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*Editor, Circulation, or Business*  
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## FROM THE EDITORS

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From the days of Mahan through “Sea Power 21,” the theory governing the activities of the U.S. Navy has had war fighting as its overriding focus. Beginning with the vision of a former Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Michael Mullen, of a “thousand-ship navy,” however, there has been a gradual broadening in our Navy’s perspective in the direction of what is most commonly known as “maritime security cooperation,” and indeed of peacetime naval and maritime missions more generally. The Navy’s “A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower” (2007) was the key milestone in this evolution. This document may be credited with stimulating an unparalleled upsurge in international cooperation in the maritime domain in the years following, a development that remains very imperfectly understood and appreciated in many quarters of the American national security community. In what we believe to be an important and timely article, “Naval Operations in Peacetime: Not Just ‘Warfare Lite,’” Ivan T. Luke makes the case for the need to rethink naval theory and doctrine in fundamental ways to cope with the new realities of the global system of commerce, proliferating legal and regulatory regimes, and the increasing interactions of the world’s navies. He argues that peacetime naval operations will be critically determined by the divergent “authorities” under which they are conducted and that naval commanders generally will need to develop a more sophisticated grasp of these matters if they are to achieve mission success. Ivan T. Luke, a retired Coast Guard officer, serves on the faculty of the Joint Military Operations Department at the Naval War College.

With the recent American “pivot” to Asia, it is worth taking a sustained look at recent developments in the northwest Pacific, especially involving the increasingly tense relationship between China and Japan. In “The Senkaku/Diaoyu Island Controversy: A Crisis Postponed,” Paul J. Smith traces the tangled history of the dispute over ownership of these uninhabited specks in the East China Sea, which is currently in an escalatory cycle that could conceivably lead to an armed clash between the Chinese and Japanese navies. The United States played a prominent role historically in this dispute—one whose unfortunate effects continue to be with us today. Eric Sayers offers a broader perspective on Japan’s Ryukyu Archipelago, of which these islands are in effect a part. In “The ‘Consequent Interest’ of Japan’s Southwestern Islands: A Mahanian Appraisal of the Ryukyu Archipelago,”



Sayers provides a wide-ranging analysis of the strategic utility of the Ryukyus for Japan and the United States in checking the ability of the Chinese to project military power beyond what they choose to call “the first island chain.” Finally in this group of articles, Shiloh Rainwater, in “Race to the North: China’s Arctic Strategy and Its Implications,” examines the apparent determination of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to take advantage of the warming Arctic Ocean to stake its own claim on Arctic resources and increase its regional profile generally.

Douglas C. Peifer, in “Maritime Commerce Warfare: The Coercive Response of the Weak?,” examines the issue of commerce raiding in long historical perspective. He argues that the disparagement of commerce warfare in the classic navalist theories of Mahan and Corbett has led to a consistent underestimation of the potential of this sort of warfare at sea. This tendency, he warns, may yet cause us to take less seriously than we should the naval challenge posed by weak contemporary states such as Iran. Douglas Peifer is a professor in the Department of Strategy at the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

Finally, Martin Murphy alerts us to a new and troubling development in China’s ongoing maritime psychological-political warfare—the use of offshore oil platforms as “strategic weapons” of the PRC.

#### NEWPORT PAPER 38 IN FREE E-BOOK FORMAT

With the assistance of the Government Printing Office, we have had the most recent (number 38) in our Newport Paper monograph series—*High Seas Buffer: The Taiwan Patrol Force, 1950–1979*, by Bruce A. Elleman—converted to e-book format. It can be downloaded without charge from the Naval War College Press website, [www.usnwc.edu/press](http://www.usnwc.edu/press); click on “Newport Papers,” then “eBook” opposite the monograph’s entry. Download either “MOBI” (readable on Kindle) or “EPUB” files (for most other e-readers). In the future, if this service proves useful and funding permits, we’ll be offering other selected, suitable titles in free e-book format as well.

#### NEW FROM THE PRESS: NEWPORT PAPER 39

*Influence without Boots on the Ground: Seaborne Crisis Response*, by Larissa Forster, the thirty-ninth title in our Newport Paper monograph series, is online, and print copies will soon be available for sale by the Government Printing Office online bookstore, at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov>. The monograph is an empirical analysis of crisis characteristics, actors, U.S. involvement, and outcomes, exploring the political use of naval forces during foreign-policy crises short of full-scale warfare. Dr. Forster, of the University of Zurich, uses a statistical model to analyze naval crisis data in ways useful to policy makers and strategists—outlining the unique characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of naval forces and

summarizing theoretical literature on naval diplomacy and coercion, as well as earlier quantitative research.

#### IF YOU VISIT US

Our editorial offices are now located in Sims Hall, in the Naval War College Coasters Harbor Island complex, on the third floor, west wing (rooms W334, 335, 309). For building-security reasons, it would be necessary to meet you at the main entrance and escort you to our suite—give us a call ahead of time (841-2236).



*Rear Admiral Christenson became the fifty-third President of the U.S. Naval War College on 30 March 2011. The fourth of six sons of a Navy Skyraider pilot and a Navy nurse, he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1981.*

*At sea, he commanded USS McClusky (FFG 41), Destroyer Squadron 21 in USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74), Carrier Strike Group 12, and the USS Enterprise (CVN 65) Strike Group. He most recently served as President, Board of Inspection and Survey. He also served as the antisubmarine warfare officer and main propulsion assistant aboard USS Cook (FF 1083); as aide to Commander, Cruiser Destroyer Group 1 in USS Long Beach (CGN 9); as weapons officer aboard USS Downes (FF 1070); as Destroyer Squadron 21 combat systems officer, in USS Nimitz (CVN 68); and as executive officer of USS Harry W. Hill (DD 986). He deployed eight times on seven ships, twice in command of McClusky.*

*Ashore, he commanded the Surface Warfare Officers School in Newport, and as a new flag officer he served as Commander, Naval Mine and Anti-submarine Warfare Command, Corpus Christi, Texas. He also served at the U.S. Naval Academy as a company officer, celestial navigation instructor, assistant varsity soccer coach, and member of the admissions board; at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, in the Strategic Initiatives Group; and on the Joint Staff, in J5 (Strategic Plans and Policy) and as executive assistant to the assistant chairman.*

*He graduated with distinction and first in his class from the Naval War College, earning his master's degree in national security and strategic studies. He was also a Navy Federal Executive Fellow at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.*

*Rear Admiral Christenson has been awarded the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (five awards), the Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), the Navy Commendation Medal (five awards), and the Navy Achievement Medal.*

## PRESIDENT'S FORUM

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*Every ambitious naval officer should want to be a graduate of Newport.*

I AM VERY PROUD OF OUR FACULTY. They relentlessly refine the academic program here to meet the always-changing security environment and needs of the Navy. We have always delivered a superb education in naval warfare and grand strategy, but it was essentially a single course that was eventually given to two different seniority classes. In 2007 we made those courses truly different. The College of Naval Warfare (CNW, or Senior Course) is now an executive-level course on grand strategy, national power, and joint warfighting, while the College of Naval Command and Staff (CNCS, or Intermediate Course) focuses on the operational level of warfare, force planning and Navy planning, and the effects of combat operations on strategy.

All Navy Unrestricted Line Officers who graduate from CNCS now earn the AQD (Additional Qualifying Designator) of "JPN," which identifies them as joint planners. Where the Army's Command and General Staff College (with others) used to be the standard for producing planners, we will hold our CNCS graduates against those of any other school. They have been educated with extensive practical exercises and conceptual foundations, as well as in the national security environment, policy and decision making, force planning, and grand strategy. So today there are over five hundred JPNs ready for duty as Operational Planning Team leaders or participants. In addition, our Maritime Advanced Warfighting School, established in 1998, now produces saltwater versions of "Jedi Knight" planners. By adding to the basic CNCS course a number of real-world projects for fleets and combatant commanders, as well as an intensive additional summer of study, they qualify for the "JP1" designator, which enables them to be ordered to the most significant planning positions.

My belief is that every ambitious naval officer should *want* to be a graduate of Newport. For midcareer officers, if they, by background or aptitude, desire a world-class technical degree, they can have the best of both worlds by seeking the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, California. In an inspired decision made by my predecessors, we have eighteen Naval War College professors in Monterey, who deliver our curriculum (and the joint education requirement that goes with it) to the students at NPS. For the more senior officers, our CNW course offers the finest education anywhere in the world. Joint Military Operations, National Security Affairs, and Strategy and Policy, as well as cyber, ethics, force planning, civil-military affairs, and case studies on past and future conflicts, prepare students from all services, the interagency arena, and nearly fifty nations for positions of leadership.

A hundred years ago, naval officers came to Newport with their fellow *naval officers* to study “all questions relating to war and to statesmanship connected with war, or the prevention of war.” Today they continue to do that, but now with a powerfully diverse team of joint, international, and interagency classmates. They also leave with a master of arts in national security and strategic studies.

So thank you, Naval War College faculty and staff. These changes required a tremendous amount of your hard work, loyalty to our history, and a vision for the future. By your efforts, the increasing requirements for joint military-planning expertise, postgraduate education, and joint professional military education are being met in historic Newport, while what made us great 128 years ago is never forgotten. Well done.

JOHN N. CHRISTENSON

*Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy*  
*President, Naval War College*



*Professor Luke is an associate professor in the Joint Military Operations Department of the Naval War College. Of his twenty-nine years of service in the U.S. Coast Guard before his retirement in 2003 he spent fourteen at sea, seven of them in command, including four years as commanding officer of the sail training ship USCGC Eagle. (Professor Luke holds a merchant mariner's license in the grade of Unlimited Ocean Master, Steam, Motor, or Sail.) Much of his service was in the law-enforcement field, especially counternarcotics and migrant-interdiction operations in the Caribbean. A 1976 graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, he earned a master of arts in national security and strategic studies from the Naval War College and a PhD in humanities from Salve Regina University, in Newport, Rhode Island.*

# NAVAL OPERATIONS IN PEACETIME

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## Not Just “Warfare Lite”

*Ivan T. Luke*

**T**he role of naval power in peacetime today is much different from what it was in the days of Mahan, but unfortunately naval theory has not kept up. Under the prevailing theoretical paradigm, many of today’s peacetime missions are seen as little more than less-violent subsets of similar wartime tasks, and the theory of naval warfare is assumed to be sufficient for understanding these operations in today’s maritime operating environment, despite its increasing complexity. This is not the case. The things the U.S. Navy and other navies of the world are doing in peacetime today are fundamentally distinct from naval warfare, and they are important enough to demand an expanded naval theory that incorporates their unique aspects. Continued reliance on naval warfare theory alone puts the Navy at risk of not doing its best to meet the challenges of, or not capitalizing on the opportunities present in, the maritime domain today.

The greatest difference between modern peacetime missions and naval warfare is the importance of legitimacy and the degree to which legitimacy hinges on the right choice of a regime of authority for action. In wartime there is no choice as to which legal regime to invoke; the law of war always applies.<sup>1</sup> In operations short of armed conflict, it is not that simple. There is a broad and growing array of legal regimes, treaties, and sources of authority that need to be fully appreciated, understood, and leveraged for success. Choosing the right regime of authority for action and fully understanding the implications of that choice can make the difference between strategic success and failure. In peacetime, legitimacy is often a decisive factor, and it can hinge entirely on the authority for action and legal status of naval forces, much more so than in war.

This article argues that naval theorists and practitioners should rethink their approach to naval activities other than war and that they should recognize the



importance of fully understanding the source, nature, and implications of the authorities invoked for action during peacetime. A framework is offered as a step toward a reconceptualization of the continuum of naval operations from peace to war.

### **TODAY'S MARITIME OPERATING ENVIRONMENT IS DIFFERENT**

The global maritime domain and the role of naval power in peacetime have changed significantly in recent decades. The U.S. Navy and many of the other navies of the world are regularly—and quite appropriately—doing things for which they were not designed. Naval forces that were organized, trained, and equipped for combat are finding themselves increasingly engaged in enforcing sanctions, chasing pirates, interdicting narcotics, and performing a host of other noncombat tasks.<sup>2</sup> Naval forces have always been used for non-war-fighting tasks during times of peace, but today the strategic context is different. Today, naval action short of war can have strategic effects like never before, and the operating environment is increasingly complex. The modern context is different from that of the past largely owing to three factors: the impact of globalization on maritime commerce, changes in the threat environment, and the evolution of international maritime law.

The first of these, the impact of globalization on maritime commerce, has made the global web of maritime trade more complex, more interdependent, and more vital to the world's economic well-being than ever before. It has also made the maritime transportation system more vulnerable to disruption. Much of the world's commerce is dependent on the growing role of seaborne transportation. Today the vast majority of international trade moves by sea; maritime transportation is more efficient and economical than ever before. This maritime link is vital to the American economy and to the economies of this nation's friends and allies around the world. By some estimates, almost a third of the American economy depends on efficient, uninterrupted oceanic transportation.<sup>3</sup> Other developed nations are similarly dependent on uninterrupted maritime trade. Protecting this critical peacetime economic link is a vital national interest and a pillar of global stability.

Surprisingly, though, as maritime commerce has grown in importance, merchant shipping has largely lost its national character—neither the United States nor any other single, major trading nation maintains a national merchant fleet even remotely adequate to meet its own shipping needs.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly, merchant ships are registered under flags of convenience, those of nations that neither own nor operate vessels but register them for a fee, allowing owners to avoid high labor and regulatory costs. At present, just three flag-of-convenience states—Panama, Liberia, and the Marshall Islands—account for over a third of the

total world shipping capacity, although none of them is a major trading nation.<sup>5</sup> Technology has played a role as well. The shipping container and the intermodal infrastructure it spawned have led to a system where a number of nations might at the same time have interests in the cargo aboard any given merchant ship.

The significance of these changes for the navies of the world is that supporting national economic interests at sea is now more complicated than ever before,

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*The president of the United States does not need any other authority to direct U.S. naval forces to do whatever is necessary if national security is threatened.*

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and success requires careful consideration of sources of authority and their effects on legitimacy. Protecting commerce has always been an important role for navies, but

today the task is no longer limited to guarding one's own national merchant ships, as it was for the Royal Navy of a previous era. Today, with the goods of many nations carried in ships flying flags of still other nations and the system increasingly interconnected and interdependent, the task requires securing the entire global maritime transportation system. This in turn requires broad international cooperation; naval actions must be seen as legitimate if that cooperation is to occur.

The second element that has changed the maritime environment and increased the importance of authority for action is the evolution of the threat. Transnational crime and terrorism are not new but have morphed in recent years. Today, small groups can create devastating effects with far-reaching consequences. New technologies and the vulnerabilities of the increasingly interconnected maritime transportation system have raised the potential impact of crime and terrorism to a strategic level. Any significant criminal or terrorist event that significantly disrupts the system could have dire consequences for the world economy.<sup>6</sup> Also, ships and vessels themselves can be used as weapons of terror, or to smuggle weapons of mass destruction or terrorists across maritime borders for attacks ashore. Advanced technology and the proliferation of antiaccess capabilities have also increased the threat to naval forces and commercial vessels alike from shore-based terrorists and subnational groups.

The implication for designers of naval operations is that the line between criminal and military threats can become blurred but that it is still very important. There are significant and far-reaching differences between naval actions conducted under the law of war and those done to enforce some element of criminal law. Here again, a full understanding of the ramifications of the underlying authority for naval action is crucial to maintain legitimacy and avoid unintended strategic consequences.

The third and arguably most important factor that makes the peacetime naval operating environment different today is the continuing evolution of

international maritime law. There has been a significant growth in recent years of international law that governs the conduct of mariners at sea. The law is now a factor in ways it never used to be. For centuries, international maritime law was essentially restrictive in nature, aiming to prevent war by keeping opposing naval forces apart and then once war broke out to impose some degree of fairness on the conduct of the belligerents. In contrast, a number of recent treaties and agreements have changed the dominant maritime-law paradigm from one of separation to one of cooperation on matters of common interest. A full discussion of these instruments is beyond the scope of this article, but examples include the 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA), the 2002 International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, and the 2003 Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI).<sup>7</sup>

The implication for naval officers of these developments in international maritime law is that there are now more comprehensive legal structures and authorities with which to deal, and also more opportunities for naval officers of various nations to work together as partners in countering common maritime threats and protecting common interests. A level of international maritime cooperation is possible today that would have been inconceivable a generation ago. A good example of this unprecedented cooperation is NATO Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR.<sup>8</sup> The various counterpiracy operations off Somalia provide more examples, including the European Union's Operation ATALANTA, Combined Task Force 151, and several unaffiliated but cooperative operations by individual nations, including the People's Republic of China. Such cooperation does not occur automatically, however. It takes work and a sound understanding of the fundamentals. Key among those fundamentals is the importance of the source, nature, and implications of the authority for action in any given circumstance.

## NAVAL THEORY IS INADEQUATE FOR PEACETIME MISSIONS

One reason that the fundamental distinctions between naval operations in peacetime and war are often overlooked is that theorists have almost exclusively focused on naval warfare, leaving naval peacetime activities largely unmoored from sound theoretical underpinnings. This is a problem because theory is important for both strategists and practitioners. The late Henry E. Eccles, writing at the Naval War College after his retirement from the U.S. Navy as a rear admiral, held that theory is the key to understanding the effects that one can and cannot achieve through the use of military forces, as well as to distinguishing between the important and the unimportant in structuring a complex problem.<sup>9</sup> The theorist Milan Vego, also of the Naval War College, explains that the purpose of theory is to frame one's thinking by providing a general, conceptual foundation from which to work.<sup>10</sup> All thinking about the design and conduct of military

operations should be grounded in a body of theory that suits the current situation. Clausewitz tells us that the essential nature of conflict does not change over time but that the details, forms, and languages do change with new technologies and new social-political structures.<sup>11</sup> The naval peacetime operating environment has changed enough that naval theory needs to catch up and expand to include the fundamentals and tenets that distinguish peacetime naval activities from warfare.

In one sense it is understandable that contemporary naval theory is focused on warfare; after all, it is firmly rooted in the works of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan and Sir Julian Corbett. Mahanian thinking drove naval operations during both world wars and the Cold War, and to a large degree it still dominates the design, strategy, and doctrine of the U.S. Navy. Mahan's central tenet is that a navy's true purpose is command of the sea (although his work is actually much more nuanced than this might suggest). Mahan writes that the best way to achieve command of the sea is to focus on the enemy fleet, asserting that "the proper main objective of the navy is the enemy's navy."<sup>12</sup> Corbett, also widely influential in naval thinking, is actually more in agreement with Mahan than he is often given credit for, primarily diverging from Mahan on the importance of naval power for supporting forces ashore.

Mahan's command of the sea and Corbett's support of forces ashore live on today as the concepts of sea control and power projection—ideas that largely drive U.S. naval acquisition and naval strategy.<sup>13</sup> Of the two, sea control more often leads to confusion about the theoretical distinctiveness of naval activities in peacetime. Properly understood, sea control is a concept that is meaningful only in the context of a state of hostilities and as such intrinsically implies the law of war as the underpinning legal regime. Naval thinkers and practitioners often miss this point. Sea control is the creation of conditions such that the enemy is unable to interfere significantly with the accomplishment of one's military objectives.<sup>14</sup> The key word here is "enemy." There are threats in peacetime but enemies only during war. The objective of sea control is freedom of action for one's own military forces and supporting units in the context of an opposing belligerent. The methods of obtaining or disputing sea control are enemy focused, aiming at the destruction or neutralization of the enemy force.<sup>15</sup>

The warfare concept of sea control is often confused with the peacetime concept of freedom of navigation, but the objectives, methods, and sources of authority for the two are fundamentally incompatible. The objective during peacetime is freedom of *navigation*, defined as unhindered access for all legitimate users of the sea as guaranteed by the law of the sea.<sup>16</sup> In wartime the objective is freedom of *action* for friendly forces, achieved in accordance with the law of war; all others can fend for themselves (in theory, at least). One can set the conditions for sea

control during peacetime by forward presence, intelligence gathering, or partnership building, but sea control itself can be gained or disputed only in times of hostilities. Attempting to apply this warfare concept to peacetime activities is a recipe for muddled thinking and not the best way to deal with today's challenges and opportunities. Unfortunately, signs of the attempt can be seen in current American strategies and doctrine.

Current U.S. naval thinking is captured in "A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower" and subsequent supporting works, *Naval Operations Concept*

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*The . . . line between criminal and military threats can become blurred but it is still very important.*

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2010 (known as NOC 10) and *Naval Warfare* (NDP 1). At its issuance, observers applauded the 2007 cooperative strategy as a move toward a "postmod-

ern" theory of sea power, because it elevated constabulary roles and naval soft power to the status of core capabilities.<sup>17</sup> Upon closer examination, however, "Cooperative Strategy" and its supporting documents fall short of their true potential by failing to recognize fully the important theoretical distinction between peacetime and hostilities. For example, NOC 10 inappropriately includes peacetime roles in a wartime concept by saying that naval forces will "conduct sea control operations to *enforce freedom of navigation, sustain unhindered global maritime commerce, prevent or limit the spread of conflict, and prevail in war.*"<sup>18</sup> This same theoretical disconnect is reflected in NDP 1: "Sea control is the essence of seapower and is a necessary ingredient in the successful accomplishment of all naval missions."<sup>19</sup> "All" naval missions today is a set that includes many conducted outside of a state of armed conflict, the only context in which sea control is meaningful.

It could be argued that by conflating elements of peacetime and wartime concepts the authors of all three papers were intentionally attempting to broaden the concept of sea control to encompass peacetime activities, but this does not seem likely. The documents' glossaries define sea control conventionally as a wartime concept and the discussions only imply its application to peacetime activities.<sup>20</sup> This suggests that the authors simply failed to appreciate fully the underlying theoretical distinctions. In any case, none of the documents address international maritime law or regimes of authority in any substantive way, certainly not as a fundamental constraint on and enabler of operations in peacetime, or as a critical factor for ensuring legitimacy. Rather than intentionally broadening the concept of sea control, it is more likely that the authors were relying on traditional naval warfare theory alone.

It is reasonable, of course, to question whether such theoretical fine points really matter. Naval culture has always been action oriented, and naval officers

pride themselves not on theorizing but on flexibility and mission accomplishment. Why should it matter what theory we use, as long as we get the job done? It absolutely does matter. Legitimacy is a principle of joint operations, vital for success in missions conducted to secure the global commons.<sup>21</sup> Legitimacy for naval operations in peacetime hinges on whether those operations are designed and conducted with a full appreciation of the fundamentals, especially the implications of the source and nature of their authorities for action.

Legitimacy aside for the moment, the choice of a legal regime for a naval action in peacetime can have strategic consequences. Take, for example, counterpiracy operations off the Horn of Africa. In recent years these have been collectively a shining example of tactical success and international cooperation, but long-term strategic effectiveness has proved elusive. Some have suggested escalating the fight by mounting a military campaign against the pirates. Others believe we should just arrest and prosecute them. At the theoretical level, this question comes down to whether pirates should be seen as military problems—essentially treating them as enemies to be engaged—or as common criminals to be arrested and prosecuted. From the perspective of authority for action, this is a question whether to invoke international criminal law or assert the right of national self-defense. The strategic implications of the two different approaches could be profound. One approach could open a state of international hostilities, while the other would not—a national strategic choice of significant gravity, not to be made lightly. This is exactly the kind of question that calls for a solid understanding of the underlying fundamentals and an appreciation of the factors that distinguish naval activities in peacetime from those in war.

## PEACETIME NAVAL OPERATIONS THEORY

There is a long tradition of and a robust body of literature on the theory of naval warfare, but not until very recently has any serious intellectual effort been applied to peacetime naval operations. A proper military theory should involve a comprehensive analysis of the subject, including its patterns and inner structure and the key relationships between the various components and elements.<sup>22</sup> No such comprehensive analysis yet exists for peacetime naval activities in the modern context, although some work has been done in this direction.

One such effort is British scholar James Cable's seminal study *Gunboat Diplomacy 1919–1991*. Cable analyzes the use of limited naval force in support of foreign policy through most of the twentieth century, but he does it from a Cold War perspective; constabulary roles and the complexities of the modern operating environment are scarcely addressed.<sup>23</sup> Milan Vego, a leading contributor to the contemporary discourse on military and naval theory, also addresses naval peacetime activities, but only as part of the spectrum of conflict at sea. He does

not develop the theory underpinning peacetime operations in any degree of detail.<sup>24</sup> British theorist Geoffrey Till writes in more depth about the evolving character of peacetime naval activities, although like Vego, he treats peacetime missions in a largely descriptive way, focusing mainly on navies' methods and investment strategies and less on the underlying principles or tenets. Till breaks down peacetime operations into two categories, activities for maintaining good order at sea and activities for maintaining a global maritime consensus.<sup>25</sup> Till does an excellent job of describing the strategic importance and complexity of peacetime operations and makes it clear that peacetime naval activities should be seen as theoretically distinct from naval warfare. He does not develop that underlying theory in any depth, however.

Perhaps Till's greatest contribution to the discourse is his caution against applying naval warfare concepts too broadly to peacetime activities, arguing that doing so "could all too easily make them banal, ambiguous and unlikely to offer the kind of guidance for force and campaign planners that is the main justification for all the intellectual effort that produces them in the first place."<sup>26</sup> Till stresses the need to think anew about the fundamentals of sea power in the modern context rather than continuing to try to force-fit everything into a naval warfare paradigm. Sailors, Till warns, will have to "do some hard thinking about how they cope and the extent to which they need to reconsider some long-standing assumptions."<sup>27</sup>

### A SUGGESTED FRAMEWORK

Till's call for hard thinking about the modern peacetime role of navies should ideally lead to a comprehensive theory of naval operations that addresses the continuum from peace to war, based on a thorough analysis of the key principles, tenets, and important interrelationships. That is a tall order and will take time, but a good starting point would be to achieve consensus on a framework for conceptualizing the various peacetime activities based on their most important factors. Current U.S. thinking simplistically divides peacetime missions into the categories of "maritime security operations" and "humanitarian assistance," essentially lexical conveniences that ignore the most important commonalities and differences. Till's categories are similarly descriptive rather than analytical in nature. A better approach is to array naval activities conceptually, according to the source and nature of the authority for action—which has, of all the underlying principles, the greatest potential strategic effect in peacetime. The figure is an outline of such a framework. It lays out the continuum of naval activities from peace to war, from the most restrictive regimes to the most permissive.

One important thing to understand about this suggested framework is that the categories are not mutually exclusive. Specific naval activities can be, and often



NAVAL ACTIVITIES BY SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

	Regime of Authority for Action					National Defense	
	Consent	Law of the Sea	Domestic Criminal Law	International or Foreign Criminal Law	UN Mandate	Prehostilities	Hostilities
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FHA/DR</li><li>• Security cooperation</li><li>• Port visits</li><li>• Mil–mil</li><li>• Permissive NEO</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FON ops</li><li>• Survey</li><li>• Salvage</li><li>• High-seas maneuvers, training</li><li>• Intel collection</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Border control</li><li>• Counterdrug</li><li>• Migration</li><li>• Port security</li><li>• Homeland security</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Counterpiracy</li><li>• Human trafficking interdiction</li><li>• Counterterror</li><li>• WMD proliferation interdiction</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sanctions</li><li>• Embargoes</li><li>• Other operations authorized by UNSC resolutions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Counter-proliferation</li><li>• Deterrence</li><li>• Coercive diplomacy</li><li>• Enhanced interdiction (EMIO)</li><li>• Nonpermissive NEO</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strikes</li><li>• Raids</li><li>• COIN</li><li>• War</li></ul>
Sovereignty Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Entirely contingent on goodwill of host nation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Right of all nations</li><li>• Subject to due regard for others’ rights</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must have jurisdiction</li><li>• End game: prosecution in U.S. court</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Often multinational</li><li>• End game: prosecution, often in foreign court</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Legitimized under UN Charter</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inherent right of nations—always an option</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inherent right of nations</li><li>• Individual or collective</li></ul>
State of Armed Conflict?	No state of armed conflict				Depends on mandate	Actions constitute hostile act, risk opening state of armed conflict	State of armed conflict exists
Use of Force/ROE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-defense</li><li>• Defense of others</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minimum force to compel compliance</li><li>• ROE conduct based; no forces declared hostile</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Per UNSCR</li><li>• Nations may interpret differently</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May be treated as a belligerent</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Governed by law of armed conflict</li><li>• ROE status based; forces may be declared hostile</li></ul>



are, conducted under different authorities, depending on the circumstances, the objectives, and choices made. In fact, one of the most important decisions to be made when developing concepts for peacetime naval action is the choice of which regime of authority to invoke in light of the circumstances and desired objective. There are always choices. For example, sovereign nations always have the right of national self-defense. The president of the United States does not *need* any other authority to direct U.S. naval forces to do whatever is necessary if national security is threatened. There are consequences to such a choice, of course, one of which could be starting a war. Understanding those consequences and making the right choices are where a sound theoretical foundation is important.

**Consent.** Turning to the framework in the figure, the most restrictive regime of authority for naval activities is the consent of a foreign government. Examples of missions normally conducted with a foreign government's consent include humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, security cooperation, port visits, and military-to-military professional exchanges. The underlying commonality of these activities is that they are entirely contingent on the goodwill and permission of the host nation. The implications are that these activities must be non-threatening and conducted with full regard for the sovereignty concerns of the host government, which can significantly impact the design of operations and limit their scope. A good example of this principle in action was the Indonesian government's placing severe restrictions on American service members carrying arms or remaining ashore overnight during the post-tsunami relief operations of 2005.<sup>28</sup> There is normally no authority for the use of force during consensual operations, beyond the inherent right of self-defense.

**Law of the Sea.** The next category up the spectrum includes activities conducted under the rights guaranteed to all nations by the law of the sea.<sup>29</sup> Operations regularly conducted under this authority include high-seas naval exercises, freedom-of-navigation missions, transit passage through international straits, and most hydrographic survey, intelligence collection, and salvage missions in international waters. The fundamental principle in this category is that the law of the sea guarantees all nations equal rights to use the sea for legitimate purposes, subject only to "due regard" for the corresponding rights of others.<sup>30</sup>

Coastal nations exercise some control over adjacent waters, but, in general, freedom of navigation allows ships to go peacefully anywhere, anytime, as long as they do not do things injurious to other nations.<sup>31</sup> This broad freedom applies to warships as well. Naval activities conducted under this authority do not require the consent (or even the awareness) of foreign governments, but there are limitations and restrictions in the law of the sea that need to be understood. For example, the law requires submarines transiting foreign territorial seas under

the regime of innocent passage to remain on the surface.<sup>32</sup> In reality, submarines presumably do transit some foreign waters submerged. Choosing to do so would be a choice to invoke some authority other than the law of the sea, most likely the inherent right of national self-defense. There are potential consequences to such a choice, of course. Actions taken under the law of the sea are normally nonprovocative, whereas invoking national self-defense certainly can be provocative, as discussed below. The key point here is that international maritime law can be either an enabling or a constraining factor, depending on how it is factored into the plan, and choices made about which authority to invoke have consequences.

**Domestic Law.** The next column in the figure lists activities conducted under the authority of domestic law. This is a relatively new area for the modern U.S. Navy, which before the fall of the Soviet Union rarely got involved in missions traditionally seen as the purview of the U.S. Coast Guard. Domestic law enforcement missions are more common for the Navy today and include various homeland security and border protection tasks, drug and migrant interdiction, and fisheries enforcement. The Coast Guard is the lead U.S. service for maritime law enforcement, but Navy assets regularly participate. The Posse Comitatus Act, the law that restricts the U.S. Army from direct participation in domestic law enforcement, does not apply to the Navy, but by policy, direct law-enforcement activities such as arrest or seizure are normally conducted by Coast Guard detachments, with Navy support.<sup>33</sup>

The fundamental principle here is that the intended outcome of these operations is prosecution in an American court. This goal drives the design of these operations, because federal jurisdiction must apply and evidentiary rules must be accommodated. This point has sometimes led to confusion about the Navy's role in law enforcement. It is important to realize that the nuances of federal legal jurisdiction do not tie the president's hands if national security is at stake; the president can direct the Navy to defeat any threat at any time, on the basis of the right of national self-defense. That decision potentially involves far-reaching consequences, however, and the much less escalatory option of acting under domestic law is often a wiser choice if circumstances permit. Again, a thorough understanding of the fundamentals is very important.

**International or Foreign Criminal Law.** A separate category of law-enforcement-related activities are those conducted under the authority of some international or foreign criminal law. Authority can come from one of the various international treaties (for example, SUA) or from customary international law (e.g., piracy is a universal crime). Sometimes authority is granted by a foreign government to take action on its behalf.<sup>34</sup> For example, counternarcotics operations in the Caribbean often involve naval units interdicting Colombian traffickers on behalf of the

Colombian government under a bilateral agreement between the two governments. Other operations in this category might include counterpiracy operations, counterproliferation operations under the PSI, and some counterterrorism operations.<sup>35</sup> These activities are often, but not always, multinational. An underlying principle of these activities is that the constraints and authorities vary widely from case to case and must be carefully considered to avoid unintended consequences. There is also a strong diplomatic element in many of these operations, and diplomatic objectives often drive the choices made.

***United Nations Mandate.*** The next category includes naval operations conducted pursuant to United Nations authority, most often in the form of a UN Security Council resolution. Common activities in this category include naval embargoes and the naval enforcement of sanctions, often involving interdiction and boarding of foreign-flag vessels at sea (in American usage, “maritime interception operations,” or MIO). Each Security Council resolution is different, and the rules of engagement, as well as the provisions for seizure, detention, and disposition of persons, vessels, and cargoes, differ from case to case. UN-authorized operations can straddle the line between peace and war; they can involve the use of combat power, ranging from strikes or raids to support of full-scale interventions ashore. Operation ODYSSEY DAWN, the 2011 imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya, was such a case. These activities can fall under either the policing power of article 42 or collective self-defense, article 51.<sup>36</sup> These missions are invariably multinational, and individual nations often interpret the specifics of the UN mandate differently. It is vital that a full understanding of the underlying authority be factored into the design of these operations.

***National Self-Defense.*** The two right-hand columns in the framework address naval operations conducted under the right of national self-defense—in other words, the regime of naval warfare. In a sense, naval national self-defense has two subcategories: naval warfare and prehostilities, naval actions that risk or threaten to open a state of armed conflict. National self-defense is not limited to wartime but can be invoked in peacetime as well, as discussed below. The strategic ramifications of invoking national self-defense in peacetime are significant and should be fully understood and considered. Nonetheless, national-self-defense authority is always in the back pocket, so to speak, ready for use should less provocative regimes of authority fail to meet the objective.

An example of the use of national self-defense as an authority during peacetime would be using force to stop a foreign merchant vessel on the high seas because it is carrying persons or cargoes that represent a national-security threat. Some less provocative authority, such as international or domestic criminal law, would almost invariably be a better option, but if those are not viable for one

reason or another, the president's inherent authority under the Constitution to use naval force as necessary to defend the nation is sufficient. Of course such use of force against a foreign vessel would bring consequences. It would threaten legitimacy for certain and potentially lead to international armed conflict. The point is that such a choice should not be made lightly or without a full understanding of the ramifications of invoking the various sources of authority.

Another case where national self-defense would be invoked in peacetime would be a noncombatant evacuation under nonpermissive conditions. If the host nation denied permission for entry, for example, naval forces could enter its territory to effect the evacuation of embassy personnel under the right of national self-defense alone. Again, the strategic ramifications of such action could be significant. It could start an armed conflict.

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*Choosing the right regime of authority for action and fully understanding the implications of that choice can make the difference between strategic success and failure.*

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Coercive naval diplomacy, strategic deterrence, and ballistic missile defense could also be conducted under a national-self-defense regime during peacetime. The choice

to invoke the right of national self-defense (instead of the law of the sea) for missions such as these would likely be based on the geopolitical circumstances, the objective of the operation (coercion, deterrence), and the probability of attempted interference. The potentially significant consequences of using national self-defense as the authority for peacetime operations outside of other, accepted peacetime legal regimes need to be carefully weighed.

The key principle of using national self-defense as an authority in peacetime is that actions might well open a state of armed conflict or earn belligerent status for parties to an ongoing conflict. Activities conducted under national self-defense can be seen as hostile acts by other governments. That is why the decision to invoke national self-defense is made at the national strategic level. Use of national self-defense during peacetime is intrinsically a national strategic decision with far-reaching consequences, and political factors will almost always trump purely military considerations.

It is important to reiterate once more that many missions can be conducted under one regime of authority or another, depending on a number of factors, and the choice of which authority to invoke is of key importance and can have strategic consequences. Also, while important, the distinctions between these conceptual categories are not always "bright lines," a point that reemphasizes the importance of a full understanding. Counterterrorism operations in particular demonstrate this. International law regarding terrorism is evolving as the community of nations comes to grips with the new realities. Specifically, the line

between criminal law and the law of armed conflict (national self-defense) is becoming blurred regarding international terrorism. Formerly perceived as a distinctly criminal activity, international terrorism is now increasingly seen to straddle the seam between criminal law and national defense. Writing in this journal, Commander James Kraska, a U.S. Navy judge advocate officer specializing in international law, equates the shift to a reconfiguration of the very nature of sea power.<sup>37</sup> The point to be taken is that international law today can be leveraged—not as a constraint but as an important force multiplier—only if the law is fully understood as a fundamental principle and factored into the design and conceptualization of naval operations.<sup>38</sup> Operations conceived or conducted without a full appreciation of the underlying principles can have unfavorable strategic consequences.

