

THE NEW MANIFEST DESTINY: THE RISE OF
NAVALISM IN *FIN DE SIÈCLE* AMERICA

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Art of War Scholars

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2013-02

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 13-12-2013		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) FEB 2013 – DEC 2013	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The New Manifest Destiny: The Rise of Navalism in <i>Fin De Siecle</i> America				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) LCDR Lewis J. Patterson, USN				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT This thesis argues that the various images and representations used to describe the “new navy” in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were indicative of a shift in how the American people viewed themselves, and how they viewed their proper role in the world. Specifically, this thesis provides a narrative of American social, economic, political, and foreign policy in the <i>fin de siècle</i> period, a narrative of the American naval rebuilding program in the same period, an analysis of popular and elite discourse about the navy between 1889 and 1917, and an analysis of professional naval discourse between 1888 and 1917. The thesis closes with a comparison of how the “new navy” sold itself to the American people and how the U.S. Navy sells itself to the American people today. It concludes that the modern U.S. Navy was born in the <i>fin de siècle</i> period from a cultural standpoint, and that this represented the origins of American global power.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Navalism, Fin De Siecle, Cultural History, Naval Arms Race					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	142	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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America

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE NEW MANIFEST DESTINY: THE RISE OF NAVALISM IN *FIN DE SIECLE* AMERICA, by LCDR Lewis J. Patterson, 142 pages.

This thesis argues that the various images and representations used to describe the “new navy” in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were indicative of a shift in how the American people viewed themselves, and how they viewed their proper role in the world.

Specifically, this thesis provides a narrative of American social, economic, political, and foreign policy in the *fin de siècle* period, a narrative of the American naval rebuilding program in the same period, an analysis of popular and elite discourse about the navy between 1889 and 1917, and an analysis of professional naval discourse between 1888 and 1917.

The thesis closes with a comparison of how the “new navy” sold itself to the American people and how the U.S. Navy sells itself to the American people today. It concludes that the modern U.S. Navy was born in the *fin de siècle* period from a cultural standpoint, and that this represented the origins of American global power.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For Heather Streets and Ray Sun, who got me started.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On December 17, 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt boarded the presidential yacht *Mayflower* to inspect the U.S. fleet assembled at Hampton Roads. As the yacht passed between the two columns of warships he tipped his hat to each of the 16 first-class battleships of the Great White Fleet as they prepared to embark on their round-the-world voyage. Overcome with emotion at the end of his inspection, the President said to his entourage on the *Mayflower* “Did you ever see such a fleet? Isn’t it magnificent? Oughtn’t we all feel proud?”¹

The fleet was brand new. None of the battleships were more than eight years old, and the flagship, the USS *Connecticut*, had been commissioned for less than a year.² The new, powerful Great White Fleet represented the culmination of a building program begun in 1883 that had modernized and expanded the United States (U.S.) Navy. Between 1883 and 1907 the U.S. had gone from having the twelfth largest navy in the world to the third largest, and soon the U.S. Navy would be second only to Great Britain’s Royal Navy.³

Roosevelt was not the only one who expressed enthusiasm for the new fleet. In the week prior to the ships setting sail, the city of Hampton Roads held luncheons, balls,

¹James R. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 21.

²Henry J. Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Naval Diplomacy: The U.S. Navy and the Birth of the American Century* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), xiii.

³Ibid.

and receptions for the soon to depart officers and crews. The festivities attracted thousands of socialites from the surrounding cities.⁴ It also received extensive press coverage. In addition to the interest generated by the fleet's stay at Hampton Roads, the USS *Connecticut* set up a special press office onboard to accommodate the numerous reporters invited to sail with the fleet as passengers.⁵ When the ships weighed anchor on the morning of underway, the shore was packed with onlookers. The balconies of nearby hotels were full of people watching the fleet depart.⁶ The Great White Fleet and the "New Navy" had become symbols of growing American power, and politicians, journalists, and naval professionals portrayed the Navy as the institution that would guarantee American security and prosperity.

This thesis attempts to construct a multi-layered cultural portrait of this newly powerful institution. It argues that the rhetoric and discourse surrounding the Navy reveals a shift in attitudes about how Americans saw themselves and the world around them, which coincided with a new more expansionist foreign policy. Naval discourse also served to link the American cultural experience to the contemporary European cultural experience, in that the widespread intellectual trends surrounding race, Social Darwinism, the purifying capability of war, and other attitudes characteristic of the *fin de siècle* were present in American discussions about the Navy.

