; the forts were garrisoned in the name of Louis XVIII, with appropriate pomp and circumstance; and the colony remained loyal to the French king. Recognizing that the inhabitants of Martinique might be wary of the return of British troops to their island, Leith and Vaugiraud took care to publish widely the terms of their agreement. They also tried to assuage the fears of the French colonists by incorporating two conditions regarding the retention of Bourbon authority over the colony. Specifically, Leith guaranteed that the sovereign administration of Martinique would remain under Vaugiraud’s control entirely, and that the British troops, as auxiliaries, would report to Vaugiraud for use as he saw fit to maintain Louis’s authority.\textsuperscript{58}

The news of the British troops’ arrival on Martinique reached Guadeloupe the next day, on 6 June, and the terms of the agreement between Leith and Vaugiraud were published there on 10 June. According to Linois’s deputy, Boyer, news of the troops caused a significant uproar, while word of the agreement did nothing to calm the population; in fact, according to Boyer, it was only his own heroic efforts that prevented the island’s inhabitants from immediately declaring for Bonaparte.\textsuperscript{59} Writing to the Admiralty on the same day on which the terms of the agreement were published, Durham offered a different perspective. Because of Melville’s orders of 26 March, Durham had found it necessary to resist requests from Leith, Vaugiraud, and Linois to “act in any way hostile to the tri-colored flag.” Clearly, Leith, Linois, and Vaugiraud had grown uncomfortable with the situation on Guadeloupe, realized that the arrival of orders from Napoléon’s government would set the island on fire, and understood that the Royal Navy was the only means of preventing this from happening. Durham did not disagree with this conclusion, expressing his relief later in the same letter that he was “happy to say [that no ship carrying Napoléon’s flag] had . . . appeared yet in these seas.” He, however, appeared concerned that soon he might be forced to act outside the restrictive bounds of Melville’s orders.\textsuperscript{60} So,
by the second week of June the situation on Guadeloupe had reached a tipping point—as had Admiral Durham.

Dispatched by Napoléon’s government from France on 9 May with a mission to “rallier la Martinique et la Guadeloupe à la métropole,” the French schooner *L’Agile* made its first landfall at Saint-François on the eastern side of Guadeloupe on 12 June, carrying two letters for the governor.61 HMS *Barrosa*, one of the brigs cruising around Guadeloupe at Linois’s request—to prevent exactly this type of thing from happening—came upon *L’Agile* shortly after it left Saint-François. *Barrosa*, ignorant of *L’Agile*’s success in already landing letters, determined the schooner to be acting suspiciously and brought it to Durham, whose flagship was anchored at the Saints. Durham’s interrogation of *L’Agile*’s commander revealed that the ship carried both the tricolor and the Bourbon flag, and that the captain had instructions to fly the Bourbon flag when away from the coast to fool any patrolling British ships. Most importantly, Durham learned that *L’Agile* carried instructions and exhortations from Napoléon’s newly installed minister of the navy and the colonies for the governors of Martinique and Guadeloupe, as well as for all French warships still in the West Indies, to return themselves to imperial rule. Likely remembering the rigid words of Melville’s orders, Durham forwarded the dispatches to Linois on Guadeloupe and asked what he would like done with them. Linois’s reply, revealing the increasing stress he felt in his position, was unambiguous. He asked Durham to send the dispatches to Vaugiraud, who recently had learned of his appointment by Louis XVIII’s government in exile as governor general of all the French West Indian colonies, to ask for his advice and instruction. Tellingly, Linois also implored Durham—taking care to refer to him as a friend—to have *L’Agile* forcibly escorted out of the West Indies to ensure continued tranquility.62

At this point, Durham faced what seemed to be an easy choice: either confiscate the dispatches carried aboard *L’Agile*, and possibly the ship itself, or release it to deliver the instructions. No act of aggression actually had occurred yet. *Barrosa* had encountered *L’Agile* while the latter was flying the Bourbon flag, and the French ship appears to have come peacefully to the Saintes, where, again, the captain had surrendered the dispatches without any recorded violence. In other words, Durham had stayed within the letter of his instructions and easily could justify confiscating the imperial dispatches, if not *L’Agile* also. This is especially true given the explicit request from the Bourbon governor of Guadeloupe to do exactly that, which was in line with Bathurst’s orders to Leith. Even if the confiscation of the imperial dispatches generated a protest from a yet-to-be-established Napoleonic government in the distant future, it was extremely unlikely that Durham would face censure from a government that had joined in declaring Napoléon an outlaw and that had directed another commander...
in chief on the same station to give the royalist governors any assistance they requested.

It is also possible to argue that it was in Durham’s best interest as the naval commander in chief to confiscate the dispatches. Left unchecked, *L’Aigle* had instructions to provide the incendiary dispatches to any French warship it could contact. While Durham knew that only one such warship remained, even that single ship would have presented a significant threat to his diminished squadron and the merchant shipping in the area. Additionally, as he had reported to the Admiralty previously, Durham was concerned that the twenty or so privateers in harbor at Pointe-à-Pitre in Guadeloupe were waiting only for a return of Napoléon’s government to begin ravaging trade in the region. Finally, regardless of what happened to Napoléon in Europe, in no way would Britain’s interests in the West Indies be bettered by having a Bourbon government secured by British power on Martinique and a Bonapartist government on Guadeloupe. Again, it is extremely unlikely that a British commander in chief would face any discipline or displeasure for taking measures to prevent depredation of British trade in the West Indies. Nonetheless, Durham wrote to the Admiralty on 13 June that he did not believe the “nature of his instructions” permitted him to do anything other than return the dispatches and allow *L’Aigle* to go wherever it chose.63

Unsurprisingly, the captain of *L’Aigle* chose to proceed directly back to Guadeloupe, arriving at Basse-Terre on 15 June. Immediately on landing, the crew distributed copies of the *Moniteur* and other newspapers, then gave dispatches to the commander of the harbor. The ship’s captain, proudly displaying a tricolored cockade on his hat, proceeded through town to meet with the governor, drawing an increasingly large and boisterous crowd as he went. Over the next three days events proceeded exactly as Linois had feared when he asked Durham to send the dispatches to Vaugiraud and to banish *L’Aigle* from the West Indies. The enthusiasm of the general population for Napoléon’s return followed a path identical to that of the people in France. The arc of events culminated in Linois—likely out of a sense of self-preservation rather than any overwhelming attachment to Napoléon’s cause—allowing the tricolor to be raised over the island on 18 June and issuing his formal declaration of loyalty to Napoléon’s government on 19 June.64

This proved too much for the island’s intendant, Jean François César de Guilhermy, a staunch royalist. He fled Guadeloupe for the Saintes on the night of 20 June, along with several other leading citizens of the colony. Two days later, Linois sent an armed detachment to the island to deliver a letter to Guilhermy. In accordance with Durham’s orders, HMS *Barbadoes*, stationed at the Saintes to monitor Guadeloupe, did not interfere with the armed party’s landing or its stay on the island. In his letter to Guilhermy, Linois asserted that he had no other choice but to
attach his own destiny to that of Bonaparte. He also requested that Guilhermy return to Guadeloupe to resume his post. At the same time, according to Guilhermy’s personal papers, published in 1886, Linois threatened Guilhermy’s wife, who was still in her house on Guadeloupe; the governor warned that he would keep her and her children hostage until Guilhermy agreed to return. The threat did not persuade Guilhermy or the others on the Saintes, who escaped aboard Barbadoes, leaving the Saintes in the possession of the armed party from Guadeloupe. Guilhermy arrived on Martinique on 26 June—one day after his family members did, who apparently had not been held captive. Three days later, after receiving a report of events on Guadeloupe, Vaugiraud, in his capacity as governor general of the French West Indies, issued a proclamation dismissing Linois as governor of Guadeloupe.65

Meanwhile, Durham had returned to Guadeloupe on the morning of 18 June and discovered the tricolor flying above all the fortifications. He apparently had “long been in expectation of [it] taking place.” In his report of this news to the Admiralty, Durham did not give an explicit reason for his return to Guadeloupe, but his concern that he might be found at fault for releasing L’Aigle and its dispatches was implied heavily by a postscript to the report. In it, Durham informed the Admiralty that he had just learned that L’Aigle had delivered dispatches at the eastern side of Guadeloupe before Barrosa came into contact with it. He clearly was trying to demonstrate that his release of L’Aigle was not the sole cause of the island declaring for Napoléon. Durham then informed his superiors in London that he had sent an officer ashore to confer with Linois, whose reply convinced him that the colony’s leadership now was dedicated fully to Napoléon’s cause. Finally, wholly in line with Melville’s orders of 26 March, Durham informed the Admiralty that once he heard of hostilities actually beginning he immediately would place the island in a state of blockade.66

Having completed his report on the revolt of Guadeloupe, Durham next took an action that baffled Leith. Shortly after 18 June, Durham wrote to Linois, informing him that, having received no orders to commence hostilities, he would not interfere with any ship flying Napoléon’s flag, regardless of the mission on which it was engaged. It did not matter whether the ship was engaged actively in hostility toward Louis XVIII’s authority or bringing troops, weapons, and supplies to fortify Guadeloupe against a Bourbon reinvasion; Durham would not permit his squadron to intervene unless his ships were attacked or he learned that war had commenced between Britain and Napoléon’s France.67

This news circulated rapidly throughout British, Bourbon, and Bonapartist circles, appropriately encouraging or enraging each audience as late as 22 July. At the time, Leith could not comprehend why Durham’s ship had allowed the rebels to seize the Saintes without opposition. Leith was troubled especially by Durham’s decision to tell Linois that he effectively had a free hand to undermine Bourbon
authority in the West Indies, and as a direct consequence put Leith’s troops on Martinique, and anywhere else they were assisting Bourbon forces, in danger.68

But the rationale behind Durham’s decision becomes clearer when viewed through the lens of mission command. As previously discussed, Melville’s orders of 26 March overly constrained Durham’s available options. They limited too severely the decision space available to Durham to deal with a unique and rapidly evolving environment in which he could not hope to get clarification on a useful timescale.