Naval operations in the modern globalized maritime domain are strategically important and increasingly complex. Naval strategists and practitioners will need to be smart about how they approach peacetime missions, yet existing naval theory fails to support the necessary full understanding. This is not to imply that conventional naval warfare theory has diminished in importance; it has not. The Navy must always be ready to prevail in combat, should it come to that, but the role of naval power in peacetime has grown in both strategic importance and complexity, and naval theory needs to catch up. Naval theory needs to expand and evolve to support a thorough understanding of the full range of contemporary activities. The framework offered here for conceptualizing the continuum of naval activities according to the authority for action is simply a start. There are other important principles of peacetime operations, including the necessity of employing other nonmilitary elements of national power in concert with naval activities and the complexities of multinational peacetime operations. These represent excellent topics for further study in this area. A more comprehensive theoretical understanding of contemporary peacetime operations will be crucial if navies are to exploit the opportunities and mitigate the risks associated with this new maritime environment.

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#### NOTES

1. "Wartime" in this context means hostilities of any type, scale, or duration. It is U.S. policy to adhere to the law of war (also called the law of armed conflict) during all armed conflicts, no matter how those conflicts are characterized. See U.S. Defense Dept., *Law of War Program*, Department of Defense Directive 2311.01E

(Washington, D.C.: 9 May 2006), p. 2. See also U.S. Navy Dept., *The Commander's Handbook on the Law of Naval Operations*, Naval Warfare Publication 1-14M (Washington, D.C.: July 2007) [hereafter NWP 1-14M], pp. 6-1, 6-2.

2. For a more extensive list of contemporary nonwarfare missions, see Milan Vego, "On Naval Power," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 50 (3rd Quarter 2008), pp. 8–17.
3. James J. Carafano and Martin E. Anderson, *Trade Security at Sea: Setting National Priorities for Safeguarding America's Economic Lifeline* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 2006), p. 1.
4. "World Merchant Fleet by Flag of Registry and Type, Year-End 2009," *U.S. Maritime Administration*, [www.marad.dot.gov/](http://www.marad.dot.gov/).
5. *Ibid.*
6. Michael D. Greenberg et al., *Maritime Terrorism, Risk and Liability* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2006), pp. 15–16.
7. James Kraska, "Grasping 'the Influence of Law on Sea Power,'" *Naval War College Review* 62, no. 3 (Summer 2009), pp. 122–30.
8. Stood up in the wake of 9/11, this ongoing multinational naval effort has been conducting counterterrorism operations in the Mediterranean Sea with the participation of most NATO nations, plus Russia, Israel, and other non-NATO states.
9. Henry E. Eccles, *Military Concepts and Philosophy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1965), p. 22.
10. Milan Vego, "On Military Theory," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 62 (3rd Quarter 2011), pp. 60–61.
11. Antulio J. Echevarria II, "War, Politics, and RMA: The Legacy of Clausewitz," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 10 (Winter 1995–96), p. 78.
12. Alfred T. Mahan, *Naval Strategy: Compared and Contrasted with the Principles and Practice of Military Operations on Land* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1911), p. 199.
13. For a discussion of the evolution of the concept of command of the sea into the modern notion of sea control, see Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 151–53, and Robert C. Rubel, "Command of the Sea: An Old Concept Resurfaces in a New Form," *Naval War College Review* 65, no. 4 (Autumn 2012), pp. 21–33.
14. Milan Vego, *Operational Warfare at Sea* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 25. Definitions in U.S. Navy and NATO documents are consistent.
15. Till, *Seapower*, p. 157.
16. NWP 1-14M, p. 2-14.
17. Geoffrey Till, "A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower": A View from Outside," *Naval War College Review* 61, no. 2 (Spring 2008), p. 28.
18. U.S. Navy Dept., *Naval Operations Concept 2010: Implementing the Maritime Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: n.d. [2010]) [hereafter NOC 10], p. 52, available at [www.navy.mil/maritime/noc/NOC2010.pdf](http://www.navy.mil/maritime/noc/NOC2010.pdf) [emphasis added].
19. U.S. Navy Dept., *Naval Warfare*, Naval Doctrine Publication 1 (Washington, D.C.: March 2010) [hereafter NDP 1], p. 27.
20. "Sea control operations" are defined in the glossaries of both NOC 10 and NDP 1 as "the employment of naval forces, supported by land and air forces as appropriate, in order to achieve military objectives in vital sea areas. Such operations include destruction of enemy naval forces, suppression of enemy sea commerce, protection of vital sea lanes, and establishment of military superiority in areas of naval operations."
21. U.S. Defense Dept., *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Staff, 11 August 2011), p. A-4.
22. Vego, "On Military Theory," p. 60.
23. James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy 1919–1991*, 3rd ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1994).
24. Vego, "On Naval Power," p. 10. See also his *Operational Warfare at Sea*, pp. 38–41.
25. Till, *Seapower*, p. 7.
26. Geoffrey Till, "Navies and the New World Order," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 131, no. 3 (March 2005), p. 63.
27. Till, *Seapower*, p. 81.
28. Kevin M. Charkowske, "Practical Impacts and Effectiveness of Cultural Intelligence," *Marine Corps Gazette* (October 2005), p. 20.
29. The law of the sea is codified in treaty under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, commonly referred to as UNCLOS. As of this writing, the United States is not a party to the convention but

recognizes the majority of UNCLOS as customary and accepted international law. See NWP 1-14M, p. 1-1.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 2-10.

31. *Ibid.*, chap. 1.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 2-5.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 3-8. There is a good deal of misunderstanding about the respective boarding authorities and capabilities of the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard. Both have the capability to interdict and board vessels at sea. The difference is that the Coast Guard has domestic statutory law-enforcement authority, whereas the Navy does not. This authority usually matters only if the desired outcome is prosecution

in the U.S. courts. Navy teams routinely conduct boardings in support of UN sanctions (MIO) and U.S. national self-defense (expanded maritime intercept operations).

34. James Kraska, "Broken Taillight at Sea: The Peacetime International Law of Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure," *Ocean and Coastal Law Journal* 16, no. 1 (2010), pp. 1-46.

35. NWP 1-14M, chap. 3.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-1, 4-2.

37. Kraska, "Grasping 'the Influence of Law on Sea Power,'" p. 114.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 112.





# THE SENKAKU/DIAOYU ISLAND CONTROVERSY

## A Crisis Postponed

Paul J. Smith

On 11 September 2012, the Japanese government signed a contract worth 2.05 billion yen (\$26.1 million) with Kunioki Kurihara, a private businessman, to purchase three of the five main islands that constitute the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island group, an action that effectively nationalized the islands.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, the government purchase was designed to head off more ambitious moves by Tokyo's governor (東京都知事), Shintaro Ishihara, to purchase the islands with cash collected in a national fund-raising campaign. Ishihara, known for his nationalistic views, had told an American audience in April 2012 that the

*Dr. Smith joined the Naval War College's National Security Affairs Department in July 2006 and teaches the Security Strategies course. Previously he had been an associate/assistant professor with the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, in Hawaii. Dr. Smith earned JD and PhD degrees from the University of Hawaii, Manoa; he has lived and studied in the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, as well as the United Kingdom, and is conversant in Mandarin Chinese. He has published numerous articles and contributed chapters in edited collections on Chinese foreign policy and transnational security issues. His edited books include Human Smuggling: Chinese Migrant Trafficking and the Challenge to America's Immigration Tradition (1997) and Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia: Transnational Challenges to States and Regional Stability (2004). He is author of The Terrorism Ahead: Confronting Transnational Violence in the 21st Century (2007).*

“Senkaku Islets will be purchased by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government . . . [and] we will do whatever it takes to protect our own land.”<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, the Chinese government viewed Japan's island-purchasing activities, whatever their motivations or sources, as severe provocations that required a firm and immediate response.

In subsequent weeks, anti-Japan protests erupted throughout China, causing a major strain in the two countries' relationship. During one two-week period in September, thousands of Chinese were engaged in marches and demonstrations in over eighty-five cities. Of greatest concern to both the Japanese and Chinese governments during the outburst was violence committed against Japanese persons and property. Japan's prime minister,



Yoshihiko Noda, told news reporters that the controversy and associated protests were “impacting the safety of our citizens and causing damage to the property of Japanese businesses.”<sup>3</sup>

The demonstrations and associated violence also had major economic consequences. Japanese companies operating in China reported significant losses due to the unrest. Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways, the country’s two largest carriers, reported that over fifty-five thousand seat reservations had been canceled during the three months through November.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Japanese automobile manufacturers saw their sales in China plummet by roughly 40 percent.<sup>5</sup> By early October 2012 the economic impact of the protests had become so widespread that the chief of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, was warning that they had the potential to negatively influence the global economy. She described China and Japan as “key economic drivers” that needed to be “fully engaged,” in light of the precarious state of the international economy.<sup>6</sup>

The 2012 crisis came just two years after a similar one that flared up following the collision of a Chinese fishing boat with two Japan coast guard vessels. In that episode, relations between the two countries hit a new low following Japan’s decision to arrest and detain the Chinese boat’s captain. When China demanded compensation over the episode and an apology from Japan, Prime Minister Naoto Kan reacted defiantly. “Senkaku is an integral part of Japanese territory,” he told reporters. “I have no intention of accepting [the demand] at all.”<sup>7</sup> China canceled a number of visits that had been planned by Japanese groups (including a major planned visit by Japanese students to the World Expo, being held in Shanghai that year). Overall, at least twenty cultural, political, or other exchange programs were affected by the dispute.<sup>8</sup> China made its anger known also by banning rare-earth mineral exports to Japan, materials that were key to several Japanese industries (including hybrid-automobile manufacturers), although Chinese leaders later claimed that these measures were taken to “protect the environment.”<sup>9</sup>

In fact, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island issue has been a persistent and caustic irritant in relations between Japan and the People’s Republic of China, particularly since the early 1970s, when “administrative rights” over the islands were transferred from the United States to Japan (as part of the larger “reversion” treaty of 1971 for the return of Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands). More recently, the islands have been assuming greater significance as Japan and the People’s Republic of China undergo a gradual yet inexorable power shift, in which China’s political and military ascendancy is juxtaposed with Japan’s relative and protracted economic and demographic decline.

Moreover, the islands’ geographic location in the East China Sea, which is increasingly a contested space between Tokyo and Beijing, places the controversy in a larger and more dangerous strategic context. Added to this is the role of

the United States, the third major actor in an increasingly complex geopolitical puzzle. Washington's standing as the defender of Japan's administrative rights over the islands—notwithstanding U.S. declarations of neutrality on the question of sovereignty—places the dispute at the heart of Sino-American competition, which in turn has been exacerbated by recent military strengthening, rebalancing, and posturing on both sides. Overall, a confluence of economic, military, and geopolitical factors suggests that the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue will increasingly define and shape the geopolitical environment in East Asia—to include the possibility of major-power war—for the foreseeable future.

## POST-WORLD WAR II AND THE SENKAKU/DIAOYU ISLANDS

The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands comprise approximately eight small islets, with a total land area of approximately seven square kilometers, located approximately 170 kilometers from both Taiwan and Japan's Ishigaki Island in the East China Sea. Although administered by Japan, the Senkakus/Diaoyus are at the center of a sovereignty dispute involving Japan, China, and Taiwan, with all three claimants relying on an array of historical and legal arguments to bolster and legitimize their respective positions.<sup>10</sup> In 1895 Japan annexed the islands, having determined ten years earlier that they were *terra nullius* ("empty land," belonging to no person or state).<sup>11</sup> Japan now asserts that its annexation of the islands was not opposed by the Chinese government (then controlled by the Qing dynasty), while China argues that Japan's annexation was invalid given that the islands were already Chinese sovereign territory and thus could not be "discovered" or annexed.<sup>12</sup>

After World War II, the United States assumed administrative responsibilities in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands as part of its larger governing responsibilities over the Ryukyu Island chain. On 8 September 1951 the United States, Japan, and other countries signed the Treaty of Peace with Japan (San Francisco Peace Treaty), of which the third article made the United States the "sole administering authority" over the Nansei Shoto south of twenty-nine degrees north latitude, which included the Ryukyu and Daito Islands. Under article 3 the United States was granted "the right to exercise all and any powers of administration, legislation and jurisdiction over the territory and inhabitants of these islands, including their territorial waters."<sup>13</sup>

As the United States administered the Ryukyu Islands (including the Senkakus/Diaoyus), it was careful to characterize its control and governance as temporary in nature; Japan was granted "residual sovereignty" over the Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa. A State Department memorandum on the Ryukyus produced in 1965 characterized the arrangement as follows: "We recognize that Japan maintains residual sovereignty over the [Ryukyu] islands, and have agreed

to return them to full Japanese control as soon as Free World security interests permit.”<sup>14</sup> The “residual sovereignty” formula was affirmed on several occasions, such as in June 1957, during a meeting between President Dwight Eisenhower and Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, and later in June 1961, during a meeting between President John F. Kennedy and Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda. Indeed, Kennedy, as part of an executive order regarding administration of the islands, declared the Ryukyus “to be a part of the Japanese homeland.”<sup>15</sup>

The policy rationale for residual sovereignty rested on at least three major considerations. First, the United States sought to cultivate Japan as a key Cold War ally in the Asia-Pacific, particularly as Japan’s southern islands were viewed as part of an essential “U.S. defense perimeter” containing “important defense points.”<sup>16</sup> A White House memorandum in 1967 paraphrased a statement of Secretary of State Dean Rusk to the effect that “it was in our vital interest to keep Japan a willing partner in the free world and to get [it] to carry the larger share of the common load.”<sup>17</sup>

Second, the residual-sovereignty formula—particularly the underlying assumption that it was a precursor to ultimate reversion—offered the Japanese government an incentive to allow the United States maximum flexibility regarding the use of American bases on Okinawa. A 1966 State Department memorandum noted, “While our legal rights in the Ryukyus are clear, effective use of our bases would be impossible without Japanese and Ryukyuan cooperation.”<sup>18</sup> For American defense planners during the Cold War, Okinawa and its “extensive and highly developed complex of military bases” were critical to U.S. efforts to provide security to Japan and all other allies in the Pacific.<sup>19</sup>

Third, residual sovereignty was in part meant to assuage anti-American sentiment in both Okinawa and mainland Japan during a period (especially the 1960s) of rising self-confidence and nationalism. A State Department study observed that as public demands for a more assertive Japanese foreign policy grew, “continued U.S. occupation of Japanese territory and unilateral control of 900,000 Japanese nationals [could] only be seen by the Japanese people as incongruous and demeaning.”<sup>20</sup>

The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, as a component of the Ryukyu Island group, were included in this Japanese residual-sovereignty formula, particularly as there was little or no indication that, prior to the late 1960s, the United States sought to disaggregate the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and their legal status from that of the overall Ryukyu group. In fact, a U.S. military “islands monolith” policy ensured that the Senkakus had the same status as that of all the other Ryukyu Islands.<sup>21</sup> In other words, as one scholar has explained, “the preferences of the U.S. military, then, resulted in the linkage of the Diaoyu [Senkaku] Islands with the Ryukyu Islands and prevented their disassociation from the Ryukyus.”<sup>22</sup>

Further evidence of this policy can be found in a 1965 telegram sent by the U.S. embassy in Tokyo to State Department headquarters in Washington, D.C. The telegram relayed Japanese government requests that the United States increase patrols around the Senkakus to prevent “uncontested squatting by Taiwanese” that could lead the Taiwanese (Republic of China) government to argue that “some sort of prescriptive rights [had] been acquired.”<sup>23</sup> The telegram’s drafters further argued that Washington should not conceal from Taipei Japan’s interest in “preserving from adverse claims” territory (implying the Senkaku Islands) over which the United States recognized Japan’s residual sovereignty.<sup>24</sup> Thus, prevailing evidence suggests that, until about three years prior to Okinawa’s reversion in 1972, the U.S. government’s recognition of Japan’s residual sovereignty applied to every component of the Ryukyu Islands, including the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.

### OKINAWA REVERSION AND RISING CHINESE INTEREST

Two major developments in the late 1960s stimulated interest in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island issue on the part of both the Republic of China (ROC) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The first was a 1968 energy survey of the East China Sea conducted by the Committee for the Coordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas, under the authority of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. The committee reported that the East China Sea might contain “substantial energy deposits,” a finding that subsequently invigorated latent ROC and PRC claims to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.<sup>25</sup>

The second development was the negotiation under way between the United States and Japan over the formal reversion of the Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa. In the middle and late 1960s a growing sense of urgency pervaded the U.S.-Japan relationship; officials from both countries were convinced that the return of the Ryukyu Islands to Japan should be completed as soon as feasible. One U.S. State Department official in late 1968 characterized the momentum for Okinawa’s reversion as having “reached the point of no return.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, President Richard Nixon viewed reversion as critical to maintenance of the U.S.-Japan security alliance, which he considered the “linchpin for peace in the Pacific.”<sup>27</sup>

In November 1969, Nixon and Prime Minister Eisaku Sato met in Washington, D.C., to establish the terms of reversion. On 21 November 1969 the two issued a joint statement reporting that they had “agreed that the two governments [U.S. and Japanese] would immediately enter into consultations regarding specific arrangements for accomplishing the early reversion of Okinawa without detriment to the security of the Far East including Japan.”<sup>28</sup> The two sides declared that reversion would occur in 1972.

However, the announcement of Okinawa's imminent reversion had a collateral effect of stimulating Chinese and, particularly, Taiwanese interest in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. On 16 September 1970 the ROC ambassador to the United States, Chow Shu-kai, presented a four-page aide-mémoire to his American counterpart outlining his government's objections to Japanese sovereignty over the Senkakus. Three months later the PRC, in a statement from the Xinhua news agency, made a similar claim, asserting that the islands belonged to Taiwan—which, in turn, naturally belonged to the People's Republic of China.<sup>29</sup>

In 1971 the Taiwan government faced significant pressure from Chinese communities overseas, particularly in the United States, whose support Taipei counted on in its cultivation and maintenance of relations with Washington. In January 1971, over a thousand Chinese students from several American East Coast cities staged a protest in front of the United Nations building, as well as the Japanese consulate general. In March more than five hundred Chinese scholars and scientists living in the United States sent a telegram to President Chiang Kai-shek in Taipei, urging him to take a firm position against "new Japanese aggression."<sup>30</sup>

On 10 April another wave of Chinese and Chinese American protests was launched in major American cities, including Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston. The *New York Times* described the protests, partly comprising scholars and scientists, as "by far the largest ever staged by the Chinese community in this country."<sup>31</sup> The protests were directed not only at Japan but also at the United States and the ROC government. One protest organizer was quoted as saying, "It's [i.e., Taipei is] the only government that can do something. Peking [i.e., Beijing] is not in a position to do anything."<sup>32</sup>

That Taiwan was sensitive to this pressure is revealed in the summary of a meeting held on 12 April 1971 between Chow Shu-kai and Henry Kissinger (then Nixon's national security adviser) in which the protests were directly addressed. Ambassador Chow reportedly cited them as evidence of the "strong sentiments which various Chinese groups had with regard to a number of issues, particularly the question of the status of [the] Senkaku Islets."<sup>33</sup> He urged that the final disposition of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in connection with the reversion of the Ryukyus be kept open, as "this issue was a measure of the ROC's ability to protect itself."<sup>34</sup> Chow's pleadings had at least one important effect—they prompted Kissinger to order an assistant on the National Security Staff, John H. Holdridge, to draft a memorandum outlining and summarizing Taiwan's main arguments as to why the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands belonged to the Republic of China and should not be returned to Japan.

On 13 April Holdridge presented his draft to Kissinger. It summarized the key points of the note verbale that had been sent to the U.S. government via the

Taiwan embassy in Washington a month earlier. The memorandum described the various historical and geographical arguments supporting the ROC's claim to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Moreover, it explained why the ROC had never raised objections about American administrative control over the islands: "For regional security considerations the GRC [government of the Republic of China] has hitherto not challenged the U.S. military occupation of the Senkakus under Article 3 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty."<sup>35</sup> Holdridge's draft acknowledged that "the Japanese Government has a comparable list of apparently offsetting arguments and maintains simply that the Senkakus remain Japanese."<sup>36</sup> It also described the official position of the State Department, which had by this time crafted its neutrality doctrine: "State's position is that in occupying the Ryukyus and the Senkakus in 1945, and in proposing to return them to Japan in 1972, the U.S. passes no judgment as to conflicting claims over any portion of them, which should be settled directly by the parties concerned."<sup>37</sup>

June 1971 was to be decisive for U.S. policy vis-à-vis the Senkakus/Diaoyus and their postreversion status. That month Ambassador at Large David Kennedy played a major role in trying to solve a textile dispute that had arisen between Taiwan and the United States.<sup>38</sup> In early 1971 the two sides had reached an impasse. Kennedy believed that one way to forge an agreement that would satisfy both Taiwan and American manufacturers, who were concerned about rising textile imports, would be to offer Taiwan a concession on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands by having them remain under U.S. administrative control. "This is a major issue in Taiwan with both domestic and international implications," Kennedy wrote. "If the U.S. were to maintain administrative control [over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands], it would give the GRC a tremendous public boost since they have expressed themselves so forcefully on the issues."<sup>39</sup> Kennedy further argued that it would signal American "interest in and support for the GRC."<sup>40</sup>

Ambassador Kennedy insisted that he was not advocating the handover of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands to Taiwan instead of Japan; he was only proposing that the United States maintain its administrative rights over the islands until the dispute was finally resolved: "Since possession of the Islands is still in dispute, there is every reason for the United States to maintain administrative control until such time as the dispute is settled."<sup>41</sup> Moreover, he reported, Taiwan's leaders believed that "once Japan had administrative control there is absolutely no possibility of their ever relinquishing that control."<sup>42</sup> In general, Kennedy made the case that since Taiwan had "taken a heavy beating from the U.S. in recent months" (an oil moratorium, two-China developments in the United Nations, and other matters of diplomacy), the United States could achieve a breakthrough on the textile dispute by "preserving the status quo" vis-à-vis the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.<sup>43</sup>

## THE PRESSURE GROWS:

### NIXON AND THE U.S. NEUTRALITY DOCTRINE

Not only did Nixon administration officials face extraordinary lobbying from Taiwan over the disposition of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, but they also had to take into account how the reversion of the islands to Japan might affect a nascent warming of relations with the People's Republic of China. The early 1970s was a decade of growing rapprochement between the United States and the PRC.

For Nixon, developing a “more normal relationship” with that nation had become necessary, because “the world situation [had] so drastically changed.”<sup>44</sup> The U.S. opening toward Beijing was motivated “not because we love them,” he explained to Walter P. McCaughy, the ambassador to Taiwan, “but because they’re there.”<sup>45</sup> Nixon foresaw that on a broad range of geopolitical issues—including Vietnam, India, competition with the Soviet Union, and so on—the United States would need Beijing’s cooperation. In other words, notwithstanding the close and formal American relationship with Taiwan, failure to open a relationship with the People’s Republic of China “would prejudice our interests in other areas that are overwhelming.”<sup>46</sup>

In July 1971 Henry Kissinger secretly traveled to China and engaged in a dialogue with Premier Chou En-lai (Zhou Enlai) on a number of issues, including details regarding President Nixon’s visit planned for the following year. One of the more substantive issues that Kissinger raised with Chou was the desire to gain China’s assistance in creating the conditions that would allow the United States to end the war in Vietnam: “We want a settlement [to end the war in Vietnam] that is consistent with our honor and our self-respect,” Kissinger told Chou. “And if we cannot get this,” Kissinger added, “then the war will continue.”<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue was not addressed in this dialogue, but on previous occasions China had made it known that its position was largely consistent with that of Taiwan.

Finally, as if the diplomatic minefield was not already complex enough, Nixon administration officials had to consider the impact on U.S.-Japan relations of any change of American policy toward the islands. In 1969, as noted earlier, Nixon and Sato had reached an understanding on the islands. Nixon would later reply to Ambassador Kennedy—who had articulated Taiwan’s requests for nonreversion of the islands to Japan—that he could not accede, because “the deal [had] gone too far and too many commitments [had been] made to back off now.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Nixon officials argued that World War II-era maps clearly depicted the Senkakus as being administered by Japan and that accordingly the islands had to be returned along with the other Ryukyus.<sup>49</sup>

In light of these factors, and despite intense pressure from Taiwan, President Nixon decided on 7 June 1971 that the United States would not change its



position on the Senkakus.<sup>50</sup> However, the reversion to Japan would be handled in such a way as not to commit the United States irrevocably on the sovereignty question. American officials planned to announce that the return of “administrative rights” to Japan would “in no way prejudice the underlying claims of the Republic of China.”<sup>51</sup> On 17 June 1971 the United States and Japan signed the agreement returning the Ryukyu Islands to Japan; the agreement was subsequently submitted to the Senate for its advice and consent to ratification. A policy of declaring neutrality with respect to the sovereignty question while transferring administrative rights to Japan seemed to offer the United States a “middle way” that would preserve its interests and relations with all three parties—Taiwan, Japan, and the People’s Republic of China.

On 20 October 1971, State Department staff attorney Robert I. Starr wrote a letter to the attorney for a U.S.-based Chinese American claimant in which he articulated the legal foundation of this neutrality doctrine.<sup>52</sup> “The Governments of the Republic of China and Japan are in disagreement as to sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands,” he wrote, and the People’s Republic of China was a third claimant. Given these conflicting claims, “the United States believes that a return of administrative rights over those islands to Japan, from which the rights were received, can in no way prejudice any underlying claims.”<sup>53</sup> More important was Starr’s characterization of the legal force of the former U.S. administrative control over the Senkakus as effectively nugatory: “The United States cannot add to the legal rights Japan possessed before it transferred administration of the islands to us, nor can the United States, by giving back what it received, diminish the rights of other claimants.”<sup>54</sup>

This reasoning would underpin American policy statements regarding the islands in 1971. For example, during the Okinawa Reversion Treaty hearing on 27 October 1971, Senator (and Chairman) J. W. Fulbright asked Secretary of State William Rogers whether Okinawa’s reversion would settle the question of who had sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands. Rogers replied, “We have made it clear that this treaty does not affect the legal status of those islands at all. Whatever the legal situation was prior to the treaty is going to be the legal situation after the treaty comes into effect.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, the neutrality doctrine was established and would shape U.S. diplomacy over the matter for the next forty years. Subsequent administrations—both Democratic and Republican—would refer to and rely on its legal analysis to justify nominal disinterest and neutrality regarding the ongoing territorial controversy.

## THE NEUTRALITY DOCTRINE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

While the U.S. neutrality doctrine and its underlying legal reasoning appeared to represent a diplomatic breakthrough, it did not ultimately solve the controversy



or placate the claimants. Japan, for its part, was quite unhappy with the American neutrality posture. In 1972, Japan's foreign minister, Takeo Fukuda, expressed strong dissatisfaction with what he described as the "uncertain attitude taken by the U.S. Government toward the question of ownership of the disputed Senkaku Island group."<sup>56</sup> Ambassador Nobuhiko Ushiba approached the State Department on two occasions in March 1972 relaying Tokyo's "unhappiness with the public position of neutrality being taken by the U.S. Government."<sup>57</sup> Ushiba pointed out that the retention of gunnery ranges by the United States in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands was inconsistent with such a policy.

In addition, Japan specifically requested the United States not to call attention to any controversy during encounters with the news media: "The GOJ [government of Japan] requested, and we [the U.S. government] agreed, that in responding to press queries on this subject we would not refer to the existence of conflicting 'claims' to 'sovereignty' over the islands, since the official GOJ position is that there are no 'claims' to these islands other than the Japanese claim."<sup>58</sup> The American side responded by "revising somewhat" its press guidance, although it insisted to Tokyo that such actions did not imply any change in policy. Similarly, in April 1972, the State Department advised Henry Kissinger to avoid the "volatile nationalistic" Senkaku/Diaoyu issue, by focusing "as little public attention on it as possible."<sup>59</sup>

A second problem with the neutrality doctrine was its putative assumption that the parties would be able to resolve their differences on their own. In his October 1971 letter, Robert Starr stated (directly below the neutrality doctrine analysis mentioned above) that "the United States has made no claim to the Senkaku Islands and considers that any conflicting claims to the islands are a matter for resolution by the parties concerned."<sup>60</sup> To date, no such resolution has occurred. Moreover, since the early 1970s, when the PRC began to gain international stature (most significantly, by gaining the China seat in the United Nations in October 1971), it began gradually to assume the dominant role as advocate for the Chinese side. There have been two significant occasions in the diplomatic relationship between the PRC and Japan where resolution of the dispute could have theoretically occurred but did not.

First, in 1972, Beijing and Tokyo entered into the negotiations that would eventually lead to the opening of official diplomatic relations. The year had begun with China reasserting its claim over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Beijing argued that the islands were Chinese territory during the Ming dynasty and had been included with Taiwan when the latter was ceded to Japan in 1895. As negotiations between the two countries proceeded, both sides realized they could not reach a mutually agreeable settlement. Premier Chou En-lai reportedly downplayed the issue by stating that the islands were difficult to find on a map given

their small size.<sup>61</sup> Eventually the Chinese government agreed to set the dispute aside so that it could be addressed at a later date.

In 1978, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island controversy emerged a second time in the context of negotiations over a peace treaty between Japan and the People's Republic of China. In April of that year Japan was surprised by the sudden arrival of an armada of Chinese ships and smaller vessels. According to an American account, "upwards of 140 PRC fishing vessels (some armed) entered the 12-mile territorial waters claimed by the Japanese around the islands and displayed signs asserting the PRC claim."<sup>62</sup> Japan demanded an explanation from the Chinese side, which described the affair as an "accident."<sup>63</sup> Four days later, most of the ships and vessels had withdrawn, although the effects of the incident (a delay in peace treaty negotiations and a new chill in Sino-Japan relations) would last for months.<sup>64</sup>

In July 1978, Japan and China were able to put the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue aside and proceed with round two of negotiations.<sup>65</sup> As in 1972, China demonstrated that, while the island controversy was important, it was subsidiary to Beijing's larger political goals vis-à-vis Japan.<sup>66</sup> In October 1978, two months following the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan, Deng Xiaoping reportedly declared that it would not matter "if this question [regarding sovereignty of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands] is shelved for some time, say, ten years. . . . Our generation is not wise enough to find common language on this question. Our next generation will certainly be wiser."<sup>67</sup> However, Japan has recently claimed that there was no formal agreement to "shelve" or put the issue aside in 1978 and that in fact no controversy exists.<sup>68</sup>

#### FORTY YEARS LATER: PERSISTENT CONTROVERSY AND TRANSFORMED GEOPOLITICS

Despite the passage of forty years since the Ryukyu Islands were returned to Japan, there are few indications that the Senkaku/Diaoyu controversy is any closer to resolution. In fact, the issue has remained a persistent irritant in the political relationship between Japan and the People's Republic of China, notwithstanding the fact that the two countries enjoy a parallel economic relationship that features extensive and growing interdependence and cross-investment. Taiwan also continues to play a role in the dispute, although Taipei's significance in the controversy is much diminished compared to forty years earlier.

Moreover, a heightening of sensitivities over the dispute—propelled by nationalism on both sides—means that the chances for unintentional conflict, perhaps ignited by tactical miscalculation or an accident involving patrol ships or surveillance aircraft, continue to grow. In general, because of changes in the geopolitical environment, including the relative power position of Japan vis-à-vis China, opportunities for peaceful resolution seem to be rapidly fading. The implications

for the future of peace and stability in East Asia are potentially grave, particularly in light of three overarching factors.

First, the power relationship between Japan and the People's Republic of China, which drives the dynamics of this dispute, is shifting. In the 1970s and, especially, the 1980s Japan's economic power was unrivaled in East Asia, while China was comparatively undeveloped and militarily weak. Today the situation has changed; the countries find themselves in an uneasy balance of relative military and economic parity. However, current trends appear to favor China. Japan, while the world's third-largest economy, is undergoing a gradual relative decline—economically, demographically, and ultimately militarily. Thus, underlying the bilateral tension over the Senkakus/Diaoyus is a palpable sense of power transition. In February 2011 Japanese officials acknowledged a widely reported fact that China's economy had surpassed Japan's to become the world's second largest. "We are not competing for rankings," stated Japan's economy minister Kaoru Yosano; instead, he argued, "we welcome China's economic advancement as a neighboring country."<sup>69</sup>

If Japanese officials do not worry excessively about China's economic ascendance, the same cannot be said regarding its military activities. "On the military front, China has been modernizing its military forces, backed by the high and constant increase in its defense budget," stated Japan's 2012 defense white paper.<sup>70</sup> A key concern in Tokyo is a perceived lack of transparency: "China has not yet achieved the levels of transparency expected of a responsible major power in the international society."<sup>71</sup> Japanese officials assert that in a number of areas—military procurement, records of key military operations, details regarding the military budget, and so on—China's openness is inadequate.<sup>72</sup> The net effect of this gradual power shift is that China increasingly perceives itself as in a position to demand a change in the rules and of the status quo concerning the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. This may explain why China now appears to be increasing the pressure on Japan—to include military posturing—with each episode in which the dispute flares up.<sup>73</sup>

The second factor that negatively influences prospects for peaceful resolution of the controversy is the geographic location of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands within the East China Sea. As China's naval power grows, the East China Sea is emerging as a "contested space" between China and Japan. Many American military observers believe that China's military modernization efforts are increasingly oriented toward missions other than Taiwan—for example, defense of territorial claims in the East and South China Seas.<sup>74</sup> In addition to the Senkakus/Diaoyus, China and Japan have other ongoing East China Sea disputes, some related to maritime boundaries and hydrocarbon resources. A 2008 agreement that would

have facilitated joint exploration of hydrocarbon resources in the East China Sea was essentially scuttled by the September 2010 dispute centering on the islands.

From a military perspective, Japanese defense officials appear to view China's advances into the East China Sea with growing alarm. Japan's 2012 defense white paper argued that China's navy is seeking to protect and consolidate maritime interests in the East China Sea: "It is believed that its naval vessels operated near the drilling facilities of the Kashi oil and gas fields in September 2005, partly because China tried to demonstrate [its] naval capabilities of acquiring, maintaining, and protecting its maritime rights and interests."<sup>75</sup> The same document reported that the Chinese air force has deployed various types of aircraft (including H-6 medium-range bombers and Y-8 early warning aircraft) around the East China Sea close to Japan's airspace.

Chinese naval transits through the East China Sea—particularly those via the Miyako Strait next to the main island of Okinawa—are closely monitored by Japanese military observers, reflecting apparent unease over this growing trend. Japan's 2012 defense white paper described a June 2011 incident in which eleven Chinese naval vessels, including a Jiangkai II-class frigate and *Sovremenny*-class destroyers, "passed between Okinawa Island and Miyako Island and advanced to the Pacific Ocean."<sup>76</sup> The report cited as well five other instances, dating back to November 2008, in which such transits occurred.

These transits seem not only to represent attempts to break through the "first island chain" (extending from northern Japan southward through the Ryukyu Islands into the South China Sea) to conduct exercises in the Pacific Ocean but also to signal dissatisfaction to Japan. For example, China's decision in early October 2012 to deploy seven warships through the Miyako Strait without alerting the Japanese government (per the terms of an agreement) was viewed by some in Japan as conveying displeasure over the Senkakus/Diaoyus.<sup>77</sup>

Japan's response has been to reemphasize the protection of its southwestern islands. "Japan has 6,800 islands, and territory that stretches over 3,300 kilometers," Japanese defense minister Satoshi Morimoto told a U.S. newspaper in 2012: "It's necessary to have troops at its southwestern end to beef up our warning and surveillance capability."<sup>78</sup> More significantly, heightened concern about the East China Sea and the security of the southwestern islands has stimulated changes in Japan's military doctrine, such as a shift from static to "dynamic defense."<sup>79</sup> This will require, among other things, significant integration between the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Japan Air Self-Defense Force "in order to defend its southwest islands."<sup>80</sup>

The third underlying factor is arguably the most important—the U.S. role in the islands controversy. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the United States

signaled to Japan, if in careful or conditional language, the applicability of article 5 of the U.S.-Japan defense treaty in a Senkaku Islands military contingency. A briefing paper prepared for Henry Kissinger in 1972, for example, stated that the Mutual Security Treaty “could be interpreted” to apply to the Senkakus.<sup>81</sup> At various times Japanese officials sought to clarify whether the United States considered the islands within the scope of the alliance. For instance, in a March 1974 meeting between American and Japanese officials, Defense Agency chief Sadanori Yamanaka inquired whether the United States, notwithstanding its “neutral” position, would be willing to defend the islands on behalf of Japan under the security treaty. A U.S. defense official stationed at the embassy in Tokyo responded with his “personal view” that the islands, which were administered by Japan, would indeed fall under the treaty.<sup>82</sup>

More recent American assurances to Japan have been more direct and robust. During an October 2010 news conference at the U.S. embassy in Tokyo, Assistant Secretary Kurt Campbell was asked about the applicability of article 5 to the Senkakus. Campbell emphasized that he and fellow American officials had “stated very clearly about the applicability of Article V in this circumstance,” a military contingency involving the Senkaku Islands. He characterized previous U.S. pronouncements as the “strongest statements” on this matter and as indicative of a “very strong and consistent [U.S.] policy.”<sup>83</sup> Just a few weeks later, on 27 October, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton seemed to dispel any strategic ambiguity when she affirmed, “The Senkakus [Diaoyus] fall within the scope of Article 5 of the 1960 U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security.”<sup>84</sup> Thus the Senkaku/Diaoyu controversy can be viewed not merely as a bilateral dispute involving Japan and China but as a focal point of Sino-American competition and potential conflict.

This means that the United States potentially bears substantial risk in the event of a rapid escalation of tensions between Japan and China. In theory, American assurances to Japan help to maintain stability by promoting a balance of power that helps keep the controversy from becoming inflamed. However, U.S. assurances could paradoxically exacerbate tensions, by emboldening Japan to initiate provocative actions designed to consolidate its sovereign claims over the islands.

