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Reflections on Reading

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REFLECTIONS ON READING

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The current version of the Chief of Naval Operations Professional Reading Program (CNO-PRP) features a dozen titles of relevance to sailors at all ranks within our Navy. One such book, *To Rule the Waves*, written by Bruce D. Jones, provides a remarkably broad look at how various components of the global maritime enterprise are interconnected and must be understood and appreciated by all maritime professionals.

The publisher describes the book as follows:

Now in vivid, closely observed prose, Bruce Jones conducts us on a fascinating voyage through the great modern ports and naval bases—from the vast container ports of Hong Kong and Shanghai to the vital naval base of the American Seventh Fleet in Hawaii to the sophisticated security arrangements in the Port of New York. Along the way, the book illustrates how global commerce works, that we are amidst a global naval arms race, and why the oceans are so crucial to America's standing going forward.

As Jones reveals, the three great geopolitical struggles of our time—for military power, for economic dominance, and over our changing climate—are playing out atop, within, and below the world's oceans.

Former USN officer Jerry D. Lenaburg, writing in the *New York Journal of Books*, summarizes some of the key points of this outstanding book by noting the following:

The 21st century is likely to continue to be an era of global competition for resources and geographic dominance, but not on land. The interconnectedness of the international economy and its reliance on ocean-going commerce, particularly for a fast-rising China, will challenge the current global order as China seeks to establish a worldwide presence both economically and militarily to ensure its access to natural resources and export markets. Combined with the potential effects of climate change on the patterns of world fisheries, the need for oceanic energy production, and the

potential for a new Arctic shipping route dreamed of by mariners for centuries will likely make the world's oceans the dominant scene of diplomatic and potentially military action in the next 25 years. . . .

In particular, the author spends a great deal of time discussing the expansion of China's navy from a coastal defense force to a true blue-water navy able to operate around the globe and challenge the primacy of the US Navy, probably the most important strategic shift in the global balance of power since the end of World War II. As China becomes more assertive and expands its presence through a series of basing agreements in the Middle East and Africa, there can be no doubt about its intention to become the world's premier naval and shipping power, able to aggressively defend China's interests and territorial ambitions, even potentially at the expense of other Asian countries, particularly Taiwan and Japan. The virtual annexation of large swaths of the South China Sea by China's land reclamation projects and build-up of military forces in the Spratly and Paracel Island groups has alarmed all of southeast Asia, while at the same time challenging traditional notions of free passage and safe transit traditionally protected by the US Navy. . . .

As the global economy becomes more dependent on the oceans, the potential for either naval cooperation or naval competition will likely become the major security issue for the next quarter century. Understanding the economic and political impacts of the complex mix of nationalism, environmental impacts, and economic pressures is crucial for recognizing the actions of major players such as China and the United States in this global commons.

The greatest benefit of considering the ideas presented in this book is that they can help all sailors *avoid* the notion that simply understanding "sea power" in the military context is all they need to master. Jones does a marvelous job of showing the linkage of our traditional understanding of naval power with related subjects such as climate change, oil and gas production and transportation, commercial seaborne trade, the "blue economy," the criticality of ports and related infrastructure, the high vulnerability of undersea cables, intelligence gathering, oceanography, and other difficult challenges. It is an incredible menu of subjects about which we all should be concerned.

The readability of the book is enhanced by the author's inclusion of fascinating stories about the famous Howard Hughes / *Glomar Explorer* recovery of a portion of a sunken Soviet submarine, attempts by the Office of Naval Research to drill through the crust of the earth, and pirate attacks both at the dawn of the American republic and well into the twenty-first century.

In closing, Jones writes as follows:

All but the tiniest fraction of humankind resides on land, works on land, interacts with other humans primarily on the land. It is entirely possible to live a rich life and never once set foot in the world's oceans; a substantial portion of humanity lives their

entire existence without even ever setting eyes on them. And yet the seas shape the world around us. It is on the oceans that the great struggles of our day—for military power, for economic dominance, over our changing climate—are playing out. Our security, our prosperity, and our environment hang in the balance.

One of the primary goals of the CNO-PRP is to broaden the field of vision of all sailors, and no book does this more effectively than *To Rule the Waves*.

JOHN E. JACKSON