Undiscussed to this point, however, is that Melville’s orders also failed to account for the personality and mind-set of the person receiving them. It is clear that by the end of June 1815 Durham wanted to go home to England. He had applied for a relief and been granted one, only to find that hope snatched away at the last moment by Napoléon’s escape from Elba.69 Sensing the possibility of another destructive world war, Durham was acutely aware of the degraded material state and decreasing numbers of the squadron he had available to protect the vital commerce in his theater. This, in turn, could threaten the reputation he had built throughout his entire career and affect his prospects at home; in fact, he was concerned enough about this reputation to begin memorializing it while busy preparing to land troops on Martinique. As with the L’Aigle incident, Durham could have stayed well within the bounds of his orders simply by ordering his ships not to interfere with French ships flying the tricolor; he did not need to tell Napoléon’s sympathizers on Guadeloupe explicitly that they had a free hand to do as they pleased. Durham’s broadcasting of his intention neither to interfere with nor to intercept any of Napoléon’s ships likely only served to ensure that none of those ships would act aggressively in the first place, which would have forced Durham to start a conflict he did not want. When looked at in light of all these stresses, it is clear that the restrictive nature of Melville’s orders, as well as his explicit tying of Durham’s prospects of relief to the maintenance of peace, provided Durham an excuse to do nothing and hope for the best. Put another way, Melville’s orders did not take into account the mind-set of the commander for whom they were intended; instead, they took away any incentive for boldness or initiative and provided room for the admiral to equivocate.

The Back-and-Forth
Leith, of course, did not know any of this when he wrote his first contribution to what turned out to be a seven-letter exchange. He simply was trying to accomplish his mission as he understood it, and Durham was doing things that both did not make sense to him and could hinder significantly Leith’s ability to carry out his own orders.

On 30 June, Leith wrote two letters to Durham. The first expressed Leith’s general frustration at Durham’s decision to allow L’Aigle to put into Guadeloupe, at Durham’s public insistence that he would not interfere even with ships
bringing reinforcements to Guadeloupe that Leith’s troops eventually might have to fight, and with Durham’s complete unwillingness to take a risk for the greater good. Leith concluded the first letter by informing Durham that he had ordered a body of soldiers to retake the Saintes, by force if necessary. Likely anticipating significant pushback from Durham, Leith asked only for Durham’s ships to provide protection from aggression and to prevent the garrison on the Saintes from communicating with Guadeloupe. The second letter was an extension of the first. Leith informed Durham that, because of a communication from Vaugiraud concerning events on Guadeloupe, Leith felt compelled to accelerate greatly his preparations to make his army ready for offensive operations against any French island that might declare for Napoléon. He again implored Durham to change his policy of allowing French reinforcements to enter Guadeloupe, seeking to prevent the island’s inevitable recapture from Bonapartist forces from being prohibitively costly in blood and treasure.⁷⁰

Durham’s reply on 1 July was extremely narrow in its scope and almost as acerbic in its tone, going well beyond the intent behind Melville’s orders. Durham, in an overtly defensive and offended manner, stated plainly that he could not and would not permit any ship under his command to be the first aggressor against any force coming from Guadeloupe. Most surprisingly, Durham informed Leith that only because the forces occupying the Saintes had withdrawn to Guadeloupe would he permit his ships to intervene and protect Leith’s troops from attack. He then went further, limiting that protection to “warn[ing] off any force that may be sent from Guadeloupe.” In other words, Durham implied that if a French force still had occupied the Saintes he would have required his ships to stand off and watch an attack on British troops, and even if he did allow his ships to intervene he would have permitted the French to attack first.⁷¹ His narrow interpretation of Melville’s orders was clearly excessive. In no way did Melville intend for his commander in chief in the West Indies to stand by and watch British soldiers die, but that is how Durham, intentionally or not, had construed his orders.

As it happened, the British successfully landed a force on the evacuated Saintes on 4 and 5 July. However, Leith and Durham continued to exchange letters, as Vaugiraud and Leith had decided to repossess Guadeloupe’s main islands forcibly.⁷²

The two British commanders exchanged another four letters over the next six days; the missives contained arguments and reasoning similar to those in the previous three. On 2 July, Leith attempted to reason with Durham; most importantly, he sought to demonstrate that the two commanders should be able to find a path to cooperation that would satisfy Durham’s narrow interpretation of his orders. Leith’s line of argument laid out that he was acting in accordance with the spirit and intent of the orders of the prince regent, not just his department head, Bathurst, to support Louis XVIII’s government by employing force short of
declaring war. Leith also argued that he considered anyone attempting armed re-
bellion against Louis’s authority, regardless of the flag under which it was done, 
to have committed the first act of aggression against British and French troops. 
Leith ended by asking Durham pointedly whether he would permit his ships 
to protect the British troops on the Saintes from being attacked by troops and 
weapons that Durham’s ships had allowed the French to deliver to Guadeloupe.\textsuperscript{73}

Leith’s arguments convinced Durham only partly. On 4 July, the admiral 
hastened to inform the general that he already had sent orders to his ships to 
“prevent [any] renewed attempt at the repossession of that post, and when the 
British have garrisoned it to keep all French ships of war under whatever flag 
at a respectful distance.” However, that is as conciliatory as Durham got. The 
rest of his letter was dedicated to legalistic arguments about how he could not 
possibly allow his forces to become the aggressors. First, he argued that only if 
the governor of Guadeloupe had requested assistance, as Vaugiraud had done at 
Martinique, would he feel satisfied that the British were acting defensively. Then 
he concluded that, because he had received “several communications from the 
Admiralty subsequent [to Leith’s receipt of his 10 April orders from Bathurst], 
all of which recommend to [him] a cautious line of conduct with respect to any 
act of aggression against the French nation under whatever flag,” his naval forces 
could not participate in an operation against Guadeloupe until he received orders 
from Britain, which he expected to arrive at any moment.\textsuperscript{74}

In his reply on 6 July, Leith shifted tactics, primarily attacking Durham’s legal-
istic arguments. He reminded Durham that Vaugiraud had been appointed gover-
nor general of all the French West Indies, and that in fact he had requested British 
assistance—making Linois a rebel instead of a governor refusing assistance. He 
also informed Durham that he had received another dispatch from Bathurst, dated 
two days later than the last instruction Durham had referenced previously, again 
 instructing him to support and maintain Louis’s authority. Yet, not willing to base 
his argument entirely on technicalities, Leith concluded the letter with a remark-
able paragraph, writing, “The responsibility of every commander ought naturally 
to oblige him to regulate the extent of his cooperation, in absence of direct orders, 
by his zeal for the public service, and by his professional judgment founded on all 
the circumstances of the case, while the principle of action is established by facts, 
and do not, for that purpose, require the exercise of discretion.”\textsuperscript{75}

Unsurprisingly, Durham was not swayed by this, and in the final letter of their 
exchange, dated 7 July, he simply responded by restating the same argument he 
had made since 30 June: that he could not and would not act offensively until the 
Admiralty gave him permission to do so.\textsuperscript{76} Clearly, nothing Leith could say was 
going to change Durham’s mind—he would do nothing differently until directly 
ordered to do so.
The Deadlock Broken

That order came quickly. On 10 July, having had enough of Leith questioning his decisions, Durham prepared to forward the correspondence between the commanders in chief and began a letter to the Admiralty complaining that Leith was “insisting [he] commence offensive operations.” He also took special care to call attention to “the many extraordinary Arguments and Accusations that [Leith] has brought forward,” in an attempt to “goad me into compliance.”

If Durham had more to say about the pressure to which Leith was subjecting him, he never got a chance to record it. On 11 July, when he was halfway through drafting the letter, Durham received Admiralty orders directing him to cooperate with Leith. To his credit, Durham quickly informed Leith that he was ready to do so. Perhaps fearing criticism from the Admiralty, however, he also was quick to inform the lords that he had been preparing for the expedition “without intermission.” Given his strident opposition to Leith’s entreaties, this was likely at best a bending of the truth, but one that would not affect the overall operation.

Finally released from his narrow interpretation of Melville’s 26 March orders, Durham lost no time in cooperating fully with Leith to prepare to retake Guadeloupe. Compared with the effort to launch the expedition, and contrary to Leith’s fears, the assault on Guadeloupe was relatively uneventful. It began on 8 August, and, despite spirited resistance, Linois and Boyer surrendered the island on 10 August after little loss of life. However, according to Leith’s report to Bathurst, the attack had come just in time to prevent the return of the terrors of the French Revolution, as several royalists apparently were due to be executed only five days later, to mark Napoléon’s birthday. Somewhat surprisingly, Leith included in his report fulsome praise for Durham’s efforts. Likewise, Durham heaped nothing but accolades on Leith in his dispatch to the Admiralty.

In the end, the events in the West Indies caused by Napoléon’s escape from Elba concluded with no major consequences. Napoléon was defeated and exiled again. British trade to and from the West Indies was not interrupted. Leith was able to execute his orders and shore up Louis XVIII’s authority in the West Indies. Melville kept his promise, with Rear Admiral John Harvey being named as Durham’s relief; Durham finally could go home. He even was able to bolster his reputation further when, in the closing hours of the assault on Guadeloupe, a fort close to Basse-Terre hauled down its flag on 10 August in response to bombardment from Durham’s flagship, HMS Venerable. On this basis, Durham claimed for the remainder of his life that he had been present at, and responsible for, the surrender of the first and last tricolor flags of the war. Even Linois was acquitted by a court-martial in France, promoted in retirement to vice admiral, and created a grand officer of the Legion of Honor.
When we look at these events only against a backdrop of insignificant consequences for the people involved and the minimal effect on the larger war, it is easy to see why they largely have evaded analysis. But when we look at them through the lens of mission command, their importance stands out.