Further, as both Japan and China build up their law-enforcement (and potentially military) presence over and around the islands—as they have increasingly done over the past few years—the likelihood of accidents or inadvertent clashes will grow. In July 2012 Tokyo and Beijing announced the creation of a hotline to cope with such a scenario. However, it is uncertain whether a hotline could keep a conflict contained, particularly one involving issues so drenched in emotion and nationalism on both sides. If an event did indeed escalate, the United States

would come under pressure to come to Japan's defense. Thus, a U.S.-China conflict could ensue, with its own potential for escalation within both conventional and nonconventional realms.

Forty years after the reversion of the Ryukyus to Japan, the controversy over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands persists. Careful management and deft diplomacy have merely postponed the dispute, allowing it to fester and emerge as perhaps the region's most volatile flash point. For the United States the dispute presents a dilemma: How can Washington maintain its neutrality over the sovereignty question while at the same time ensuring that relations between Tokyo and Beijing do not become inflamed—as they did in 2012—or worse, lead to war?

It may be that historical circumstances require a more activist approach by all concerned countries, including the United States, to achieve a lasting solution to this vexing controversy. Such a solution might involve simply reinvigorating the status quo ante—the tacit understanding between Beijing and Tokyo that Japan, notwithstanding its administrative rights, would not actively consummate its sovereignty claims by, among other things, building permanent structures on the islands. Alternatively, both countries could strive for a more ambitious grand bargain, one in which the final disposition of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island controversy was negotiated within the larger interests of both countries. However, for this option to be viable, a much higher level of trust and goodwill than now exists would need to be established between the two countries. Also, since Japan currently enjoys the advantage of administrative rights over the islands, China would need to offer a package compelling enough to balance Japanese concessions. Such a package might include formal acknowledgment of Japan's other claims in the East China Sea (including those related to boundaries and hydrocarbon resources) and support for a Japanese permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, among other possibilities.

Regardless of which path is chosen, an informal tacit understanding or a more ambitious grand bargain, each side must remain focused on one key strategic goal—preventing the controversy from escalating, particularly to the level of military conflict. China and Japan, like two partners in an estranged but lucrative marriage, are inextricably tied to one another. As the world's second- and third-largest economies, respectively, China and Japan are keys to each other's long-term success and continued prosperity. As one Chinese official recently stated, the China-Japan relationship bears “directly on peace, stability and prosperity of the region and the world as a whole.”<sup>85</sup> The Senkaku/Diaoyu controversy, important and emotionally potent as it is, must not obscure or derail this larger strategic reality.

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# THE “CONSEQUENT INTEREST” OF JAPAN’S SOUTHWESTERN ISLANDS

## A Mahanian Appraisal of the Ryukyu Archipelago

Eric Sayers

In his classic collection of essays on maritime geography *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future*, Alfred Thayer Mahan opined that the importance of “portions of the earth’s surface, and their consequent interest to mankind, differ from time to time.”<sup>1</sup> Just as the Mediterranean Sea once transfixed the minds of European strategists and policy makers, Mahan believed, at the turn of the twentieth century, the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea would obtain similar prominence in American strategic thinking. A century later, as we observe the relative balance of economic and military powers shifting to Asia and the Pacific and Indian Oceans, Mahan’s teachings on geography are again instructive, as once seemingly insignificant bodies of water and island chains take on a new importance in regional security matters.

Recent research has drawn attention to the interaction of commercial and martial activity in the Indian Ocean, Malacca Strait, and South China Sea.<sup>2</sup> To this group of portentous maritime zones should be added Japan’s southwestern island chain—and specifically the Ryukyu Islands in the East China Sea.<sup>3</sup> The ongoing territorial dispute between the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Japan,

and Taiwan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu island group near the southern end of the Ryukyu chain; the southwestern islands’ geographic proximity to the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan; and the former’s expanding naval capabilities and ambitions promise to ensure, as Mahan’s adage contends, the Ryukyus’ “consequent interest” to Japan and its neighboring states.<sup>4</sup>

*Mr. Sayers is Defense Policy Advisor to a U.S. congressman on the House Armed Services Committee. He conducted the research for this publication as an SPF resident fellow at the Pacific Forum CSIS. Mr. Sayers earned a master of science degree in strategic studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.*

After hugging its own shores for decades, since 2004 the PRC's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy has increased its activity around Japan's southwestern islands. In what appeared as a response to this more assertive posture of the PLA Navy (or PLAN) the Japanese Ministry of Defense in its 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) identified the southwestern islands as a priority for defense spending and advocated a shift in the nation's strategic focus to them. Why has China taken an interest in these islands and their surrounding waters? What explains Japan's new strategic emphasis on its southwestern islands? What form will Japan's strategy take in response to China's increased focus on them and activity there?

This article seeks to explain the growing strategic importance of Japan's southwestern island chain and to understand how Japan is responding to China's increased maritime activity in this zone. The article has five sections. The first two review the geography of the southwestern islands and evaluate the strategic importance of these islands by adopting a topology that Alfred Thayer Mahan developed to assess a geographic location's strategic value. The third section evaluates China's maritime interests in the Ryukyus and reviews the PLA's capabilities and war-fighting missions that affect the islands. The fourth describes the Japanese government's strategic focus on the southwestern islands as articulated in the 2010 NDPG. The final section draws conclusions on Tokyo's likely course of action in this area.

### JAPAN'S SOUTHWEST, OR "RYUKYU," ISLANDS

The history of Japan's southwestern islands stretches back to the establishment of the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1429. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries the kingdom embraced all of the island chain, from the Amami Islands below Kyushu in the north to the Sakishima Islands near Taiwan in the south. During this period, the kingdom paid tribute to both the Japanese shogun and the Chinese emperor. In 1609 the Japanese feudal domain of Satsuma invaded the Ryukyu Kingdom and took control of it after a swift victory. In 1853, on his way to open trade relations with Tokyo, Commodore Matthew Perry transited the Ryukyus, stopping over at Naha. Less than two decades later, in 1872, the Japanese Meiji government abolished the kingdom, declaring it the Prefecture of Okinawa in 1879. Following World War II, the U.S. government maintained administrative rights over the islands, while recognizing Japan's residual sovereignty. Full sovereignty over the islands was ultimately returned to Japan in 1972.

Japan's southwestern islands form a seven-hundred-mile-long chain that flanks the coast of China, from the Japanese home island of Kyushu to near the northeast coast of Taiwan. In Japanese, the overall chain is known as the Nansei-shotō (Nansei Islands). The Satsunan Islands make up the northern half of the

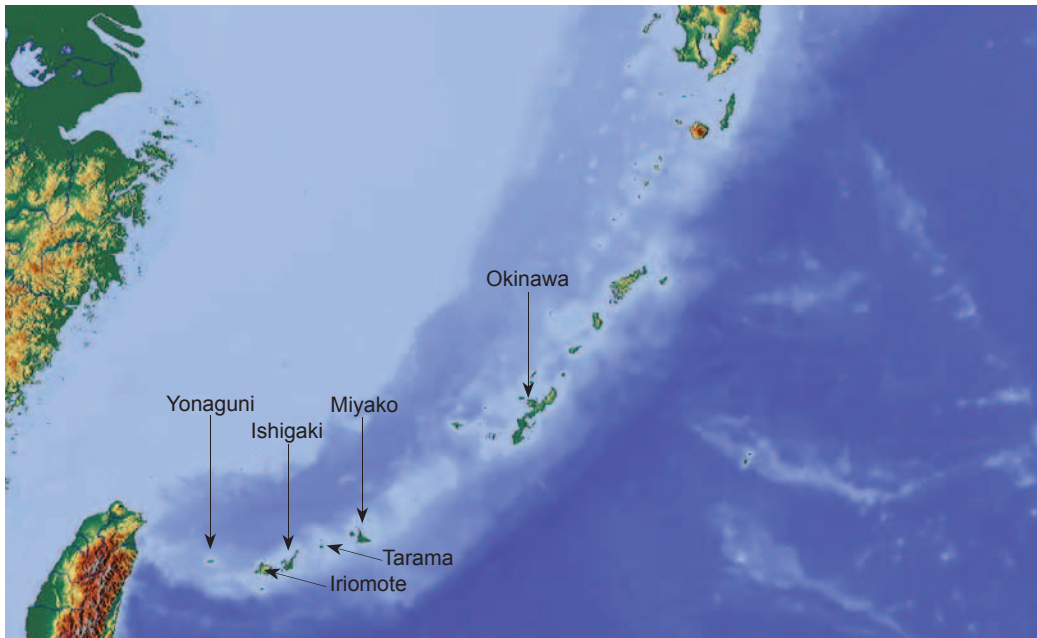
Nansei Islands and the Ryukyu Islands, including the Okinawa Islands and the Sakishima Islands, the southern half. This article will focus on the Ryukyus, including Okinawa and the larger islands of Miyako, Ishigaki, Iriomote, and Yonaguni.

The Okinawa Islands form the northern portion of the Ryukyus, almost four hundred miles south of Kyushu. Okinawa itself is the largest in the Ryukyu chain, stretching sixty miles from the northeast to the southwest and ranging from two to sixteen miles wide. The northern portion of the island, known as Kunigami, contains a dense mountain ridge with streams and valleys where water is abundant. The midsection, known as Nakagami, is marked by limestone ridges and rolling hills; below that is a hilly southern area called Shimajiri. The majority of Okinawa's population of almost 1.4 million people lives in the urban areas of the south. The major islets of the Okinawa group are scattered to the north and west, including Yoron, Iheya, Izena, Zamami, and Tokashiki. Naha's harbor and airport are located in the southwestern portion of the island and serve as major transit points to the rest of the Ryukyus.

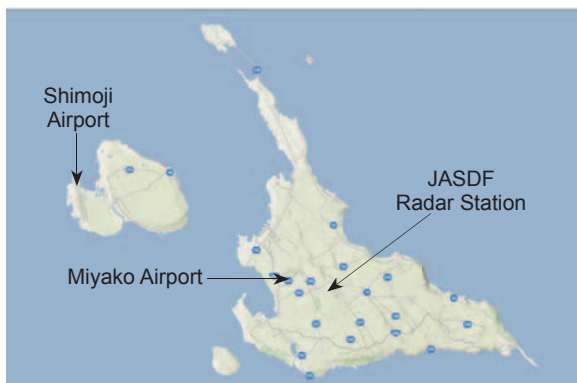
While one's typical mental map of Japan is challenged to visualize the archipelago as stretching southward beyond Okinawa, in fact the twenty islands that make up the Sakishima portion of the Ryukyus pepper the waters of the East China Sea for roughly three hundred nautical miles, from Okinawa all the way to within a hundred miles of the coast of Taiwan. Governed as part of Okinawa Prefecture, the Sakishimas include the contested Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and the main islands of Miyako, Ishigaki, Iriomote, and Yonaguni.

The Miyako chain, with its main island of Miyako, is the first group of the Sakishimas south of Okinawa. The Miyako Strait separates Miyako Island from Okinawa by roughly 145 nautical miles and runs 500–1,500 meters deep. The triangle-shaped island is composed largely of limestone formed by the raised coral, with a maximum height of 378 feet. Because it is relatively flat, it is densely settled (a population of roughly fifty thousand) and intensely cultivated. Large limestone ridges run north and south along the island's coast. Miyako is flanked by a number of even tinier islands, including Kurima, Shimoji, Irabu, and Ikema. Both Kurima and Ikema are accessible from Miyako by bridge. Miyako's Hirara civilian port is on the northwest portion of the island facing Irabu. Farther south lies the Yaeyama Island chain, including the major islands of Ishigaki and Iriomote and the westernmost island of the Ryukyus, Yonaguni. The Ishigaki Strait, separating Ishigaki from Miyako, is twenty-five nautical miles wide and from seventy to five hundred meters deep. It is sliced in half by the islands of Tarama and Minna. Ishigaki Island is eleven miles long and consists of a southern plain and a northern mountainous spur. A low beach extends along the southern coast, where the Ishigaki port is located. The island's total population is roughly forty

## RYUKYU ISLANDS



### MIYAKO (TOP) AND YONAGUNI (BOTTOM) ISLANDS



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thousand. Five smaller islets separate Ishigaki from Iriomote: Taketomi, Kuroshima, Kohama, Aragusuku, and Hateruma. All are sparsely inhabited, largely dependent on tourism, and accessible only by ferry from Ishigaki. Iriomote, fifteen miles wide from east to west and about ten miles from north to south, is the largest of the Sakishimas. Its coasts are very irregular, and the topography is rough and mountainous. Visitors to the island arrive by ferry from Ishigaki. To the west—and the most southwestern of Japan's southwest islands—is Yonaguni. Eighty nautical miles from the east coast of Taiwan, Yonaguni is just seven miles from east to west and 2.5 north to south. Most of the island is composed of Tertiary rocks, with places capped by limestone. Known largely as a tourist destination, it has a population of just 1,600.

Finally, to the north of the Yaeyamas are the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. The Senkakus/Diaoyus comprise five islands—Uotsuri, Taisho, Kuba, Kita, and Minami—and three exposed rocks, covering a total area of seven square kilometers. Since the U.S. Civil Administration returned the Ryukyus to Japan in 1972, the mayor of Ishigaki has had civic control over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Around this time both the PRC and Taiwan began to claim ownership of the group, whose waters are ideal for fishing and contain potentially large oil and gas fields, in addition to seabed minerals.

## SITUATION, STRENGTH, AND RESOURCES

Mahan often found that applying continental characteristics to features of the nautical domain aided clarity. He famously referred to the ocean as “a great highway . . . a wide common,” and as a “level desert of land” where geographical features are prized for their geostrategic value.<sup>5</sup> To assess the value of islands, specifically for use as bases, Mahan developed a three-pronged formula—first examine the island's “situation,” or geographic proximity to important sea lines of communication; second, its strength, both its inherent and acquired ability to defend itself; and finally, its resources, either natural or stored military capabilities.<sup>6</sup> “When all three conditions . . . are found [to be favorable] in the same place, it becomes of great consequence strategically and may be of the very first importance,” Mahan believed.<sup>7</sup> In short, the blend of situation, strength, and resources defines the Mahanian consequence of a strategic position. By this measure, we turn to assessing the significance of the Ryukyus in maritime East Asia.

### *The Situation of the Ryukyus*

Of Mahan's triad, he believed a position's situation to be the “most indispensable,” because it is beyond “the power of man to change the situation of a port which lies outside the limits of strategic effect.”<sup>8</sup> The situational value of a position depends on its nearness to sea-lanes and the potential effect it can have over communications. Unsurprisingly, a location that straddles two or more routes simultaneously

has greater value and narrows the choice of available routes. Finally, if these routes are “highways” through which ships pass, not simply ports where their routes terminate, the island’s strategic value is even greater, because the number of passing ships is larger. As for the Ryukyus, their situation gives them command over a number of positions along key sea-lanes.

**Okinawa.** The largest and most populous island of the southwestern chain, Okinawa flanks the Chinese coast, serving as a natural barrier against PLA ambitions to break out of what is commonly referred to as the “first island chain”—the islands of Japan, the Ryukyu Archipelago, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Borneo, embracing the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and the South China Sea.<sup>9</sup> It is also situated strategically alongside the Miyako Strait and near the Luzon Strait. If Chinese surface patrols over the last decade are an indication, the PLA Navy’s prefers the Miyako Strait, only enhancing Okinawa’s importance. Finally, as a key military base for U.S. forces in the Pacific, Okinawa is a bulwark of military power and a point of transit for U.S. forces between Guam, the Korean Peninsula, and the South China Sea.

**The Ryukyu Archipelago.** Like Okinawa individually, the Ryukyu chain as a whole presents itself as an archipelagic screen for commercial and naval ships transiting the East China Sea to the Pacific Ocean. This is especially true for China. Three Chinese naval engineers claim that of the sixteen major straits critical to their country’s maritime access, no less than eleven are located along the Ryukyu Archipelago.<sup>10</sup> Whether in the form of a Chinese containership passing north of Okinawa or a PLA Navy surface-action group steaming through the Miyako or Ishigaki Strait, a good portion of Chinese maritime communications fall under the watchful eye of Japan’s southern flank.

**Taiwan.** A brief look at a map reveals that the southern Sakishimas lie just to the east of the island and its capital, Taipei. The cities of Yilan and Keelung in Taiwan’s northeast face the Sakishimas, most directly the tiny island of Yonaguni. Add to the mix the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, only 120 nautical miles to the northeast, and it is hard to imagine a conflict over Taiwan that would not threaten to spill over into Japan’s territory. The strategic advantages the Ryukyus would offer during a Taiwan crisis are compelling. For China, they are a valuable feature to seize and from which to envelop Taiwan or contest the approach of U.S. forces. From the U.S. perspective, they represent, if properly protected, a primary position from which either to launch strikes or to exercise local sea control.

### ***Strength and Resources***

Mahan advised that a position should also be judged by its strength, or defensive qualities—be they natural coastal embankments that pose dilemmas for amphibious forces or ideal sites for antiship missile batteries. Mahan understood that



“advantages of position would more than counterbalance a small disadvantage in force,” though deficits of both attributes could rarely be made up for.<sup>11</sup> He also believed that the resources, natural or manufactured, that a position can supply to its port and a fleet must be considered. However, since Mahan’s day, technology—notably, enabling ships to produce their own freshwater, refrigerate their own stores, and feed forces with preserved food, and allowing submarines and aircraft carriers to operate independently of conventional-fuel sources—has all but negated the importance in this context of a position’s resource capacity.

The Ryukyus as a whole enjoy strategic effect on nearby sea-lanes, but what sets individual islands apart are their individual situations combined with their military strength. Closer examination of the Ryukyus reveals the inherent and potential military strength these islands possess.

**Okinawa.** Mahan prized Cuba for its size and declared it had few strategic rivals among the islands of the world. Similarly, Okinawa benefits from its vast coastline and numerous harbors, which offer advantages to mobile forces and make the island difficult to blockade. Its main harbor at Naha gazes west toward Shanghai and is protected, as is the island as a whole, by a natural barrier of smaller islands and islets to the north and west. The military force on these islets includes air-defense radar sites on Kume in the west and Okinoerabu in the north. The island of Ie has an airstrip where U.S. Marines maintain a drop zone for parachute training. During the battle of Okinawa in 1945, the Allies seized many of these tiny islands and set up artillery on them in preparation for their assault on the main island; by the same token, Tokyo could, if it saw fit, use the islands as a defensive barrier. In terms of strength, the island of Okinawa is home to a large contingent of Japanese and U.S. forces. Japan has surface-to-air missile units in southern Okinawa, and the United States operates an air-defense artillery regiment at Kadena Air Base. The island also houses the U.S. Air Force’s 18th Air Wing and the Japan Air Self-Defense Force’s 83rd Squadron. Finally, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) operates the 5th Air Wing, with two P-3C squadrons (twenty aircraft in all) out of Okinawa and the 1st Air Wing (roughly twenty P-3Cs) at Kanoya on southern Kyushu. The JMSDF also bases three mine-countermeasure ships on Okinawa. Destroyers from both the U.S. Seventh Fleet and JMSDF operate out of Sasebo, Kure, and Yokosuka to the north.

**Miyako.** The first major island south of Okinawa hosts a Japanese Air Self-Defense Force radar station and a new, state-of-the-art signals intelligence facility.<sup>12</sup> Miyako has a large civilian runway (two thousand meters long and forty-five wide, without a parallel taxiway) on its west coast and another airfield (with a runway three thousand meters long by sixty meters wide and a parallel taxiway), normally used for civilian airline practice, nearby on the tiny island



of Shimoji. In the future, the latter airfield could be used for military training and even for basing military assets.<sup>13</sup> The northern face of Miyako is guarded by ridged cliffs running from west to east along the Miyako Strait. Like Naha on Okinawa, the port of Hirara faces west toward China. In September 2010 it hosted the U.S. Navy mine-countermeasures ship USS *Defender* (MCM 2), only the third visit by U.S. naval units to the island since 1972.<sup>14</sup> In response to both the March and December 2012 ballistic-missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the Japanese Ministry of Defense deployed Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) interceptor batteries to Miyako and Ishigaki.<sup>15</sup> In the future, the basing of JMSDF troops or Japan Coast Guard (JCG) vessels on the island is a possibility.<sup>16</sup> As well, the southwest portion of the island and the sparsely inhabited Irabu Island to the west would be ideal locations for surface-to-air missile batteries or shore-based antiship cruise missiles.

**Ishigaki.** Japan's only permanent naval or air presence south of Okinawa is a small JCG air facility on Ishigaki, with a runway 1,500 meters long and forty-five meters wide (no parallel taxiway). The JCG, which is part of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism, operates B-737 aircraft from here to patrol Japan's exclusive economic zone, including the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. At the time of this writing, a new airport with a runway two thousand meters long and forty-five wide and a parallel taxiway is under construction. Another commercial airstrip is located on the small island of Hateruma to the southwest, but it is no longer in service. As on Miyako, the rugged northwestern coast of Ishigaki faces westward like a shield toward the East China Sea, while the hulking Iriomote Island, with its mountains and rough coasts, stands guard between Ishigaki and Taiwan. The Ishigaki port is on the Philippine Sea side of the island and its approaches are protected by five islets. In February 2011 two JMSDF minesweepers visited the island, followed in March by an *Atago*-class guided-missile destroyer. Most of the population is concentrated in the area around the port. The plains just to the north and east of the port are well suited as defensive positions. As on Miyako, PAC-3 interceptors were deployed to the island in March 2012 in anticipation of the DPRK missile launch.

**Tarama.** In the middle of the Ishigaki Strait, thirty miles southwest of Miyako, rests the circle-shaped island of Tarama. It has a population of only 1,200 but is home to two ports and a small runway (single, 1,500 meters by forty-five, no parallel taxiway). Tarama's small size and lack of defenses make it susceptible to blockade and difficult to defend. For this reason, Tarama can be compared to the islands of Mujeres off the Yucatán Peninsula or Saint Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, to which Mahan concluded "defensive strength could be imparted only by an expense quite disproportionate to the result obtained."

*Yonaguni.* The tiny island of Yonaguni is remarkable for its proximity to Taiwan. The southeast coast of the island is marked by large cliffs, while the westernmost portion, facing Taiwan, consists of gently rolling hills. Yonaguni currently has no military presence, but its western plains would be ideal for defense emplacements. Japan plans to deploy a small contingent of Ground Self-Defense Force soldiers to the island by 2015. It has three ports, the largest on the west coast opposite Taiwan, another on the south side of the island, and the third to the north. A sizable airfield (single runway running east and west, two thousand meters by forty-five, no parallel taxiway) sits near the northern port. Controlling the island, with its airfields and ports, would help the PRC concentrate forces on Taiwan's eastern coast. Yonaguni also offers China a new axis from which to press its interests in the Senkakus/Diaoyus or the rest of the Sakishima archipelago.

In his 1897 review of the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, Mahan opined that “the advantages of situation, strength, and resources are greatly and decisively in favor of Cuba.”<sup>17</sup> It is clear that the same could be said today for Okinawa, with its great size, access to key straits both to the north (near Japan's home islands) and south (toward Taiwan), its multiple airfields, and finally the resident defensive and offensive military capabilities of the United States and Japan. An effort to enhance the island's capacity to watch over the southwestern islands in the future would demand further defensive capabilities, distributed airfields, greater intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, and perhaps a base for fast attack craft.

Of Cuba, Mahan wrote that its lengthy coastline and numerous harbors gave it an “advantageous” possibility of “shifting operations from side to side, and finding refuge and supplies in either direction.”<sup>18</sup> Today, the same might be said, in maritime terms, of a large archipelagic defense array with Okinawa, Miyako, Ishigaki, and perhaps Yonaguni as the hubs. Indeed, in the future, given the right mix of mobility, command and control, and defensive assets, a networked Ryukyu Archipelago could enjoy the same advantages as continental Cuba, with distributed capabilities and the ability to shift operations “from side to side” along the chain.<sup>19</sup>

## CHINESE MILITARY OPERATIONS IN ITS “NEAR SEAS”

China's growing interest in the Ryukyu island chain, in particular the southern Sakishimas, has paralleled its own growing capabilities and ambitions. Prior to 2004, there was almost no PLA Navy activity in the Ryukyu region. However, since 2004, and especially since 2008, it has become a regular occurrence.<sup>20</sup>

- November 2004: A Chinese Han-class nuclear attack submarine traveled submerged through the Ishigaki Strait.

- October 2008: A *Sovremennyy*-class destroyer and four other vessels passed through the Miyako Strait from the Pacific Ocean.
- November 2008: Six surface vessels, including a *Luzhou*-class destroyer, passed through the Miyako Strait on the way to the Pacific Ocean.
- June 2009: A *Luzhou*-class destroyer and four other vessels traversed the Miyako Strait.
- March 2010: Six warships, including a *Luzhou*-class destroyer, passed through the Miyako Strait to the Pacific Ocean.
- April 2010: Eight warships and two submarines passed through the Miyako Strait, during which time a Chinese helicopter buzzed a JMSDF escort ship.
- July 2010: Two vessels, including a *Luzhou*-class destroyer, passed through the Miyako Strait.
- March 2011: A PLA Y-8 patrol aircraft and a Y-8 intelligence-gathering aircraft crossed the Japan–China median line and approached within approximately fifty kilometers of Japan’s airspace near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.
- June 2011: Eleven vessels, including three *Sovremennyy*-class destroyers, transited the Miyako Strait.<sup>21</sup>
- 4 October 2012: Seven PLA Navy vessels transited the Miyako Strait to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>22</sup> On 17 October the same seven vessels—destroyers, frigates, a refueling vessel, and a submarine rescue vessel—transited back to the East China Sea through the Taiwan-Yonaguni Strait.<sup>23</sup>
- 28 November 2012: Five vessels—two guided-missile destroyers, two missile frigates, and a supply ship—passed through the Miyako Strait on their way to the Pacific Ocean to conduct training exercises.<sup>24</sup>

What explains the PRC’s increased maritime activity near the Ryukyus? China’s 2010 defense white paper discusses the nation’s “vast territories and territorial seas” and pledges to “defend the security of China’s lands, inland waters, territorial waters and airspace,” “safeguard its maritime rights and interests,” and “oppose and contain the separatist forces for ‘Taiwan independence.’”<sup>25</sup> China’s ability to achieve these objectives is connected to the Ryukyus in various ways. First, Beijing’s pledge to defend its lands and territorial waters includes the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, inevitably generating friction with Japan. Second, the maritime rights it desires to protect involve access to sea-lanes, including the vital straits that transit the Ryukyus to the Pacific Ocean. Finally, the proximity of the Ryukyus to Taiwan means that should China resort to force to prevent Taiwanese independence, the Ryukyus would likely play a critical operational role.

To accomplish the goals set forth in the white paper, the PLA Navy aims to pursue what it calls an “offshore defense strategy.”<sup>26</sup> However, the missions and capabilities needed for a strategy in the Ryukyu Islands are left undefined. One Western specialist has analyzed China’s military developments and the roles and missions with which the PLA Navy would be tasked in terms of China’s “near seas,” which he describes as running along the PRC’s first island chain. This near-seas strategy “aims to reunify Taiwan with the mainland, restore lost and disputed maritime territories, protect China’s maritime resources, secure major sea lines of communications in times of war, deter and defend against foreign aggression from the sea, and conduct strategic nuclear deterrence.”<sup>27</sup> These objectives, save nuclear deterrence, all can pertain to China’s interests in the Ryukyus.

The same scholar attempts to categorize the war-fighting missions for which the PLA is preparing as a part of this strategy: “blockade and isolation,” “joint strike,” “suppression of outlying islands,” “search and annihilation,” and “comprehensive barrier removal.” These missions are relevant to the Ryukyus in two ways. First, they focus on reducing the ability of strategic positions like islands to be used for countering PLA sea-control and amphibious-landing operations: the “suppression of outlying islands” calls for “coastal firepower, ground-attack aircraft and light surface combatants to strike the defense systems of these islands.”<sup>28</sup> Second, “joint strike” aims to attack the opponent’s “reconnaissance and early warning systems, command and control, naval and air bases and logistics infrastructure, for the purpose of crippling the opponent’s capabilities to counter the PLAN’s sea-control operations.”<sup>29</sup> Japan’s radar and signals-intelligence facilities on islands like Miyako would be primary targets, and ISR systems or mobile forces deployed to the Sakishimas in the future would also be at risk. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, to help achieve these missions the PLA is deploying large numbers of land-attack cruise missiles and short- and medium-range conventional ballistic missiles.<sup>30</sup>

These war-fighting missions also aim to deny mobile naval forces the ability to conduct sea-control missions through “search and annihilation” and “comprehensive barrier removal” methods. If China aimed to seize the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands or other islands in the Sakishima chain during a Taiwan crisis, it would be forced to vie for sea control with Japanese and U.S. forces. China’s focus on search and annihilation “involves the use of submarines, major surface combatants and sea-attack aircraft to search and destroy the opponent’s major naval combatants outside the blocked areas, for the purpose of capturing and maintaining sea-control.” Consistent with this effort, the PLA Navy has commissioned *Luyang*- and *Luzhou*-class destroyers, acquired *Sovremennyy*-class destroyers from Russia, and sent Song-class and Yuan-class diesel attack submarines to sea and is now

developing an antiship ballistic missile based on a variant of the CSS-5 medium-range ballistic missile.<sup>31</sup> Should Japan develop an offensive mine-warfare capability, “comprehensive barrier removal,” mine countermeasures “to ensure the security and freedom of sea-crossing and amphibious landing operations,” would also become critical for Chinese forces.<sup>32</sup>

Another Chinese mission that affects security in the Ryukyu Islands is the PLA Navy’s amphibious capabilities. China seeks to be able to project power ashore in Taiwan or various islands of the East China Sea. To date, its capabilities have been concentrated opposite Taiwan. The U.S. Department of Defense reported in 2012, however, that “the PLA is capable of accomplishing various amphibious operations short of a full-scale invasion of Taiwan. With few overt military preparations beyond routine training, China could launch an invasion of small Taiwan-held islands such as the Pratas or Itu Aba. A PLA invasion of a medium-sized, defended offshore island such as Matsu or Jinmen is within China’s capabilities.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, while China’s amphibious assets remain focused on the Taiwan Strait, they appear capable of assaults against small, lightly defended islands, potentially including Miyako, Ishigaki, or Yonaguni.

### THE RYUKYUS IN JAPANESE DEFENSE PLANNING

In December 2010, the Japanese Ministry of Defense released the anticipated National Defense Program Guidelines 2010. NDPG 2010 identifies Japan’s offshore islands as a new priority for defense planning and advocates shifting the nation’s strategic focus to the East China Sea and the southern Ryukyu island chain.<sup>34</sup> Specifically, it directs the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to “permanently station the minimum necessary units on offshore islands where the SDF is not currently stationed. Also, the SDF will enhance its capability to respond to attacks on those islands and ensure the security of the surrounding sea and air space by securing bases, mobility, transport capacity and effective countermeasures necessary for conducting operations against such attacks.”<sup>35</sup>

To support this strategy, the corresponding Mid-Term Defense Program budget calls for the procurement of thirteen new JMSDF ships for sea control in local waters, including helicopter-equipped destroyers, destroyers, diesel attack submarines, and fixed-wing aircraft, and life extensions for existing platforms. It also gives priority to expansion of continuous, steady-state ISR capabilities (including deployment of ground-based surveillance radars to the Ryukyus), development of a maintenance infrastructure to support E-2C early-warning aircraft in southwestern Japan, and procurement and service-life extension for maritime patrol aircraft.

Finally, the NDPG aims to establish a new coastal-surveillance unit in the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) and to stand up a first-response unit in

the island chains “to gather intelligence, monitor situations, and respond swiftly when incidents occur.”<sup>36</sup> This unit will also train for rapid deployment operations. While official deployments have not been announced, reports indicate that the JGSDF plans to increase its total presence in the Nansei Islands, including Okinawa, by two thousand soldiers.<sup>37</sup> Alongside these forces, the deployment of eighteen surface-to-ship guided-missile launchers in fiscal year 2011 and potentially a hundred more over the following four years represents at least a moderate defense against hostile mobile forces operating from the littoral.<sup>38</sup>

## THE FUTURE SHAPE OF JAPAN’S DEFENSE POSTURE

The 2010 NDPG put the nation’s offshore islands, specifically the Ryukyus, at the center of Japan’s strategic focus. How Japan approaches the Ryukyus and adapts its forces to China’s growing defense capabilities will be central questions. The Mid-Term Defense Program budget has initiated this process, but the specific posture to be adopted remains unresolved. That decision will be influenced by a number of variables.

*The 1 Percent Limit and National Expenditures.* Since 1976, Japan has chosen, with few exceptions, to invest no more than 1 percent of its gross domestic product in defense. Efforts to break free from this commitment in the last two decades and grow the defense budget have fallen short. Today, Japan’s economic troubles continue to place pressure on the federal budget, and defense spending over the past decade has dipped slightly below the 1 percent ceiling. The cost of the March 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, with material damage estimated at over U.S.\$300 billion, could add incentive to retain the spending cap.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, any defense buildup or new capabilities associated with the Ryukyus would be likely to have to fit within the 1 percent framework, requiring difficult trade-offs, if possible at all.

*Defending Japan’s Vital “Areas.”* Investment in a Ryukyus buildup would compete with the demands of other capabilities for Japan’s defense, including the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, a maritime patrol aircraft, and ballistic-missile defenses against the DPRK. In addition to competing systems, Japan will have to wrestle with choices at a more strategic level. In particular, as a maritime nation Japan will have to protect the sea-lanes that make up what have long been called the “lifelines” of its existence. All of 99.7 percent of Japan’s trade travels by sea; the nation must import 99 percent of its petroleum and 60 percent of its caloric intake.<sup>40</sup> If Japan chooses to rely less on nuclear power for its energy, as is currently being debated in the aftermath of the 11 March 2011 disaster, its reliance on the seas for energy will grow even greater. At the 2010 Shangri-La Dialogue, former Japanese defense minister Toshimi Kitazawa identified Northeast Asia as

one of four “areas” (maritime regions) that Japan must defend in order to secure its sea-lanes.<sup>41</sup> While this speech was billed as an indication that Tokyo planned to take on a more international role, the operational impact for the JMSDF is to bifurcate its core missions between directly protecting sea-lanes in Japan’s home waters and relying on the United States and on Japanese diplomacy to secure those interests in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia.<sup>42</sup> For the JMSDF to uphold its long-standing commitments to secure sea-lanes within a thousand miles of Tokyo, it will mean continued investment in many of the same kinds of platforms that would enhance its Ryukyu defenses, including destroyers, attack submarines, maritime patrol aircraft, and, increasingly, amphibious capabilities.

*The U.S.-Japan Alliance.* During the Cold War, when the Soviet Union’s defense buildup pushed Japan to respond with its own defense modernization, the parameters of this response were in many ways shaped by the U.S.-Japan alliance. Feeling that it could rely on the United States for sea-lane defense in the Indian Ocean, Japan focused its efforts within one thousand nautical miles, a policy advocated by Admiral Nakamura Teiji, chief of the Maritime Staff from 1976 to 1977. Today Japan continues to look to the U.S. Navy to provide sea-lane defense through the Indian Ocean, the Strait of Malacca, and much of the South China Sea.<sup>43</sup> This has two implications for the Ryukyus. First, although the size of the U.S. fleet is declining and could face even further pressure under the defense “sequestration” cuts at this writing scheduled to take effect on 1 March 2013, in the medium term Japan can continue to rely on the United States for sea-lane security beyond a thousand nautical miles. This should give Tokyo confidence to concentrate on the maritime “area” of Northeast Asia as part of a Ryukyu defense strategy. Second, consistent with the Barack Obama administration’s plan to “re-balance” its international focus to the Asia-Pacific region, the continued strength of U.S. forces in the Pacific, particularly those forward-deployed forces in Japan, will enhance conventional deterrence. Japanese decision makers are likely to conclude that the United States would continue to shoulder some of the burden for deterrence and defense in the Ryukyus. This could help spur new areas of defense cooperation. For instance, just as the alliance has benefited from a focus on ballistic-missile defense capabilities over the last decade, the decade ahead could bring new developments in joint U.S.-Japan amphibious capabilities.

*Pacifism or Nationalism?* How Japan chooses to respond to China’s growing power will determine the nature of its Ryukyu defense strategy. A number of scholars have sought to explain Japan’s more restrained (relative to its economic strength) defense investments by the pacifist tendencies of the Japanese polity. However, when national security interests have been at stake, Tokyo has not hesitated to act in its defense.<sup>44</sup> During the 1970s, the Japanese maritime community



found itself embroiled in a debate over sea-lane defense. Sekino Hideo, once a commander in the Imperial Japanese Navy, argued that Japan should give the protection of Japan's sea-lanes first priority and obtain the necessary capabilities to accomplish this mission. Alternatively, Kaihara Osamu, the former director of the Defense Policy Bureau and Secretariat of the National Defense Council, held that securing Japan's sea-lanes was an "unrealistic goal" because they were too long and the necessary capabilities were unaffordable.<sup>45</sup> Threatened by the growing naval power of the Soviet Union, Japan adopted a sea-lane-defense strategy in the 1980s, modeled on Sekino's thinking, inside the thousand-nautical-mile limit. China presents a similar dilemma today, and it could prompt Tokyo to respond with the same conviction it demonstrated in the 1980s.