⁴Reckner, 22.

⁵Kenneth Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet: American Sea Power Comes of Age* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1998), xii.

⁶*Ibid.*, xiv.

This thesis contains an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 2 discusses the various social, political, demographic, economic, and foreign policy trends in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America, in order to provide a context for constructing the cultural portrait of the Navy.

Chapter 3 discusses the rise of the “New Navy” as an institution, beginning in 1883 with the construction of the U.S. Navy’s first modern armored warships. It then examines the fielding of the Navy’s first battleships, the Spanish-American War, the increasing frequency of fleet reviews, and the continuing naval expansion in the years leading up to World War One. Like chapter 2, chapter 3 is a contextual chapter, designed to give a reader a sense of the narrative to anchor the analysis of the primary sources used in constructing the cultural portrait.

Chapter 4 analyzes the elite and popular discourse about the Navy between 1889 and 1898. It includes speeches given during Naval Appropriations debates in the Congressional Record and coverage of the Navy in a wide range of newspapers. Instead of focusing on the policy decisions made about the navy—spending levels, battleship procurement, and the pace of naval expansion—this analysis focuses on the representations of the Navy as a cultural artifact. This chapter and the ones that follow it describe what the Navy meant to people, and how this presentation changed over time. Themes in elite and popular discourse included notions of superior American quality of craftsmanship, the Navy as a source of pride, America’s vulnerability to foreign attack, and the assertion that the Navy had reinvented itself.

Chapter 5 conducts the same type of analysis as chapter 4, beginning after the Spanish-American War in 1898. After the war, the American people had new naval

victories to celebrate. This increased the amount of discourse about the Navy, and descriptions of the Navy showed that Americans had become more self-confident about their maritime forces. Chapter 5 also examines the new themes that emerged as a result of the continuing naval expansion and the new aggressive foreign policy that emerged after the Spanish-American War. These new themes included the glorious naval victories at Manila Bay and Santiago, the Navy as a national institution, the ability of the “New Navy” to compete with the European navies, the new virtuous American imperialism, and the Navy as a symbol of American racial quality.

Chapter 6 is an analysis of professional naval discourse during this period, taken from the U.S. Naval Institute’s *Proceedings* magazine from 1888 to 1917. Some of the positive and self-congratulating themes and images present in popular discourse appear in professional discourse. But, the professional discourse also revealed an institution that was trying to reinvent itself while trying to discern what the next war would bring in order to properly prepare for battle. As a result, the professional discourse revealed a lot about the insecurity and uncertainty that wracked the institution. Naval professionals saw themselves as railing against the ignorance and complacency of their countrymen, who were denying the Navy the means to provide for the nation’s security.

This thesis intersects with several existing historiographies. First is the general study of American society in the *fin de siècle* period, which tells the story of rising corruption and income inequality after the Civil War, the increasing frequency of economic depressions, and the transformation of the country due to the Second Industrial Revolution and the closure of the frontier. Notable examples include Robert Wiebe’s *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, Sean Dennis Cashman’s *America in the Gilded Age: From*

the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt and *America in the Age of Titans: The Progressive Era and World War I*, and Neil Irving Painter's *Standing at Armageddon: A Grassroots History of the Progressive Era*. Collectively these works explore the increasing instability in American society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, caused by rising immigration, rising income inequality, rising popular dissatisfaction, and the new aggressive American foreign policy.

A second, related historiography is the rise of imperialism in America, which deals with the unprecedented expansionist foreign policy that resulted in the birth of the American Empire in 1898. Examples include Walter LaFeber's *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion: 1860-1898* and Evan Thomas's *The War Lovers: Roosevelt, Lodge, Hearst, and the Rush to Empire*. Both of these deal with the evolution of American foreign policy in the late nineteenth century, and Thomas's book in particular attributes the new imperialism to the agitations of Theodore Roosevelt, William Randolph Hearst, and Henry Cabot Lodge.