APPLICATION OF THE MISSION-COMMAND FRAMEWORK
Mission command is a powerful tool, one that can provide a nuanced and more compelling explanation of events during the age of sail, considered at all levels of warfare. In the case of the events during the spring and summer of 1815 in the West Indies, and especially in the case of the conflict between Durham and Leith, using mission command as an analytical framework provides a much better explanation than the previously accepted narrative. It also provides important lessons for modern commanders at the strategic and operational levels of war.

This article’s mission-command framework demonstrates clearly that the cause of the dispute between Leith and Durham went much deeper than a difference in interpretation of orders or Durham’s alleged desire to avoid plunging his “nation into a rash, and perhaps unnecessary, war.” Clearly, Melville and Durham’s relationship, as evidenced by Melville’s orders and the communications between the two, fits into the failure-of-mission-command category (the third of the possibilities presented in the introduction). Not only did Durham fail to achieve the desired end state by allowing Guadeloupe to fall into Bonapartist hands, when minimal and nonaggressive action could have prevented it from doing so, but Durham’s and Melville’s respective decision spaces barely aligned, if they did so at all. This failure was primarily Melville’s. His orders were overly restrictive, preventing Durham from adapting to a fast-changing situation or taking advantage of his position on scene. Melville also failed to take Durham’s mind-set into account when writing his subordinate’s orders. He knew Durham had requested relief and wanted to return home, but he does not appear to have anticipated how this might affect Durham’s actions on station. Taken together, these failures created such a narrow potential decision space for Durham that the orders both forced and allowed him to take actions that made no strategic sense and could have complicated Britain’s position in the West Indies greatly if Napoléon had fared differently in Europe.

On the other hand, at the operational level of war, the interaction between Leith and Bathurst exemplifies the best execution of mission command (the first of the possibilities presented in the introduction). Leith, operating with orders that specified an end state and that used permissive language, made the most of his initiative by securing Martinique quickly, preventing an imminent uprising there. Bathurst’s orders to Leith also clearly were well tailored to Leith’s mind-set and the trust existing between the two. This is demonstrated by the fact that Leith
did not feel the need to ask for clarification or further orders; he understood what was required of him, and he trusted that his actions would receive Bathurst's support, despite whatever consequences Durham's actions might have brought about. This is demonstrated even more powerfully by the extract from Leith's last letter to Durham, quoted above; while Leith obviously had no familiarity with the term mission command, he clearly understood, and strove to apply, its core concepts.

Modern commanders can draw two lessons from Melville's failure of mission command and from Bathurst's best application of the same. The first is the difficulty in crafting adequate mission orders. Put simply, word choice matters. As Melville found out, overly restrictive language can restrict the subordinate's perceived decision space to the point where it brings about unintended consequences, even at the strategic level of war. Permissive language, on the other hand, allows a subordinate freedom to maneuver and adapt, as Leith did. A commander must consider whether the orders in question define an appropriate decision space for the subordinate or instead will remove potential courses of action that should have been available.

Implicit in this is an understanding of the subordinate for whom the orders are intended. A subordinate who is energetic and willing to take risks, whether to his or her physical safety or personal reputation, might be trusted with more latitude in orders. A subordinate who is too reckless or aggressive may need to be restrained, whereas a subordinate who is too timid may need to be forced into action. So, when crafting mission orders, modern commanders should take care to use language that shapes and appropriately constrains the subordinate's decision space. As demonstrated above, permissive language usually will provide better results than constrictive wording.

The second lesson commanders can draw concerns the importance of intent. Even precise wording of orders still can prove insufficient if a subordinate does not understand why the commander wants an objective to be achieved. If Melville had written even a few lines to Durham in the 26 March orders explaining why he was to avoid hostilities, Durham likely would have been in a much better position to adapt his restrictive orders to a changing situation. In contrast, Bathurst's orders to Leith demonstrate the power of intent. Simply by telling Leith that the prince regent desired the French West Indian islands to remain faithful to Louis XVIII, Bathurst gave Leith the confidence to adapt to the situation. This lesson is applicable to all three levels of war. Explanation of the intent behind orders, then, is the most powerful tool a modern commander has when applying mission command.

Mission command never has been more important than in the current era of great-power competition, because it is one of the strongest methods by which to leverage the advantages inherent in decentralized command in today's rapidly
This is especially true with the emergence of the cyber and space domains of warfare. However, mission command is neither simple nor easy to use effectively. To reap the full benefits made available by mission command, practitioners must both practice it in day-to-day operations and study the past for lessons learned previously.

The age of sail is a gold mine for those lessons at all levels of warfare and complexity. As previously mentioned, historians already have succeeded in drawing mission-command-related lessons from the age of sail at the tactical and operational levels of war. However, this article’s framework provides a standardized and more rigorous analytical method for future study than that applied previously. There are many other examples from the age of sail at all levels of war—such as Graves at the Battle of the Capes, Calder in the Trafalgar campaign, and Berkeley in the Peninsular War—that should be mined for military-related mission-command lessons.

The case study presented in this article was particularly complicated. Politics and diplomacy played an important role; events changed rapidly and unexpectedly when Napoléon returned; there was a long lead time in communications between commanders and subordinates; and two separate British ministers with different priorities issued orders to two different military commanders, with no theater commander to provide a unified chain of command. Because of all these elements and challenges, the case provides an extremely tough test of the mission-command system—and equally valuable lessons.

This further demonstrates the utility of this framework and of the idea of mission command at the strategic level of war, because it can be applied to situations involving all the instruments of national power, not just the military. For example, applying this framework to Collingwood’s time in the Mediterranean or Saumarez’s in the Baltic likely would provide senior admirals and generals with invaluable lessons in the application of diplomacy, information, and economics—something they face on an increasingly frequent basis in today’s era of great-power competition.

NOTES

1. An in-depth discussion of the Prussian origins of mission command and how the various U.S. military services have incorporated it into their doctrine is beyond the scope of this article. For an excellent summary, see James W. Harvard [Lt. Col., USAF (Ret.)], “Airmen and Mission Command,” Air & Space Power Journal 27, no. 2 (March–April 2013), pp. 131–45.


18. Leith does not appear ever to have commented publicly on his disagreement with Durham, as neither his report to Bathurst nor his memoirs refer to anything other than the successful recapture of Guadeloupe. For a copy of Leith’s report to Bathurst, see the issue of the *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh, U.K.) for 21 September 1815. For Leith’s memoirs, see *The Annual Biography and Obituary, for the Year 1819* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819), pp. 488–91.


20. Durham’s full career reads like a combination of Horatio Hornblower’s and Jack Aubrey’s. For a comprehensive account, see Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*.

22. Ibid., pp. 241–42; Admiralty to Durham, 6 September 1814, Lords’ Letters: Orders and Instructions, ADM 2/166, UKNA; Durham to Croker, 30 March 1815, 7 April 1815, and 1 May 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.


26. Vaugiraud Papers, AV; Murray, *Memoir of the Naval Life*, p. 41; Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*, p. 65; *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh, U.K.), 10 December 1814; état des dépêches de M. le gouverneur de la Martinique parvenues au ministère de la marine depuis le 1er janvier 1815 jusqu’au 31 juillet 1817, 40 J 16, Fonds de Féret (1581–1867) [hereafter FF], AV; comte de Vaugiraud, rapport au roi sur le système colonial et la prospérité de commerce, [October 1814], 40 J 25, FF, AV; instructions secrètes données par Vaugiraud, gouverneur général des Îles du Vent [sic], à M. de Bussy, capitaine de vaisseau, commandant “l’Hermione,” 15 December 1814, 40 J 46, FF, AV.


29. Admiralty to Durham, 6 September 1814.


32. This portion of the larger struggle is known as the War of the Seventh Coalition, and also as the Hundred Days.


36. Ibid., p. 390; Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 452.


38. No copy of these orders survives today. A request to the British Archives for all correspondence from the Admiralty to Durham during 1815 did not produce a copy, and Rubinstein’s edition of Durham’s papers does not contain them either. They are quoted in Durham’s memoir as an excerpt from a longer letter. Murray, *Memoir of the Naval Life*, pp. 95–96.

39. There is significant potential for further research in this area. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, I was unable to access any of Melville’s personal papers.

40. Rubinstein, *Durham Papers*, pp. 455–56. The future King George IV served as regent for his father, George III, during the last years of the latter’s life.

41. Murray, *Memoir of the Naval Life*, p. 95; état chronologique des dépêches du ministre de la marine et des colonies adressées au comte de Vaugiraud, soit individuellement, soit en nom collectif avec l’intendant Dubuc, depuis le 17 juin 1814 jusqu’au 30 avril 1817, 40 J 15, FF, AV; Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, pp. xxx–36; Léon Muel, *Gouvernements, ministères...

42. Three letters, Blacas to Vaugiraud, Linois, and Guilhermy, 18 April 1815, 40 J 18, FF, AV.


45. Blacas to Vaugiraud, 18 April 1815; Boyer, Événemens de la Guadeloupe, p. 36; Durham to Croker, 13 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.

46. Robinson, Carrying British Mails, p. 103; Olenkiewicz, “British Packet Sailings.”


49. Leith to Vaugiraud, 27 May 1815, 40 J 28, FF; AV; Royal Gazette (Kingston, Jam.), 29 July 1815; London Courier and Evening Gazette, 26 July 1815.


51. Durham to Croker, 11 May 1815.


53. Royal Gazette (Kingston, Jam.), 29 July 1815; Durham to Croker, 28, 31 May 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA; Leith to Vaugiraud, 27 May 1815.