Mahan taught us that "from time to time" certain geographic locations could be transformed into the "centre round which gathered all the influences and developments" of importance. Japan's Ryukyu Archipelago, a chain of islands that have received little attention in print and are in fact barely visible on most modern maps, appears poised to take on a new significance in Asia-Pacific security affairs. While the modern strategic value of these islands may be overshadowed by that of the Strait of Hormuz or South China Sea, the geographic situation of the Ryukyus combined with their military capacity all but guarantees their "consequent interest" for Japanese and regional security. Indeed, how Japan (along with the United States) chooses to address its Ryukyu issues in the face of the PRC's growing defense capabilities and activity in this maritime arena will be a critical security question for policy makers in Tokyo and Washington in the decade ahead.

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#### NOTES

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1. Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea," *Harper's Monthly* (October 1897), pp. 680–91.
2. On the geostrategic relevance of the Indian Ocean see Robert Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2010). On the relevance of the South China Sea see, for instance, James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

3. Government of Japan documents refer to these islands as "offshore islands" or, more specifically, the "southwestern islands."

4. The government of Japan does not accept that the Senkakus/Diaoyus are in dispute and insists that the PRC and Taiwan are both unilaterally claiming ownership of them. The author is indebted to the previous work of Dr. James Holmes and Dr. Toshi Yoshihara on the general subject. See James Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, "The Japanese Archipelago through Chinese Eyes," Jamestown Foundation *China Brief* 10, no. 16 (5 August 2010), and Holmes and Yoshihara, "Ryukyu Chain in China's Island Strategy," Jamestown Foundation *China Brief* 10, no. 19 (10 September 2010).



5. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (1890; repr. New York: Dover, 1987), p. 20.
6. Mahan, “Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.”
7. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Warfare*, ed. Allan Westcott (Boston: Little, Brown, 1918), chap. 6.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
9. Nan Li, “The Evolution of China’s Naval Strategy and Capabilities: From ‘Near Coast’ and ‘Near Seas’ to ‘Far Seas,’” *Asian Security* 5, no. 2 (2009), pp. 144–69.
10. Quoted in Holmes and Yoshihara, “Japanese Archipelago through Chinese Eyes.”
11. Mahan, “Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.”
12. Yoichi Kato, “SDF Preparations All Have but Only One Target: China,” *Asahi Shimbun*, 1–2 January 2011. The author traveled to Miyako-jima in December 2010; see Eric Sayers, “A Day Trip to Miyako-jima,” *Information Dissemination* (blog), 18 January 2011, [www.informationdissemination.net](http://www.informationdissemination.net).
13. Shimoji has been discussed as one of the several offshore islands that could be an alternative to the Futenma Replacement Facility planned at Camp Schwab.
14. “Rare U.S. Warship Visit to Miyako Island Port Draws Protests,” *Japan Update*, 23 September 2010.
15. See “SDF, U.S. Ships Deployed for North’s Rocket,” *Japan Times*, 8 April 2012; and “PAC-3 Missile Interceptors Arrive at Miyako Island,” *House of Japan*, 7 December 2012.
16. Japanese Ministry of Defense officials, interviews with author, Tokyo, December 2010.
17. Mahan, “Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.”
18. *Ibid.*
19. This is already occurring, consistent with the NDPG of 2010.
20. Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2011* (Tokyo: [2011]), pp. 82–83, available at [www.mod.go.jp/](http://www.mod.go.jp/).
21. *Ibid.*
22. “Yin Zhuo: China Doesn’t Need to Inform Japan When Passing through Miyako Strait,” *People’s Daily Online*, 12 October 2012.
23. “Seven Chinese Navy Warships Skirt Okinawa,” *Japan Times*, 17 October 2012.
24. “Chinese Navy Fleet Enters West Pacific for Routine Training,” *Xinhua*, 28 November 2012.
25. *China’s National Defense in 2010* (n.p.: 31 March 2011), available at [www.china.org.cn/government/](http://www.china.org.cn/government/).
26. *Ibid.*
27. Li, “Evolution of China’s Naval Strategy and Capabilities,” p. 118.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. U.S. Defense Dept., *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2012*, Annual Report to Congress (Washington, D.C.: May 2012), available at [www.defense.gov/](http://www.defense.gov/).
31. *Ibid.*
32. Li, “Evolution of China’s Naval Strategy and Capabilities,” p. 119.
33. U.S. Defense Dept., *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2012*.
34. See Eric Sayers, “Defending Japan’s Southern Flank,” *Defense News*, 7 February 2011.
35. Government of Japan, *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2011 and Beyond* (Tokyo: Security Council and Cabinet, 17 December 2010), p. 14.
36. Government of Japan, *Mid-Term Defense Program (FY2011–FY2015)* (Tokyo: Security Council and Cabinet, 17 December 2010), p. 3.
37. “GSDF Coastal Unit to Monitor Islands,” *Kyodo News*, 18 December 2010.
38. *Ibid.*
39. Rie Ishiguro and Shinji Kitamura, “Japan Quake’s Economic Impact Worse than First Feared,” *Reuters*, 12 April 2011.
40. James Manicom, “Japan’s Role in Strengthening Maritime Security in Southeast Asia,” in *Maritime Security in Southeast Asia: US, Japanese, Regional, and Industry Strategies*,

ed. John Bradford et al., NBR Special Report 24 (Seattle, Wash.: National Bureau of Asian Research, November 2010), available at [www.nbr.org/](http://www.nbr.org/).

41. This maritime strategy based on separating missions into “areas” was discussed at length as a framework for JMSDF strategy during interviews conducted by the author at the JMSDF Staff College in December 2010.
42. “JMSDF Strategy and Sea Lanes Security,” briefing at the JMSDF Staff College, Tokyo, 2 December 2010. Also see Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes, “Don’t Expect Much from Japan in the Indian Ocean,” *Journal of Military and Strategies Studies* 13, no. 2 (Winter 2011).
43. See, for instance, Tetsuo Kotani, “Lifeline at Sea: Japan’s Policy towards the Indian Ocean Region,” *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 7, no. 2 (December 2011), and Yoshihara and Holmes, “Don’t Expect Much from Japan in the Indian Ocean.”
44. Also see Jennifer M. Lind, “Pacifism or Passing the Buck? Testing Theories of Japanese Security Policy,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 2004).
45. James E. Auer, *The Postwar Rearmament of Japanese Maritime Forces, 1945–1971* (New York: Praeger, 1973), pp. 133–47.

# RACE TO THE NORTH

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## China's Arctic Strategy and Its Implications

*Shiloh Rainwater*

**T**he Arctic, during the Cold War a locus of intense military competition between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, is rapidly reemerging as a geostrategic flash point. As accelerating climate change melts the Arctic's perennial sea ice, littoral as well as peripheral actors are preparing to exploit emergent economic and strategic opportunities in the High North. Although the possibility of armed conflict over Arctic resources has been somewhat discounted, a fair amount of saber rattling in recent years among the "Arctic Eight"—the United States, Russia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden—has given rise to the notion that circumpolar security actors may be priming for a "new kind of Cold War" in the North.<sup>1</sup> Russia, for example, has warned that countries could be at war within a decade over resources in the Arctic region.<sup>2</sup>

*Mr. Rainwater is a senior honors student studying political science and international relations at Pepperdine University, where he expects to graduate in spring 2013. After graduating, he plans to pursue his interest in international trade issues by obtaining a law degree in international law as well as a master's degree in international relations. He has conducted extensive research projects for various organizations, including policy analysis of democratic movements in the Middle East for Pepperdine's Communication Division and research into the geopolitical and logistical implications of operating nonprofits abroad.*

While a substantial body of literature has addressed the issue of Arctic sovereignty disputes and the potential for conflict between the circumpolar states, much less attention has been devoted to the "globalization" of these affairs. Non-Arctic states, including China, India, and Italy, as well as the European Union collectively, are making preparations to exploit a seasonally ice-free Arctic, thus complicating the Arctic's already fragile security environment. As the Finnish foreign minister stated in 2009, "The Arctic is evolving from a regional frozen backwater into a global hot issue."<sup>3</sup>

Most notable among these external actors is the People's Republic of China (PRC), which has maintained a vast, well-funded Arctic research apparatus since the mid-1990s and has invested heavily in Arctic-resource projects in recent years. For China's energy import-dependent economy, Arctic resources and sea-lanes present a welcome strategic remedy. In light of the nation's growing Arctic interests, Chinese leaders have begun to promulgate the notion that China is a "near-Arctic state" and a "stakeholder" in Arctic affairs.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding China's assertiveness with respect to its Arctic interests, important questions remain as to how it will pursue these ambitions, as it possesses neither Arctic territory nor the ability to vote on official policy at the Arctic Council.<sup>5</sup> Cognizant of these inherent disadvantages, the PRC is leveraging its economic, political, and diplomatic might in order to secure for itself a say in Arctic affairs.

This article analyzes the extent to which the PRC is pursuing foreign policies, whether "status quo" or "revisionist," in the Arctic, in an attempt to discern whether a "China threat" will materialize in the High North. While China's overall position as a status quo or revisionist power is an issue beyond the scope of this article, analysis of China's Arctic strategy can be profitably couched in this terminology. Traditionally, status quo states are considered those that have "participated in designing the 'rules of the game' and stand to benefit from these rules," while revisionist states are those that "express a 'general dissatisfaction' with their 'position in the system'" and have a "desire to redraft the rules by which relations among nations work."<sup>6</sup> Status quo states aim to maintain the balance of power "as it exists at a particular moment in history";<sup>7</sup> revisionist nations resort to military force to "change the status quo and to extend their values."<sup>8</sup>

Recent scholarship has expanded on this delineation, suggesting that rather than a dichotomy, the status quo/revisionist distinction is more usefully considered a complex spectrum that takes into account states that fall somewhere between its extremes. For example, in his pioneering 2003 study on China, Alastair Iain Johnston proposed five levels of analysis by which to determine whether an actor is outside a status quo "international community." Moving from the least to the most threatening with respect to the status quo, a non-status quo actor either minimally participates in the regulatory institutions of an international community; participates in these institutions yet breaks the rules and norms of the community; participates in these institutions and temporarily adheres to the community's rules and norms yet attempts to "change these rules and norms in ways that defeat the original purposes of the institution and the community"; exhibits a preference for a "radical redistribution of material power in the international system"; or dedicates itself to realizing such a redistribution of power "and to this end military power is considered to be a critical tool."<sup>9</sup> The following analysis suggests that China's Arctic strategy is mildly revisionist, as it registers

in the middle of Johnston's spectrum, posing both challenges and opportunities for cooperation with the circumpolar states.

Two recommendations are ultimately presented. First, the circumpolar states must be careful not to misread and in turn to overreact to China's strategy, so as to avoid conflict. Illuminating the status quo and revisionist strains in China's strategy will contribute to informed policy debates and help avert such miscalculation. Second, because there is strong potential for cooperation with China on Arctic development and governance, the Arctic states should seek to incorporate China's interests into their policy calculus. This article will draw attention to those interests and opportunities for cooperation.

### FUELING THE DRAGON: ENERGY INSECURITIES

Will the twenty-first century belong to China? In strictly economic terms, the shift of global power to China seems inevitable. Since Deng Xiaoping's 1978 market reforms, China has sustained impressive 8–10 percent annual gross-domestic-product growth rates and is projected by the International Monetary Fund to overtake the United States by 2016.<sup>10</sup> According to one scholar, by 2030 China's economic dominance relative to American decline will yield a near-unipolar world in which China is supreme.<sup>11</sup> In many respects, the PRC is already economically dominant. China acts as the world's creditor, is the world's biggest export market, and is the world's largest manufacturing nation. In light of its status as an economic giant despite its being a relatively "poor" nation, one columnist has referred to the PRC as a "premature superpower."<sup>12</sup>

Despite this rather impressive outlook, sustaining China's economic momentum poses a considerable strategic problem for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Because of the nation's limited domestic-resource base, China's breakneck industrialization, urbanization, and booming transportation and manufacturing sectors have bred massive reliance on foreign resources, particularly petroleum. As the world's second-largest importer of goods and second-largest oil consumer, China fears that supply disruptions or shortages could derail its continued economic momentum, thus causing social unrest and threatening the survival of the regime. Chinese leaders, tremendously anxious at the prospect of such an economic downturn, have identified oil as a component of China's national economic security since 2003.<sup>13</sup>

Since China became a net oil importer in 1993, PRC dependence on foreign energy markets has rapidly increased. Oil consumption is currently estimated at 9.9 million barrels per day, half of which is imported.<sup>14</sup> Long-term projections yield little consolation in this regard. According to the International Energy Agency, by 2020 China will become the world's largest net importer of oil, with net imports reaching thirteen million barrels per day by 2035.<sup>15</sup> China also suffers

from a rapidly increasing natural-gas import gap, and its demand is projected to increase by 6 percent annually through 2035.<sup>16</sup>

Chinese security analysts and policy makers express tremendous concern over this “excessive” dependence on foreign energy, the vast majority of which relies on seaborne transportation.<sup>17</sup> Foreign reliance presents a number of strategic issues for the PRC, particularly vulnerability. For example, half of China’s oil originates in the politically unstable Middle East and subsequently flows through foreign-controlled sea lines of communication (SLOCs).<sup>18</sup> Of particular concern is the safety of supplies transiting the Strait of Malacca, which connects the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. With 85 percent of its oil imports passing through the narrow 1.5-mile-wide strait, China worries that its strategic lifeline is vulnerable to a hostile shutdown by the littoral states (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore). In response to this “Malacca dilemma,” President Hu Jintao has called for new strategies to alleviate the PRC’s vulnerability, reflecting deep-seated anxieties within the CCP over the security of China’s energy imports.<sup>19</sup>

China also worries that many of its vessels sail through pirate-infested waters.<sup>20</sup> In 2010 piracy attacks in the Malacca Strait accounted for 15.7 percent of the worldwide total.<sup>21</sup> Somali pirates are also a major concern for ships sailing toward the Suez Canal through the Gulf of Aden, where as a consequence ship-insurance premiums have skyrocketed.<sup>22</sup> So severe has the threat of piracy become that some shipping companies have begun to divert their vessels to the longer and more expensive route around the southern tip of Africa.

Since China’s economic momentum depends significantly on long-term access to critical resource inputs, the primary objective of China’s foreign policy is resource acquisition. China’s energy-import dependence, therefore, has profound implications for its international behavior and is the subject of considerable external and internal speculation. The debate surrounding China’s resource strategy is framed by competing archetypes of China’s rise.<sup>23</sup> Analysts who view China as a status quo power argue that PRC foreign-oil dependence is a vehicle for greater international cooperation and integration. For those who view China as a revisionist state, however, oil dependence is a catalyst for conflict.

Resource diplomacy literature lends credence to the first perspective. China’s resource-diplomacy strategy aims to diversify its oil supply away from politically and geographically volatile regions by fostering closer ties with major oil-producing states around the world.<sup>24</sup> Since 1992, this strategy has enabled Chinese oil companies to invest heavily in foreign oil-infrastructure projects, acquire equity in oil industry assets, and secure oil supply contracts with foreign firms. The state oil company PetroChina is noteworthy in this regard, having spearheaded seventy-five projects in twenty-nine states around the world by 2009.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, China is particularly well positioned to inject large amounts of capital into foreign energy markets, as it is flush with foreign-exchange reserves. China's hope is that promoting economic interdependence will preclude oil suppliers from withholding oil exports in the event of an international crisis.

China's resource diplomacy also seeks to ensure the safety of its energy imports by strengthening ties with governments along major sea routes. From the Persian Gulf to the South China Sea, China has secured access to commercial port and airfield facilities through diplomatic arrangements in order to provide a support network for its maritime assets in militarily distant regions. Despite some fears in New Delhi that China is encircling the Indian Ocean with this "string of pearls" strategy, the reality appears more benign and less coordinated;<sup>26</sup> there is no evidence that China is establishing a system of overseas military bases. Instead, China's strategy more closely resembles the creation of what American officials refer to as "places," as opposed to bases.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast, rising "energy nationalism" in China, defined by assertive governmental action to obtain and protect energy supplies, has spurred the modernization of the Chinese navy in recent years to deter rival claimants from resource-rich regions and to provide security for the nation's maritime supply routes.<sup>28</sup> This buildup gives rise to the notion that foreign-oil dependence could lead to conflict rather than cooperation. Underlying Beijing's naval modernization is a shift in Chinese strategic culture, which has become imbued by the doctrine of early-twentieth-century American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, who argued that the ability to protect commerce by engaging naval forces in decisive battle has always been a determining factor in world history.<sup>29</sup> In 2010 Rear Admiral Zhang Huachen alluded to this strategic imperative, stating, "With the expansion of the country's economic interests, the navy wants to better protect the country's transportation routes and the safety of our major sea lanes."<sup>30</sup>

China's new strategy represents a shift from coastal to "far sea" defense.<sup>31</sup> According to Beijing's 2008 defense white paper, "the Navy has been striving to improve in an all-round way its capabilities of integrated offshore operations, strategic deterrence and strategic counterattacks, and to gradually develop its capabilities of conducting cooperation in distant waters."<sup>32</sup> Since 1993, the budget of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has increased by an average of 15 percent annually, with a significant portion allocated to the navy in recent years. Included in China's blue-water naval buildup are antiship ballistic missiles, aircraft, under-sea mines, optical satellites, surface ships, and a sophisticated submarine force that could outnumber the U.S. Navy's within fifteen years.<sup>33</sup> China also recently acquired its first aircraft carrier, an important symbol of power projection in its own right.<sup>34</sup> To date, the most substantial achievement of the PLA Navy (PLAN)



in terms of far-sea missions has been its deployment of warships to conduct counterpiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since late 2008. While in itself a limited exercise of power projection focused on the protection of commercial interests, this deployment is emblematic of China's growing interest in far-sea operations and could portend future naval missions to protect distant interests more generally.

In sum, China's global energy strategy relies on both diplomatic and military components. Energy insecurity has driven the PRC to diversify oil suppliers and modernize its navy to provide security of distant sea lines of communication (SLOCs). As China looks north to the Arctic Circle to alleviate further its energy needs, Chinese officials will continue to pursue this hybrid strategy, emphasizing oil diplomacy while analyzing the potential for PLAN operations to protect emergent Arctic trade routes.

## GRAND STRATEGY AND FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES

Analysis of Chinese grand strategy literature offers key insights into China's foreign-policy goals and international behavior. During the 1990s, improvements in China's military capabilities led the United States to identify China as the greatest modern threat to American primacy.<sup>35</sup> In response, under Jiang Zemin's leadership, China began to focus on dispelling fears of the "China threat," characterizing its rise as peaceful and representing itself as "a responsible great power." Successive generations of Chinese leadership have pursued this strategy in differing ways, as when China adopted the term "Peaceful Development" instead of "Peaceful Rise" in 2004.<sup>36</sup> The central logic of China's grand strategy has remained the same, however, since 1996, when Chinese leaders reached a consensus on a foreign-policy line. According to one analyst, China's grand strategy is designed to "sustain the conditions necessary for continuing China's program of economic and military modernization as well as to minimize the risk that others, most importantly the peerless United States, will view the ongoing increase in China's capabilities as an unacceptably dangerous threat that must be parried or perhaps even forestalled."<sup>37</sup> In short, China's grand strategy aims to facilitate its rise to great-power status without provoking a counterbalancing reaction.

Empirically, China's grand strategy attends first to perceived threats to core interests.<sup>38</sup> In 2004 Chinese diplomacy incorporated "core interests" into its lexicon and has since utilized the term assertively to pressure foreign actors to respect the PRC's agenda.<sup>39</sup> Over the years, China's official core interests have varied greatly, ranging from national reunification to even human rights, the most explicit concerns being "sovereignty and territorial integrity."<sup>40</sup> Also, and for the first time, the 2011 white paper *China's Peaceful Development* explicitly identified the nation's political system as a core interest, along with economic and



social development.<sup>41</sup> Regime maintenance, economic development, and territorial integrity are therefore the PRC's top strategic priorities informing its foreign policy decisions.

While officially China is committed to peaceful development in order to achieve great-power status and usher in an era of multipolarity, China's actions with respect to preserving the integrity of its core interests seem to complicate that narrative.<sup>42</sup> In particular, China has not hesitated to employ naval force to enforce its sweeping territorial claims in the resource-rich South China Sea, claims that extend its borders more than a thousand miles from the mainland—substantially farther than the two-hundred-nautical-mile limit of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).<sup>43</sup> Examples include the 1974 battle of the Paracel Islands, the 1988 Johnson Reef skirmish, and the 2005 scuffle with Vietnamese fishing boats near Hainan Island, as well as a series of recent clashes over sovereignty between units of the PLAN and vessels from Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines. According to PLA doctrine, “If ‘an enemy offends our national interests it means that the enemy has already fired the first shot,’ in which case the PLA’s mission is ‘to do all we can to dominate the enemy by striking first.’”<sup>44</sup>

Under this logic, China could resort to armed force to maintain its economic and political core interests. At the heart of China's political culture is a deep insecurity over sustaining the nation's rapid modernization, pointing to an intrinsic relationship between China's core interests of regime maintenance and economic development, on one hand, and the CCP's legitimacy, on the other, the latter resting on the party's ability to keep unemployment low while satisfying the Chinese people's demands for rising living standards.<sup>45</sup> Economic health is therefore the cornerstone of social stability and, subsequently, CCP legitimacy. To maintain social harmony and hold on to power, the CCP could utilize military force to secure economic interests in the event of a supply disruption or shortage. As demonstrated by China's brutal suppression of the Tiananmen Square protests in the spring of 1989, the CCP will resort to any means necessary for the stability of its regime.

Chinese grand-strategy literature, in short, suggests that China's Arctic strategy has the potential to lead to conflict, albeit under limited circumstances. If at some point China's economic momentum becomes heavily reliant on Arctic resources and shipping lanes, a supply disruption could lead the PRC to deploy significant naval forces to the region to secure its interests in order to avert domestic social unrest. Still, it will be quite some time before the Arctic could become a key strategic theater for China's economic interests, providing an opportunity for the Arctic states to formulate in advance policy in response to China's entrance into the High North.

## CHINA LOOKS NORTH

China's global resource strategy has led the PRC to the far corners of the earth, from Venezuelan oil fields to energy-rich Siberia. Now, as a consequence of accelerating climate change and the melting of the polar ice cap, China is increasingly looking to the Arctic Circle for new resource-extraction and maritime-shipping opportunities. Current estimates as to when the Arctic could be seasonally ice-free have varied greatly from as early as summer 2013 to as late as 2040; in any case, the Arctic is evidently thawing more rapidly than most climate models initially predicted.<sup>46</sup> In August 2012, for example, the National Snow and Ice Data Center observed that Arctic sea-ice extent had reached the lowest level on record, prompting concerns about the exponential speed at which the polar ice is disappearing.<sup>47</sup> Chinese leaders are keenly aware of this trend and are making calculated preparations to exploit an ice-free Arctic.

Since the mid-1990s, China's extensive polar research program has spearheaded its Arctic policy. Under the direction of the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration (CAA), the mammoth Ukrainian-built icebreaker *Xuelong* has conducted five Arctic research expeditions since 1999, reaching the geographic North Pole for the first time during its fourth expedition, in 2010. In 2004 the Polar Research Institute of China established a permanent Arctic research station at Ny-Ålesund, in Norway's Svalbard Archipelago, to monitor Arctic climate change and its effects on China's continental and oceanic environment.<sup>48</sup> The Huanghe (Yellow River) station serves as a physical indicator of both the global scope of China's scientific interests and its entrance into the "polar club."<sup>49</sup>

Impressive as is China's polar research apparatus in its current form, Beijing is eager to augment its operations in the Arctic. China's twelfth five-year plan (2011–15) reflects this ambition, announcing three new Arctic expeditions to be conducted before 2015.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, by 2014 China intends to launch the first of a series of new icebreakers to join *Xuelong*, thus enabling the CAA to conduct more frequent polar exploration and research missions.<sup>51</sup> When the 1.25-billion-yuan (\$198 million), eight-thousand-ton vessel sets sail, China will possess icebreakers that are larger than and qualitatively superior to those of the United States and Canada.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to constructing an icebreaker fleet, the PRC is acquiring various technologies essential to exploiting new economic opportunities in the Arctic. China is building ice-strengthened bulk carriers and tankers capable of commercial Arctic navigation, as well as planes that can fly in harsh polar weather conditions, in order to expand Beijing's aviation network into the Arctic and assist in emergency rescue missions.<sup>53</sup> Soon China may also be capable of polar oil extraction, as it recently acquired deepwater drilling technologies, although the Arctic's residual ice sheet will greatly complicate such operations.<sup>54</sup>

While Chinese researchers express genuine concern over Arctic climate change (one publication stated that it is more significant than “the international debt crisis or the demise of the Libyan dictatorship”), the PRC is apparently more interested in the economic implications of Arctic warming than in its environmental consequences.<sup>55</sup> According to a widely circulated 2008 U.S. Geological Survey report, it is estimated that recoverable petroleum resources in the Arctic Circle account for “13 percent of the undiscovered oil, 30 percent of the undiscovered natural gas, and 20 percent of the undiscovered natural gas liquids in the world.”<sup>56</sup> Around 84 percent of these reserves are thought to reside in offshore areas. The Arctic also potentially holds 9 percent of the world’s coal and significant deposits of diamonds, gold, and uranium. China, eager to exploit these resources, has grown quite vocal in its view that these are “global resources, not regional.”<sup>57</sup>

Similarly enticing is the prospect of commercial shipping through the Northern Sea Route, adjacent to Russia’s polar coast, and through the Northwest Passage, which transits Canadian waters. A Transpolar Sea Route, through the center of the Arctic Ocean, could also prove a boon for shipping, yet this prospect will not be viable for some time, until ice-free seasons lengthen. Redirecting trade through an Arctic sea-lane could greatly alleviate PRC energy insecurities by allowing commercial vessels to avoid the pirate-infested Gulf of Aden and South China Sea as well as such politically volatile regions as the Middle East. This would contribute to the resolution of China’s “Malacca dilemma,” as that narrow choke point would no longer dictate global trade patterns. Diverting oil supplies through the Arctic would also reduce Chinese dependence on the Strait of Hormuz (known in China as “the oil strait”), therefore reducing the vulnerability of those supplies to a hostile shutdown.<sup>58</sup>

Arctic sea-lanes could also be tremendous cost savers, as they are much shorter than existing routes. A voyage from Rotterdam to Shanghai via the Northern Sea Route, for example, is 22 percent shorter than by the current route through the Suez Canal. Navigating the Northwest Passage would cut the Suez distance by 15 percent.<sup>59</sup> In addition to saving time and tons of bunker fuel, carriers would also avoid prohibitive vessel regulations, such as size restrictions, making Arctic sea-lanes attractive for megaships that are too large to pass through current routes.<sup>60</sup> With these advantages in mind, President Vladimir Putin of Russia has touted the Northern Sea Route as an emerging rival to the Suez and Panama Canals.<sup>61</sup> Chinese analysts share Putin’s optimism, calculating that China could save a staggering \$60–\$120 billion per year solely by diverting trade through the Northern Sea Route.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, aside from the economic advantages of Arctic shipping, additional vessels will inevitably be diverted through the Arctic in any case, as both the Suez and Panama Canals are already operating at maximum capacity.<sup>63</sup>

China is fully aware of this reality and is making preparations to capitalize on the opening of the High North to commercial shipping.

### CHINA'S ARCTIC STRATEGY

While eager to access Arctic resources and shipping opportunities, China is also conscious of its disadvantaged status as a non-Arctic state. China's Arctic strategy therefore privileges cooperation over confrontation so as to position the nation as an Arctic power while preserving the Arctic status quo and avoiding countermeasures from the circumpolar states. This strategy emphasizes soft power through scientific diplomacy, participation in Arctic institutions, and resource diplomacy.

The first component of China's strategy, scientific diplomacy, promotes cooperation with the Arctic Eight on Arctic climate change and ecological studies. To address these issues, China will soon open its first international Arctic cooperation and research institute in Shanghai.<sup>64</sup> Further, since 1996 China has participated as a member of the International Arctic Science Committee, which promotes multidisciplinary research on the Arctic and its impact on the world. Chinese scientists also consistently participate in international forums on the Arctic environment, such as the Arctic Science Summit Week and the International Polar Year Programme.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to scientific ventures, China is attempting to augment further its influence through participation in Arctic governance. In 2007, China was admitted as an ad hoc observer to the Arctic Council, the most influential intergovernmental organization in the region. Yet to the distress of CCP leaders, China's application for full observer status on the council has been denied three times and is unlikely to be granted in the near future. Each of the council's members has veto power over new accessions, and while some member countries favor China's bid, there is little consensus about it in the council as a whole. Norway, for example, has threatened to veto China's application since 2010, when Beijing halted political and human rights discourse with Oslo in response to the awarding to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo of the Nobel Peace Prize. Moreover, at the 2011 ministerial meeting a new requirement was established that observers recognize the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the littoral nations over the Arctic, a position that conflicts with China's interests as a non-Arctic state.

Despite this rather bleak outlook, China's level of participation in Arctic affairs is notably rising, primarily as a consequence of its resource-diplomacy strategy. Consistent with its global strategy in that realm, China is fostering closer ties with the circumpolar states and investing in resource projects in the Arctic to diversify its supply away from politically volatile regions. Arctic resources require enormous foreign investment to develop, and China, flush with capital, is well positioned to facilitate this investment and thus acquire a major stake. In turn,

CCP leaders hope the Arctic states will be inclined to back Chinese interests in the region.

Since Canada exercises dominion over the Northwest Passage and will chair the Arctic Council for two years beginning in April 2013, Beijing is paying special attention to Ottawa. China is now Canada's second-largest trading partner and seventh-largest source of foreign direct investment, with investments topping twenty billion dollars in 2011.<sup>66</sup> In the past two years alone, Chinese state-owned companies such as Sinopec and the China National Offshore Oil Corporation have invested more than sixteen billion dollars in Canadian energy.<sup>67</sup> China also accounts for 50 percent of the demand for Canadian minerals, demonstrating its capacity to become the largest trading partner and foreign investor in the Canadian Arctic.<sup>68</sup> Despite warming Sino-Canadian relations as a consequence of growing economic ties, however, Canada has thus far proved unwilling to support China's accession to the Arctic Council, causing the PRC to seek friends in other places.<sup>69</sup>

Russia has similarly attracted growing Chinese investment and trade. With its vast Arctic coastline, Russia not only controls the lion's share of Arctic resources within its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) but controls much of the Northern Sea Route. Against this backdrop, the China National Petroleum Corporation and the Russian Sovcomflot Group have signed an agreement regarding the shipment of hydrocarbons along the Northern Sea Route.<sup>70</sup> Russia has also invited China to engage in joint exploration and exploitation ventures for hydrocarbon deposits in its Arctic offshore.<sup>71</sup> In 2012 China and Russia further deepened economic ties by signing twenty-seven trade contracts totaling fifteen billion dollars and creating a four-billion-dollar investment fund.<sup>72</sup> Yet even with these developments, Russia, arguably the most important Arctic player, has remained ambiguous regarding China's accession to the Arctic Council, having stated in July 2011 that it did not "in principle" oppose China's application.<sup>73</sup>

If the PRC has found little support for its Arctic Council bid in Norway, Canada, and Russia, it has gained support from other Arctic players, particularly Iceland. Since 2008, when Reykjavík's economy collapsed, China has injected substantial investment into the country, anticipating that it will soon become a logistics hub as the Arctic warms. In April 2012 Premier Wen Jiabao traveled to Iceland and signed a number of bilateral deals, including a framework accord on North Pole cooperation. In response to these agreements, Iceland's prime minister, Johanna Sigurdardottir, has expressed her country's support for China's accession to the council as a permanent observer.<sup>74</sup>

Denmark too has voiced support for China's interests in the Arctic. On 28 October 2011 Denmark's ambassador to China, Friis Arne Petersen, stated that China has "natural and legitimate economic and scientific interests in the

Arctic.”<sup>75</sup> Denmark has also declared that it “would like to see China as a permanent observer” at the Arctic Council.<sup>76</sup> This support coincides with Chinese interests in developing resources in Denmark’s constituent country Greenland, which lacks the ability to develop its resources independently. Among Greenland’s substantial resource deposits are rare-earth minerals, uranium, iron ore, lead, zinc, gemstones, and petroleum, all magnets for Chinese investment.

In sum, China’s strategy of scientific diplomacy, participation in Arctic institutions, and resource diplomacy has proved fairly successful, enabling the PRC to acquire peacefully a (limited) say in Arctic affairs. Through these measures China has shored up soft power in the region by successfully aligning the interests of some of the Arctic states with its own. In addition to Denmark and Iceland, China has garnered support for its accession to the Arctic Council from Sweden, also a member.<sup>77</sup> Even the Inuit and other indigenous peoples represented at the Arctic Council have said that they do not object to the expansion of the council, as long as their own voices remain heard.<sup>78</sup>

Yet China faces a further obstacle to participation in Arctic affairs, in the form of competition with other non-Arctic states. Prominent among those countries vying for admission to the Arctic Council as permanent observers are India, Brazil, Japan, South Korea, the European Union, and a number of individual European states. The growing Arctic interests of these states demonstrate that the race to the High North has truly become global, adding to the complexity of Arctic geopolitics. Notably, India, already a competitor with China in South Asia, has established a formidable Arctic research program of its own, including a permanent research station in the Svalbard Archipelago and numerous research expeditions.<sup>79</sup> But while the council may expand to admit a few of these states as observers, it is unlikely that many will gain seats, since present members are wary of seeing their own influence diminished.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, China, it seems, is not highly favored for accession, as indicated by a January 2011 survey of public opinion in the eight Arctic states that found that “China is the least attractive partner to all current Arctic Council countries [save for Russia].”<sup>81</sup> These factors will tend to intensify Chinese relations with other non-Arctic states as Beijing fights to have a say in Arctic affairs.

## CHINA: POTENTIAL REVISIONIST ARCTIC POWER

Despite its many achievements in terms of investment and cooperation, China fears it is being shut out of the Arctic. In 2008, for example, the “Arctic Five”—Canada, Russia, the United States, Denmark, and Norway—signed the Ilulissat Declaration, committing themselves to peaceful resolution of territorial sovereignty disputes in the Arctic.<sup>82</sup> However, with its narrow definition of Arctic matters as regional ones, the declaration perceptually attempts to exclude non-Arctic

states from them.<sup>83</sup> China fears that in this fashion the circumpolar states will “gang up and ‘carve up the Arctic melon’ and its natural resources among themselves, to the exclusion of everyone else.”<sup>84</sup> To secure its position in Arctic affairs, therefore, Beijing propagates the notion that it has rights in the Arctic, engages in “lawfare” to obfuscate the legal framework, advocates institutional reform, and cultivates hard-power measures to secure its interests.

First and foremost, China harbors a deep sense of entitlement to Arctic resources, sea-lanes, and governance. This entitlement relies on various justifications. As a Northern Hemisphere country that is affected by Arctic warming, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and the world’s most populous state, China sees its role in Arctic affairs as indispensable. Chinese rear admiral Yin Zhuo made this point in March 2010, proclaiming that “the Arctic belongs to all the people around the world as no nation has sovereignty over it.”<sup>85</sup> Similarly, in 2009 Hu Zhengyue, China’s assistant minister of foreign affairs, warned that Arctic countries should “ensure a balance of coastal countries’ interests and the common interests of the international community.”<sup>86</sup> Hu, it seems, was advising the circumpolar states not to lock up for themselves the resources and sea-lanes of the Arctic.

China further asserts its rights by employing the language of UNCLOS to argue that the Arctic and its resources are the “common heritage of all humankind” and do not belong exclusively to the Arctic Five.<sup>87</sup> In reality, “common heritage” in UNCLOS refers to the high seas, designated by UNCLOS as the area that lies beyond EEZ boundaries. If the current territorial and continental-shelf claims of the circumpolar states are ultimately accepted as presented, 88 percent of the Arctic seabed would likely fall under their combined sovereign EEZ jurisdictions, with the small “doughnut hole” in the center qualifying as the common heritage.<sup>88</sup> Since, however, most of the resource wealth in the Arctic lies within these claims, China perpetuates the notion that the entire Arctic Ocean is the common heritage of humankind so as to expand its legal rights there.<sup>89</sup> This sort of “lawfare,” or misuse of the “law as a substitute for traditional military means to achieve an operational objective,” is an essential component of China’s strategy, enabling the PRC to circumvent its weaker status as a non-Arctic state through asymmetrical means.<sup>90</sup>

China also appears bent on reforming the institutions governing the Arctic so as to create for itself a more favorable legal environment. China’s national news magazine *Beijing Review* has boldly asserted that every treaty and organization constituting the Arctic legal regime—including UNCLOS, the International Maritime Organization, and the Arctic Council—is riddled with flaws and must be reformed. For example, in China’s view the laws enacted by the Arctic Council are not legally binding and “a politically valid . . . Arctic governance system



has yet to be established.” Moreover, China resents the fact that Arctic affairs are dominated by the littoral states, claiming that “it is unimaginable that non-Arctic states will remain users of Arctic shipping routes and consumers of Arctic energy without playing a role in the decision-making process. . . . [A]n end to the Arctic states’ monopoly of Arctic affairs is now imperative.”<sup>91</sup>

One area that China wishes to reform is free navigation through Arctic sea-lanes. According to UNCLOS, while foreign vessels are granted the right of “innocent passage” through territorial waters and free navigation through exclusive economic zones, states retain full sovereignty over internal waters—waters on the landward side of the baseline from which the territorial zone is demarcated—and can restrict shipping therein. Under this provision, Russia has declared that currently accessible portions of the Northern Sea Route fall within its internal waters;<sup>92</sup> for its part, Canada has asserted that the Northwest Passage constitutes “historic internal waters.”<sup>93</sup> In response, some Chinese scholars and government officials have suggested that the Svalbard Treaty—the instrument that governs the international use of Norway’s Svalbard Archipelago, where China maintains its sole Arctic research station—could be used as a model for resolving Canada’s claims of sovereignty over the Northwest Passage.<sup>94</sup> Under such an agreement, Canada would retain full sovereignty over the passage but with the provision that international shipping would be allowed free navigation rights. However, Canada, like Russia, places an extremely high premium on its Arctic sovereignty and is unlikely to favor such a proposal.<sup>95</sup>

In light of these disadvantages, some speculation has arisen as to whether China, which has an extensive history of advocating its own sovereignty rights while disregarding the claims of other states, will respect the sovereign claims of the circumpolar states or instead utilize military force to secure its interests. In fact, a Chinese military presence in the Arctic is not beyond the realm of possibility, and the idea is entertained with some seriousness in the PRC. For example, Li Zhenfu of Dalian Maritime University has written that the Arctic “has significant military value, a fact recognized by other countries.” Similarly, the PLA, which has apparently assumed the role of guardian of China’s core national interests, has adopted a strident tone on Arctic affairs. In 2008, for example, Senior Colonel Han Xudong warned that the “possibility of use of force cannot be ruled out in the Arctic due to complex sovereignty disputes.”<sup>96</sup> In contrast, Chinese political officials have expressed a preference for cooperative resolution of Arctic disputes. This disjunction between Chinese military and political commentary hints at internal divisions over Arctic strategy and raises questions whether the PLA is driving China’s economic and strategic fixation with the Arctic. To the extent that in fact it is, PLA posturing could translate into action.