54. Durham’s memoirs and Rubinstein’s Trafalgar Captain both make a reference to Durham sending an officer to Martinique incognito to ensure that Vaugiraud actually was still in command of the island. Heavily implied in both these descriptions is that if Vaugiraud already had been overthrown, Durham would not have supported landing troops on Martinique, to stay within the bound of the 26 March orders from Melville. This contention does not make sense given Durham’s demonstrated propensity for communicating his intentions to the Admiralty. Also, he makes no mention of his intention to verify Vaugiraud’s hold on power in either of the letters he wrote to the Admiralty prior to embarking Leith’s troops. See Murray, Memoir of the Naval Life, p. 97; Rubinstein, Trafalgar Captain, p. 243; and Durham to Croker, 28, 31 May 1815.

55. Durham to Croker, 31 May 1815.

56. Durham to Croker, 28, 31 May, 19 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA; Leith to Vaugiraud, 27, 2 June 1815, 40 J 28, FF, AV.

57. Rubinstein, Trafalgar Captain, p. 243.

58. London Courier and Evening Gazette, 26 July 1815; Durham to Croker, 28, 31 May, 19 June 1815; Leith to Vaugiraud, 27 May, 2 June 1815; Rubinstein, Trafalgar Captain, p. 243.


60. Durham to Croker, 10 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.


62. Durham to Croker, 13 June 1815; two letters, Decrès to commanders of French warships and to Vaugiraud and Guilhermy, 16 April 1815, 40 J 19, FF, AV.

63. Durham to Croker, 13 June 1815; Linois to Durham, 12 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA. If Boyer is to be believed, Durham initially agreed to Linois’s request and sent L’Agile under tow to Martinique, but then, out of a fervent desire to ravage Guadeloupe in the name of George III, he immediately regretted the decision and chased down both ships to release L’Agile. See Boyer, Événemens de la Guadeloupe, p. 47.

64. Boyer, Événemens de la Guadeloupe, pp. 47–60; Fabre, “La Guadeloupe pendant les Cent-Jours.”
65. The events that took place on Guadeloupe 15–18 June present a significant opportunity for further research that this article cannot encompass. See Jean François César, baron de Guilhermy, Papiers d’un émigré, 1789–1829, ed. Col. Guilhermy (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit, 1886), pp. 390–95.

66. Durham to Croker, 18 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.

67. Rubinstein, Durham Papers, pp. 452–55; Rubinstein, Trafalgar Captain, p. 243; Royal Gazette (Kingston, Jam.), 22 July 1815.

68. Rubinstein, Durham Papers, pp. 452–55; Rubinstein, Trafalgar Captain, p. 243; Royal Gazette (Kingston, Jam.), 22 July 1815.

69. Durham concluded an already despondent letter to Vice Admiral Cochrane, written 28 June, with the sentence “No hopes of peace.” Rubinstein, Durham Papers, p. 452.

70. Rubinstein, Durham Papers, pp. 452–56; Leith received additional orders from Bathurst, dated 20 May, on 21 June, directing him to prepare his forces to attack any French colony in the West Indies in the event of war with France. See Leith to Durham, 22 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.

71. Durham to Leith, 1 July 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.

72. Ironically, Durham may have been in receipt of bad intelligence here. According to both Boyer’s and Guilhermy’s memoirs, the British imprisoned the small garrisons found on the Saintes. Even more damning for the British intelligence is Guilhermy’s statement that the attacking force took unspecified measures to minimize the resistance of the troops on the island prior to landing and were extremely surprised to find the Bourbon flag already flying over the islands on their arrival. See Boyer, Événemens de la Guadeloupe, p. 68, and Guilhermy, Papiers d’un émigré, pp. 390–95.


74. Ibid., pp. 460–61. Considering Durham’s established reputation as a man who loved to spin a good yarn, especially when it enhanced his personal reputation, and his clearly defensive response to Leith’s repeated questioning of his narrow interpretation of his orders, it is possible that Durham is lying about, or at least exaggerating, the existence of these other orders. The only proof that they existed is Durham’s letter to Leith and James Ralfe’s biographical entry about Durham, which very likely was sourced from Durham himself. An examination of the lists of correspondence that Durham received from the Admiralty between January and 11 July 1815 shows that Durham received fifty-three letters during this period—none of which appears to be the mentioned orders. However, Durham’s acknowledgment and receipt letters give only a brief summary of the contents of the letters, so it is possible, though unlikely, that the guidance he mentioned was contained in letters with different subject lines. See Rubinstein, Trafalgar Captain, p. 22; Ralfe, Naval Biography, vol. 3, p. 44; and Durham to Croker, 22 May 1815, and three reports to the Admiralty of received letters, 2, 17 June, 13 July 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.


76. Ibid., pp. 464–65.

77. Durham to Croker, 10/11 July 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.

78. Rubinstein incorrectly identifies the day of Durham’s change of heart as 27 July and that the cause was receiving word of the Battle of Waterloo. See Rubinstein, Trafalgar Captain, p. 244.

79. Durham to Croker, 10/11 July 1815. Durham actually received two separate orders from the Admiralty on 11 July. The first, to which he refers in his 10/11 July letter, was dated 8 June. The second, dated 22 May, directed him to “detain and bring into Port all French National armed vessels,” and provides a useful example of the variability in delivery time for instructions. Bathurst had written to Leith on 20 May and Leith received the orders 21 June, whereas Melville’s orders, written two days later, took another three weeks to arrive. See Durham to Croker, 13 July 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.

80. Royal Gazette (Kingston, Jam.), 23, 30 September 1815; Caledonian Mercury (Edinburgh, U.K.), 30 September 1815.
It is more accurate to say that Durham was responsible for the surrender of the first and last tricolors of the war to British naval forces. The final surrender of a tricolor flag of the Napoleonic Wars likely occurred when the fortifications at Charlemont and Givet surrendered to Blücher’s army, which may have had a contingent of British siege artillery with it, on 30 November 1815. However, there is no indication Durham or any of his biographers were aware of this. Gareth Glover, Waterloo: Myth and Reality (Barnsley, U.K.: Pen and Sword Books, 2014), p. 226.

This quote is taken from what is effectively a rebuttal by Durham, through Ralfe’s biography of him, to Leith’s striking, and mission-command-sounding, quote in Leith’s last letter to Durham. That Durham still felt the need to rebut Leith over a decade after Leith’s death, and that he did so publicly, speaks both to the power that the events in the West Indies held over Durham and to how Durham felt about the legitimacy of his actions.

COVID-19 restrictions prevented a closer study of the relationship between Bathurst and Leith, but one is warranted. Particularly, there are likely more mission-command-related lessons to be drawn from their correspondence about why the two trusted each other so implicitly and why Bathurst did not feel the need to be more prescriptive with Leith.

BOOK REVIEWS

STRATEGY IN MANY FORMS


Although a wealth of scholarly literature exists on various political, military, intelligence, and intercultural aspects of the 1974 Cyprus crisis, an authoritative English-language history of the actual Turkish campaign and Greek Cypriot resistance was lacking heretofore. Now, *Phase Line Attila* assesses Turkey’s July–August 1974 invasion of Cyprus, an operation officially dubbed YILDIZ-ATMA 4 (STAR-DROP 4); this was the fourth revision of an invasion plan drawn up in 1970. The book is recommended for anyone interested in either eastern Mediterranean military history in particular or the strategies and tactics of modern amphibious assaults in general.

The authors of *Phase Line Attila* are eminently qualified for the project. Dr. Edward J. Erickson is a retired U.S. Army officer and noted historian of the late Ottoman and early Turkish militaries. His coauthor, Dr. Mesut Uyar, is dean of the School of Business and Social Sciences, Antalya Bilim University, and a retired Turkish army officer.

Structurally, the book begins with introductory background material on other examples of post–World War II amphibious assaults. Its eight chapters then narrate events chronologically, beginning with discussion of a simmering crisis from the 1940s (when Cyprus was still a British colony) through independence in 1960 and the gradual increase in tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, as well as between Greece and Turkey themselves, both of which were under military governments during parts of the 1960s and early 1970s. This retelling is supported by eleven tables on air, land, and naval deployments, plus twelve maps of the operational zones of the time. This cumulative presentation will be very helpful for academics desiring visual accompaniments for teaching the military campaign.

The book does come with certain caveats—which are somewhat paradoxical. While the authors generally are objective and remind readers that other works also should be consulted for a wider appreciation of the Cyprus crisis, their attempt to limit their treatment strictly to military history does not succeed entirely. Where encountered, this is more a sin of omission than anything worse. This is because of the still extremely controversial nature of the military operation itself, which made
Turkey an international pariah, including incurring a U.S. arms export ban that lasted until 1978. In effect, the authors have written an apologia for Turkey’s intervention, emphasizing the elements of strategic genius and battlefield bravery necessary for them to make the case for it as a model military operation. While there certainly is some truth to the depictions, the authors never critically assess the likelihood of Cyprus uniting with Greece, as no great powers of the time would have allowed this, and Greeks themselves were divided on it. Nevertheless—as the authors note—the Greek Cypriot military coup that overthrew Archbishop Makarios in 1974 provided Turkey with a useful pretext for its long-planned invasion, as it could point to the 1960 treaty negotiated among itself, Greece, and Britain, which stipulated that these guarantor powers of Cypriot independence could prevent the island from uniting with another country. So, if the truism holds that every battle is over before it has been fought, it can be said that the British-led negotiations created a military confrontation that only required time to be fulfilled. A similar omission is the lack of detailed discussion of Turkish or Turkish Cypriot leaders and their contributions.

Perhaps the most baffling omission is the book’s lack of critical inquiry regarding what happened—and why. Many historians, especially Greek ones, have suspected tacit Anglo-American support for the Turkish invasion as a way to solve the island’s pesky interethnic issues—even if it meant a potentially disastrous rift within NATO. Of course, the British military also retained two sovereign base areas and an important signals facility, so it would be laughable to presume that both it and the UN, which had had a peacekeeping mission in place since the early 1960s, could be caught off guard. Nevertheless, this is what the authors claim: that the Turkish military used the element of surprise, along with overwhelming air superiority, to defeat the well-entrenched Greek Cypriot resistance. Nowhere do they ask why Greece reacted so weakly, or whether it was possible that certain individuals (such as the deposed Makarios) had sold out the country. In any case, Greece already had pulled out the bulk of its military in the mid-1960s, whereas Turkey had not.

The major surprise of the campaign was the choice of landing beaches. Whereas the Greek Cypriots (and, according to the authors, Henry Kissinger) had believed the intelligence of a Turkish defector that pointed to one location, the actual Turkish landing took place at another port, with only ghost vessels sent toward the former. The authors mention this as a point of fact, but again they ask no further questions that could lead to even more interesting findings—for example, to confirm whether the informant was indeed an actual defector or just someone sent to provide the enemy with disinformation.

However, this is the kind of conundrum the reader is happy to encounter. The presence of such conundrums in the work speaks to the level of detail the authors have presented—on strategy, tactics, and the vital ground-level information on troop movements—that fuels and inspires further research. While *Phase Line Attila* sometimes is a one-sided work, it is a necessary one for anyone interested in Cyprus or the history of amphibious assaults in the modern age.

CHRIS DELISO

Many aspects of warfare may remain the same through the centuries, but the weapons of war do not. Weapons developed, tested, and used in one conflict become standard arms in subsequent wars. Today’s experimental weapon may become tomorrow’s weapon of choice. For navies, new technologies become part of doctrine, practices, and platforms.

The authors of Innovating Victory study six emerging technologies in naval conflict during three wars of the twentieth century: the Russo-Japanese War, World War I, and World War II. They provide a macroperspective on mines, torpedoes, radio, radar, submarines, and aircraft; after an introduction and an opening chapter titled “Use, Doctrine, Innovation,” one chapter is devoted to each of these technologies. Each such chapter is structured similarly, presenting to readers information on and discussion of the discovery, evolution, and exploitation of the technology. In the course of doing so, the authors tell how these “six technologies facilitated and frustrated navies in their pursuit of victory” (p. 5).

In the introduction, readers are reminded that in the twentieth century there were four waves of technological change for navies, three of them climaxing in one war—World War II. The first wave began in the mid-nineteenth century with the shift from sail to coal-fired steam engines, and included the development of armor, the improvement of guns and mines, the rise of torpedoes, and the introduction of radio. The second wave, from 1905 to 1918, brought to naval warfare submarines and aircraft. The third wave was made up of radar and sonar, which “revolutionized the collection and use of information, and saw the introduction of practical guided weapons” (p. 2). The fourth and final wave is still ongoing. It began with the splitting of the atom and includes satellites, drones, computers and data networks, artificial intelligence, and weapons that employ magnetic and directed energy. (This fourth wave is worthy of its own volume.)

The first chapter reminds readers how quickly naval technologies changed during the twentieth century. Some of the ships of the British and German navies that fought at the Battle of Jutland in 1916 were twice as large as the battleships that had fought ten years earlier at the Battle of Tsushima, and they fired shells that were twice as heavy at twice the range. Within three decades, junior officers who had fought at Jutland, now senior officers, might have used radar and guided weapons in World War II. Not only is technological development fast moving, but it does not follow a specific trajectory that permits rapid establishment of doctrine regarding its use. Further, technological advantages in warfare rarely endure, and not all naval technologies developed are successful when employed.

Mines are the subject of the second chapter. Mines as a naval weapon came to maturity during the Russo-Japanese War, and by the war’s end all major navies had begun to study the conflict for lessons about this and other new technologies with an eye to future wars. Properly used, mines can be highly effective, yet the authors contend that even though mine warfare is a core naval capability, navies do not prioritize
it, in part because it is not a compelling technology with an emotional component that will "command the imagination like aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines do" (p. 50). This lack hinders advocacy of the technology.

The third chapter’s study of torpedoes shows that the maturation of torpedo warfare was slow and sporadic. After the Russo-Japanese War there was debate regarding the future role of torpedoes, because of their negligible effects in that war, but by the eve of World War I the range, speed, and warhead weight of torpedoes had increased—with deadly consequences. The British, Germans, and Americans all faced difficulties with sea-launched torpedoes, and early in the war the Americans’ air-dropped torpedoes had a staggering failure rate. For U.S. torpedoes, a reliable magnetic exploder did not appear until 1943, but after that the results were impressive. The authors contend that, more than for any other technology, torpedo development "shows that the combination of the right platform and the right target transforms a technology of marginal application into one with war-winning potential" (pp. 77–78). They continue this argument in the sixth and seventh chapters, dealing respectively with the development of submarines and aircraft.

Chapters 4 and 5 (radio and radar, respectively) provide summaries that for this reviewer were the most informative and show the exponential effects of combining technologies in warfare. Both technologies are constructed to use the electromagnetic spectrum, but with different core purposes. For radio, it is communication; for radar, detection. The Italian navy began testing shore-to-ship radio in 1897, and the British navy did so in 1899. Radio systems that competed with Marconi’s invention soon arose, with other navies favoring them. By the time of the Russo-Japanese War, radio’s naval utility had been proved, and the technology continued to improve. The interwar years saw the initial development of radar and its varied use by belligerent nations, and World War II saw its maturation as an effective naval weapon.

The final two chapters, dealing with submarines and airplanes, likely will cover ground more familiar to most readers, and the authors present very good overviews of these technologies as naval weapons. The concluding chapter provides a synthesis of the lessons learned from the six weapons studies.

The volume has numerous photographs and charts that enhance the study, as well as an extensive bibliography. Equally weighted chapters provide balance to the book and ensure it is readable to generalists yet informative and thought provoking for all; it is filled with historical examples, well written, and engaging.

TIMOTHY J. DEMY


The opening line of Military Virtues captures the attention of the reader with the provocative teaser: “What does Aristotle have to teach a fighter pilot?” (p. xxv). In response to the question, editors Michael Skerker, David Whetham, and Don Carrick integrate articles by thirty-eight warfighters, professors, and chaplains into one book, combining both theory and practice into a cohesive exploration of moral virtues for the profession of arms. Each of the fourteen segments on
the warrior virtues provides an overview that surveys the philosophical dynamics of the virtue in question, then follows it with two case studies that consider the practical implications of that specific character trait in historical scenarios. *Military Virtues* investigates the ideals of classical philosophy without retreating into the ivory tower of academia, while at the same time it examines current practice from the ethical foxholes of modern and ancient battle spaces without reducing morality to something responsive to a simplistic manual on decision-making.

Aristotle’s system of virtue as the golden mean between the vices of excess and deficiency can shape the military frontiers of just war theory and a whole gamut of applied ethics, including the use of drones, interrogation techniques, professional military contractors, and artificial intelligence. From Homer’s tales of Odysseus in the Trojan War to the account of Chief Warrant Officer Thompson’s intervention at the My Lai massacre in the Vietnam War, the reader journeys with distinguished writers and warriors who invite serious reflection on one of the most compelling topics in military ethics: the role and nature of virtue.

However, virtue ethics, whether defended by Aristotle or contemporary proponents in *Military Virtues*, draws a number of criticisms. In particular, the emphasis on character seems to dodge the quandaries of right choices and plays into the argument of moral relativists, who claim that all norms are subjective preferences or social conventions. In championing a moderate moral objectivity and referring to Aristotle’s formulation of *aretē* (virtue) and *eudaimonia* (human flourishing), Peter Olsthoorn maintains that most philosophers reject moral relativism for various reasons. For example, Olsthoorn points out that virtually all would agree that it is intuitively self-evident that “kicking babies for fun is morally wrong” (p. 2), and this admission of a foundational moral value, along with others (prohibition of rape, murder, genocide, and so on), undermines the argument for moral relativism. Thus, moral relativism lacks credibility as a viable truth claim.

More germane to military operations, Olsthoorn considers the Afghan practice of *bacha bazi* (the sexual exploitation of boys by adult male soldiers). According to moral relativism, *bacha bazi* calls for cultural tolerance, and yet this practice repelled NATO servicemembers deployed to Afghanistan. Rather than accept *bacha bazi* as merely a difference of cultural values, Olsthoorn conducted empirical research and uncovered that *bacha bazi* actually was outlawed by the pre-2021 Afghanistan government and, according to one study, 80 percent of Afghans find the practice morally abhorrent. The external evidence of law and public opinion on *bacha bazi* calls into question the adequacy of moral relativism as a sweeping theory and undergirds a more general premise of basic rights common to all humanity. Skerker notes that the latter part of the twentieth century was marked by ongoing twin reiterations of just war theory and virtue ethics, but little was espoused in terms of military virtues. Thus, *Military Virtues* is an implicit attempt to bridge that “curious” gap with virtues in the armed services that support the enduring precepts of the just war tradition.

By the time the reader has completed this comprehensive study, he or she very well may agree with Skerker’s conclusion: “Aristotle has much to teach fighter pilots
as well as SIGINT analysts, artillery gunners, submariners, ordnancemen, snipers, linguists, and logisticians” (p. xxvi). Undeniably, Aristotle does have much to teach both the military practitioner and the philosopher of political theory. But by the same token, if Aristotle—a master of methodological induction and a posteriori analysis—suddenly returned to life today, no doubt he would learn much, just as the present-day military strategist and tactician would, from the candid war experiences and the well-reasoned arguments of the astute thinkers in *Military Virtues*.

EDWARD ERWIN


When I was trying to drum up enrollment for an elective on Thucydides at the Naval War College, one interested student told me that he was most inspired by Thucydides’s famous quote that “the nation that makes a distinction between its scholars and its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools.” I did not have the heart to tell him that he had not only the quote wrong but the author too. Sadly, this is only one of many misconceptions that national-security professionals have about Thucydides and his work.