With its naval modernization program now aimed at “far-sea defense,” a Chinese military presence in the Arctic could materialize as Beijing becomes more reliant on Arctic resources and sea-lanes to fuel its economy. China could deploy submarines or surface warships into the Arctic to conduct surveillance, defend economic interests, or accomplish strategic goals. In recent years the PLAN has grown increasingly assertive, as in 2009, when five Chinese vessels stalked USNS *Impeccable*, ostensibly defending China’s territorial claims in the South China Sea.<sup>97</sup> David Curtis Wright has argued that given this trend, along with “the brazen nuclear-powered submarine violation of Japanese territorial waters on 10 November 2004, the lurking of one or more Chinese submarines in the Arctic should not come as much of a surprise, if it has not happened already.”<sup>98</sup> In fact, *Xuelong*’s oceanographic studies and sea-bottom research during its 1999 expedition had “operational implications for the PLAN’s antisubmarine warfare (ASW) capability,” suggesting that China could already be making preparations for a military contingency in the High North.<sup>99</sup> In addition to these considerations, China might also find an Arctic naval presence attractive as it would constitute a strategic vantage point from which to exert pressure on the United States in the event of a confrontation over, for example, Taiwan.

At a minimum, when climate change makes the sea routes and resources of the Arctic truly profitable, China may seek to establish a naval presence along the Bering Strait to provide trade security. No more than fifty-two nautical miles wide, the Bering Strait, which separates Alaska and Russia, was referred to as the “Ice Curtain” during the Cold War and is now sometimes called the “Bering Gate.”<sup>100</sup> As China’s only entry point into the Arctic, the Bering Strait is a narrow choke point through which all of the nation’s energy and trade transiting the Arctic will have to pass. The PLAN, therefore, will be deeply concerned with its safety.

## CHANGING THE RULES

China’s entrance into the Arctic signals the reality that Arctic affairs may no longer be considered strictly regional, as climate change makes the Arctic’s vast resource wealth and shipping lanes accessible to the world. When formulating Arctic policy, therefore, circumpolar actors must take into account the intentions of non-Arctic states. The foregoing analysis is relevant to that decision calculus, as it illuminates the status quo and revisionist strains in China’s Arctic strategy.

It appears that China’s Arctic strategy qualifies under the third level of Alastair Iain Johnston’s framework referred to above, which holds that a non-status quo actor may participate in the institutions of an international community and temporarily adhere to its rules and norms yet, if given the opportunity, attempt to “change these rules and norms in ways that defeat the original purposes of the

institution and the community.” While China’s strategy stresses cooperation and participation in existing Arctic institutions, such as the Arctic Council, it also challenges the rules and norms protecting the exclusive rights of the circumpolar states. For example, China’s claim that Arctic resources are global contradicts the norm and legal principle that Arctic affairs are regional affairs. Still, beyond military and strategic circles, China has displayed no intention of realizing a “radical redistribution” of material power in the Arctic through military means. Since China’s strategy favors institutional and normative reform over military conflict, China must be considered a mildly revisionist Arctic power.

Nevertheless, the potential for conflict exists, and its likelihood will depend to a significant degree on how the circumpolar states react to China’s Arctic ambitions. China’s strategy emphasizes the status quo only so long as that proves conducive to its “core interests”; Beijing could pursue more revisionist policies if it perceived these interests as severely threatened. If at some point the CCP were to determine that supply disruptions or a blockade of commercial vessels threatened its economic interests in the Arctic to the point of impacting Chinese social, and subsequently regime, stability, it could respond with military force. To reduce the likelihood of such a conflict, the Arctic Eight should incorporate PRC interests into their Arctic policy calculus, in two basic ways.

First, the circumpolar states must be cautious not to overreact to a Chinese presence in the Arctic. This is not to say that they should avoid precautionary measures; prudence dictates that the Arctic Eight prepare for military contingencies and protect their northern sovereignty should, for instance, the strategic value of the Arctic region eventually attract Chinese warships for protecting trade or exerting pressure on the United States. Still, the logic of the security dilemma suggests that heavy Arctic militarization or inflammatory rhetoric could provoke conflict if regional states, worried about China’s growing influence, were to engage in excessive military posturing and thereby intensify China’s concerns.

Second, the Arctic Eight should seek to include, rather than exclude, China in Arctic institutions and agreements, which they can do without ceding their own rights. Admission of the PRC as a permanent observer country to the Arctic Council, for example, would go far toward meeting Chinese interests. A number of non-Arctic countries (all of them European) already operate as permanent observers to the council, and the expansion of such a right to an East Asian country would enhance the organization’s soft power in that region. More importantly, admission of China to the Arctic Council as a permanent observer would not significantly diminish the influence of the Arctic Eight, as, among other limitations, observers do not have voting privileges. Given this point, along with the fact that Chinese and American interests are aligned on such issues as free navigation

through the Northwest Passage, Washington would be well served to advocate China's accession to the council.

China's Arctic strategy remains in its formative stages. Yet even if a Chinese threat to Arctic security never materializes, the unfolding race to the north will tend to intensify Sino-Arctic strategic suspicion, as well as tension between China and other non-Arctic states seeking a say in Arctic affairs. To avoid a destabilizing escalation, it will be important not only for the littoral states to be inclusive of China but also for the PRC to improve the transparency of its Arctic policy making by clarifying its intentions in the High North.

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#### NOTES

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1. For example, Canada has bolstered its Arctic security with growing numbers of border rangers and plans to construct new offshore patrol ships; Denmark, an Arctic-territorial state by virtue of its autonomous constituent country Greenland, has indicated that it will establish an Arctic military command and task force in the coming years; in 2009 the U.S. Navy announced an "Arctic Roadmap" calling for increased readiness, cooperation, and identification of potential conflict in the Arctic region; in 2007 Russia resumed strategic bomber flights over the Arctic and in 2011 announced that it would establish military units specially trained for operations in the Arctic; in 2012 Norway indicated that it will rename the army's 2nd Battalion the "Arctic Battalion" and will equip it to protect its Arctic territory; Canada, Denmark, and the United States have also conducted joint military exercises, and in early 2012 the Arctic Eight held an unprecedented regional Arctic security summit. See "Military Powers Beef Up Arctic Presence," *Wall Street Journal*, 16 April 2012.
2. See James Kraska, "Northern Exposures," *American Interest* (May/June 2010).
3. Alexander Stubb, "A New Arctic Era and Finland's Arctic Policy" (keynote speech, 20th Anniversary Seminar of the Arctic Center, 29 September 2009), available at [formin.finland.fi/](http://formin.finland.fi/).
4. "China Defines Itself as a 'Near-Arctic State,' Says SIPRI," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 10 May 2012, [www.sipri.org/](http://www.sipri.org/).
5. The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental body addressing issues concerning the indigenous people of the Arctic and the governments of the circumpolar states. Its voting members constitute the "Arctic Eight." In addition, the council has six permanent observer states, all of them European.
6. A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 19–20, 23, quoted in Alastair Iain Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?," *International Security* 27, no. 4 (Spring 2003), p. 9.
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8. Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994), p. 105.
9. Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?," p. 11.
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12. Martin Wolf, "India's Elephant Charges On through the Crisis," *Financial Times*, 2 March 2010.
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  15. International Energy Agency, "World Energy Outlook 2011," 9 November 2011, available at [www.iea.org/](http://www.iea.org/).
  16. Matt Stone, "Natural Gas," *Diplomat*, n.d. [2011], [the-diplomat.com/](http://the-diplomat.com/).
  17. Maritime shipping, far cheaper and more viable than pipeline transit, accounts for more than 80 percent of China's oil imports and 40 percent of its total oil needs. See Andrew S. Erickson, "Pipe Dream: China Seeks Land and Sea Energy Security," *Jane's Intelligence Review (China Watch)* 21, no. 8 (August 2009), pp. 54–55.
  18. Zhang Tingbin, "Time to Curb Appetite for Foreign Oil," *Global Times*, 2 August 2012.
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  20. See Robert J. Antony, "Piracy on the South China Coast through Modern Times," and David Rosenberg, "The Political Economy of Piracy in the South China Sea," in *Piracy and Maritime Crime: Historical and Modern Case Studies*, ed. Bruce A. Elleman, Andrew Forbes, and David Rosenberg, Newport Paper 35 (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, 2010).
  21. "Final Piracy Report 2011," *ASI Global: Maritime Response*, 2011, [www.asiglobalresponse.com/](http://www.asiglobalresponse.com/).
  22. Global piracy costs shipping companies between seven and twelve billion dollars a year in "insurance premiums, ransoms, and disruption." See "Short and Sharp," *Economist*, 16 June 2012.
  23. For a lengthier treatment of this debate, see Erica S. Downs, "The Chinese Energy Security Debate," *China Quarterly* 177 (2004), pp. 21–41.
  24. See David Zweig and Bi Jianhai, "China's Global Hunt for Energy," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 5 (September/October 2005).
  25. David L. O. Hayward, "China's Oil Supply Dependence," *Journal of Energy Security* (June 2009), [www.ensec.org/](http://www.ensec.org/).
  26. Vincent Wei-cheng Wang, "'Chindia' or Rivalry? Rising China, Rising India, and Contending Perspectives on India-China Relations," *Asian Perspective* 35 (2011), p. 451.
  27. For a more exhaustive analysis of this strategy, see Daniel J. Kostecka, "Places and Bases: The Chinese Navy's Emerging Support Network in the Indian Ocean," *Naval War College Review* 64, no. 1 (Winter 2011), p. 61.
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  31. Ibid.
  32. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, *China's National Defense in 2008* (Beijing: January 2009), part V, "The Navy," available at [english.gov.cn/](http://english.gov.cn/).
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  34. See Erickson, Denmark, and Collins, "Beijing's 'Starter Carrier,'" pp. 15–54.
  35. Efforts to respond to China's rise have remained characteristic of American grand

- strategy through the present. A 2001 U.S. strategic review conducted by then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld identified China as America's most plausible great-power concern and adversary. The United States has maintained this posture; in late 2011 and early 2012, the Obama administration announced a strategic pivot toward the Asia-Pacific region to ensure that "the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future." See White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament," 17 November 2011, available at [www.whitehouse.gov/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/).
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  37. Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2005), p. 12.
  38. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
  39. Michael D. Swaine, "China's Assertive Behavior: Part One—on 'Core Interests,'" *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 34 (Winter 2011), p. 4.
  40. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
  41. "Political System Now China's Core Interest," *Global Times*, 7 September 2011.
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  43. Roger Howard, *The Arctic Gold Rush: The New Race for Tomorrow's Natural Resources* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 216.
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  47. "Media Advisory: Arctic Sea Ice Breaks Lowest Extent on Record," *National Snow and Ice Data Center*, 27 August 2012, [nsidc.org/](http://nsidc.org/).
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  51. Qu Tanzhou, director of the CAA, has stated that "more icebreakers will be built in the long term"; *ibid.*
  52. This point was first made by Paul McLeary, "The Arctic: China Opens a New Strategic Front," *World Politics Review*, 19 May 2010. In sharp contrast, both U.S. heavy-duty icebreakers—*Polar Star* and *Polar Sea*—remain in states of disrepair and neglect; see Patrick J. Russell, "U.S. Icebreaker Ships in Disrepair," *Seattle Times*, 11 October 2011. Moreover, Canada's aging icebreakers are crippled by their inability to operate during the winter; see Michael Byers, *Who Owns the Arctic? Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North* (Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010), p. 62. It is noteworthy that Russia has over twenty-five icebreakers, six of them nuclear powered.



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57. Wang Qian, "Arctic Research Set to Be Beefed Up," *China Daily*, 6 May 2010, [www.chinadaily.com.cn/](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/).
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60. Joseph Spears, "China and the Arctic: The Awakening Snow Dragon," *Jamestown Foundation China Brief* 9, no. 6 (March 2009), p. 11.
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65. For a more exhaustive analysis of Chinese scientific actions in the Arctic, see Linda Jakobson's pioneering piece "China Prepares for an Ice-Free Arctic," *SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security* 2 (March 2010), p. 4.
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67. "Canada's Harper in China Visit Focused on Energy," *Associated Press*, 7 February 2012, [abcnews.go.com/](http://abcnews.go.com/).
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# MARITIME COMMERCE WARFARE

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## The Coercive Response of the Weak?

*Douglas C. Peifer*

Maritime commerce warfare” has a distinctly dated whiff. The great Anglo-American naval theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the Colomb brothers, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and Julian Corbett—all dismissed it as an indecisive strategy of the weak. Imperial Germany’s turn to unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 failed to achieve its political purpose, instead bringing the United States into the war just as war weariness and revolution threatened to undermine the Entente’s military effectiveness. In the Second World War, both Germany and the United States used the submarine with deadly effectiveness against the maritime supply lines of their enemies, but even the more effective of their campaigns—that of the U.S. Navy in the Pacific—seemed outdated and unnecessary once the atomic bomb made Giulio Douhet’s vision of directly attacking the enemy’s industry and civilian population a reality. The accelerating pace of technological change after the Second World War suggested that any war between superpowers might swiftly escalate beyond the conventional stage; the U.S. and Soviet navies accordingly paid a great deal of attention

to the nuclear balance of terror, to deterrence, and to finding, fixing, and destroying military assets.

Commerce warfare and commerce protection by this time seemed secondary concerns, receiving serious attention only in the context of securing tankers and the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz following the Iranian Revolution. The Persian Gulf “tanker war” of the mid-1980s forced the U.S. Navy to resuscitate its proficiency in convoy protection, mine warfare, and the challenges

*Douglas C. Peifer is a civilian professor (PhD, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) in the Department of Strategy at the U.S. Air War College, where he teaches core courses on strategy, along with regional and thematic electives. His publications on naval history and strategy include The Three German Navies: Dissolution, Transition, and New Beginning (2002) and numerous articles, in such journals as Journal of Military History, War in History, and War and Society.*

of securing local command of the seas. But the challenge posed by Iranian and Iraqi forces was local, littoral, and limited. Broadly speaking, maritime commerce warfare seemed a distant threat, as irrelevant and outdated as the practice from which it had evolved, piracy.

Yet as has become clear, unlikely threats and outdated practices rear their ugly heads when the situation favors them. During the Cold War, piracy had seemed on its way to oblivion, but in Africa the suspension of superpower rivalry, coupled with the collapse of client state authority in Somalia, made the practice both viable and attractive to warlords and clans in the Horn of Africa. In the same manner, the proliferation of antiaccess and area-denial weapons, coupled with the rise of China, may give new life to such maritime practices as distant blockade or maritime interdiction. The prospect of responding to naval clashes in the South China Sea with deep strikes into the Chinese interior to dismantle its dense radar, missile, and air-defense networks seems reasonable only to those willing to escalate tension over maritime exclusive economic zones to the level of major theater war with a nuclear power.<sup>1</sup> Yet the idea that China would respond to the imposition of a distant blockade or the interdiction of oil flows by de-escalating the situation seems sanguine at best. Historically, weaker naval powers unable to contest command of the seas have not simply resigned themselves to maintaining “fleets in being” while suffering the slow indignities of naval blockade. Instead, they have resorted to what the French termed *guerre de course*, the Germans *Handelskrieg*, and the British “commerce warfare.”<sup>2</sup>

This article examines the evolution—and the conceptual links to the present—of the theory and practice of commerce warfare from the seventeenth century to the eve of World War I. This era, often termed the “age of limited war,” may in many ways more closely reflect the diffuse distribution of power likely to prevail in the twenty-first century than the bipolar distribution that marked the years from 1945 through the 1980s. Furthermore, belligerents of the age of limited war seldom aimed for the total overthrow or unconditional surrender of opposing powers, instead using force and coercion to tilt the distribution of power and resources in their own favor. A rich blend of the theory and practice of commerce warfare evolved, using concepts of limited war and coercion centuries before Thomas Schelling, Alexander George, or Lawrence Freedman endowed such words as “coercion,” “compellence,” and “forceful persuasion” with particular social-scientific meaning.<sup>3</sup>

The classical tools of maritime coercion, blockade and the interdiction of trade, have been used on numerous occasions over the past decades, from United Nations–authorized controls on Iraqi imports and arms embargoes on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s to the maritime exclusion zone established north of Libya by UN Security Council Resolution 1973 in March

2011. The cost to the U.S. Navy and the international community of enforcing these blockades and maritime controls was minimal, since none of the targeted nations could contest American command of the sea. Other nations subjected to blockades and embargoes, nations weaker than their enemies yet powerful and determined enough to have options, have been loath simply to accept the costs of naval inferiority. The classic response of the weak to blockade and interdiction has been *guerre de course*, commerce warfare.

### GUERRE DE COURSE IN THE AGE OF SAIL

Targets of commerce warfare—such as Britain in both world wars, the Union in the Civil War, and the Spaniards in the early modern era—frequently described the concerted attacks on their merchant ships by U-boats, Confederate raiders, and English sea dogs, respectively, as nothing more than organized piracy. This charge touched on a sensitive matter: the historical connection among commerce warfare, privateering, and piracy. Commerce warfare was for centuries sustained and made possible by privateers—that is, private individuals authorized by the state to seize enemy shipping in exchange for a portion of the spoils, more politely known as “prize money.” In order to understand the outrage caused by Germany’s use of its U-boats during the world wars, one must understand the similarity and differences between unrestricted submarine warfare and its precedent, the naval strategy of *guerre de course* developed by the French in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as an alternative to fleet warfare, or *guerre d’escadre*.

A strategy of the weak, *guerre de course* rested on small, swift frigates, schooners, and other sailing vessels that attacked enemy merchant shipping while avoiding enemy ships of the line. One of its advantages was that the campaign could be outsourced to private interests, which, in exchange for government-issued “letters of marque” authorizing them to seize and sell enemy merchant ships and cargo, would outfit privateer ships at their own expense. The distinction between privateering and piracy—a state-sanctioned method of warfare as opposed to a criminal enterprise conducted for private gain—is important in law and theory. Yet the historical record suggests that the distinction was murky in practice. *Guerre de course*, a strategy that aimed to raise the costs of war to the enemy while lowering them for oneself, had much in common with piracy during the early modern period, when weak state bureaucracies and overstressed treasuries compelled nations to delegate the use of naval force to private contractors.

The distinction between pirates and privateers has been particularly nebulous along the fault lines of civilizations and empires. In the Mediterranean Sea, the Knights of Malta sustained their outpost on that island in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through charitable contributions and the seizure of Muslim shipping. Their Muslim antagonists in North Africa—the rulers of Algiers, Tunis,

and Tripoli—supported and profited from slave raids and the seizure of Christian shipping for over five hundred years, a practice suppressed only in the early nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Initially, the distinction between pirate and privateer was equally nebulous in northern European waters and the Atlantic. In the Baltic, German freebooters like Klaus Störtebeker (1360–ca. 1401) served as entrepreneurs during times of war, supplying the Nordic monarchies with ships, men, and supplies, and in peacetime were freebooting pirates, preying on Hanseatic shipping.<sup>5</sup> In the English Channel and along the Atlantic coastline, the English and French crowns encouraged their followers to raid enemy towns and seize shipping in wartime, activities that persisted with little interference after hostilities officially ceased. The English crown first began to issue letters of reprisal in the thirteenth century, authorizing those who had suffered from foreign piracy to seek redress by force. Theoretically limiting seizure of ships and goods to losses suffered, in effect these letters sanctioned piracy so long as it was directed at powers with which England was at war.

Letters of reprisal and “of marque” (the French term) stimulated and protected English, French, and Scottish piratical ventures against one another during the late Middle Ages; the coastal communities of Devon, Cornwall, and the southwestern counties in England, as well as Brittany in France, became intimately involved in both sanctioned commerce raiding and privately initiated piracy. When merchants pressed charges of piracy in court, more often than not they found that local officials protected those who ignored the restrictions of the royal letters of reprisal. This was hardly surprising, as piratical ventures were the preserve not of desperate outlaws but of commercial enterprises supported and sustained by local knights, dignitaries, and officials. During the reign of Henry VI, the Duke of Exeter, Admiral of England, was one of many who profited from investments in piracy.<sup>6</sup> Occasionally, the English and French crowns intervened to suppress overzealous freebooters, reminding coastal communities to refrain from seizing and plundering the ships of allies or neutrals.<sup>7</sup> But these instances of royal intervention were few and sporadic. The dispersed nature of power during the medieval period rendered attempts to distinguish, through the issuance of letters of reprisal and marque, between authorized naval commerce warfare and freebooting piracy more theoretical than real.

The weakness of the central state persisted through the early modern period in Europe and in the overseas colonial outposts and holdings of Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France, and England. Once again, the boundaries between maritime commerce warfare and piracy were nebulous. Huguenot and Dutch rebels led the way in attacking Spanish trade and treasure fleets in the sixteenth century; Protestant Dutch “sea beggars” (*Watergeuzen* in Dutch) openly sold booty from captured Spanish ships in English ports during the early days of the

Dutch rebellion.<sup>8</sup> English seafarers such as Sir John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake, observing the weakness of the Spanish navy, undertook ventures in slave trading and piracy that resulted in handsome profits for the investors (including Elizabeth I) who helped fund these expeditions. With the coming of open warfare between England and Spain in the 1580s, Hawkins—as a rear admiral, treasurer of the Royal Navy, and confidant of the queen—advised Elizabeth that “the hurt that our State should seek to do him [Philip II of Spain] is to intercept his treasures, whereby we shall cut his sinews and make war upon him with his money.”<sup>9</sup>

This explicit strategy of cutting off the flow of silver from the New World to Spain tantalized English, Dutch, and Huguenot seamen throughout the seventeenth century. But intercepting Spanish treasure fleets proved difficult in practice. Piet Heyn, commanding a fleet of Dutch West India Company ships, in 1628 captured sixteen Spanish ships loaded with over eleven million guilders in silver and gold, but the feat was not repeated for decades.<sup>10</sup> Far more prevalent were depredations on the less-well-protected merchant ships of Spain, Portugal, and their dependencies. Commerce warfare and naval raids were essential elements of naval warfare from the mid-sixteenth century into the seventeenth, more frequent than the fleet actions of the period. Commerce warfare reflected the mercantilist spirit and thinking of the time, leading Sir Michael Howard in his seminal study of war in European history to characterize the wars of the period as “wars of the merchants.”<sup>11</sup> Naval war during the mercantilist era was unabashedly about the seizure and destruction of enemy commerce and the defense and promotion of one’s own trade. The monarchs and the few republics (the Dutch Republic, Venice) of Europe controlled and directed these early campaigns of commerce destruction only loosely, still forced by their own weakness to rely on private ventures authorized by letters of reprisal and marque.

By the mid-seventeenth century, however, the state mechanisms of the United Provinces, England, and France had matured sufficiently that each of these powers could create, support, control, and administer state navies. The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the seventeenth centuries, as well as the wars of Louis XIV, pitted fleets against fleets without abandoning long-established patterns of commerce destruction.

In his historical examination of the struggle between French and Anglo-Dutch sea power in the final decade of the seventeenth century, Alfred Thayer Mahan conceded that “at no time has war against commerce been conducted on a larger scale and with greater results than during this period,” with “the distress caused to commerce wrought by the [French] privateers . . . a large factor in bringing the sea nations to wish for peace.”<sup>12</sup> Mahan nonetheless assessed Louis XIV’s decision to abandon fleet action (*guerre d’escadre*) in favor of commerce warfare (*guerre de course*) midway through the nine-year-long War of the League of Augsburg

(1688–97) as a strategic mistake of the first order. Mahan and British naval theorists were drawn to the conflict of this era among the Netherlands, England, and France for maritime supremacy because the struggle could be understood in terms of a narrative linking state navies and fleet construction to national greatness, power, and prosperity.

During Louis XIV's early reign, as the narrative goes, farsighted Frenchmen like Jean-Baptiste Colbert and his eldest son, the marquis de Seignelay, patiently laid the foundations of French sea power. They built up the infrastructure necessary to support a great navy, establishing the French naval ports of Toulon, Brest, and Rochefort; they encouraged French commerce and colonies; they organized the bureaucracy to support and fund a state navy; and they invested in the French fleet, enabling it to defeat a combined Anglo-Dutch fleet in 1690 and temporarily control the Channel. The English and Dutch, by way of contrast, neglected their navies prior to the outbreak of war, and only strenuous efforts after its onset, aided by French timidity, staved off disaster. Per the Mahanian narrative, had France invested more fully its efforts, energy, and treasury in naval power rather than squandering its wealth fighting land campaigns in Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere, it might have gained the global dominance it sought.

Naval power—explicitly naval power that commanded the seas—provided the Dutch and English with the wealth and resources to wage and fund a protracted war against Louis XIV, while Bourbon France grew increasingly exhausted. According to the Mahanian orthodoxy, when France gave up its quest for command of the sea—that is, when it abandoned a naval strategy of *guerre d'escadre* in favor of *guerre de course*—it practically sealed its own fate. Then or later, whether in the reign of Louis XIV, under the revolutionary government of the 1790s, or under Napoleon, French resort to commerce warfare and privateering over fleet action reflected failure to perceive the essential connection between naval power and commerce. As Mahan put it, prolonged “control of the strategic centres of commerce” required a powerful navy able to fight for and then defend command of the sea. Weaker powers might be compelled by circumstances to resort to commerce warfare, but even then they needed to support their privateers with “squadron warfare, and by divisions of ships-of-the-line; which, forcing the enemy to unite his forces, permit the cruisers to make fortunate attempts upon his trade.”<sup>13</sup>

The Mahanian, or navalist, interpretation of Britain's triumph over France—a teleological analysis of Anglo-French conflict from Louis XIV to Napoleon—rests on shaky foundations. It downplays the role of continental commitments and the fiscal realities of the period. Louis XIV simply did not have the financial means to maintain a fleet of sufficient size to operate against the combined English and Dutch fleets while simultaneously waging a land war against a coalition



that included the Holy Roman Empire, Austria, Spain, Savoy, and numerous other lesser states alongside the Netherlands and England. His successors—whether in the Seven Years' War, in the revolutionary period, or in the person of Napoleon—likewise faced continental threats and commitments that put constraints on the size of the French navy. Furthermore, Mahan's characterization of *guerre de course* as strategically ineffective ignores how technology, organization, and culture rendered "command of the sea" ephemeral at best during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. During the era of Vauban and Louis XIV, fleet warfare was a seasonal activity, which made commerce raiding more effective and blockading less ineffective, strategically speaking, than they would be in the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth. Owing to the poor sea-keeping qualities of the ships of the line, fleet operations largely ceased with the onset of dangerous fall and winter weather, resuming only in late spring. Navies did not have the capability to maintain close blockades in the meantime, rendering "command of the seas" temporary and passing. Merchant ships, though subject to the same weather conditions, could and did operate well into the winter months. Mahan's assertion that powerful fleets could establish "command of the seas" and drive the enemy's flag from them through interdiction and blockade simply did not apply during this era. *Guerre de course* presented a viable alternative to blockades enforced by a fleet that "commanded the seas."<sup>14</sup>

If one can trace the essentials of commerce warfare as practice and policy in assorted statements by medieval kings, Elizabethan freebooters, and early-modern Dutch captains, the logic of commerce warfare as a strategy was fully developed only in the seventeenth century, when the French coined the term "*guerre de course*." Louis XIV's master military architect Sébastien Le Prestre, seigneur de Vauban, composed the first thorough, fully developed analysis of the potential and opportunity costs of fleet-versus-commerce warfare at a time when France was fighting both England and the Dutch Republic. Vauban, knowing that France could not afford to wage war on land while simultaneously taking on both the English and Dutch navies, recommended that Louis reduce the size of the fleet from ninety to forty-five ships of the line, shrink his Mediterranean galley fleet, and disband a number of marine infantry companies.<sup>15</sup> In a memorandum entitled *Mémoire sur la course* (November 1693) he laid out his reasoning, arguing that France should shift away from a high-cost strategy of directly confronting the sea power of England and the Netherlands, toward a low-cost strategy of attacking their economic underpinnings.<sup>16</sup>

Vauban asserted that the enormously expensive battle fleet had been unable to secure peace on French terms. The English and Dutch navies had been able to recover fairly quickly from their defeat at the outset of the conflict, and France's military operations on the continent had become ever more costly. Given these

realities, Vauban held, Louis and France should largely abandon the chimera of crushing the combined Dutch and English fleets and instead adopt the more moderate and cost-effective naval strategy of commerce warfare. French privateers, if properly encouraged by tax policy, could attack the source of Anglo-Dutch power directly, by waging a privately funded war on English and Dutch merchant shipping. The French crown, Vauban charged, had heretofore been shortsighted in its relationship with the owners (*armateurs*), captains, and crews of privateering ships, levying unreasonable charges and allowing prize courts to take months to dispose of seizures and distribute the proceeds among the captors.

In the future, Vauban advised, the state should assist privateers, by speeding up prize-court proceedings, lowering taxes and charges levied on vessels seized, and supporting privateer operations as appropriate with small squadrons that would, while avoiding fleet action, divert and dissipate Anglo-Dutch naval power. Commerce raiding had been neglected in a vain quest for naval dominance:

The advantages of this kingdom's position have not yet been fully realized; nor have the good results that commerce-raiding can produce, if properly managed; and moreover up to now people have had an exaggerated idea of the value of a battle fleet, which has completely failed to live up to the hopes that the king placed on it, and which in all probability will never live up to them so long as the present coalition lasts, because all the appearances indicate that the enemy will always be stronger than we are at sea.<sup>17</sup>

The port of Brest, according to Vauban, was “placed as though God had made it expressly for the purpose of the destruction of these two nations. The most skillful policy is the shaking of the buttresses of the League by means of a subtle and widespread form of war.”<sup>18</sup> The French navy should henceforth focus on squadron attacks on enemy convoys, and the crown should make every effort to stimulate and encourage privately funded commerce warfare.

Privately funded commerce warfare had numerous advantages over royally funded fleet warfare, but as a stand-alone strategy it had shortcomings. Most attractive to Louis XIV and later French leaders who embraced *guerre de course* was the argument that it represented an option for waging war at sea without costly building programs. By encouraging and stimulating private initiative with the promise that individuals operating under letters of marque might legitimately seize and sell for profit enemy ships, goods, and equipment, the state was able to shift the costs of naval warfare. Wealthy entrepreneurs pooled resources to raise the funds to buy ships, provision them, and recruit officers and crews who were lured by the promise of high pay and shares of the profits. These private endeavors varied in scale, from locally organized Channel coast *chaloupes*—“glorified rowing-boats” that carried “a handful of men with a pop-gun or two by way of armament”—to squadrons of half a dozen ships of the line and frigates owned

or leased by such wealthy *armateurs* as André, marquis de Nesmond, and Bernard Desjean, baron de Pointis, who sold shares in their privateering ventures to French aristocrats and merchants.<sup>19</sup>

By 1695, Louis XIV had little choice. France had built an impressive sixty-three ships of the line of the first, second, and third rates between 1688 and 1695, but the Anglo-Dutch coalition had launched sixty-seven (twenty-one English, forty-six Dutch).<sup>20</sup> France did not have the resources to compete with Europe's leading maritime powers and a mighty coalition on land at the same time. Given these realities, *guerre de course* was the only realistic option available to Louis short of ceding the maritime domain to his opponents. During the struggle French privateers captured or ransomed over four thousand ships of the nations allied against France, generating more than a hundred million livres of income for the crown, via the "Admiral's tenth" levy on prizes.<sup>21</sup> Marine insurance rates for English and Dutch shipping doubled and tripled.

By 1697, however, both France and its antagonists had exhausted themselves. England and the United Provinces had thwarted Louis's ambition by funding a continental coalition that checked his armies, but Louis for his part had placed tremendous pressure on his maritime opponents' sources of strength, their merchant shipping and trade. Mahan, generally critical of commerce destruction as a strategy, concedes that in this instance *guerre de course* played a major role in persuading England and the Dutch Republic to settle for a compromise peace. A leading scholar on the naval dimension of the War of the League of Augsburg asserts that Mahan in his fixation on fleet combat failed to grasp the effectiveness of alternative strategies. *Guerre de course*, far from a misguided application of French naval resources, was "admirably suited to conditions governing warfare at the end of the seventeenth century, when attrition strategy was in the ascendant, and states habitually employed mercenary armies and auxiliary forces to augment their limited capacity to wage war."<sup>22</sup> A noted scholar of grand strategy echoes these sentiments and concludes that "under certain circumstances a *guerre de course* strategy was not to be scorned."<sup>23</sup>

Neither the Sun King's successors, his ministers of the marine, nor the officers of "La Royale" (the French navy) were in the years to come content to cede naval supremacy to Britain without a contest. Throughout the eighteenth century, France continued to engage in fleet actions against the Royal Navy, occasionally holding its own (Minorca in 1756), more frequently suffering a drubbing (Lagos and Quiberon Bay in 1759, the battle of the Saintes in 1782), and on rare occasion driving off the British (the battle of the Virginia Capes, 1781). French dreams of restoring the Stuart monarchy in Britain, supporting Jacobite risings in Scotland, and pursuing colonial ambitions in Canada, the Caribbean, and India all rested on the ability to protect sea lines of communication and project

power amphibiously. Again and again, French maritime ambitions were crushed by the power of the Royal Navy, with only the Virginia Capes action translating into strategic success of the first order—decisive support for the American revolutionary cause.

In general, the inability of the French navy, accordingly, to sustain France's colonial ambitions, let alone an invasion of the British Isles, drove the French to employ privateers and commerce raiders in all their wars against Britain, and they in turn exacted a heavy toll on British shipping. But over the long haul, the results of Vauban's concept of attacking the buttresses of British power fell short of expectation. During the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48), for example, French and Spanish privateers seized over three thousand British merchant ships, but at the close of the war Britain's merchant fleet was both larger and more dominant than it had been at the outset.<sup>24</sup>

The ultimate test of the strategic effectiveness of preindustrial *guerre de course* occurred during the conflict between Britain and revolutionary, later Napoleonic, France. The French navy attempted to confront the Royal Navy shortly after the disruptions of the Revolution, only to be defeated in the Atlantic (the First of June, 1794) and the Mediterranean (the battle of the Nile, 1798). Following his ascent to power, Napoleon attempted to exploit his alliance with Spain to create a combined Franco-Spanish fleet that could contest British sea power, only to see this grand design crushed at Trafalgar (1805). Throughout this period France employed privateers and frigates to attack British commerce as a complement to its fleet maneuvers, but following Trafalgar *guerre de course* became France's sole tool for offensive naval action against Britain. French privateers seized some eleven thousand British merchant ships during the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, driving up insurance rates.<sup>25</sup> Isolated naval squadrons joined in the assault against British shipping. Yet slowly, through seizure or blockade, Britain closed down privateer dens, as the Royal Navy tracked down and sank the remnants of the French navy. In early 1806 the small French squadron operating in the Caribbean was destroyed; by 1810 Britain and its allies had subdued or captured all French holdings in the area. In the Indian Ocean, French warships and privateers operating out of Réunion and Mauritius continued to harass British shipping, but by December of that year both outposts had fallen.

Britain coped with France's *guerre de course* by adopting in 1793 a global system of convoys, making them compulsory for merchant shipping by the Convoy Acts of 1798 and 1803. The system proved more than adequate to the threat. Between 1793 and 1815 British merchant losses were only about 2 percent; losses in the English Channel were even lower. The system imposed delays and inconvenience on merchant shipping, and convoys were forced to proceed at the speed of the slowest ship. Yet by depriving French privateers of isolated targets and forcing

them to risk combat with well-armed escort vessels, the system undermined the economic incentive for privateering. The number of French seamen captured by Britain provides a sense of the effectiveness of the convoy system: some forty-two thousand French privateersmen were captured by the British during the 1790s, with twenty-seven thousand French seamen held as captives by Britain at the close of the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>26</sup>

Yet faith in the effectiveness of commerce warfare as a coercive strategy had not yet ebbed when Napoleon decisively defeated Austria and Prussia in 1805 and 1806. Napoleon sought to escalate the scope of commerce warfare, issuing the Berlin and Milan Decrees of November 1806 and December 1807, respectively, banning the importation of British goods by France, its dependencies, or its allies. The Continental System, an economic embargo that in theory stretched from Russia to Spain and from the tip of Norway to the foot of Italy, took economic warfare to a new level. It sought to impoverish Britain by denying it outlets for its products and sought to drain Britain's coffers by requiring it to pay for any imports with bullion.<sup>27</sup> The Berlin and Milan Decrees were extremely unpopular with Napoleon's Dutch, Danish, and German allies, and they proved impossible to enforce. Smuggling became rampant, and trade declined. Spain and Russia ceased observing the embargo, and once that happened, enforcing the decree in Amsterdam, Hamburg, and Marseille made no sense unless those two nations could be enticed or coerced back into the fold of the Continental System. Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign and developments in Spain soon showed that this was beyond France's power.

Britain responded to the Berlin Decree with its own Orders in Council declaring all French ports under blockade and demanding that neutral shipping submit to British controls. The United States objected to both the French and British measures and placed an embargo on exports to both. The Orders in Council, searches of American merchant vessels and forcible impressments of sailors deemed British subjects, and frontier issues drove the United States to declare war on Britain in 1812. The U.S. Navy was minuscule compared to the Royal Navy, but its superbly designed frigates, particularly the forty-four-gun *Constitution*, *President*, and *United States*, could outgun equivalent British frigates. In a series of engagements during 1812 the Americans shocked and surprised the British by winning several ship-to-ship engagements. Yet by 1813 the British had met the challenge. The Americans, much like the French, turned to commerce warfare and privateering in the face of superior British naval strength.

Mahan and others have concluded that French and American commerce raiding in this period was more irritant than real threat. Yet practiced in conjunction with the Continental System and American trade embargoes, its costs to Britain were high. An authoritative scholar asserts that

the commercial warfare of the French and the Americans brought the country [Britain] closer to an economic crisis in 1808 and 1811–12 than at any time in the two decades of war. . . . Vast stocks of manufactures piled up outside [British] factories. The London docks filled to overflowing with colonial produce. The supply of naval stores dropped off alarmingly, despite the British exploitation of the forests of the Empire as a substitute. Bankruptcies of firms rapidly increased. Unemployment and the rising cost of bread produced a spate of riots. The gap between the government's revenue and expenditures was widening alarmingly. Napoleon's overrunning of the Baltic saw hundreds of British vessels captured in that sea. An adverse trade balance caused the pound to depreciate.<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, Britain showed far more resilience than the French proponents of commerce warfare had anticipated, and the strategy of *guerre de course* proved inadequate in itself to drive Britain to the peace table during the age of sail. French privateers and frigates might cause insurance rates to soar in London, and embargoes might idle British factories, but neither could protect French colonies or convey French armies to England itself. *Guerre de course* and commerce warfare enabled France to impose costs on Britain despite the Royal Navy's command of the sea, but its effectiveness as a strategy to coerce Britain into accepting French continental hegemony was disappointing.

### NEW RESTRICTIONS, CAPABILITIES, AND CONCEPTS

Following the Napoleonic Wars, Europe enjoyed over a generation of respite from major interstate warfare. At the fringes of the continent, Russia and Turkey fought one another in Bulgaria, and in 1830 and 1848 uprisings and revolutions convulsed Europe as a whole. From a naval-warfare perspective, assessing future trends proved remarkably difficult in this period of rapidly advancing technology coupled with relative tranquility. On the technological side, the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century saw such rapid change that a ship might be obsolete before it was commissioned. In 1837 the French navy adopted explosive shells, the value of which was clearly demonstrated by the Russian victory over the Turks at Sinope in 1853.<sup>29</sup> The superiority of the propeller over the paddle wheel was established in an odd "tug-of-war" competition sponsored by the British Admiralty in 1845, during which the propeller-driven *Rattler* proved superior to the paddle-driven *Alecto* in both speed and power.<sup>30</sup> The French ironclad frigate *La Gloire* (1859) and the British all-iron battleship *Warrior* (1860) heralded the shift from wooden to iron hulls.

One invention succeeded another at such a bewildering pace that observers hardly knew what to make of the situation. The lessons to be learned were not nearly as clear to contemporaries as they might later have appeared, particularly whether *guerre de course* remained a viable strategy of the weak or whether steam

power and the telegraph had rendered it outdated.<sup>31</sup> The next major interstate war, the Crimean War of 1853–56, aligned Europe's major naval powers, Britain and France, alongside the Ottoman Empire and the kingdom of Sardinia against the Russian Empire. Having no need to resort to *guerre de course* against Russia's paltry coastal trade and able to blockade its seaports with impunity, the two maritime powers had every reason to limit the impact of the Crimean War on global trade. At the outset Britain and France agreed to respect the rights of neutral vessels and goods, declaring that they would refrain from authorizing privateers. Following the war, at the urging of the French foreign minister, Count Walewski, they sought to make their mutual agreement general and permanent, persuading all the belligerents of the Crimean War to adhere to a declaration that would place permanent limits on the conduct of naval warfare.

The Declaration of Paris, adopted on 16 April 1856, spelled the end of *guerre de course* as it had been waged since the age of Drake and Hawkins. The plenipotentiaries pledged that henceforth

1. Privateering is and remains abolished
2. The neutral flag covers enemy's goods, with the exception of contraband of war
3. Neutral goods, with the exception of contraband of war, are not liable to capture under the enemy's flag
4. Blockades, in order to be binding, must be effective, that is to say, maintained by a force sufficient really to prevent access to the coast of the enemy.<sup>32</sup>

The Declaration of Paris entailed concessions from the various lesser naval powers that had entered into the agreement—chiefly France, Russia, Austria, and Prussia—as well as from Britain, whose naval dominance was overwhelming by midcentury. The inferior powers renounced one of the main advantages of *guerre de course*—the outsourcing of naval warfare to private entrepreneurs willing to bear the costs of equipping commerce raiders—in exchange for the sanctioned seizure of enemy property. Given the development of steam power, this concession was less remarkable than it might appear. By midcentury steam power was on the verge of breaking the tyranny of wind and weather. Soon superior navies would be able to enforce blockades in weather fair and foul, making it more difficult for privateers to slip out of blockaded ports and, even more to the point, making it improbable that captured vessels could be brought safely into friendly ports for disposition by prize courts. Technology had transformed the economics of *guerre de course*: the costs of constructing commerce raiders seemed likely to increase, while the likelihood of profits seemed certain to decline.

Nonetheless, given Britain's vulnerability to commerce warfare, the renunciation of privateering was a major concession by France and the weaker naval



powers; it meant that any future campaigns of *guerre de course* would be under the direct control of the state. The privateer captain and crew—entrepreneurs and private contractors motivated at least in part by the lure of gain—would be replaced by naval officers and enlisted personnel operating as representatives of the state. Naval warfare would henceforth distinguish more clearly between those who used violence for private gain and those who did so for *raison d'état*, as politics asserted its dominance over profits as the sole legitimate reason for naval force. The state might use force to secure trade and ensure prosperity, but the privateer who served the state while pursuing his own economic interests would no longer be granted the status of legitimate combatant. Vestiges of the incentive system that had fueled commerce warfare persisted into the twentieth century, such as prize money, but the logic for capturing rather than destroying merchant shipping whenever possible would henceforth rest on ethical rather than economic grounds.

France and the weaker naval powers were willing to abandon privateering in large part because Britain agreed to recognize the claim that free ships made free goods—that is, that the neutral flag covered all goods on board a ship, with the exception of formally specified contraband.<sup>33</sup> Previously, Britain had asserted the right to seize and confiscate enemy goods carried aboard neutral vessels and insisted that all goods carried by enemy vessels were subject to confiscation regardless of ownership. Britain's policy had been a major irritant to neutral shippers during the French revolutionary and Napoleonic periods, and its acknowledgment that the flag of a neutral carrier covered both neutral and enemy goods was a major concession—subject, of course, to the definition of the exempted category of contraband.

Lastly, the principle of the Declaration of Paris that blockades had to be effective to be legally binding under international law addressed recent concerns over “paper blockades,” like those imposed following Spain's expulsion from South America by various successor states that declared blockades against each other while lacking any ability to enforce them. Europe's major states now served notice that they would pay no heed to these fictitious blockades and would insist on the right to continue trading with states under blockade if the blockade was more theoretical than real.

In all these ways, the principles of the Declaration of Paris rendered economic and commerce warfare highly problematic. Inferior naval powers pledged to abandon the traditional mainstay of *guerre de course*, privateering. Superior naval powers agreed to limit sharply the effectiveness of trade interdiction. By rights, in the future inferior naval powers would be able both to send (under neutral flag) and to receive all goods short of contraband. Furthermore, neutral powers

shipping noncontraband goods on enemy-flagged merchants would be able to expect restitution or compensation for goods seized.<sup>34</sup>

The United States, possessing the world's second-largest merchant fleet yet lacking a commensurate navy, did not sign the Declaration of Paris. Spain, Mexico, and Venezuela likewise refused to subscribe. All four held that the convention would put them at a disadvantage if compelled to wage war against nations with powerful, standing navies. The logic of the American position was that abolishing privateering would rob the United States, which possessed no great navy that could compete with those of Europe, of one of its most effective maritime instruments of power, while the concessions made by Britain hinged entirely on the dubious distinction between contraband and noncontraband goods.<sup>35</sup> The American reservations stemmed from weakness and conservatism, reflecting the perspective of an inferior naval power that had twice confronted overwhelming British sea power. Ironically, five years after the Declaration of Paris the U.S. Navy found itself hunting down Confederate raiders and privateers.

The American Civil War served as a test of whether a strategy of *guerre de course* was sustainable in the age of steam. On 12 April 1861 Confederate batteries on Morris Island in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, transformed a political confrontation into an armed rebellion by firing the opening shots of the Civil War against Fort Sumter, held by a Federal garrison. Three days later, Abraham Lincoln responded by calling seventy-five thousand state militia into Federal service, prompting Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Tennessee to secede from the Union.<sup>36</sup> On 17 April, President Jefferson Davis of the newly declared Confederate States of America escalated the conflict by inviting "all those who may desire, by service in private-armed vessels on the high seas, to aid this Government in resisting so wanton and wicked an aggression, to make application for commissions or letters of marque and reprisal to be issued under the seal of these Confederate States."<sup>37</sup> Davis had instinctively resorted to the sole offensive naval strategy available to the weak. Commerce warfare had served the rebellious American colonies well in the War of Independence against Britain and had vexed Britain sorely in the renewed conflict of 1812–15.

Lincoln responded to the Confederate call for privateers by declaring that "if any person, under the pretended authority of said States" molested "a vessel of the United States, or the persons or cargo on board her," such persons would be treated as pirates.<sup>38</sup> The U.S. government sought to garner international support for this policy by offering to accept unconditionally the provisions of the Declaration of Paris that had abolished privateering (an offer the British secretary of state rejected as too naked a reversal of declared American policy). The United States, which so recently had reserved to itself the right to employ privateers in the event

of war, now faced the prospect of Confederate privateers bent on wreaking havoc on its own merchant shipping.

While Union threats to hang Confederate privateers as pirates were never implemented, the threat reflected the fear, even hysteria, engendered by Confederate letters of marque and reprisal.<sup>39</sup> A sense of panic in the North was matched by an overly optimistic sense of expectation in the South. The Confederacy issued some thirty letters of marque and reprisal, with applications coming in from almost every Confederate port on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Shipowners in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Charleston proved particularly keen to profit from the opportunity. Initially, privateering appeared to be a cost-effective way to strike at the Union; privateers captured between fifty and sixty Union merchants within the first five months of the war.<sup>40</sup> Yet within a year, the heady assessments dissipated, as reality set in.<sup>41</sup> Three factors served to render the bite of Confederate privateering far less dangerous than its bark.

First, and perhaps most importantly, the leading European powers—including Spain (still master of Cuba at that time)—closed their ports as venues for the sale and disposition of prize vessels and cargoes. Privateers would have to send their prizes back to the Confederacy for disposition. Second, though at the start of the war the blockade was largely a “paper” one, the risks quickly became apparent with the loss in 1861 of such privateers as the schooner *Savannah* in June, the cutter *Beauregard* in July, and the brig *Jefferson Davis* in August. Southern entrepreneurs turned to more lucrative ventures like outfitting blockade-runners or supplying equipment to the infant Confederate navy. Lastly, the Union blockade gradually became a material reality. The loss of New Orleans in April 1862 deprived the Confederacy of its largest port and numerous shipyards. The Union blockade was never able to interdict blockade-running completely, but it clamped down on Confederate ports one by one. Even privateers fortunate enough to evade Union warships and get to sea faced what became an impossible task—sending seized merchant ships into Confederate ports. To do that, the prize crews sent on board had to sail them (few oceangoing merchant vessels were equipped with steam power) past steam-driven Union warships. The likelihood of performing this feat grew steadily dimmer over the course of the war.

The failure of privateering to inflict significant harm on Northern shipping led the Confederacy to pursue a more direct expedient. It purchased, armed, and took under direct control screw (i.e., propeller-driven) steamships such as CSS *Sumter*, which before the war had been a merchant steamer. It also acquired new vessels designed for waging a war against Union commerce, but given its resource limitations and inadequate shipbuilding capacity, the Confederacy had to turn to foreign shipyards. Ingeniously, it placed orders in British shipyards for specially built cruisers, installed guns after delivery, and commissioned them as

Confederate warships. CSS *Alabama* (Captain Raphael Semmes), *Shenandoah* (Captain James Waddell), and *Florida* (Lieutenants John Maffitt, then Charles Manigault Morris) are perhaps the best known of these Confederate raiders. *Alabama* took sixty-six Union merchant ships, *Shenandoah* devastated the Northern whaling fleet in the Pacific (thirty-two whalers burned, six seized), and *Florida* accounted for thirty-seven prizes.<sup>42</sup>

The impact of these raiders was dramatic. Equipped with both sail and steam power in an era when most oceanic shipping, as noted, relied solely on sail, these cruisers could swiftly catch fleeing merchant ships when the traditional tactics of deception and guile failed. Their armament proved more than sufficient to intimidate merchant ships, while their speed allowed them to evade more heavily armed but slower Union warships. Insurance rates in the North skyrocketed, and Northern shippers flocked to transfer their registries to foreign flags. One hundred twenty-six owners transferred their registries in 1861, 135 in 1862, and 348 in 1863.<sup>43</sup> Equally encouraging from a Southern perspective, the Union was forced to divert numerous warships from blockade and coastal operations to generally fruitless hunts for raiders. In an age before transoceanic cables linked Europe to North America and London to India, Australia, and elsewhere, Confederate raiders could use the vastness of the oceans as a sanctuary and avenue of escape. They were most vulnerable when replenishing coal and bringing supplies on board, or when too many crewmen had been sent away in prize crews.

Semmes, Waddell, Maffitt, and other Confederate naval officers waged a more ruthless *guerre de course* than their privateer brethren, because they were free from the imperative of turning a profit. These Confederate captains sank most of their prizes, helping themselves to supplies of food and fuel before setting captured ships aflame. Yet they did so while observing the conventions of humanity. The Confederates would signal vessels to heave to and then board and search them, bringing officers and crews on board the raider before sinking the unfortunate merchantmen or whaling ships. The captured crews would be periodically transferred to prizes, which the prize crews were directed to sail to the nearest neutral harbor. The logic and aim of commerce warfare changed, but the conventions remained the same: merchant and whaling ships were more often destroyed rather than seized, but their crews were not sent to the bottom with them. They were brought on board, treated humanely as noncombatants, and released as soon as operationally feasible.

The overall impact of the Confederate war against Union shipping was mixed. On the one hand, fewer than two dozen Confederate commerce raiders sank more Union shipping than did all the Confederate gunboats, ironclads, and naval batteries combined. Union maritime insurance rates doubled and tripled, causing a flight to foreign flags. Dozens of Union warships were diverted to search for

and destroy a handful of raiders. At the start of the war, a number of prize ships and their cargoes were brought into Confederate ports for sale and disposition. Yet the Confederate *guerre de course* had little impact on the course or outcome of the war. It did not prevent the Union from enforcing a blockade that became ever more effective. It did not prevent the North from launching amphibious attacks when and where it desired. It did not bring foreign intervention. Most significantly, it had little if any impact on Union manufacturing and agriculture; Northern factories and armament plants were not dependent on imports of coal, iron ore, oil, or fertilizer. Most naval observers would have concurred with the later assessment of a young Union naval officer who had participated in the blockade of the South, one Alfred Thayer Mahan. Mahan's judgment, published some twenty-five years later and drawing on both personal experience in blockading and the study of naval warfare over the last two hundred years, was that "commerce-destroying by independent cruisers depends upon wide dissemination of force. Commerce-destroying through control of a strategic centre by a great fleet depends on concentration of force. Regarded as a primary, not as a secondary, operation, the former is condemned, the latter justified, by the experience of centuries."<sup>44</sup>

### THE JEUNE ÉCOLE AND THE RADICALIZATION OF *GUERRE DE COURSE*

The pace of technological change continued to accelerate after the American Civil War, soon rendering the lessons of that conflict less than clear to naval strategists. New competitors joined Britain, France, and Russia in the naval race. Whereas even in 1883 Britain's battleship total was greater than that of the next three strongest navies, by 1904 Britain had been forced to abandon even its traditional "two-power standard."<sup>45</sup> The refinement or introduction of the torpedo, the torpedo boat, the destroyer, the mine, the turbine engine, the submarine, the "all-big-gun" battleship (*Dreadnought*, 1906), and the aircraft resulted in a bewildering array of platforms and weapons.<sup>46</sup> Debates raged over the effectiveness of these new weapons, their employment, and their roles in the fleet. The lessons learned from centuries of naval warfare under sail seemed obsolete.

This atmosphere of rapid change increased tension between two schools of naval thought. One asserted that navies should be organized as fleets, with as their primary duty the destruction of the enemy's fleet. The other argued that technology offered new opportunities for the direct destruction of the enemy's commerce. The latter pointed to the success of Confederate commerce raiders and extrapolated that a larger, better-supported array of raiders would indeed have a strategic effect if employed against a nation dependent on the import and export of goods. The two schools envisioned very different sorts of navies, with

radical implications for naval construction programs, organization, and personnel policies. These arguments over strategic concepts were not mere theoretical wrangles but rather clashes of fundamentally different conceptions of how new technologies were altering the framework of sea power.

The French explored more seriously than any other nationality the implications of technological change for an inferior naval power. Initially, much of their thinking revolved around the proposition that new technologies might allow a numerically inferior naval power to confront British naval superiority directly. In 1822, Henri-Joseph Paixhans, inventor of the shell-firing naval gun, speculated that by investing in a combination of steam power and explosive shells the French navy might acquire a “sudden and decisive” qualitative edge over Britain. In the 1840s the prince de Joinville, commander of the French navy, talked of using steam power, should war break out, to wage “the most audacious war of aggression” against the Royal Navy. But by the 1860s most French naval strategists shifted from thinking about how to use technology to confront the Royal Navy toward how to wage *guerre de course* more effectively.<sup>47</sup>

Louis Antoine Richild Grivel, a well-connected captain in the French navy, presented, in his *De la guerre maritime avant et depuis les nouvelles inventions* (1869), perhaps the most thoughtful analysis of how technology had opened new naval options. France, argued Grivel, needed to recognize that its naval strategy very much hinged on which adversary it faced. In a confrontation with the German Confederation, France should be prepared to wage *la grande guerre* of fleet action and squadron warfare. But in a confrontation with Britain, Grivel argued, a strategy aimed at fleet action made no sense. Given Britain’s numerical lead in warships and the strength of its industry, the prospects for building a fleet that could rival the Royal Navy were nil. Instead, if France became involved in a war with Britain it should wage a war of cruisers that it could if necessary sustain indefinitely.<sup>48</sup> He held that in practice a protracted campaign based on *guerre de course* would probably be unnecessary:

It is, moreover, more than probable that our perseverance would never be submitted in such a case to a test of such long duration.—Just through the rise of the insurance rates on the London Exchange, two or three years of well-directed cruisers [*sic*] would suffice to take away the customers of the enemy’s merchant flag, that is to say, dry up the principal source of the national wealth!—The result: a commercial and financial distress that would with scarce delay wear out this phalanx of wise and calculating minds who have always directed the affairs of England.<sup>49</sup>

Grivel was not an isolated voice in postulating that *guerre de course* remained a viable strategy for the future despite the limitations of the Declaration of Paris. Carefully and judiciously, Grivel argued that *guerre de course* was the only viable

naval strategy for confronting Britain specifically but that France needed to retain its battleships, as it could indeed aim for command of the sea if confronted by weaker naval powers. Likewise, he noted that the declaration had not outlawed commerce warfare per se, only privateering. The Confederacy had waged a vigorous war against Union commerce even after the demise of its privateers, with its commissioned, specially designed cruisers. France too might wage a *guerre de course* within the bounds of international law by employing cruisers of its navy, manned by professional French naval officers and sailors.

The *Jeune École* (or “new school”), which succeeded Grivel, presented a more radical vision.<sup>50</sup> Centered on Admiral Théophile Aube and the journalist Gabriel Charmes, the school challenged orthodoxy and advocated an unfettered embrace of *guerre de course* utilizing the latest technologies. Aube argued that the traditional notion of command of the sea had lost much of its validity, because it was underpinned by two notions—the naval battle and the naval blockade—whose futures were now open to question. Aube, citing as an example the 1866 battle of Lissa (the first major naval engagement to involve ironclads), argued that technology had made the pitched naval battle equally devastating to victor and vanquished and therefore no longer decisive. Arguing from the experience of the American Civil War, he predicted that the modern steam engine would make the naval blockade impossible to maintain: high-speed blockade-runners would be able to slip past blockading ships using night, fog, or diversions as cover.<sup>51</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn was that the battleship no longer could ensure command of the sea, and thereby served no vital purpose.<sup>52</sup> The *Jeune École* decried the enormous expense of the battleship, accompanied by decreased speed and maneuverability, resulting from attempts to incorporate the latest developments in gunnery, armor, propulsion, and other weapons (torpedoes, rams) in one platform. In contrast to Grivel, who had conceded that French battleships would play important roles against continental opponents, *Jeune École* advocates dismissed the battleship as such. Grivel had argued that “France remains in the presence of two strategies perfectly distinct and radically opposed in their means and in their consequences:—Fleet warfare or cruiser warfare.”<sup>53</sup> The *Jeune École* tended to dismiss entirely the former and overpromise the potentialities of the latter. The *Jeune École* held that the French navy should abandon its fascination with battleships and instead build large numbers of specialty ships, specifically cruisers, torpedo boats, high-speed ram boats, monitors, and gunboats.

These vessels were to be employed in a coordinated manner that would first provide defense, then break an enemy blockade, and then proceed offensively.<sup>54</sup> Fortified ports and naval bases were to be built in France and its colonies as shelters and strongpoints at the outbreak of war. Monitors and gunboats were to



supplement the fixed defenses. Unable to capture French ports, the enemy would establish a blockade. It was at this point that swift and numerous torpedo boats and ram ships would use low visibility and surprise to attack and inflict unacceptable losses on the superior enemy force. Once the enemy was forced to abandon the blockade, cruisers and torpedo boats would begin the offensive phase of the campaign. Cruisers were to use their superior speed to devastate the enemy's commerce while avoiding lumbering, heavily armored battleships. Torpedo boats and fast gunships would continue to wear down the enemy fleet through pinprick attacks, simultaneously confusing and demoralizing the enemy through raids on his coast, ports, and lines of communications.<sup>55</sup> Aube put it as follows:

If the enemy is England, there is no doubt of the objective: Try to ruin her trade, to harass the weak points of her *territoire maritime* and by surprise actions put pressure on some of her important colonies in order to separate them from England. The maritime stake is immensely greater for England than for us. The blows that England can direct at our colonies or trade are immeasurably less important than the other way around. The role of our cruisers will therefore be: Harass the enemy by all means, hunt *à outrance* her merchant ships, fall upon them like a bird of prey.<sup>56</sup>

The French navy grappled with the problem of how one might wage cruiser warfare while still abiding by the conventions of international law. In 1874, Aube—then idled because of his republican sympathies—wrote an article objecting to the Declaration of Paris, claiming that France had given up one of its most effective tools, the right to issue letters of marque and employ privateers. In 1885, shortly before being appointed minister of the navy, Aube elaborated on his conception of how commerce warfare would be waged with the newest technologies—the torpedo boat and the torpedo:

In the days when . . . in theory the laws of war were accepted by even the most rebellious spirits[,] . . . how was maritime war practiced? . . . A captured ship was taken to the nearest port if it was worth it, otherwise the captor took aboard its crew and the prize was sunk. Humanity was saved—and also safe were the laws of war. Tomorrow, war breaks out; an autonomous torpedo boat—two officers, a dozen men—meets one of these liners carrying a cargo richer than that of the richest galleons of Spain and a crew and passengers of many hundreds; will the torpedo boat signify to the captain of the liner that it is there, that it is watching him, that it could sink him, and that consequently it makes him prisoner—him, his crew, his passengers of many hundreds—in a word that he has platonically been made a prize and should proceed to the nearest French port? To this declaration . . . the captain of the liner would respond with a well-aimed shell that would send to the bottom the torpedo boat, its crew, and its chivalrous captain, and tranquilly he would continue on his momentarily interrupted voyage. Therefore, the torpedo boat would follow from afar, invisible [to] the liner it

has met; and, once night has fallen, perfectly silently and tranquilly it will send into the abyss liner, cargo, passengers; and his soul will not only rest but fully satisfied, the captain of the torpedo boat will continue his cruise.<sup>57</sup>

Aube explained his detached disregard of international law to his readers by asserting that “war is the negation of law. . . . It is the recourse to force—the ruler of the world—of an entire people in the incessant and universal struggle for existence. Everything is therefore not only permissible but legitimate against the enemy.”<sup>58</sup> How widely Aube’s ruthless vision was shared within the French navy is uncertain. In 1897 the commander in chief of the Northern Fleet sent his draft instructions for commerce raiding in the event of war with Germany to Aube’s successor at the Ministry of the Navy. The orders directed captains to “seek to hurt the enemy commerce as much as possible, while adhering to international law and the laws of humanity. The prizes you have taken shall be destroyed after you have removed all usable goods and you have been able to disembark the crew.”<sup>59</sup>

The ideas of Aube and his followers provoked a storm of controversy both at home and abroad, with keen supporters and critics of his ideas engaging in heated debates.<sup>60</sup> His vigorous embrace of new technology pleased many who felt that the old admirals were unresponsive and unimaginative, and it appealed also to those opposed to the horrendous expenses of a battle-fleet navy. The ideas of the *Jeune École* “split the French Navy wide open,” creating “incredible confusion” in the service during the period 1871 to 1900.<sup>61</sup> In exercises, the torpedo boats, gunboats, and monitors that were now the mainstay of its strategy failed to live up to expectations, unable to intercept convoys at sea.<sup>62</sup> Various critics, such as Admiral Siméon Bourgeois, attacked the movement for its open disregard of international law: “The advent of the torpedo . . . has in no way changed international treaties, the law of nations, or the moral laws which govern the world.”<sup>63</sup>

Following Franco-British rapprochement and the development of the *Entente Cordiale* in 1904, French interest in commerce warfare declined. On the eve of the First World War, few naval thinkers anticipated its revival using the new technology of the U-boat. In Germany, the powerful state secretary of the Navy Office, Alfred von Tirpitz, firmly focused the Imperial Navy on building a battle fleet that might someday threaten Britain’s command of the sea. In June 1897 Tirpitz declared, “Commerce raiding and transatlantic war against England is so hopeless, because of the shortage of bases on our side and the superfluity on England’s side, that we must ignore this type of war against England in our plans for the constitution of our fleet. Our fleet must be so constructed that it can unfold its greatest military potential between Heligoland and the Thames.”<sup>64</sup>

The British—whether policy makers like Lord Fisher or such theorists as the Colomb brothers or Julian Corbett—proved much more attuned to the connection between naval power, trade, and economic survival. Yet while Fisher was

fascinated with the submarine, he viewed it primarily as a threat to the fleet. He and others failed to perceive that it would enable attacks against merchant shipping on a scale unprecedented.<sup>65</sup> Concerning the future of attacks against British trade, Corbett, the nation's foremost naval thinker, cautioned in 1911 that "there is no part of strategy where historical deduction is more difficult or more liable to error," owing to profound technological, economic, and legal changes since the age of sail.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, he ventured the prediction that modern developments would render commerce warfare more problematic.

Three developments shaped his assessment. First, Corbett held that the abolition of privateering would make commerce raiding less destructive in the future: "Difficult as it is to arrive at exact statistics of commerce destruction in the old wars, one thing seems certain—that the bulk of captures, which were reckoned in hundreds and sometimes even in thousands, were due to the action of privateers."<sup>67</sup> While a state might commission its own commerce raiders, as had the Confederacy, they presumably would be fewer in number than the swarms of privateers that operated in the heyday of *guerre de course*. Second, the shift from sail to coal would make it impractical to embark prize crews on seized vessels, whereas, although Jeune École proponents had suggested simply sinking ships vice seizing them, Corbett briskly objected that "no Power will incur the odium of sinking a prize with all hands, and their removal to the captor's ship takes time." Lastly, wireless communications had changed the environment to the disadvantage of commerce raiders. Merchant ships could report the presence of enemy raiders, allowing other merchant vessels to take evasive action even as friendly warships took up the chase. Corbett concluded that "on the whole, then, it would appear that in so far as modern developments affect the problem [of commerce warfare], they certainly render pelagic operations far more difficult and uncertain than they used to be."<sup>68</sup>

### REPEATING CORBETT'S ERROR?

Julian Corbett remains one of the keenest and most incisive theorists of naval power, whose insights and concepts remain essential to discussions of command of the sea, types of sea control, and naval power's ability to limit and isolate warfare. Yet his assessment that legal and technological developments would make commerce warfare in the near future unlikely proved grievously wrong. When the next war between great powers broke out in 1914, both Britain and Germany soon resorted to maritime economic warfare: Britain declared the entire North Sea a war zone in November 1914, and Germany declared on 1 February 1915 a zone around the British Isles within which all shipping was subject to unrestricted U-boat attack. American protests following the sinking of *Lusitania* and *Arabic* in May and August 1915, respectively, forced a suspension of unrestricted

U-boat warfare, but the operational advantages proved irresistible to the German navy and government. At the Pless Conference in January 1917, the imperial government decided to resume unrestricted submarine warfare even at the cost of U.S. entry into the conflict. The decision proved a strategic blunder of the first order, but the U-boat campaign exacted a terrible cost. By war's end, over 12.5 million tons of allied and neutral shipping had been sent to the bottom by Germany's primitive U-boats.<sup>69</sup>

Corbett's 1911 misdiagnosis of the future threat of commerce warfare underscores the difficulty, even for brilliant thinkers, of predicting the future forms of war. War, as Clausewitz pointed out and Corbett realized, has a way of escalating in unpredictable manners, and both British and German naval officers were surprised at the effectiveness of the U-boat against merchant shipping. Maritime escalation in the form of the British blockade elicited the traditional response of the weaker side, *guerre de course*, using new platforms and technologies unavailable during its previous iteration under the Jeune École. Today and in the future, blockades and maritime controls—recently a largely cost-free endeavor, as applied against such insignificant naval powers as Iraq, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and Libya—may likewise elicit counter-escalation rather than meek compliance. At this writing, much attention is being given to the challenge of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open should tensions escalate with Iran. Yet we would do well to consider that coercion and escalation in the maritime sphere entail more than an exclusive focus on the challenge posed by antiaccess/area-denial networks. Better equipped and more determined adversaries may respond to future blockades and shipping controls by countering these tools of coercion with the coercive response of the weak, maritime commerce warfare. The theory and logic of this strategy of the weak have a venerable ancestry, and we would do well not to repeat Corbett's error of assuming that legal, economic, and technological developments have rendered future recourse to maritime commerce warfare unlikely and ineffective.

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## NOTES

The views expressed in this article belong solely to the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the U.S. government, the Department of Defense, or the Air War College.

1. For a critique of the dismantling and degrading component of AirSea Battle in the context of antiaccess/area-denial in the South China Sea, see the author's "China, the German

Analogy, and the New AirSea Operational Concept," *Orbis* 55, no. 1 (Winter 2011), pp. 114–31. For a broader discussion of the U.S. strategic pivot to Asia, which this author endorses, see Jeffrey Bader, *Obama and China's Rise: An Insider Account of America's Asia Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2012), and Martin Indyk et al., *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign*

- Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2012).
2. For broad analyses of maritime commerce warfare, see Nicholas Tracy, *Attack on Maritime Trade* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1991), and Patrick Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade 1689–1815* (Folkestone, U.K.: Dawson, 1977).
  3. For an overview of the overlapping and contested meanings of terms such as “coercion,” “coercive diplomacy,” “compellence,” “military coercion,” “coercive military strategy,” and “strategic coercion,” see Patrick C. Bratton, “When Is Coercion Successful? And Why Can’t We Agree on It?,” *Naval War College Review* 58, no. 3 (Summer 2005), pp. 99–120. The key texts include Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence: With a New Preface and Afterword* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2008); Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002); Alexander George, *Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1991); Lawrence Freedman, *Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998); and Stephen J. Cimbala, *Coercive Military Strategy* (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1998).
  4. For a discussion of gunboat diplomacy, see Douglas Peifer, “Riskfree Coercion? Technological Disparity and Coercive Diplomacy,” *European Security* 18, no. 1, special edition (March 2009), pp. 7–31.
  5. Matthias Puhle, *Die Vitalienbrüder: Klaus Störtebeker und die Seeräuber der Hansezeit* (Frankfurt, Ger.: Campus Verlag, 1992).
  6. N. A. M. Rodger, *The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain, 660–1649*, 1st American ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), p. 149. For a broader discussion of naval power in the Middle Ages, see the excellent collection edited by John B. Hattendorf and Richard W. Unger, *War at Sea in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Warfare in History* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, U.K.: Boydell, 2003).
  7. See, for example, instructions from Edward I to the Cinque Ports, or agreements between England and France during the truce period of 1408–10 in John B. Hattendorf, “Maritime Conflict,” in *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World*, ed. Michael Eliot Howard, George J. Andreopoulos, and Mark R. Shulman (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 100–101.
  8. Rodger, *Safeguard of the Sea*, pp. 202–203.
  9. Herbert W. Richmond, *Statesmen and Sea Power* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon, 1946), p. 9.
  10. Michael Eliot Howard, *War in European History* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), p. 45.
  11. *Ibid.*, chap. 3, “The Wars of the Merchants,” pp. 38–53.
  12. A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660–1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1890; repr. Gretna, La.: Pelican, 2003), pp. 193–94.
  13. Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1997). See pp. 46–47 for a balanced assessment of Mahan’s take on commerce warfare.
  14. Mahan’s critical assessment of *guerre de course* is developed at the close of chapters 2, 4, and 14 of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*. Mahan asserted, “It is not the taking of individual ships or convoys, be they few or many, that strikes down the money power of a nation; it is the possession of that overbearing power on the sea which drives the enemy’s flag from it, or allows it to appear only as a fugitive; and which, by controlling the great common, closes the highways by which commerce moves to and from the enemy’s shores. This overbearing power can only be exercised by great navies.” While Corbett developed the concept of “command of the sea” more fully, Mahan used the term in his classic interchangeably with “overbearing power on the sea” and “supremacy of the ocean.” See Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, pp. 133–38, 247, 341, 398, 461, and 538–39. For the best refutation of Mahan’s argument, see Geoffrey Symcox, *The Crisis of French Sea Power, 1688–1697: From the Guerre d’Escadre to the Guerre de Course*, Archives Internationales d’Histoire des Idées (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974), p. 73.
  15. Richmond, *Statesmen and Sea Power*, p. 179.
  16. Vauban was by no means ignorant of maritime affairs, having nourished a

- long-standing interest in commerce warfare and privateering. At the time the memo was prepared, Vauban held a naval commission as commander of the naval fortifications at Brest and its dependencies. See Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, p. 177.
17. See *ibid.*, pp. 182–85, for an analysis of Vauban's memorandum. The Vauban quote is from p. 183.
  18. Richmond, *Statesmen and Sea Power*, pp. 65, 76. Note that Jean Bart had urged a similar policy as early as 1689; given his lack of pedigree and influence at court, however, his advice carried less weight than that of Vauban.
  19. See Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, pp. 187–220, for the best analysis to date of the organization of privateering during the War of the League of Augsburg.
  20. I restrict myself to first-, second-, and third-rate ships of the line. The disparity becomes even greater if one includes fourth and fifth rates. See *ibid.*, app. 2, pp. 236–37, for a full table of ships launched.
  21. *Ibid.*, p. 226; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger, 1983), pp. 84–85.
  22. Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, p. 228.
  23. Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, p. 79.
  24. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
  25. *Ibid.*, pp. 131–32.
  26. N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1816* (New York: Norton, 2004), pp. 559–60.
  27. *Ibid.*, pp. 551–52.
  28. Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, p. 144.
  29. John Keegan, *The Price of Admiralty: The Evolution of Naval Warfare* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 98.
  30. Rolf Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea: Naval Strategic Thought, the Ideology of Sea Power, and the Tirpitz Plan, 1875–1914*, Studies in Central European Histories (Boston: Brill Academic, 2002), pp. 26–29; Tom Hartman, *The Guinness Book of Ships and Shipping Facts & Feats* (Enfield, Middlesex, U.K.: Guinness Superlatives, 1983), pp. 89–92.
  31. Hartman, *Guinness Book of Ships*, p. 94.
  32. Francis Piggott, *The Declaration of Paris 1856: A Study* (London: Univ. of London Press, 1919), p. 346, available at *Internet Archive*, [archive.org/details/declarationofpar00piggiala](http://archive.org/details/declarationofpar00piggiala).
  33. Hattendorf, "Maritime Conflict," p. 109.
  34. Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, p. 88.
  35. *Ibid.*
  36. E. B. Potter, ed., *Sea Power: A Naval History*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1981), p. 124.
  37. William Morrison Robinson, Jr., *The Confederate Privateers* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1928), p. 13.
  38. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
  39. The officers and crew of the Confederate privateer *Savannah*, captured by USS *Perry* in June 1861, were tried for piracy in the U.S. Circuit Court for the Southern District of New York in October 1861, but the jury became deadlocked. Under pressure from both the Confederacy—which threatened to execute Union prisoners if *Savannah's* crew was hanged—and European powers, the Federal government decided not to continue to press charges.
  40. Potter, ed., *Sea Power*, p. 130.
  41. The overoptimistic appraisal of privateering is reflected in section X of the "Act Recognizing the Existence of War between the United States and the Confederate States; and Concerning Letters of Marque, Prizes, and Prize Goods." Here the Confederacy held out the prospect of financial gain for privateers who captured or defeated Union warships, offering twenty dollars for every captured Union sailor, as well as a 20 percent prize based on the value of the ship and its armament. Robinson, *Confederate Privateers*, pp. 22–23.
  42. See Spencer Tucker, *Naval Warfare: An International Encyclopedia* (Oxford, U.K.: ABC Clio, 2002).
  43. Potter, ed., *Sea Power*, p. 130.
  44. Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, p. 540.
  45. Keegan, *Price of Admiralty*, pp. 99, 103. The British had traditionally maintained that their navy was to equal the combined power of its next two potential rivals. Owing to the



- pressure caused by the German construction program, the British in November 1904 revised this standard to include a 10 percent margin.
46. Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea*, pp. 26–29.
  47. See David H. Olivier, *German Naval Strategy, 1856–1888: Forerunners to Tirpitz* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p. 33.
  48. Theodore Ropp and Stephen S. Roberts, *The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy, 1871–1904* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987), pp. 19–22.
  49. Olivier, *German Naval Strategy*, pp. 32–33.
  50. The best discussions of the Jeune École are Arne Roksund, *The Jeune École: The Strategy of the Weak* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Volkmar Bueb, *Die "Junge Schule" der französischen Marine: Strategie und Politik 1875–1900* (Boppard, Ger.: Harald Boldt, 1971); and Ropp and Roberts, *Development of a Modern Navy*, pp. 155–80.
  51. Aube clearly was referring to what later came to be termed the "close blockade" rather than the "distant blockade" developed by the British during the First World War.
  52. Bueb, "Junge Schule," p. 17.
  53. Olivier, *German Naval Strategy*, p. 33.
  54. The ideas of Aube and the Jeune École were a response to the overwhelming power of the Royal Navy.
  55. Bueb, "Junge Schule," pp. 20–21.
  56. Roksund, *Jeune École*, p. 56.
  57. Aube, "Défense nationale, défense des colonies," in *Atlas Colonial*, ed. Henri Mager (Paris: n.p., 1885), pp. 11–12. The Aube quote is from Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, p. 165.
  58. Ropp and Roberts, *Development of a Modern Navy*, p. 165.
  59. Roksund, *Jeune École*, p. 94.
  60. For an overview of contemporaneous debates in the United States, see Craig L. Symonds, *Navalist and Antinavalist: The Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785–1827* (London: Associated University Presses, 1980).
  61. Ropp and Roberts, *Development of a Modern Navy*, pp. 178–79.
  62. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
  63. Olivier, *German Naval Strategy*, p. 135. For a detailed discussion of German policy prior to and during the Tirpitz era, see Lawrence Sondhaus, *Preparing for Weltpolitik: German Sea Power before the Tirpitz Era* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997); Christian Rödel, *Krieger, Denker, Amateure: Alfred von Tirpitz und das Seekriegsbild vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 2003); and Holger Herwig, "Luxury" Fleet: *The Imperial German Navy, 1888–1918*, rev. ed. (London: Ashfield, 1987).
  64. Tirpitz memorandum of June 1897, in Jonathan Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 208–209.
  65. Sir John "Jacky" Fisher, a keen advocate of the submarine, was earnestly concerned about its potential during the pre–World War I years. Yet he and others perceived the submarine largely in terms of a threat to the capital ship and the battle fleet rather than as an instrument of *guerre de course*. See Nicholas A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 80–81, 122–25.
  66. Julian Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (1911; repr. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1988), p. 266.
  67. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
  68. *Ibid.*, p. 270.
  69. V. E. Tarrant, *The U-boat Offensive, 1914–1945* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1989), p. 148. In addition, see Maurice Prendergast and R. H. Gibson, *The German Submarine War, 1914–1918* (Penzance, U.K.: Periscope, 2002), and Paul Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I* (New York: Routledge, 1995), for excellent discussions of the U-boat campaign in World War I.