Andrew R. Novo and Jay M. Parker’s *Restoring Thucydides: Testing Familiar Lessons and Deriving New Ones* takes on many of these misconceptions to “push back against the oversimplification and decontextualization of Thucydides” (p. 3). In doing so, Novo and Parker appear to be part of the response to Graham Allison’s 2017 *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* and his use of Thucydides as a crystal ball for future Sino-American relations. While the authors acknowledge their issues with Allison’s analysis, they take pains to point out that they are less interested in refuting Allison’s thesis and more interested in providing a corrective to some of the worst misunderstandings of Thucydides that followed Allison’s best seller. To that end, they draw on some of the major scholarship on Thucydides over the past twenty years from diverse perspectives such as literary criticism, translation mechanics, and international relations theory. In addition, they rely on multiple English translations of Thucydides and even throw in a little ancient Greek.

The authors first identify five “common threats” that lead readers to superficial conclusions: that fifth-century Greece was bipolar, that Thucydides blamed the international system for the war, that domestic politics are less important than state-on-state interactions, that Thucydides is the father of realism, and that the Peloponnesian War was a single unitary conflict between Athens and Sparta. In each chapter, they provide something like an annotated bibliography of relevant books and articles that support their reexamination of these misconceptions. In addition, they present accessible summaries of some of the most important episodes of the Peloponnesian War, such as the political maneuvering during the Peace of Nicias, the siege of Melos, the Sicilian expedition, and the fates of Athens and Sparta after the war ended in 404 BCE.

The book ends with seven lessons to take the place of the five threats identified
The fact that the former are not as easily listed as the latter demonstrates that Novo and Parker are offering more-complex and -nuanced lessons than those they replaced. Aside from these big takeaways, the book has some smaller but no less compelling ideas. Specifically, Novo and Parker point out that, despite what Archidamus, king of Sparta, and Pericles, “first citizen” of Athens, repeatedly say (and what the Naval War College repeatedly teaches), navies were far easier to replace than armies (p. 75). They also quite persuasively dispute the Sicilian expedition’s similarities to the Vietnam War (pp. 37–38, 147), another long-standing Naval War College truism. Unfortunately, the authors sometimes are guilty of the very sins they catalog. First, some of their myth busting seems more like hair splitting. For example, they point out that Athens was not a sea power because “strictly speaking, as a metropolitan area” Athens lacked access to the sea (p. 102)—but surely a distance of six miles from acropolis to port does not dictate disqualification as a sea power. Second, they take several incidents out of context, or they ascribe links between events that just are not present in Thucydides. For example, they imply that Thucydides was shocked that Sparta did not break the Peace of Nicias after Melos was reduced, but the quote they cite describes Spartan reaction (or lack thereof) to Athenian raids in the Peloponnesus (p. 115), not the sack of Melos. Finally, on several occasions they mischaracterize secondary sources as representing Thucydides, or speeches from Thucydides as the author’s own views (p. 83). The end result is that rather than add nuance to an oversimplified claim such as “fifth-century Greece was not bipolar,” despite having presented many diverse and compelling points of view that fifth-century Greece was a more complicated state than a simple label would suggest (pp. 50–53).

I recognize that I may not be the target audience for this book. I am fluent in ancient Greek; I have read Thucydides multiple times, as literature, translation material, history, and political science; and I already am familiar with most of the books and articles the authors cite. In contrast, for a reader who knows Thucydides only through Graham Allison or from pithy misquotations and misattributions, this book may provide alternative perspectives. While I agree with Novo and Parker’s exhortation to use Thucydides “as a beginning not as an end” (p. 171), readers who are unfamiliar with Thucydides but wish to understand this important work still should approach Restoring Thucydides with caution.

JOSHUA HAMMOND


On Operations is B. A. Friedman’s examination of the origins of the operational level of war, operational art, and the military general staff and of their impact on U.S. military thinking, doctrine, and way of war. His ambitious work has two aims. First, he advocates strongly for the removal of the concept of the operational level of war from U.S. doctrine. Second, he seeks to improve the value and use of operational art by military staffs in organizing tactical actions to attain strategic
results. Although the pieces as a whole are thought provoking for practitioners and planners, the book suffers from two notable shortfalls. In his pursuit of the first aim—removing the operational level of war from military thinking—he at times appears to paint theory and doctrine as excessively dogmatic. In addressing the second aim—enhancing the use of operational art—his points, while persuasive at times, would have been stronger overall had they provided further elaboration on the planning efficacy that would be achieved by using a paradigm with no operational level.

Friedman organizes his work into seventeen chapters and provides five case studies to help illustrate his own theory of operational art. In his introductory chapter he meticulously lays out the case for bifurcating the operational level of war from operational art, then removing the operational-level concept from U.S. military thinking altogether while retaining operational art. He presents his evidence against the operational level first by outlining the arguments opposing its abolishment. In the five subsequent chapters he reinforces his position by covering the historical origins and application of the operational level in German, Soviet, and U.S. military thinking, and discusses the nature of a healthy civil-military relationship.

Friedman shifts his focus in the remaining chapters and proffers a set of principles for operational art by organizing war-fighting functions into six disciplines. He dedicates a chapter to each of the six: administration, information, operations, fire support, logistics, and command and control. Finally, five case studies covering Austerlitz, Königgrätz, the Atlantic campaign, the Battle of Britain, and Operation WATCHTOWER (Guadalcanal) are offered to illustrate the utility of these operational disciplines.

Friedman argues that the concept of an operational level of war, and consequently the levels themselves, has no place in U.S. military thinking and must be removed. He asserts that the adoption of the operational level as part of U.S. doctrine was the result of a misinterpretation of German and Soviet operational thought. Further, he claims that there is an underlying lack of supporting logic for the purpose of the operational level as being the link between tactics and strategy. According to Friedman, the various definitions of the operational level are contradictory and nebulous in the literature and cannot be linked to the long-established concepts of tactics and strategy. He warns that the consequences of an operational level interposed between tactics and strategy will continue to be damaging to contemporary military planning.

Friedman advocates strongly for the retention and application of operational art and for a military general staff to serve as its executor. According to Friedman, flawed doctrine and military thinking have resulted in an incorrect understanding of the operational level and a resultant conflation of it with operational art, causing the latter to be marginalized. He firmly establishes that operational art has merit once it is separated from the operational level. He explores the rise of the military staff in applying operational art to manage the conduct of war, and he suggests a modernized version of the Scharnhorst model of a general staff as an exemplar. This professional staff, knowledgeable in the practice of operational art, capably can support the commander. It is the general staff and its application of operational art, not the
concept of an operational level of war, that effectively support the tactics-and-strategy dialectic, in turn serving to manage the complexities of modern warfare. Unfortunately, Friedman’s argument paints a picture of the concepts underpinning military theory and doctrine as being static and unchanging. Yet military theory is not static, and doctrine changes under the pressures of experience and critical thinking to provide pragmatic utility. No theory or doctrine should be dogmatic, especially in the conduct of war, and this truism applies to the concept of the operational level of war as well. Even though it was wrongly adopted into doctrine, the concept of an operational level of war has evolved beyond its original formulation. In the absence of addressing directly the interrelationships among levels, related objectives, and operational art itself, his argument is left weaker than it could have been. As long as there is utility to be found in applying any concept to create and execute military plans effectively, that concept has a purpose in military thinking and should be retained.

On Operations outlines a way to understand and manage war. The work is ambitious and covers significant territory in roughly two hundred pages. This work will generate controversy among practitioners of operational planning—who, in fact, should be challenged to justify the value and existence of the operational-level-of-war concept. Friedman’s work adds to the body of military thinking about operational art and the operational level of war. It should appeal to military staffs, and planners in particular, who desire to widen their professional knowledge about operational art and the theory and doctrine that support it.

EDMUND B. HERNANDEZ


In modern Chinese history, few subjects are discussed as widely and misunderstood as broadly as the so-called Century of Humiliation, which ostensibly commenced with China’s defeat in the First Opium War (1839–42). Most academic analyses of the Century of Humiliation’s genesis emphasize economic and technological disparities, inevitable clashes of contrasting civilizations, or, broadly, the tide of European imperialism. Historian Stephen Platt, however, has sought to examine the prelude to the Opium War comprehensively through the eyes of the individuals who drove early Anglo-Chinese relations.

Imperial Twilight is concerned not with the Opium War itself but with how it came to occur. Platt posits two essential questions along which he aligns his work. The first examines how Britain came to fight a war with China for the sake of merchants who were trafficking illegal drugs, despite visceral domestic opposition. The second seeks to determine how China declined from its peerless geopolitical position in the eighteenth century and, in turn, how Britain came to take advantage of that decline. Within this framework, Platt examines the early history of Anglo-Chinese trade and diplomatic relations, beginning with the establishment of the canton system in 1759 and ending in the aftermath of the Opium War. At the same time, Platt relates the various internal crises faced by the Qing Empire, from the White Lotus Rebellion to rampant piracy in China’s southern littoral.
Notably, however, Platt’s discussion of the evolution of the relationship between Britain and China is driven by the actions of individuals of both nations from 1759 to 1842. Platt asserts that the Opium War in no way resulted from an inevitable clash of cultures, much less a premeditated imperialist plot; rather, the war represents a tragic culmination of mounting domestic crises taxing the resources of the Qing Empire coupled with the successful lobbying of the British Parliament by private merchants to protect their illicit businesses, despite many Westerners’ genuinely felt, albeit misinformed, admiration of Chinese civilization.

Platt’s work is eminently readable, using concise language and driven by the engaging individual personalities of those involved in Britain’s burgeoning trade with China. His inclusion of both British and Chinese perspectives, in relatively equal allotments, grounds the work’s approach to understanding how a mutual relationship between the states was established and evolved. The author relies extensively on both English- and Chinese-language primary sources, lending credibility to his accounts and interpretations. At the same time, Platt’s emphasis on the role that individuals played in the Anglo-Chinese relationship reminds readers that the greatest events in history often are triggered by happenstance and subject to unintended consequences rather than resulting from methodical plans.

Perhaps the most notable contribution of Platt’s work is the comprehensive debunking of any association between premeditated grand imperialist plans for China and the Opium War. Early in *Imperial Twilight*, Platt presents the reader with a discussion of the amazing admiration that the West felt for China prior to the war. In recounting many writings from major Western Enlightenment figures, such as Adam Smith, George Washington, and Voltaire, Platt demonstrates to readers that China—rightfully so—was revered as the world’s largest, most prosperous, and best-governed state during the eighteenth century. This fact was the foundation for Britain’s efforts to engage China diplomatically and economically. Nonetheless, many of the key individuals driving closer relations between Britain and China, such as George T. Staunton, did so primarily out of their own personal interests, not at the behest of London. Regarding the eventual war itself, Platt relates the intense opposition from members of the British public and Parliament, firmly rooted on moral grounds, that persisted throughout the short conflict. Ultimately, Platt argues convincingly that the decision to go to war, which succeeded by only five votes in the House of Commons, was rooted in the moneyed interests of private opium merchants responding to a renewed clampdown on their trade. In doing so, Platt undercuts proponents of the narrative portraying the Opium War as a plot to initiate China’s subjugation and, in turn, the Century of Humiliation.

The primary shortcoming of *Imperial Twilight* is its apparent lack of a distinct conclusion. The work begins by posing its two questions, and centers on them; however, after the historical narrative culminates in the final chapter, the work fails to revisit these ordering questions explicitly. While Platt’s emphasis on the role of individuals and their intergenerational relations is refreshing among modern histories that tend to overemphasize trends and forces, the book’s limited consideration of structural factors undermines its ability to marshal
the panoply of evidence provided to establish definitive answers to the original questions. Furthermore, Platt’s brief treatment of the consequences of the war itself may not convince the reader that the conflict truly marked the turning point of China’s last golden age, as the book’s subtitle suggests.

However, Platt is successful in reminding modern readers of the many unknowns that remain regarding the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century worlds; the capricious nature of the process by which interstate relationships emerge; and the dangers that arise when wealth bleeds into politics to entice governments to take action, however contrary to public opinion those actions may be—a lesson modern readers would do well to heed.

BENJAMIN E. MAINARDI


This book is long overdue. Few individuals have put their personal stamp on an aspect of world affairs as conclusively as Sergey G. Gorshkov, who almost single-handedly developed the Soviet navy from a gaggle of vessels and competing strategies into one of the most formidable forces in maritime history. For nearly three decades, the Soviet navy was his navy and Soviet naval strategy was his strategy. No other figure in maritime history can quite compare in how completely he created a military service.

For U.S. naval officers serving during the latter half of the Cold War, Gorshkov’s navy was the only real threat. It was not a question of whether the Soviet and U.S. fleets would clash, but only of when. At sea, U.S. tactical action officers served as living computers, memorizing the entire Soviet naval and air orders of battle—from the peculiarities of ship and aircraft types to weapons systems to electronic sensors—to enable them to deal with a bewildering complexity of threats in as rapid and effective a manner as possible. The U.S. Navy’s initial role in the predicted war for Europe would have been to move ten Army divisions and their equipment across the Atlantic in ten days while running a gauntlet of Soviet submarines, fleets of Badger and Backfire bombers, and cruise-missile-firing surface ships. It is fitting that former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman wrote the foreword to Admiral Gorshkov, as it was Lehman’s six-hundred-ship Navy that was going to have to match and defeat Gorshkov’s fleet. Under Lehman, the U.S. Navy embraced a much more offensive-minded way of thinking and prepared not only to get the Army across the Atlantic but to harry the Soviet flanks while destroying the USSR’s maritime forces wherever they were.

The authors have delivered a riveting account of the growth of the Soviet fleet. They chronicle how Stalin’s desire for major warships gave way to a more defensive, coastal, and submarine-based strategy, only to return to a big, blue-water idea. Gorshkov’s forces were designed and built neither for maritime supremacy nor for sea control, but these would come as the fruits of victory if the Soviet navy could achieve its mission: destroying the U.S. Navy, primarily by sinking its aircraft carriers. Whether it could have done so remains a matter of conjecture; that the Soviets would have failed in the effort remains a matter of faith among most Cold War–vintage U.S. naval officers.
Gorshkov joined the Soviet navy before World War II and served extensively in the Far East. He gained his first command and saw combat against the Japanese while supporting Soviet ground forces in 1938. It was during this period that he had his first brush with disaster. Gorshkov commanded an operation that involved the towing of a newly built destroyer to port. Things went wrong and the ship was lost; his career was in peril. However, support from his seniors in the chain of command saved him.

As a young captain in World War II, Gorshkov saw combat in Crimea and the Black Sea. He displayed personal bravery, and he played a role in the defense of Stalingrad. After the war, and particularly after the Cuban missile crisis, Gorshkov became adept at explaining the role of the Soviet navy in defending the homeland—at ever-increasing distances from home waters. In doing so, he also embraced and demonstrated the power of warships as tools of statecraft. Soviet port visits expanded to harbors all over the globe, demonstrating the USSR's strategic reach, maritime prowess, and suitability as a partner. Admiral Gorshkov embraced technology, and there were areas in which Soviet advances ran ahead of those of the United States. These ranged from fabricating the titanium hulls of Alpha-class submarines to putting gas turbine engines into warships well before the United States. He was able to acquire massive amounts of matériel—steel and electronics, among others—and trained personnel to grow his fleet.

It can be easy to lose sight of all the other challenges Gorshkov had to face while he built his fleet. There were political alliances to manage, political enemies to avoid, and the couching of every plan and decision in a manner acceptable to party ideologues and leaders. Polmar and company do fine work in covering these aspects.

If there is a weakness in the work, the authors identify and acknowledge it. Although they make a valiant effort, it is hard to reveal Sergey Gorshkov the man. It is doubtful whether anyone could have done a better job, but those wanting to know about Gorshkov's personal life will have to wait.

An easy read and a compelling work, Admiral Gorshkov is a welcome addition to biographies of great naval leaders, builders, and thinkers. Gorshkov too often is neglected in discussions of naval strategists; it is high time for him to be included.

RICHARD NORTON

Our Reviewers

Chris Deliso is an American geopolitical analyst specializing in southeast Europe.

Timothy J. Demy, ThD, PhD, is a professor of military ethics at the Naval War College (the College).

Edward Erwin, Commander, USN, CHC, serves as a facilitator at the Naval Leadership and Ethics Center in Newport, Rhode Island. He earned his PhD in theology and ethics from Duke University.
Joshua Hammond, Commander, USN, is a professor of strategy and policy at the College.

Edmund B. Hernandez, Captain, USN (Ret.), is an associate professor of joint military operations in the College of Distance Education at the College.

Benjamin E. Mainardi is an analyst for the Center for Maritime Strategy. He holds an MA in war studies from King’s College London.

Richard Norton, PhD, is a retired USN officer and a professor of national-security affairs at the College.
RESPONSE TO “INNOVATION, INTERRUPTED: NEXT-GENERATION SURFACE-COMBATANT DESIGN,” BY DAVID H. LEWIS, NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW 75, NO. 1 (WINTER 2022), PP. 107–40

Sir:

While I enjoyed reading David Lewis’s highly informative article on innovation in the Winter 2022 edition of the Naval War College Review, I was chagrined to read his contention on page 120 that “American dive-bombers . . . were unknown when the first American aircraft carriers were designed in the 1920s and early 1930s.” Unfortunately, although Professor Lewis is well versed in shipbuilding technology, his knowledge of the development of U.S. naval aviation in the interwar years is less than comprehensive.

The first experimental dive-bombing practice against a moving target by U.S. carrier aircraft took place in the fall of 1927. As I noted in Destined for Glory: Dive Bombing, Midway, and the Evolution of Carrier Airpower (Naval Institute Press, 1998), “The bombing scores obtained during the light-bombing exercise against a moving target showed the high degree of accuracy that could be obtained through the use of dive bombing with relatively little practice.” Although the F6C-3s that participated in this exercise carried relatively light bomb loads, they were the forerunners of the ever-more-capable dive-bombing aircraft that evolved into the SBDs of Midway fame. Had Professor Lewis been familiar with these developments he could have used them as another example of how doctrine changes in response to technological improvements in weapons.

During the pre–World War II era, the U.S. Navy—like other navies throughout the world—viewed the “decisive action” of the next war in terms of what had happened at the Battle of Jutland in the First World War. It continued to focus on the gunnery duel that was expected to be the determining factor in the outcome of the great battle that would ensue when two opposing fleets met on the high seas. Many of the fleet exercises, board games, and tactical studies conducted during the 1920s were designed to evaluate various aspects of this engagement.
In most scenarios, the gunnery duel would be preceded by a destroyer torpedo attack initiated in an attempt to damage at least some of the opposing battleships. The destroyers did not have to sink any of the dreadnoughts to be successful; their job was to slow down the enemy line. Searching for a way to counter the dreaded destroyer attack, the Navy conducted exercises using dive-bombers against moving targets, and their success opened the door for light-bombing (as it was known then) to be used for that purpose.

An even more important role for the dive-bomber was discovered during Fleet Problem IX. It was conducted in March 1930 in response to the first carrier-versus-carrier duels carried out during the exercises leading up to it—exchanges that later would characterize the World War II naval war in the Pacific. The results during these duels showed that the carrier that was first to locate and attack its counterpart in the opposing force was able to achieve air superiority, gaining an overwhelming advantage for its own fleet. During the critique that followed the conclusion of Fleet Problem IX, Rear Admiral Henry V. Butler, Commander, Aircraft Squadrons, Scouting Force, described the situation now facing carrier commanders. The opposing forces, he explained, were “like blindfolded men armed with daggers in a ring[;] if the bandage over the eyes of one is removed, the other [was] doomed.” The only solution was to locate the enemy carrier and attack while the latter’s planes were still on deck.