## COMMENTARY

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### DEEPWATER OIL RIGS AS STRATEGIC WEAPONS

*Martin Murphy*

Wang Yilin, chairman of the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), reportedly told an audience at CNOOC's headquarters in Beijing in May that large-scale deepwater rigs are "our mobile national territory and a strategic weapon."<sup>1</sup> This writer is no sinologist and lacks the qualifications to parse these words for hidden meanings. At the same time, people are all too familiar with the sound of public figures misspeaking. Nonetheless, it appears prudent to assume that the man knew what he was saying and that we should accept his words at face value. If we do, we should be troubled.

Six concerns spring to mind. First, the statement appears to reflect the mercantilist thinking of China's ruling elite. Mercantilism, the trading philosophy that prevailed before open markets, saw wealth as limited and trade and national power as linked, such that it was not enough for one state to win commercially and therefore politically—the other state had to lose. Consequently, China's great corporations that have significant state involvement, such as CNOOC, should not be regarded as being the same as modern Western companies but as arms of

a competitive state in which profit maximization sits uncomfortably alongside the need to further Chinese state policy, whatever that might happen to be at the time.

Second, the legal position is unclear. The CNOOC chairman is asserting something that does not exist, since there is nothing in the law of the sea that recognizes platforms or structures as sovereign territory, even though they are considered under the title—that is, ownership—of the

*Dr. Murphy is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University, a senior research fellow at the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies at Dalhousie University, Canada, and visiting fellow at the Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies at King's College London. His published works are Somalia, the New Barbary? Piracy and Islam in the Horn of Africa (2011), Small Boats, Weak States, Dirty Money: Piracy and Maritime Terrorism in the Modern World (2009), and Contemporary Piracy and Maritime Terrorism, Adelphi Paper 388 (2007).*

states that put them there. In general, such platforms have much more salience in the political than in the legal realm, and this realm appears to be what China is attempting to expand. Chairman Wang's language suggests that China intends using CNOOC platforms slowly to wrest control of offshore areas by creating an ambiguous political-legal aura of authority and control. Possession is nine-tenths of the law in any language, and if China (as in the game of *wei-ch'i*, known more widely in the West under its Japanese name of *go*) can establish an advantageous position, then it will.<sup>2</sup>

Third, how does this view of oil rigs as strategic weapons and this peculiar interpretation of China's legal status coincide with its "Three Warfares" thinking? The U.S. Department of Defense in its 2011 annual report to Congress, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, described this as a three-pronged offensive strategy based on

- Psychological warfare, which seeks to undermine an enemy's ability to conduct combat operations by deterring, shocking, and demoralizing enemy military personnel and supporting civilian populations.
- Media warfare, aimed at influencing domestic and international public opinion to build support for China's military actions and to dissuade an adversary from pursuing actions contrary to China's interests.
- Legal warfare, which uses international and domestic law to claim the legal high ground or assert Chinese interests, employing both to hamstring an adversary's operational freedom and shape the operational space. Legal warfare is also intended to build international support and manage possible political repercussions of China's military actions.<sup>3</sup>

Fourth, the implications of this thinking and of CNOOC's state-directed role in advancing China's national interests, when it comes to evaluating the current disputes in the South China Sea, are worrisome. China is looking to control 80 percent of the sea's area and is prepared to use all arms of national power (diplomatic, military, paramilitary, and commercial) to get what it wants.<sup>4</sup> The starting point is a historical claim usually delineated by the so-called nine-dash line, based on a similar line drawn up by the previous, Nationalist regime. This line and China's claims are contested by Vietnam and the Philippines particularly but by other littoral states as well.<sup>5</sup>

A semisubmersible deepwater rig of the type China launched in May—*Haiyang Shiyou 981* (known as *HYSY 981*)—which Chairman Wang was celebrating when he spoke about a strategic weapon, would give China access to all but the very deepest seabed areas within the line. The Stimson Center and the analysts Gabe Collins and Andrew Erickson all believe that for the present China

will not deploy such a vulnerable asset outside its undisputed exclusive economic zone (EEZ), even though the rig now enables China to undertake drilling operations in the deep waters off the Vietnamese coast.<sup>6</sup>

Collins and Erickson (who provide useful maps illustrating how *HYSY 981* extends China's exploratory range) take the view that for the near future CNOOC's deepwater drilling operations will remain in the Liwan Trough and other areas that lie unequivocally within China's EEZ. For Beijing, the diplomatic costs of drilling in disputed zones, such as the Spratlys, against the wishes of the other claimants would likely substantially exceed the additional oil or gas production gained. In Collins and Erickson's judgment, even a large new oil field producing 200,000 barrels per day or more in a disputed zone would not be worth drilling unilaterally if doing so catalyzed further development of anti-China regional security alignments.

This may be true for the moment, given that despite its provocative stance vis-à-vis the Philippines off the Scarborough Shoal, and despite the failure of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to maintain a united front in the face of its brazen manipulation, China lacks the resources to defend the whole of its claim militarily.<sup>7</sup> That it is working to change this is indisputable.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, China, through the agency of CNOOC, has for the first time invited tenders for oil and gas exploration blocks in disputed waters off Vietnam's coast.<sup>9</sup> These blocks overlap already proclaimed Vietnamese blocks. The consequent uncertainty means that in all likelihood there will be few takers for what is on offer, certainly among major oil companies with the necessary deepwater technology and expertise. Suggestions that this move reveals a lack of policy coordination between the Chinese foreign affairs ministry and CNOOC—with CNOOC acting on the assumption that China's right to everything within the nine-dash line is indisputable just at the moment the foreign ministry was adopting a somewhat more conciliatory tone—may or may not be true. Whichever interpretation proves correct, China is sending a signal to Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries that it will proceed on its terms—terms that are reinforced by the declaration of a new prefecture covering the Paracel and Spratly Islands and by an increase in the size of the People's Liberation Army garrison on the tiny Woody (or Yongxing) Island.<sup>10</sup>

Fifth is the question of how this worldview and the concomitant view of oil rigs as strategic weapons could play out in more distant waters where China has similar natural-resource interests. Pertinent examples are the emerging oil and gas province off East Africa and the seabed mineral deposits in the southwestern Indian Ocean, for which the United Nations International Seabed Authority recently granted China an exploratory license.<sup>11</sup> It is unlikely that China will behave

as aggressively in these areas as it has in the South China Sea, but the grant of the mineral license has nonetheless provoked worries in India about an enlarged Chinese Indian Ocean naval presence. China's words and actions reveal that it continues to regard the sea as *territory*. Compare this to the Western view that has prevailed for the past three hundred years that the sea is space open to all and subject to only limited restrictions. China attempted to assert its view of the sea as territory during the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea negotiations but failed. Some states are nonetheless sympathetic to its position, and while none assert it as vigorously as China, they may well be tempted to follow China's lead if it crushes the objections of its neighbors and gains the level of control over the South China Sea to which it feels entitled. If China succeeds and its blue-water naval capability expands, it is likely that it will have the power to shift subtly in its favor the international rules governing the maritime domain.

Sixth, and finally, Chairman Wang's words do not square with CNOOC's statement in the *Wall Street Journal* that it is "respectful of the regulatory requirements across all the respective jurisdictions and that it aims to cooperate with all regulatory authorities." This is relevant to the United States, because CNOOC is attempting to buy a large Canadian energy company, Nexen, in a deal worth \$15.1 billion. At the time of writing, Canada had approved the takeover, although it has seemingly closed the door to similar future purchases.<sup>12</sup> Even so, the bid's ultimate outcome remains uncertain.<sup>13</sup> In part, this is because U.S. regulatory approval is required, in that Nexen has assets in the Gulf of Mexico; the decision of the interagency Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States is still pending.<sup>14</sup> While there are good commercial reasons to allow the purchase—the Chinese are arguably overpaying, a 60 percent premium over the pre-deal stock price—Nexen nevertheless does have deepwater extractive technology that could help CNOOC in the South China Sea and elsewhere and also allow CNOOC to maximize the return on its investment in *HYSY 981* more quickly.<sup>15</sup> Is this in the interest of the United States?<sup>16</sup> More particularly, how would approval, and the Obama administration's strange reluctance to challenge China's political posturing in maritime matters, help its Southeast Asian allies, who may sometime in the near future—depending on how negotiations, in which China is aiming to pick them off one by one, play out—see this rig and others like it parked in waters over which they previously had valid claims?

## NOTES

- This essay first appeared on the author's blog, [www.murphyonpirates.com](http://www.murphyonpirates.com), 5 September 2012. It has been amended and updated.
1. Brian Spegele and Wayne Ma, "For China Boss, Oil Rigs Are a 'Strategic Weapon,'" *Wall Street Journal*, 29 August 2012.
  2. For an introduction to the game and the analogy with Maoist insurgency strategy, see Scott A. Boorman, *The Protracted Game: A Wei-ch'i Interpretation of Maoist Revolutionary Strategy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969).
  3. Timothy Walton, "China's Three Warfares," Delex Special Report no. 3, 18 January 2012, available at [delex.com](http://delex.com).
  4. Jane Perlez, "China Asserts Sea Claim with Politics and Ships," *New York Times*, 11 August 2012.
  5. For an assessment of the significance of the so-called nine-dash line and China's assertion of sovereignty over the South China Sea, see Jacques deLisle, "Troubled Waters: China's Claims and the South China Sea," *Orbis* 56, no. 4 (Autumn 2012), pp. 608–42.
  6. Zach Dubel, *Regional Implications for China's Newest Oil Rig*, Spotlight (Henry L. Stimson Center, 2 July 2012), available at [www.stimson.org/](http://www.stimson.org/); Gabe Collins and Andrew Erickson, "China Aims to More than Triple Its Oil and Gas Production in the South China Sea over the Next 10 Years," *China SignPost*, no. 31 (3 April 2012), [www.chinasignpost.com/](http://www.chinasignpost.com/). The recent cable-cutting incident that occurred off Vietnam can be seen as a further attempt by China to use "lawfare" to redefine unilaterally the extent of its territorial waters. Huy Duong and Van Pham, "Trouble outside the Gulf of Tonkin," *cogitASIA* (blog), 14 December 2012, [cogitasia.com/](http://cogitasia.com/).
  7. Ian Storey, "China Bares Claws in Maritime Dispute," *Asia Times*, 8 August 2012, [www.atimes.com/](http://www.atimes.com/); Felix K. Chang, "China's Naval Rise and the South China Sea: An Operational Assessment," *Orbis* 56, no. 1 (Winter 2012), pp. 19–38.
  8. Andrew Erickson and Gabe Collins, "Near Seas 'Anti-navy' Capabilities, Not Nascent Blue Water Fleet, Constitute China's Core Challenge to U.S. and Regional Militaries," *China SignPost*, no. 55 (6 March 2012), [www.chinasignpost.com/](http://www.chinasignpost.com/).
  9. M. Taylor Fravel, "The South China Sea Oil Card," *China Power: A New World Order* (blog), 27 June 2012, [thediplomat.com/](http://thediplomat.com/); Randy Fabi and Chen Aizhu, "China Unveils Oil Offensive in South China Sea Squabble," Reuters, 1 August 2012, available at [www.reuters.com/](http://www.reuters.com/).
  10. Richard Cronin and Zach Dubel, *Sea of Absurdity: Sansha, China's New Island City*, Spotlight (Henry L. Stimson Center, 14 August 2012), available at [www.stimson.org/](http://www.stimson.org/); Oriana Skylar Mastro, *The Sansha Garrison: China's Deliberate Escalation in the South China Sea*, East and South China Seas Bulletin 5 (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, September 2012), available at [www.cnas.org/](http://www.cnas.org/).
  11. "East Africa Hits It Big in Oil, Gas Boom," United Press International, 29 February 2012, available at [www.upi.com/](http://www.upi.com/); *China's Role in the East African Oil and Gas Sector: A New Model of Engagement?*, Policy Briefing (Stellenbosch, S. Afr.: Centre for Chinese Studies, August 2012), available at [www.ccs.org.za/](http://www.ccs.org.za/); "China Wins Approval to Explore Indian Ocean," *2point6billion.com*, 3 August 2011.
  12. Ian Austin, "Canada Clears \$15 Billion Chinese Take-Over on an Energy Company," *New York Times*, 7 December 2012.
  13. Jeffrey Jones, "Nexen Chief Executive Says CNOOC Deal Not Yet Done," Reuters, 10 December 2012, available at [www.reuters.com/](http://www.reuters.com/).
  14. Ed Crooks and David Gelles, "Oil Tie-Up Is Test for US Deal-Watchers," *Financial Times*, 11 September 2012, available at [www.ft.com/](http://www.ft.com/).
  15. It is noteworthy that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service in its 2012 annual report warned of the risk in allowing foreign companies with close ties to their home governments to gain control of Canadian enterprises. "CSIS Warns of Foreign Takeover Risks in Annual Report," *CBC News*, 21 September 2012, [www.cbc.ca/](http://www.cbc.ca/).
  16. James Webb, "The South China Sea's Gathering Storm," *Wall Street Journal*, 20 August 2012.

## REVIEW ESSAY

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### LIKE STRANGERS TRAPPED IN A DARK ROOM

*Thomas Hone*

Lambert, Nicholas. *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and the First World War*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2012. 662pp. \$37.21

This work begins in the early twentieth century, when Great Britain stood at the center of the first modern global economy. The dream of British free-trade liberals was coming true; world trade was expanding, and economists, financiers, and business leaders in many nations were working to eliminate tariff barriers and expand international trade and finance.

Three things made this expansion possible. The large British steam-powered merchant marine, watched over by the Royal Navy, was making it possible for buyers and sellers of many goods to have confidence that products would be shipped on time. Second, as Nicholas Lambert observes in *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and the First World War*, the “huge explosion in international trade after 1870 was made possible largely by the development of the London credit market,” which allowed vendors to ship goods to purchasers on the guarantee that payment had been made and would find its way through London to the vendors’ banks. Third, the creation of reliable submarine cables

allowed vendors, purchasers, and banks to communicate almost instantaneously across whole oceans, facilitating the various messages that in their turn made international commerce possible.

Lambert makes clear that it was the reliability of Britain’s merchant marine and the great utility of the undersea cable network, which Britain’s government had subsidized, along with “the vast

*Dr. Hone is a retired member of the Naval War College faculty and a former senior executive in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Dr. Hone is the author or coauthor of six books and multiple articles that have appeared in the Naval War College Review and the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings. His edited anthology on the battle of Midway is scheduled for publication in early 2013.*

majority of international commercial transactions conducted by means of credit drawn on a London bank,” that sustained the new global web of commerce. The key banking instrument was the bill of exchange, “an unconditional demand for payment of a specified sum on a specified date that has been drawn by one party on another and accepted by an acceptance house.” In effect, a bill of exchange allowed a vendor to ship goods even before the purchaser’s check cleared.

What allowed the bills of exchange to take place was the resources of the major London banks and the confidence of vendors and purchasers in the integrity of the London banks and in the resources of the Bank of England. This development of bills of exchange was the financial foundation of the rapid growth in international trade, which was the foundation of rising incomes in many nations. However, Lambert argues that some officers and civilians advising the British Admiralty realized around 1908 that this newfound prosperity could be selectively choked off if the British government blocked a belligerent’s use of British merchant ships and undersea telegraph cables and access to London’s acceptance houses. Blockade had traditionally meant intercepting ships trying to reach or leave a belligerent’s ports, but now it might mean the complete and rapid shut-down of a belligerent’s international trade.

As Lambert points out, this was a new and potentially devastating form of economic warfare that “entailed large-scale state intervention in the workings of both the domestic and international economy, starkly challenging traditional ideas about the role of government. In so doing, moreover, it far exceeded established boundaries of what constituted grand strategy and indeed the very nature of war. Economic warfare thus involved issues that were beyond the Admiralty’s competence.” After all, what would in fact happen if the British government waged such a “war” against its rival Germany? Would international trade collapse? Would international finance, which was centered in London, suffer a panic, destroying one of Britain’s primary sources of wealth? Financiers did not want a repeat of the American banking panic of 1907, which had shaken banks worldwide.

As Lambert reveals, there was no consensus within the British government regarding the use of this new form of economic warfare. The Admiralty advocated it. The offices in Britain’s government that represented business and finance opposed it. The British foreign ministry also opposed it, on the grounds that it might actually bring such nations as the United States into a war *against* Britain. Much of Lambert’s book describes this internal conflict in detail.

The British government had to decide what to do now that it was committed to assist France if Germany invaded. The author describes how the British army wanted to send a force to fight alongside the French. The Admiralty’s response was to argue that Britain’s strength lay in its navy and in its key roles in international trade and finance. But how best to use that strength? Again, we are shown



how difficult it was for Britain to answer this question. For example, if France and Britain were at war with Germany but Holland was not, how could the Royal Navy legally blockade the port of Rotterdam, which was the entrance and exit for many cargoes carried by neutral shipping going into and out of Germany? Could Norway and Sweden be legally blockaded by the Royal Navy if they remained neutral?

The virtue of an economic warfare strategy was that it would be quick, and ideally decisive, whereas a traditional naval blockade would be slow. But would all-out economic warfare hurt Britain as much as it would hurt Germany? What about the neutrals, especially the United States? As Lambert finds, at the outbreak of World War I “Great Britain implemented economic warfare through a series of already drafted royal proclamations. Within a fortnight, however, political commitment to economic warfare began to crumble under protests from civilian departments that resented Admiralty control of issues they regarded as their bailiwick, from bankers distraught at the havoc already wreaked, and from businessmen upset at government interference with their trade. Further objections were raised by neutrals, irritated by Royal Naval threats of interference with their commerce.”

By the last two weeks of July 1914 the “new” global economy had been gripped by panic, as Europe slid toward war. That set off a running battle between the British Board of Trade and the Admiralty, the latter trying to strangle German commerce and the former actually facilitating it. Lambert shows how pressure from the U.S. government against economic warfare was a major factor in weakening the economic campaign against Germany prior to congressional elections in the fall of 1914.

The new global economy was a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it made the more modern economies of Europe and the United States more vulnerable to economic warfare, while on the other hand, it facilitated trade from neutrals through other neutrals, trade that worked against the Royal Navy’s blockade and weakened the effects of the British economic warfare campaign against Germany. Lambert writes, “In 1914, no means or mechanism, municipal or international, existed anywhere to verify the ownership or destination of merchant ship cargoes. . . . [T]he immutable rights of neutrals under international law to maintain their legitimate trade had become fundamentally irreconcilable with the equally immutable rights of belligerents to prevent illegitimate contraband from reaching their enemies.” This situation produced what can only be termed absurdities, the greatest of which was probably “the degree to which contraband trade [with Germany] through neutral countries was financed by the City of London and carried across the Atlantic in British ships.”

One of the concerns of today’s diplomat, political leader, and military planner has been the lack of a useful historical analogue to today’s global economy

—something they can study, something from which to gain insight. Lambert has provided such a source in *Planning Armageddon*. The parallels are striking. In the run-up to World War I, few business, financial, or political leaders understood what “economic warfare” could mean for them. These executives and political leaders were part of the new global economy, but few really understood it in a strategic sense, and even fewer could assess what embarking on real economic warfare would do to Britain’s economy even if at the same time it severely hurt the German economy. The cost of the new form of warfare seemed very high and the benefits unclear. The pressure to back away from all-out economic warfare began well before World War I and mounted through the first two months of the war. The results were a half-hearted effort and a British commitment to a war of attrition in northern France.

One of Lambert’s criticisms of the historiography of World War I is that most historians have not looked carefully at British efforts to develop a concept of economic warfare and then sketch out its implications for the global economy of 1914. Lambert’s point is that the debate over economic warfare within the British government was important yet often not well understood even by those who so energetically participated in it. The surviving archival records often lend themselves to different interpretations, though I believe that Lambert has it right—many British leaders believed that tampering with the new economy of international trade and finance was extremely risky. Economic warfare also ran against their faith that free trade was an absolute necessity for economic prosperity, especially a prosperity that would allow Britain to prevail in a long war.

A key point in *Planning Armageddon* applies now: the global economy is based on the confidence that springs from the effective working of institutions like banking and from the rapid and accurate movement of both capital and cargo. When this confidence slips, major economies cease to grow and the welfare of billions of people around the globe is affected. Does this mean—as some commentators in the first decade of the twentieth century suggested—that a major war is impossible? Could China and the United States go to war, knowing that doing so would have negative effects on the existing global economy? If they did go to war, could they contain their conflict? Could their economies endure a conflict?

We have two case studies that can help answer these questions. The first is the recent great recession and the related euro-zone crisis. The second is Lambert’s. National security officials need to study and think about both cases. I am not sure that the recent great recession and the euro-zone crisis are completely understood, even by those whose responsibility it is to understand them, but having noneconomists study them is essential. Lambert, to his great credit, provides extensive and detailed evidence to support his generalizations, but a careful reading

of all that evidence (504 pages of text and 134 pages of notes) is probably too great a stretch for active-service military professionals.

It is important, however, for those professionals to realize that as in the beginning of the last century, changes in the world's economy offer opportunities and challenges to governments that are economically, politically, and militarily powerful. As Lambert's research shows, the British government and leading British financial and business leaders often could not decide what to do with their economic weapons. They were like strangers trapped in a pitch-dark room with no flashlight, needing to work closely together to find a means to escape but with no idea who is best qualified to organize them. The first step toward escape in such a case is coordination among those trapped. The second step is to understand the environment. Lambert shows that in 1914 too many influential individuals in Britain could not take those two steps. We are today watching governments trying—and perhaps not succeeding—to do fundamentally the same thing.

Nicholas Lambert has written a powerful book. If you can read it, do so. At least read the introduction. It *may* change your idea about what happened to the British from August 1914 through 1915, and it *should* get you thinking about the similarities and differences between 1912 and 2012.

We are fortunate to have this book. It has come just in time.



## BOOK REVIEWS

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### HOW ZHENG CHENGGONG DEFEATED THE DUTCH IN TAIWAN

Andrade, Tonio. *Lost Colony: The Untold Story of China's First Great Victory over the West*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2011. 456pp. \$35

Written on several levels, *Lost Colony* is at the same time a Ming–Qing transition history, a Chinese maritime and naval history of the seventeenth century, and a global historical argument about the relative places of Europe and Asia in world history. Extensively researched in Chinese, Dutch, and English sources, the book tells the engaging story of Koxinga (Zheng Chenggong), a Ming loyalist who failed to remove the Qing from Nanjing in 1659 but did defeat and remove the Dutch from Taiwan in 1662.

Born of a Chinese father and a Japanese mother, Koxinga was trained early as a samurai in Japan and later as a Confucian scholar in China, where he passed arduous stages of the imperial examinations. This complex background, including his difficult relationship with his larger-than-life father, challenged Koxinga to become a major force during the Ming–Qing transition period.

Koxinga's father, Zheng Zhilong, was the founder of a great Zheng family legacy on the Fujian coast. Elements of his colorful tale are recounted in the early part of the book. In 1625 he pushed the Dutch from their fort

in the Penghu Islands in the Taiwan Strait eastward to Taiwan itself, where the Dutch reestablished their premises in swampy area farther from the center of their desired trade connections along the Chinese coast.

The book is replete with stories of how natural phenomena, such as typhoons and storms, affected and helped determine military outcomes, as in Koxinga's first campaign, in 1658, to take Nanjing from the Manchu Qing. Koxinga's force included something like 150,000 troops on ships, the largest naval force put together in Chinese history up to that time. The force was devastated by storms en route to engagement and was forced to turn back. Koxinga's second campaign to take Nanjing, in 1659, is a fascinating study of early military success followed by failure. Koxinga did not heed the advice of his leading field commanders. His decision-making process led to defeat in this second campaign against the Qing.

The core of the narrative goes on to the page-turning saga of Koxinga's subsequent campaign to take Taiwan from the Dutch, including their

fortress Zeelandia, near present-day Tainan. Koxinga succeeded in taking the fortress and driving the remaining Dutch back to Batavia (currently Jakarta) over the course of a bitterly contested nine-month siege.

Andrade compares Chinese seventeenth-century military capabilities with those of the Dutch, especially on four levels. His conclusions are, first, that the technology in guns was about equal but that second, the military discipline of the Chinese was better than that of the Dutch, whose discipline was vaunted in Europe at the time. Third, as for ships, the ability of the Dutch ships to sail to windward gave them an edge over Chinese. Fourth, although the Chinese outnumbered the Dutch by a large margin, the Renaissance fortress configuration, with corner battlements, allowed the Dutch to hold out for many months before surrendering. That was long enough for Koxinga to study and absorb the technology of the Renaissance fort and incorporate it into his own counterstrategy. Each side had elements of relative strength, and the elements were not static in terms of relative advantage. Thus, Andrade proposes, during the seventeenth century China was fairly similar to Europe in terms of military capabilities.

Koxinga and his heirs controlled Taiwan until 1683, when they were defeated by a former Zheng family commander, Shi Lang, who had defected to support the Qing emperor. Andrade makes the interesting observation that the Qing dynasty, following the Taiwan campaigns of the late 1600s, was an era of 160 years of peace in China, requiring little in the way of military advancement. Meanwhile, Europe was embroiled in nearly constant warfare, improving its

military capabilities decade by decade. Thus the Chinese were to be at a distinct military disadvantage when the Opium Wars began in 1839, and the century of humiliation for China was by that time a *fait accompli* with respect to relative military advantage.

The book includes a fine set of maps and figures, as well as a dust jacket with an evocative seventeenth-century painting by Andries Beckman of the Dutch fort at Batavia. The Dutch governor of Taiwan, Frederick Coyet, was executed symbolically in front of this fort for losing the profitable colony of Taiwan to Koxinga.

GRANT F. RHODE  
Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies  
Harvard University



Lo Jung-pang, edited by Bruce Elleman. *China as a Sea Power: A Preliminary Survey of the Maritime Expansion and Naval Exploits of the Chinese People during the Southern Song and Yuan Periods*. Singapore: National Univ. of Singapore Press, 2012. 378pp. \$35

Lo Jung-pang (1912–81), the scion of a distinguished Chinese family, was a great historian, old enough to have received a traditional Chinese education when young and young enough to have mastered the Western way as a student abroad. Like many of his cohorts, he chose exile, becoming one of those who for decades kept the study of China alive outside the country until the post-Mao liberalization of the 1980s allowed its resumption at home. Lo, a long-serving professor and historian in the United States, focused on China's great middle era and launched the field of China's maritime history. Bruce Elleman's unearthing and editing

of this previously unavailable 1950s manuscript, properly seeing contemporary United States–China strategic relations as his backdrop, has made Lo’s encyclopedic knowledge available to us. However, Lo’s book is instructive beyond that; *China as a Sea Power* is a magisterial contribution to the study of world maritime history and should be known everywhere by those who are interested in that subject.

Lo was determined to illuminate China’s maritime history to edify his countrymen, who had seen the consequences of a lack of naval power. In the first decades of Lo’s life, foreign navies dominated China’s coastal ports and also had wide-ranging rights in other ports hundreds of miles up the great rivers. It was as if foreign navies could, by right, sail at will up the Mississippi from New Orleans to Minneapolis. The Chinese had become accustomed to the seeming inevitability of such circumstances and knew of the failures to revive Chinese naval power at the end of the nineteenth century and of Japan’s easy closure of China’s ports between 1937 and 1945. It was for them that Lo wanted to present a grand history of Chinese power on the sea, and not only naval power but seaborne commercial power and the urbanization, wealth, and sophistication that it had created in great ages past. China’s remarkable efflorescence that we see today derives from such visions.

Of this book’s many compelling accounts, perhaps the richest is Lo’s description of the naval campaigns of the Mongols, who, as the Yuan dynasty, ruled China between 1271 and 1368. The Mongols, who had no experience fighting at sea, quickly adapted and soon organized armadas built and manned by their new Chinese subjects.

They launched invasions northward into the East China Sea and southward into the South China Sea. Today’s increasingly visible and vocal Chinese admirals seem eager to draw inspiration from these huge undertakings, but for all the immense capabilities they demonstrated, Kublai Khan’s two invasions of Japan and his three invasions of Vietnam in the thirteenth century all ended in disaster. Eight centuries later, in his November 2012 valedictory address, Hu Jintao, China’s outgoing president and the Communist Party’s general secretary, urged his successors “to build China into a maritime power.” In this they would be well advised to read Lo Jung-pang’s account of China’s past glories as a sea power, not only as inspiration but also as a cautionary tale.

CHARLES HORNER

Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute, and author of *Rising China and Its Postmodern Fate*



Tucker, Nancy Bernkopf. *The China Threat: Memories, Myths, and Realities in the 1950s*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2012. 312pp. \$39.50

President Dwight D. Eisenhower is remembered in history as a dedicated Cold Warrior whose staunch anticommunism included commitment to the containment and rollback of communism in Asia. In *The China Threat* Nancy Bernkopf Tucker challenges this narrative, suggesting that Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles possessed a more nuanced view of China than is generally supposed.

Tucker is an established and respected historian of U.S. policy toward China whose earlier works include a study of U.S.-Chinese relations during the



second Harry Truman administration. In this work, she soundly establishes that Eisenhower and Dulles did not view the communist world as a monolith. In contrast to many American observers, Eisenhower concluded that Mao's control of China was a permanent fact and that U.S. rollback of the Chinese communist revolution was unlikely. Like Truman before him, he disparaged Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek and his unrealistic hopes for reestablishing himself on the mainland. Eisenhower and Dulles believed that Mao could create his own path within international communism, following the independent path of Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito. In this view they anticipated the possibility of a Sino-Soviet split before it came to pass. They viewed U.S. economic sanctions against China as counterproductive, strengthening ties between the communist-bloc nations. Yet despite these assessments, Eisenhower continued on a course of confrontation with China, conducting covert operations and propaganda against China, tying Taiwan into a mutual-defense treaty, and enforcing economic sanctions against the mainland. Tucker thus faces the task of explaining an Eisenhower who "disparaged much of what passed for China policy under his own administration" yet never publicly expressed or substantially acted on his convictions. Eisenhower and Dulles both saw U.S. interests in Asia as secondary to those in Europe. Both had strong personal ties to the European allies and to NATO and were convinced that Europe was America's enduring partner and the key arena for arresting communist expansion. Changing U.S.-China policy carried the probability of significant

political cost. Because the Republican Party had made Truman's "loss of China" a central issue in the 1952 campaign, moderating the U.S. approach would have required Eisenhower to challenge both his own party and the influential anticommunist "China lobby." Political capital expended on China policy would come at the expense of essential support for European efforts—a cost Eisenhower was not willing to pay.

In the end, the fact that Eisenhower and Dulles had a less hard-line view of U.S. relations with China than is commonly assessed becomes a case study in the use and limitation of presidential power. The subtleties of Eisenhower's view of Asia pointed to constraints on his action, real and perceived, and made the cost of a potential change in U.S. policy more than Eisenhower was willing to bear. As Tucker concludes, in the end Eisenhower did not get the China policy he wanted, but he did get the China policy he made.

COMMANDER DALE C. RIELAGE, USN



Strachan, Hew, and Sibylle Scheipers, eds. *The Changing Character of War*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011. 564pp. \$110

Academic strategists have been agonizing over whether war is changing its character or is being changed by any manner of influences, ranging from technology to "war amongst the people," since the fall of the Soviet Union. The tragedy of September 11th added impetus to this inquiry. The Oxford Leverhulme Changing Character of War program, which ran from 2003 to 2009, has been to date the most

comprehensive attempt to answer the question. The essays in this work are the participants' considered responses to it.

The standout contribution among several extraordinarily useful chapters is Hew Strachan's on strategy in the twenty-first century. Strachan is a historian who, while aware of his discipline's fondness for the particular and aversion to the general, is concerned to rescue the study of strategy from political scientists who tend to use historical examples to justify sometimes-sweeping theoretical constructs. Historians may be tempted to dismiss everything as having passed this way before, which can sometimes cause failure to recognize genuine change and innovation. Political scientists, however, too often are oblivious to the peculiarities of their chosen examples and can be tempted to see novelty where none exists. Ironically, both are seeking stability in the service of predictability—the historian, admittedly, with the skeptic's reluctance. Strachan therefore asks, What can guide us? His answer, not unexpectedly, is war itself, provided we maintain a steady focus on the distinction between its nature and its character.

But to what changes in war's character can the contributors point? They begin by defining what war is, in terms of characteristics: fighting; reciprocity; scale; public, not private; aims beyond the fighting itself. It is easy to agree that within these five pillars war is changing, but exactly how is harder to pin down and often amounts to a question of degree.

The historians point to war as a collective act engaged in by politically, nationally, and ethnically defined communities. The "philosophers" point to war's individualization. In the

"just-war tradition," killing is legitimized as part of a collective action, but under humanitarian law, which now claims greater and increasing authority, killing is a moral responsibility to act against inhumane behavior. Consequently, the "what" and "what for" of law represent a major change, one in which differences become apparent when the U.S. interpretation of law as the tool of states is contrasted with that of those who increasingly view law as the crystallization of absolute and internationally agreed norms.

This difference obviously affects attitudes toward not only the suppression of terrorism but even the issue of who is a terrorist, as well as the question of who is, and who is not, a noncombatant. Osama bin Laden placed the citizens of all Western nations in his sights on the basis that democratic mandates empower governments and do not simply hold them to account. Yet is this substantially different from Giulio Douhet and the other advocates of strategic bombing who argued that civilians should be bombed to provoke them into rising up against their governments?