With this knowledge, the Navy (via the Bureau of Aeronautics) began efforts to develop the scout-bomber (a type unique to the U.S. Navy, and not mentioned by Professor Lewis). That program ultimately resulted in the design and subsequent deployment of the dive-bomber known as the Douglas SBD (for Scout-Bomber Douglas).

THOMAS WILDENBERG

AUTHOR’S RESPONSE TO “NOT SO!’ ON CARRIERS,” BY JAMES ALVEY, NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW 75, NO. 2 (SPRING 2022), PP. 189–91

Sir:

I praise James Alvey for his detailed research on USS Ranger (CV 4) and his knowledge of World War II aircraft carriers in general. Individuals interested
enough in naval history to seek out primary sources in archives are rare and deserve support. We need more such dedicated researchers and writers.

However, as Alvey admits, my article was but a very brief survey of small aircraft carriers and the decisions to build them. I do not claim to have done original research in primary sources; I prowl the archives only occasionally. I do not even consider myself an historian; instead I am a defense strategist and a strategic/security studies scholar. Therefore, I am a “user of history,” and I rely on the work of the top historians in the field. My focus is on what lessons history may offer for our deterrence of and preparation for future wars. History is the only real laboratory for human decision-making, so, after critical evaluation, I incorporate it into all my work.

The two questions I set out to analyze in my article were: “What is the history of ‘small’ aircraft carriers?” and “Did small carriers prove effective in war?” Answering them necessitates discussing the decisions to build the ships in question and assessing their effectiveness in the aggregate.

Norman Friedman, Emily Goldman, Charles Melhorn, William Trimble, and the Belote brothers (one of whom was my professor, oh so long ago) are or were top scholars in their fields. Charles Melhorn was also a naval aviator, so he could assess USS Ranger from an experienced perspective. I did search for more-recent sources, but I found none that contradicted the conclusions of these experts or added much more than detail.

The sometimes-contradictory writings of Rear Admiral William A. Moffett, USN, the father of naval aviation, reflect the fact that he routinely changed his mind on the basis of incoming facts. He tried multiple methods of bringing airpower to sea: large carriers, small carriers, floatplanes, flying boats, and airships. Some proved successful; some did not. He was lost in the April 1933 crash of the naval airship USS Akron (ZRS 4) at sea; like Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, USN, he was not afraid to test his own programs personally.

I am not going to spar with Mr. Alvey on all details. However, in writing that there were six CVLs constructed, I could be considered technically correct—only six carriers were designated CVL upon commissioning. Others, such as USS Princeton (CV/CVL 23)—let us honor its heroic crew and those of the ships that came to its aid—were built as CVs, but then redesignated CVLs after they were operating at sea. Neither USS Ranger nor USS Wasp (CV 7)—both approximately the same size as the CVLs—was redesignated. However, if I were to revise the article, I think I would adopt Mr. Alvey’s approach to counting CVLs. Thank you, sir.

One mistake he did not catch is that I identified USS Valley Forge (CV 45) incorrectly as belonging to the Midway class rather than the Essex class. Another reader took issue with my contention that the United States built 146 carriers (of all sizes) during World War II, and proposed an alternative number. Establishing
a total depends on whether one counts the CVEs built for the British and those that were almost completed but were never commissioned. Let us just agree that U.S. production was more than eight times that of imperial Japan.

On a related note, at the final meeting at which the top imperial Japanese decision makers debated whether to start a war with the United States, held in October 1941, the question of the U.S. potential and ability for war was asked. The consensus answer was about seven to eight times that of Japan. Good assessment; bad choice.

Despite our differences over details, Mr. Alvey does not challenge my main thesis. There is no operational evidence that a large number of small carriers can substitute in effectiveness for a smaller (but proportional) number of large carriers. No war or major naval operation has demonstrated that as fact. Therefore, we cannot just assume that they would today. Modeling and simulation are not evidence.

If you think me wrong, please challenge me on that! If any reader can prove me wrong, please get in touch with me via sam.tangredi@usnwc.edu. In designing a future fleet, this is a critical issue that still has not been addressed satisfactorily. And, Mr. Alvey, if you would like to give a lecture on USS Ranger (CV 4) at the Naval War College, I will sponsor you.

SAM J. TANGREDI

RESPONSE TO “WHAT WAS NIMITZ THINKING?,” BY JONATHAN B. PARSHALL, NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW 75, NO. 2 (SPRING 2022), PP. 92–122

Sir:

Jonathan Parshall’s fascinating article in the Spring 2022 Review on Admiral Chester W. Nimitz’s decision-making attendant on the Battle of Midway rather shortchanges the effect of Midway itself on the outcome of the battle. Parshall does some outstanding, groundbreaking work in bringing mathematical analysis (done by others) both to the explanation of the battle as it occurred and to a range of counterfactual scenarios that serve to deepen our understanding of Nimitz’s decision to commit to a battle. That said, the effect of the island of Midway on
both Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto’s and Admiral Chūichi Nagumo’s decision-making needs to be appreciated.

Yamamoto intended the island to function as bait to lure the remaining American carrier forces into battle. But it became more than that: an objective in and of itself, as evidenced by the planned amphibious assault. This, in turn, suboptimized the Japanese force deployment, with Nagumo’s carriers being dual tasked both to reduce the island’s defenses and to be ready to engage any U.S. carrier forces sent out to defend the island. Multitasking is a dangerous proposition for naval forces, especially if too few units are available. Had Nagumo had the full six-carrier complement of the Kidō Butai, multitasking would not have been so much of an issue, salvo equations or not.

As it was, Midway Island lured in the Japanese, such that it became a distraction, and thus served Nimitz’s carriers as bait. Yamamoto’s plan virtually guaranteed that Nagumo would be faced with a multitasking dilemma. If Yamamoto simply had sailed the reduced Kidō Butai toward Midway without intending to invade, the island’s malign influence on his and Nagumo’s decision-making could have been avoided. Nagumo would not have been faced with the dilemma of whether to obey Yamamoto’s order to maintain an alert antiship package. American advantages in intelligence and scouting and Japanese failures in those functions might not have mattered so much.

Of course, the principle of striking effectively first still would have governed, but the effects of the various exigencies that favored the Americans might not have weighed as heavily if the Japanese had not been distracted by Midway itself.

In my Review article “Deconstructing Nimitz’s Principle of Calculated Risk” (Winter 2015), I concluded that Nimitz was determined to engage Yamamoto at Midway. His suggestion to Fletcher to move west to be able to get in a first strike effectively negated the concept of calculated risk. Nimitz had good reasons for doing this, as Parshall points out, but the crux of the matter is spelled out in the OP 29-42 plan: “Operate with Task Forces available initially to the northeast of MIDWAY . . . in order to seize opportunity to obtain initial advantage against carriers which are employing their air groups against MIDWAY.” In other words, the whole strategy revolved around catching Nagumo with his pants down, and that is just what they did.
Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Michael M. Gilday recently released an update to his professional reading program. The CNO Professional Reading Program (CNO-PRP) now consists of twelve books, including a mix of fiction and nonfiction titles covering military strategy, management, leadership, technology, and other subjects relevant to the development of maritime professionals at all levels.

“A learning mindset is essential to accelerating our warfighting advantage,” said Gilday. “A Navy that learns, adapts, and improves the fastest will be the most successful. Knowledge sharing is essential to creating a learning culture.”

The goal of the program is to contribute to a culture dedicated to warfighting and learning, while simultaneously supporting the personal and professional development of sailors beyond that of their primary designator or rating.

“We are driving a fleet-wide campaign of self-improvement,” said Gilday. “We must foster an organization that supports and empowers Sailors to have an independent quest for knowledge through reading and information sharing. What you know and how fast you learn is relevant in this era of strategic competition.”

The following books are included in the newly released update:

*To Rule the Waves: How Control of the World’s Oceans Shapes the Fate of the Superpowers*, by Bruce D. Jones


*China as a Twenty First Century Naval Power: Theory, Practice, and Implications*, by Michael A. McDevitt
Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post–Cold War Stalemate, by M. E. Sarotte

The Sailor’s Bookshelf: Fifty Books to Know the Sea, by Admiral James G. Stavridis, USN (Ret.)

Army of None: Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War, by Paul Scharre

Fortune Favors Boldness: The Story of Naval Valor during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, by Vice Admiral Barry M. Costello, USN (Ret.)

The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors: The Extraordinary World War II Story of the U.S. Navy’s Finest Hour, by James D. Hornfischer

World War II at Sea: A Global History, by Craig L. Symonds

Ashley’s War: The Untold Story of a Team of Women Soldiers on the Special Ops Battlefield, by Gayle Tzemach Lemmon

Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts, by Brené Brown

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, by Carol S. Dweck

Additional information about these books can be found on the CNO-PRP website, www.navy.mil/CNO-Professional-Reading-Program/. Most are available for loan at no cost to sailors in both e-book and digital audio format from the Navy MWR digital library collection. Eligible patrons can download the books at www.navymwrdigitallibrary.org/.

The motto of the CNO-PRP is Read Well to Lead Well. This slogan reflects the notion that a key component of the professional development of all maritime leaders is a career-long commitment to expanding their expertise via a self-directed program of study and reflection on issues relevant to their unique profession. The Navy Leader Development Framework notes that “[l]eaders with the passion to make ourselves and our teams the best do not wait for formal training or formal avenues—we get to it on our own. . . . The CNO’s Professional Reading Program provides a jumping-off point to build knowledge about competence, character, and connections.”

Even in these days of incessant social media, streaming television dramas, and wide-screen theatrical releases, the value (and comfort) of reading a book (in hard copy or digital format) is still significant. The connection between the written word and the mind of the reader is just as valuable today as it has been for centuries. I encourage you to set a personal goal to read as many of the great books on the CNO-PRP as you can over the next twelve to twenty-four
months. By doing so you will become a better leader, better citizen, and better human. Not bad for a few hours of effort each week. If you read well, you will lead well!

JOHN E. JACKSON