The success of nuclear deterrence ironically reinforced this trend toward opaqueness. By making major war effectively impossible between 1945 and 1990, it opened the door to terrorism and the rise of nonstate actors, and it led states to channel their use of violence into limited wars. Such wars can be robust—think of Russia's invasion of Georgia and U.S. action in Iraq. But limitation and the diversification of players have also sparked talk of a spectrum of conflict, a concept that erodes the distinction between war and peace by viewing peace not merely as the absence of war but as

something requiring the provision of justice, good government, and all that is necessary to secure human security.

It will come as little surprise that the majority of essays in this estimable and thought-provoking volume display little sympathy for such “new wars” views. Change has occurred, but the new wars/old wars argument is between strawmen who do not exist, or if they did, who survived only for a time and need to be examined in historical context. “The wars waged at the start of the twenty-first century were still predominantly the products of national, religious and ethnic identity; their aims remained governance and state formation. Paradoxically, however, they have been seen as wars of a new variety, principally because we have mistaken the character of individual wars for war’s normative nature.” “New wars” often turn out to be “old wars” coming back to fool us all over again.

MARTIN MURPHY  
Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Foreign  
Research Studies  
Dalhousie University



Middendorf, J. William, II. *Potomac Fever: A Memoir of Politics and Public Service*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2011. 213pp. \$29.95

Among horses, Potomac fever is a potentially fatal gastrointestinal disease, but in the world of American governmental officials it has an entirely different meaning—although it too can be a fatal disease. In this case, J. William Middendorf II refers to the impetus that led him to leave a successful career as an investment banker on Wall Street for Washington, D.C., to become treasurer of the Republican Party, 1964–68; then

ambassador to the Netherlands, 1969–73; Under Secretary and then Secretary of the Navy, 1973–77; permanent representative to the Organization of American States, 1981–85; U.S. representative to the European Union, 1985–87; and finally the chairman of the White House Task Force on Project Economic Justice, 1985–87. In addition, Middendorf has been a board member of the Heritage Foundation and of the Defense Forum Foundation, as well as playing continuing key roles as an active supporter of the Navy League, the Naval Order of the United States, and many other naval-related activities.

The history of the U.S. Navy’s civilian administration and its political dimension is a relatively overlooked subject when compared to its operational history. Moreover, it is rare that a Secretary of the Navy writes his memoirs, but when he does they provide invaluable information, insight, and perspective. Only a very few of Middendorf’s predecessors have published their memoirs, generally figures who served during key periods, such as John D. Long of the William McKinley administration and John Lehman of the Ronald Reagan administration. Middendorf’s service as both under secretary and secretary linked the last year of Richard Nixon’s administration with the entire Gerald Ford administration and provides valuable insights from that period. The published works of the two Chiefs of Naval Operations who served under Middendorf—Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, who served his final months under him and published his memoir *On Watch* (1976), and Admiral James L. Holloway III, who published his memoir under the title *Aircraft Carriers at War* (2007)—are significantly complemented by this book, which

provides a valuable firsthand account that historians will continue to use to understand these years.

To take the volume as a whole, Middendorf's purpose in writing his book is quite different from that of other memoir writers. He clearly tells his own story, not in self-justification, but rather as a series of lessons learned for anyone who might have similar ambitions for public service. Thus, his tone and focus, are modest and even self-deprecating, while the book tends toward a broad narrative punctuated by well told and illustrative stories rather than detailed relations of particular issues.

A descendant of Captain William Stone of the Continental Navy, who had brought the Navy its first warships named *Wasp* and *Hornet*, Middendorf has a personal naval experience that goes back to his undergraduate days at Harvard. In the first of his chapters on his period as secretary, he relates his first meeting with Admiral Zumwalt, while still ambassador to the Netherlands. Middendorf clearly supported and encouraged Zumwalt's initiatives in support of larger roles for women officers. Among his achievements as secretary, Middendorf counts as first the acquisition of the *Ohio*-class submarine with its Trident missile, followed closely by the Aegis cruiser shipbuilding program. Clearly, the greatest pleasure he had as secretary came in employing his knowledge of and interest in naval history, as he presided over the Navy's contribution to the celebration of the bicentennial of the United States in 1976.

Throughout, Middendorf has kept in mind that his is a cautionary tale for those who might be exposed to Potomac fever and be led to follow a similar path. In his conclusion the eighty-six-year-old

notes that "the path through life is a checklist of things that you don't have to do again. Life is all about seeking equilibrium, the rarest of human conditions. It's about moving forward without going over the cliff, finding success without losing our way, smelling the roses without getting stung by the bees."

JOHN HATTENDORF  
*Naval War College*



Brown, David K., and George Moore. *Rebuilding the Royal Navy: Warship Design since 1945*. London: Seaforth, 2012. 208pp. \$30

This title is the fourth and final in the authors' best-selling technical series, which covers the development and design of the Royal Navy's iron and steel warships since HMS *Warrior* in the 1850s. The volume under review, a reprint of its first edition of 2003, covers the awkward and challenging half-century since the end of the Second World War. This was not an easy time for warship designers, particularly in Europe; they had first to deal with stringent postwar austerity measures that dramatically curtailed their aspirations, and later with the advent of guided-weapon technology, which completely altered the rationale behind the established classes of warships. Nowhere was this more obvious than for the cruiser classes, which had been so much of a war-fighting staple for the Royal Navy following the reductions in the battle fleet as a result of the naval treaties of the twenties and thirties.

The authors' focus has been to present the whole story in terms of the designs covered, giving equal prominence to conceptual designs that often never saw

the light of day and to their better-known, living ship counterparts. For the first five chapters George Moore is the lead author, ably covering the more historical aspects and leaving the technically demanding era of guided weapons and nuclear propulsion to the highly experienced David Brown, whose personal involvement as a constructor during this period clearly shows. Together, they span the whole spectrum of naval capability, from aircraft carriers to submarines and minor war vessels, even venturing into the support classes. The coverage verges on the technical in some areas and is richly illustrated with line drawings, black-and-white photographs, and designer's artistic impressions. The downside here is that many of these illustrations lack any mention of their subject's individual particulars, something that should possibly have been rectified with an additional appendix.

Their comprehensive strategy, though, is successful in other ways—making it, for example, easier for the reader to follow the development of trends in naval design thinking between the established classes. It is less effective when it comes to identifying why the truly landmark designs were individually so successful and why they became so influential to shipbuilders internationally. For example, the light fleet carriers of the *Hermes* and *Majestic* classes that did so much to establish the technological baselines of postwar naval aviation, variously introducing the angled deck, mirror sight, steam catapult, and so on, are given no more prominence than CVA-01, a more advanced design resembling a smaller *Forrestal* class that despite its obvious promise was destined to face the politician's axe. Similar things

could also be said about the splendid Type 12/*Leander* frigate designs, the *Oberon*-class patrol submarines, and the Ton-class MCMVs, all of which had long careers and variously set the worldwide standards in their classes for a great many years. An enhanced coverage of these ships, as designs that were truly influential in “rebuilding” the Royal Navy, would have been most welcome and could certainly have been accommodated in this volume, which is noticeably thinner than its forebears.

These comments notwithstanding, the book is still a very worthwhile addition to the library of anyone with an interest in warship design or the postwar Royal Navy. Both authors' credentials are impeccable, and together they have provided a detailed survey of the designs and thinking in the Royal Navy during the postwar era, along with a fascinating insight into how naval design teams respond to the political, societal, and economic pressures of their times.

In truth, however, and despite the rather open-ended implication of the title, the book really goes no farther than the designs that were conceived in the late seventies and early eighties. The section entitled “A Glimpse of the Future” is already dated and superficial, with the classes covered now at sea and well beyond the conceptual stage. So, if you are looking for a detailed design and service history of the more famous classes or something that is up-to-the-minute, you will have to look elsewhere. But in most cases these areas have already been covered by individual technical monographs or the periodical press.

COMMANDER ANGUS K. ROSS, ROYAL NAVY, RET.  
*Naval War College*



Kaplan, Robert. *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us about Coming Conflicts and the Battle against Fate*. New York: Random House, 2012. 432pp. \$28

Professors Colin Gray and Geoffrey Sloan of Reading University once averred that geography is “the mother of strategy.” Geography generates context and constraints at all levels of conflict, but its most acute impact is at the strategic level, as a producer of commanding advantage. Geography has lost its niche in academia, and pundits extol the virtues of a smaller world, but they intrepidly overlook enduring realities. For all the talk about the flattening of the globe (via the Internet, social media, collaborative software, and tightly integrated economies), geography still matters to strategists and international relations.

Ambrose Bierce said that war was “God’s way of teaching Americans geography.” Although our geographic illiteracy has grown over the past decades, geography still dominates strategy and geopolitics. Even as information technology proves to be enormously valuable as the real-time disseminator of ideas (and the source of a new domain of conflict), the actual application of politics and military power occurs in physical domains, and any strategy must observe the realities of time, space, distance, and geography.

This is why Robert Kaplan’s latest book, *The Revenge of Geography*, is so timely and relevant. It is also his most intellectual work, reflecting years of thought and travel to troubled dark spots. Ever since his breakout book, *The Coming Anarchy* (2001), Kaplan has reported on the confluence of culture, history,

and conflict. His insights, borne of personal research, have been consistently dystopic but unerringly prophetic. In this, his fourteenth book, Kaplan provides a scholarly view into the past and the future. The first part provides an overview of the “Visionaries,” the original geostrategists. Kaplan dissects the geopolitical articulations of Halford Mackinder (of the Heartland), the less known German Karl Haushofer, our own Alfred Thayer Mahan, the Dutch American Nicholas Spykman (and his Rimlands), and the Austrian émigré Robert Strausz-Hupe (former U.S. ambassador to Turkey and founder of the Foreign Policy Research Institute). In the back half of the book, the author applies the various theories via a tour of the world, with a focus on the influence of the early twenty-first-century map.

Kaplan recognizes the influence of geography on nations and history, and he does not adhere to a deterministic approach. There are other factors, such as culture and demography, but “the only thing enduring is a people’s position on a map,” he suggests. “With the political ground shifting rapidly under one’s feet, the map, though not determinative,” he adds, “is the beginning of discerning a historical logic about what might come next.”

The fact that military power must be applied in a distinct geographic context or domain—over, under, or upon the globe—is not news to naval officers. Mahan, of course, was a noted geostrategist, and he is given his due by Kaplan. Naval readers will find chapter 7, “The Allure of Sea Power,” useful and Mahan’s ideas about maritime concerts of democratic states possibly appealing.

Also quite noteworthy is Kaplan’s chapter entitled “The Geography of



Chinese Power.” Here the author notes that China has resolved its land-border disputes and has shifted its attention to “a more hostile environment at sea,” where the “first island chain” (Japan, Taiwan, etc.) constrains Chinese access to markets and resources. China is now in the early stages of becoming a sea power, and Kaplan contends that China “in the twenty-first century will project hard power primarily through its navy.” Ironically, the Chinese “have absorbed the aggressive philosophy of Alfred Thayer Mahan, without having graduated yet to the blue-water oceanic force that would make it possible to apply Mahanian theory.” Kaplan discusses at length a naval “presence in being” around Oceania to preserve stability and to dissuade Chinese aggression beyond the first-island-chain territories. Kaplan concedes Chinese naval emergence in its near waters and envisions just beyond them “a stream of American warships . . . partnered with warships from India, Japan, and other democracies all of whom cannot resist the Chinese embrace, but at the same time are forced to balance against it.” The resulting tension along the Eurasian rimlands would surprise neither Mackinder nor Spykman, and evokes Mahan’s notion of democratic concerts.

The publisher is to be congratulated for the superb maps included. If there is one oversight, it is that Kaplan could have built much of his narrative around the concept of “shatter belts.” Such zones represent a useful conception that is consistent with the notion of geographically pivotal states and buffer regions.

*The Revenge of Geography* is not deterministic but studiously enlightening. Geography frames but does not decide. It remains an enduring constraint on

great states and the policies of statesmen. This book is highly recommended for readers seeking an intellectually founded understanding of past theories and strategies and a window into conflict in the near future. It will be valuable at all graduate schools in security studies, and it is particularly recommended for professional military education as the foundational reading for regional studies and geostrategy—because while geography may not be destiny, it will shape and influence our lives in ways we too often overlook.

F. G. HOFFMAN  
*National Defense University*



Verria, Lawrence, and George Galdorisi. *The Kissing Sailor: The Mystery behind the Photo That Ended World War II*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2012. 268pp. \$24.95

While I do not believe this photo *caused* the war to end, I do believe that the iconic picture by famed *Life* magazine photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt of a sailor celebrating in Times Square on 14 August 1945 served for many as the joyous and emotional end to that horrible conflict. The picture captured a moment in time, when a sailor, a nurse, and a photographer came together in a moment of jubilation, and then went their separate ways without saying a word to one another.

When the photo was published in *Life* magazine several weeks later, it became very popular, and people began wondering about the lives of the kissers on the cover. Neither the magazine nor the photographer could provide their identities, and the mystery lingered for more than sixty years. As far as this



reviewer is concerned, this clever new book, filled with forensic evidence and compelling documentation, conclusively settles the issue: the kissing sailor is George Mendonsa, a career fisherman from the historic coastal community of Newport, Rhode Island. Authors Verria and Galdorisi performed credible investigative journalism to sort through the stories of more than eighty sailors who have claimed to be the sailor on the cover. One by one they proved these stories false, and the evidence in favor of Mendonsa grew stronger. In his foreword, the television journalist David Hartman entices readers to “join detectives Verria and Galdorisi for a mystery solved and an emotional journey, a trip back to a few moments of joy and exultation in America.” The authors provide

their analysis of other photos taken that famous day, using “age adjusted” digital photography, as well as interviews with other people in the photograph—including Mendonsa’s wife of sixty-six years, who is in the picture, but *not* in his arms! Readers will also discover the identity of the largely unheralded woman on the receiving end of the most famous kiss in modern history.

This is a fun book to read, and while it is impossible to prove beyond a reasonable doubt who owned those famous lips seen “round the world,” the reader will enjoy capturing some of the spirit felt by everyone in Times Square when peace returned to America.

CAPTAIN JOHN JACKSON, SC, USN, RET.  
*Naval War College*



## IN MY VIEW

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### DOUBLE LIVES

Sir:

I read the article by Captain Light entitled “The Navy’s Moral Compass” [*Naval War College Review*, Summer 2012] with great interest. The Navy has tied personal conduct to the careers of commanding officers as a matter of public concern. I am writing to provide some insight into how the behaviour of “immoral and dissolute” commanding officers has a troubling ripple effect into the civilian world the Navy is charged to protect and not plunder.

Recently, I was formally engaged to a commanding officer as part of a three year relationship that included his entire command at sea. I relocated to Guam because he repeatedly asked me to, against my objections. He told me he had orders to go there after his command. A few days after I arrived on island to begin my new job and on the night before his Change of Command ceremony, he e-mailed me that he was in love with someone else and cut off all contact. He, of course, did not ever go to Guam. I later discovered that he was deceiving yet another woman, who lived elsewhere, during the same three years. He was also planning to marry her after his command ended until, in her words, “he pulled a cowardly breakup.” One may try to dismiss this because a sailor has “a girl in every port” but who can actually respect a commanding officer who shanghaied the girl and sent her to a remote port while he stayed ashore for a desk job?

I was badly shattered and very confused. Nonetheless, I understood that a man entrusted with national security matters had not suffered from a momentary lapse of judgement or a minor lapse in character and courage. He had led a fundamentally dishonest and secretive life every day for at least three years. I quickly informed his chain of command and the DOD Inspector General about his tawdry behavior. I received only one response. “In your now mixed experience with the Navy, I want to assure you that your efforts on behalf of the crew and families of BOATNAME are much appreciated. I’m grateful for your contribution.”

I had interrupted my twenty year career as a research scientist to find myself abruptly isolated, thousands of miles from anyone I had ever known, and without

any of my possessions only because a commanding officer in the U.S. Navy was so cowardly that it strains credulity. The least of my concerns was appreciation for my efforts on behalf of some people I had only casually known because they were also associated with a boat.

Recently, I found that he is back in a leadership position. After concerns were again expressed to the Navy and, after a few questions from them, they responded, “There is no current evidence to question the fitness or ability of — . . .” After ignoring this, the word “current” was a nice touch.

First, the proportion of commanding officers with questionable conduct is small but is probably higher than 3%. There is no reason to believe that I am the only civilian who has raised concerns that the Navy decided not to address.

To my surprise, his actions had grave consequences for my personal security. I suspect other civilians have faced this but also suspect that this particular issue is rarely acknowledged in your community. Because the Navy was not willing to question the veracity of its senior officer, no civilian system would either. The most inconsequential of the personal problems I faced was that I was not able to recover some of my belongings (that he had stored in his name before my move) because there was no way to find out why they went missing. He did not acknowledge my requests for assistance. The police and courts were unwilling to believe that the possessions were mine if he, an officer, would not assist.

One reason that personal conduct is a matter of public concern is because unstable personal situations, in any sailor’s life, can lead to distractions that could become harmful to the entire command, especially one confined at sea. Commanding officers are expected to serve as a role model. Although he kept his “double/triple” life hidden from the women whom he placed at risk, he led them in view of his wardroom and crew.

A commanding officer at sea has little scrutiny and so there are few restraints placed upon his behavior other than his conscience. Sailors who report to him and form the allegiances that arise from time at sea cannot be expected to be the only source of information regarding his conduct.

My former fiancé repeatedly described to me how he screened all e-mails to the boat for specific situations that might create distractions for a sailor and, consequently, the command. Those situations included monitoring potentially explosive relationship issues such as multiple relationships. If a sailor’s unstable life could lead to distracting drama that is harmful for the command, then the CO’s does as well. An obvious suggestion is for his sailormail to also be screened by a superior officer. This would quickly eliminate any issue that sets a poor example or has the potential to distract the command.

Clearly, the Navy has long argued that honorable personal conduct is an essential quality in a commanding officer. I do not have the expertise to know what qualities go into being an excellent commanding officer but the subject

is a matter of public concern and deserves a thoughtful, honest and consistent statement from the Navy. Like any well-educated citizen, I have read classics that explore this topic (e.g., the Stoics or Sun Tzu). There is a solid argument that a fine warrior is not purely a paragon of virtue because other qualities are essential. For lack of a better word, the “sinister” could be exactly what is required. My understanding of my former fiancé suggests that a “yin/yang” dynamic is inked into his nature. I acknowledge that he is likely quite good at commanding a boat even if I do not think much of him as a man.

Requiring PCOs to sign an agreement that they will avoid “immoral and dissolute behavior” is very odd to the public when many of us just call that “being an adult” and, for those of you in the military, the UCMJ already has the “conduct unbecoming . . .” clause. Something is amiss if the normal rules are not enough to rein in these few senior officers in the Navy.

Furthermore, in the civilian world, someone who behaved this way on a daily basis over years would have been quickly flagged for numerous security clearance violations. Simply speaking, dishonesty is unacceptable and “double lives” involving sex are all the more so because they trigger additional lies born out of cowardice and shame. These lead to the potential for duress. If the Navy cannot take these issues seriously with its line officers in command, why would anyone else take them seriously? Yet, we cannot all count on having our indiscretions ignored until they are no longer “current.”

Finally, the claim that COs are models of virtue is a potential risk to the Navy’s reputation because it places private citizens in jeopardy. Hypothetically speaking, claims of moral superiority are the perfect cloak to veil a predator. If the prey complains, those same claims can be used to give the predator safe harbor. This is clearly not an adequate defense of the citizenry but instead it is one from which a private individual needs protection.

I will close with a final suggestion. Because the Navy has repeatedly announced that it is concerned about the behavior of some of its COs, it would be helpful for the Navy to provide practical guidance to citizens on how concerns should be broached. This should include assurance that concerns are considered in an impartial way free of the Navy’s understandably biased interest in protecting the individual senior officer and its own reputation. Such bias brings a significant cost to a civilian who, while acting out of her own desire to protect the public good, faces the intimidating command structure of the U.S. Navy after she has been badly weakened by one of its officers.

## FUCHIDA'S WHOPPERS

Sir:

Mr. Bennett has produced here in the *Naval War College Review* ["Parshall's 'Whoppers' Examined: Fact-Checking the Various Claims and Conclusions of Jonathan Parshall," Winter 2013] essentially a *Reader's Digest* version of a very long blog entry he posted in March 2012. He then quietly removed it for "updating" after receiving an equally lengthy point-by-point rebuttal from me. Intriguingly, Mr. Bennett has incorporated *none* of that feedback into this article. I won't bore the reader trying to reproduce the details of my rebuttal here. Those with a masochistic bent can view it here: <http://www.combinedfleet.com/BennettRebuttal.htm>.

However, a quick summarization and rebuttal of the underlying themes of Mr. Bennett's arguments is easily presented. He has produced an impressively cited article that will seem superficially plausible to a casual reader. However, his scholarship on these matters is equally superficial and does not withstand serious scrutiny.

Regarding Pearl Harbor, Mr. Bennett's basic argument is that it was not Fuchida who originated the myth surrounding a hypothetical attack against Pearl Harbor's fuel tanks. However, a careful review of Fuchida's statements (see "masochistic bent," above) given in several interviews from 1945 to 1963 reveals a different picture. Fuchida's account changed dramatically over that time, and by the end he was relating to Gordon Prange the "classic" myth regarding a follow-up attack aimed at these facilities. His myth persists to this day.

Regarding the Battle of Midway, Mr. Bennett attempts to chip away at Anthony Tully's and my account of what occurred on the Japanese flight decks immediately prior to the fateful 1020 dive-bomber attack. His general line of attack is to try splitting mathematical hairs without any positive data to back him up. A symbolic refutation of Mr. Bennett's computational methods is thusly:

$$(\text{Wrong}) - (\text{Wrong}) \neq (\text{Right}).$$

In the course of this exercise, he overstates his case so badly that he has no choice but to cast aspersions on the credibility of various Japanese sources, including both the Japanese official war history series (*Senshi Sōsho*) and the air unit records (known as *kōdōchōshos*) of the Japanese carriers themselves.

His attack on these sources is more serious, because of what it represents to the study of history. In essence, Mr. Bennett is saying that operational records must take a backseat to personal accounts. This is folly. And frankly, it is a folly born of his incomprehension and inability to use the sources he criticizes.

Consider the following example, wherein a hypothetical modern historian produces a book on the Battle of Midway. Based on Japanese aviator accounts,

this author might claim that eyewitness accounts “proved” that the Japanese struck the carrier *Yorktown* with five bombs during the battle. However, in the face of such “eyewitness evidence,” more prudent naval historians would be well within their rights to say, “Wait a minute! We have the *Yorktown*’s after-action report, which describes precisely where each of the three bombs hit her. She’s an American ship, and they ought to know!” This same principle applies *exactly* in reverse to the Japanese unit records and what they have to say about what occurred on board the *Japanese* carriers at Midway. Any sensible modern historian would use Japanese operational records as the bedrock of his/her account and then flesh out the narrative with personal recollections. This is precisely what Tully and I did in *Shattered Sword*.

Mr. Bennett should think *very* carefully before attacking our methods and source selection. By so doing, he attacks not only us but also such experts as John Lundstrom, Osamu Tagaya, Henry Sakaida, J. Michael Wenger, James Sawruk, and other members of the research community surrounding the Pacific War, whose collective wisdom on these matters *vastly* outweighs Mr. Bennett’s. Indeed, Lundstrom, Tagaya, and Sawruk personally reviewed our original manuscript and vetted its approach and conclusions. Mr. Bennett’s credibility in questioning *Senshi Sōsho* and the *kōdōchōshos* is precisely nil. In essence, Mr. Bennett is saying, “Stop the historical train: I want to go back to the 1980s and just use Grandpa’s sources!” Fortunately for the study of history, this isn’t going to happen.

Regarding Mr. Bennett’s defense of Fuchida’s claim of having been on board USS *Missouri* for the Japanese surrender ceremony, I need simply point out that no one has ever produced a corroborating account placing Fuchida at this event. The only “evidence” we have comes from Fuchida himself. Extraordinary claims require positive proof. Yet Mr. Bennett presses his case by demanding that historians prove a negative. That’s not cricket. Likewise, the photograph Mr. Bennett puts forth purporting to show Fuchida on board *Missouri* was analyzed by the curator of the Battleship Missouri Memorial and shown to be that of an American sailor.

In closing, it is perhaps not surprising that Mr. Bennett’s relentless attacks on my scholarship and intellectual honesty have not resulted in my taking a more sanguine view of Fuchida’s misstatements. This is compounded by Mr. Bennett’s failure to incorporate any of my previous criticisms of his work into this *Naval War College Review* article. Though I previously had no interest in pursuing these matters further, during the course of refuting his original blog post I took the time to examine several more of Fuchida’s wartime accounts. As part of this rebuttal I am presenting three more Fuchida whoppers for readers interested in such matters. They can be found here: <http://www.combinedfleet.com/ThreeMoreWhoppers.htm>.



All are short. Each comes with annotated Japanese sources presenting the data in a form that will be easily comprehensible to anyone. And one of them is a real howler. They demonstrate yet again—if any further proof was possibly needed—that Fuchida is not a reliable witness to the history of the Pacific War. If Fuchida is to be used at all, he absolutely must be used in conjunction with other, corroborating sources. I have no doubt that Mr. Bennett will never willingly accept that the central subject of his screenplay was clearly a man who was overly fond of spinning *very* tall tales. But any objective historian cannot help but be convinced by the evidence the Japanese sources provide us on these matters.

JONATHAN PARSHALL

## **WORLD'S FIRST "CARRIER KILLER" BALLISTIC MISSILE**

Sir:

The excellent article on Aegis ballistic-missile-defense (BMD) development by Messrs. Hicks, Galdorisi, and Truver provides the official U.S. intelligence community conclusion that China has developed the world's first "carrier killer" ballistic missile (Summer 2012 edition of the *Naval War College Review*, page 69).

While U.S. officials have long believed that the earlier Soviet anti-carrier ballistic missile never became operational, several Russian sources now confirm that this feat was accomplished under the Soviet regime. In 1962 the Soviet government approved the development of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) for use against surface ships, especially U.S. aircraft carriers that threatened nuclear strikes against the USSR.

At the time the advanced R-27/SS-N-6 SLBM was under development in Makeyev's SKB-385 bureau. The decision was made to provide the nuclear missile with a terminal guidance for the anti-ship role, to be redesignated R-27K. The R-27 and R-27K missiles were identical in their size and external appearance. (The NATO designation was SS-NX-13; U.S. intelligence analysts initially used the designation KY-9, the prefix KY indicating the Kapustin Yar test facility.)

The missile system and trials submarine *K-102* were accepted for operational service on 15 August 1975. The complexity of the weapons system (D-5) had led

to delays, with the *K-102* joining the fleet more than 13 years after the project was approved.

The R-27K/SS-NX-13 was targeted prior to launch with data provided from aircraft or satellites tracking U.S. and British aircraft carriers and other surface ships. Western intelligence credited the missile with a range of 350 to 400 nautical miles and a homing warhead that had a terminal maneuvering warhead to strike targets within a “footprint” of about 27 n.miles. Warheads of 500 kilotons to one megaton could be fitted. The weapons system—capable of striking land or sea targets—was to be fitted in the later Project 667A/Yankee SSBNs.

However, the R-27K missile did not become operational, because the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) agreements of the 1970s would count every SLBM tube as a strategic missile regardless of whether it held a land-attack or anti-ship (tactical) missile. Some Western analysts also postulated that the missile also might be employed as an *anti-submarine* weapon. This evaluation fit with the U.S. shift of sea-based strategic strike forces from carrier-based aircraft to missile-armed submarines, and the related shift in the Soviet Navy’s emphasis from anti-carrier warfare to anti-submarine warfare in the 1960s. Sergei Kovalev, the dean of Russian SSBN designers, told this writer that “ASW calculations for the R-27K were made.”

NORMAN POLMAR

*Coauthor with K. J. Moore of Cold War Submarines: The Design and Construction of U.S. and Soviet Submarines (2004)*

## **BRASS AND ACADEMICS**

Sir:

Just wanted to pass along my thoughts of Thomas Nichols’s book review of Howard Wiarda’s *Military Brass vs. Civilian Academics at the National War College: A Clash of Cultures*, in the Autumn 2012 *Naval War College Review*.

While I’ll say the review was good enough for me to conclude not to read Wiarda’s book, this was not the reviewer’s intent. Nichols begins by describing *Military Brass* as “amassed anecdotes that point to dire flaws in the way military education is conducted in the United States.”

Dire flaws? Can the review at least provide one example of a negative outcome derived from these flaws? Whether in academia or not, who accepts one-sided anecdotes as fact? Perhaps there are kernels of truth to Wiarda's stories but Nichols rightfully grants that such author-only perspective lacks corroboration. So I ask, what constructive value or inherent merit lay here beyond entertainment derived from "salty" sea stories? Does the reviewer seriously advocate that schools be restructured based on the ruminations of a peeved professor? Nichols concedes the point but then ignores it with "too many legitimate points will be too quickly dismissed" and later concludes the book is "an important step in illuminating serious and continuing problems in the PME [professional military education] community."

Now, this book may be 100 percent accurate in identifying important issues that require to be addressed but . . . How can Nichols expect us to trust Wiarda's veracity when his view is presented, in my opinion, as whiny diatribe from an annoyed academic by a reviewer who blindly accepts the teller's tale of gross injustice and dictatorial "brass" buffoonery at academic military establishments?

Sounds like we've got here a disgruntled academic reviewing the work of a like-minded disgruntled academic. In light of this, it's hard to accept Nichols as an impartial reviewer; he seems to share the same bias about the military brass and thus assumes the book will be useful in identifying areas for reform and improving the civilian academic's experience with the pesky military ogres.

Again, an example of a real-world military-education travesty would perhaps lend some credence, but none is offered. So by the end of the review I find myself asking, If the military "brass" is so bad, why is there no mass exodus of civilians from the war colleges? Have they all been thrown in the brig to prevent escape?

The serious underlying issue that Nichols ignores is Big Academia, not military academia. A national university system in crisis, where adhering to vast and arcane government regulations to ensure immense revenue sources requires student happiness trump educational quality. This is a national "disease," with likely no remedy in sight until the college "bubble" bursts. That Nichols doesn't offer this perspective and strictly focuses on the "obvious" negativity of the war college professorial experience leads me to conclude he should not have been chosen for this review. And also for me to recommend the Naval War College keep this man happy or perhaps one day you'll experience a fusillade of anecdotes, a biographical broadside, or diatribe-filled memoir shot across your bow.

ROBERT J. LIPSITZ

*Captain, Medical Corps, U.S. Navy  
Bureau of Medicine and Surgery*

*Professor Nichols replies:*

Robert Lipsitz is quite angry with Howard Wiarda's book—which he admits he hasn't read—and is none too pleased, either, that I agreed with much of it (although I was quite critical of the way Wiarda wrote it). Unfortunately, Captain Lipsitz's letter is a perfect example of the military disdain for civilian academics that Wiarda was describing in his book.

Indeed, Captain Lipsitz's vitriol serves only to confirm the points Wiarda and many others in PME have made about the difficulty of reforming military education. Any criticism of the system, and especially any that touches on the attitudes of military officers, immediately generates an urge to "shoot the messenger," followed by the inevitable dismissal of civilian professors as ingrates who just don't get it, who should either love PME or leave it, and who—at least in my case, according to Captain Lipsitz—should be disqualified from writing about, or reviewing, anything about military education.

More to the point, Captain Lipsitz seems to think Wiarda is just a single academic with a grudge, but he should have read my review more carefully. I emphasized at the outset that almost any civilian academic working in PME—and I speak from over two decades of association with military education—could verify Wiarda's experiences. But Captain Lipsitz doesn't have to take my word for it: if he would like concrete examples of the kinds of flaws in the military educational system raised by me and Wiarda, he might consider reading not only Wiarda's book but the numerous writings of other PME scholars—educators whom I named in the review—such as Joan Johnson-Freese, Judith Stiehm, George Reed, Diane Mazur, and others.

At the very least, Captain Lipsitz should refrain from impugning the personal motives either of the author or the reviewer, since the clear goal of such *ad hominem* attacks is to shut down discussion and debate. Not only does this inhibit innovation and improvement, but it is exactly contrary to the spirit we should expect in the senior war colleges of a healthy democracy.

TOM NICHOLS

*Professor, Department of National Security Affairs*

## OF SPECIAL INTEREST

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### RECENT BOOKS

A selection of books of interest recently received at our editorial office, as described by their publishers:

Lord, Carnes. *Proconsuls: Delegated Political-Military Leadership from Rome to America Today*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012. 254pp. \$29.99

This is a study of proconsulship, a form of delegated political-military leadership historically associated with the governance of large empires. Its main focus is proconsulship in American history.

McNab, Chris, ed. *The Roman Army: The Greatest War Machine of the Ancient World*. Westminister, Md.: Osprey, 2012. 280pp. \$18.95

This book goes beyond the stereotypes found in popular culture to examine the Roman Army from the first armed citizens of the early Republic through the glorious heights of the imperial legions to the shameful defeats inflicted on the late Roman Army by the Goths and Huns. Illustrated with detailed maps, artwork, and photographs.

Hart, Sidney, and Rachael L. Penman. *1812: A Nation Emerges*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012. 284pp. \$50

Marking the two hundredth anniversary of the conflict, this book explores how the United States was transformed and unified by those who took part in that seminal event. Beautifully illustrated.

## REFLECTIONS ON READING

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*Professor John E. Jackson is the Naval War College's program manager for the Chief of Naval Operations Professional Reading Program.*

**T**he Chief of Naval Operations Professional Reading Program (CNO-PRP) is designed to enhance the professionalism of all sailors by encouraging them to read books related to the history and heritage of military service, as well as books that provide insights into the challenges of a career in the U.S. Navy. After considering hundreds of suggestions for books to be added to the program for its 2012 update, the CNO accepted the recommendations of the CNO-PRP advisory committee that eighteen books be designated as “essential reading” for all sailors. Fully a third of these books were written by current or former naval officers and senior enlisted sailors.

*Execute against Japan*, by Lieutenant Joel Holwitt, USN, was written by an active-duty Submarine Warfare Officer. Lieutenant Holwitt recounts how, less than five hours after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, a telegram from the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations ordered, “Execute against Japan unrestricted air and submarine warfare.” In a matter of hours the United States thus abandoned its long-standing adherence to freedom of the seas, under which commercial vessels were immune from attack. From that moment, the American war effort in the Pacific would target not only military assets but all Japanese shipping.

*In the Shadow of Greatness*, by Naval Academy graduates Joshua Welle, John Ennis, Katherine Kranz, and Graham Plaster, is a fascinating book that provides a glimpse into the lives of some of the post-9/11 generation of warriors. The stories of the Naval Academy class of 2002 are representative of an entire generation of sailors and officers who volunteered for service with the knowledge that they would serve in combat. Each story depicted in this book provides a glimpse into the lives of modern-day military officers faced with unique challenges.

*Navigating the Seven Seas*, by retired master chief Melvin G. Williams, Sr., and Vice Admiral Melvin G. Williams, Jr., showcases important leadership lessons from the first African American father and son to have served at the top in the U.S. Navy. In addition to the engaging biographical content of the book, the authors identify what they call “the Seven Cs of Leadership”: character, courage, competence, commitment, caring, community, and communicating. Each

is explained through vivid examples that will help guide all sailors to successful lives and Navy careers.

*Red Star over the Pacific*, by Dr. Toshi Yoshihara and Commander James R. Holmes, USN (Ret.), assesses how the rise of Chinese sea power will affect U.S. maritime strategy in Asia. Combining a close knowledge of Asia, ability to tap Chinese-language sources, and naval combat experience and expertise in sea-power theory, the authors argue that China is laying the groundwork for a sustained challenge to American primacy in maritime Asia. To defend this hypothesis they look back to Alfred Thayer Mahan's theories, now popular with the Chinese. Rich with historical examples and superb scholarship, this book is a thoughtful and informative analysis on the rise of Chinese naval power.

*A Sailor's History of the U.S. Navy*, by Commander Tom Cutler, USN (Ret.), was discussed in detail in the "Reflections on Reading" department of the Autumn 2012 *Review*. It is one of the best "sailor-focused" books ever written about the U.S. Navy.

*Wake of the Wahoo*, by Forest J. Sterling, is the heroic, true story of America's most daring World War II submarine, as told by one of the few surviving members of its crew, a retired chief petty officer. USS *Wahoo* (SS 238) was the most successful American submarine in the World War II Pacific Fleet. This riveting account of five combat patrols captures life on board a World War II submarine, from the witty and inspiring deck-plates perspective of *Wahoo's* yeoman.

One other book by a Navy author (one of the twenty-four CNO-PRP titles designated as "recommended reading") also deserves highlighting. *The Seventh Angel*, by Jeff Edwards, focuses on the crew of a fictional *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer and the civilian technicians operating an unmanned robot submersible to stop a "rogue actor" armed with nuclear weapons. Edwards is a retired chief petty officer and antisubmarine warfare specialist. His military techno-thriller novels have been awarded the Admiral Nimitz Award, the Reader's Choice Award, the Clive Cussler Award, and the American Author's Medal. *The Seventh Angel* blends page-turning action and compelling characters with an informative history on the development of rockets, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and the challenges of ballistic missile defense.

No one knows the Navy like someone who has worn the blue and gold of naval service. We encourage you to read any (or all!) of these great books to get a taste of the salt water from which they were derived.

JOHN E. JACKSON

(with the assistance of Commander Dan Dolan, USN)