The third historiography is the rise of navalism.⁷ In addition to studies of American society as a whole, several books have been written about the rise of the "New Navy," beginning with the new warships built in 1883. Some examples of these include Peter Karsten's *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis*, and Mark Russell Shulman's *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power 1882-1893*. These works highlight the policy decisions made about the Navy, and Karsten in particular

⁷"Navalism" refers to general popular enthusiasm about the Navy, and political prominence of the naval classes and pro-navy policies. In late 19th century America navalism enabled the massive expansion and modernization of the U.S. Navy. Pressure groups, politicians, and journalists celebrated the Navy's power and advertised its accomplishments in order to foster public support for continued naval building.

charges that the naval establishment lobbied for further naval expansion in order to enhance their own career opportunities rather than for national security reasons. While both of these books address the rise of navalism in America, they focus more on the narrow views and agendas of pressure groups and the policy decisions that resulted from their lobbying, rather than on popular discourse about the Navy.

The fourth historiography is the Anglo-German naval arms race in the years leading up to World War One. While the American naval buildup was not a significant factor in polarizing the European powers against one another in the way that German and British naval expansion programs were, they all drew on similar intellectual trends and ideas to justify their respective naval building programs. As one of the primary causes of World War One, the Anglo-German naval arms race has received considerable attention from numerous authors. Some examples include Robert Massie's *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War*, Paul Kennedy's *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, Jon Sumida's *In Defense of Naval Supremacy*, and Arthur Marder's *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*. This thesis conducts a similar examination of the American naval buildup during the same period, which expands this historiography to include a naval arms race in a non-European country.

The final historiography that intersects with this thesis is associated with the rise of Naval Theater and popular culture in the late nineteenth century. The best example of this is Jan Ruger's *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire*, in which he details the elaborate pageantry associated with fleet reviews in Britain and Germany in the late nineteenth century, as well as other public spectacles and products with naval themes. While this thesis does not go as far as Ruger's work in exploring

naval cultural phenomena in American in the *fin de siècle* period, it represents a first step, and points the way to a larger study.

By constructing this cultural portrait of the Navy, this thesis is able to do three unique things. First, while authors have studied the rise of navalism in America in the *fin de siècle* period from a policy perspective, the author believes this to be the first study of the popular cultural aspects of American navalism at the time of the advent of the “New Navy.” Studying the Navy as a cultural artifact allows for synthesis of the past, present, and future in a single cultural “moment.” Discourse about past naval victories were used to inspire the American people about what they had achieved, fleet reviews and press coverage of ship launchings served to reassure them about their present security, and calls for increased naval preparedness and for outward expansion of American power were intended to galvanize the people into action so that their future would be safeguarded.

Second, it represents an example of the American people fashioning themselves as a “martial race.” This is especially clear when comparing the American people to the British, who American navalists saw as their natural kinsmen. While the British in this period ascribed special status to Sikhs and Gurkhas as “martial races” because of their perceived aptitude as soldiers, the British believed that there was no one anywhere who was the equal of the British Tar or the British Admiral.⁸ By linking themselves to the British, the American navalists were coopting that same attitude, arguing that they were, as Anglo-Saxons, just as entitled to think of themselves as “masters of the seas” as their British cousins.

⁸The best work on martial races is Heather Streets’s, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004).

Finally, it links the American cultural experience in the *fin de siècle* period to the contemporary European cultural experience. Social Darwinism; concepts of racial degeneracy; the virtue of international competition; the prescriptive, Jominian ideas of Alfred Thayer Mahan about the primacy of seapower; the inevitability of war; and the rapid, bewildering pace of technological and social change were every bit as present in American culture as in European culture. Authors describing the years leading up to World War One tend to view the development of the Anglo-German antagonism as an isolated phenomenon, confined to Europe. The existence of parallels in the American experience, as the American people rebuilt their Navy and adopted a new imperialist foreign policy, suggests that the forces driving the Anglo-German antagonism were not isolated to Europe. This also points the way for additional cultural studies of other countries besides the U.S., Germany, and Great Britain. Other countries were also expanding their navies during this period, including Japan, Italy, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

This thesis portrays a people who saw themselves as beset with internal societal and economic disruption, full of untapped potential, and possessing a superior morality that was primed for exporting the blessings of civilization to the undeveloped world. As they struck out to fulfill their New Manifest Destiny, they increasingly tied themselves to their Navy as the vehicle that would safeguard their security, project their power abroad for their own economic benefit and for the benefit of the uncivilized world, and heal the social rifts within their society. It was a symbol of strength and moral purity for the people to rally around, and its advocates believed that it would serve as the last word on

the quality of the American “race” as the U.S. sought to take on a greater role in international politics.

CHAPTER 2

AMERICA IN THE *FIN DE SIÈCLE* PERIOD

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a time of dramatic change in the U.S. During this period, the U.S. transitioned from a predominately agricultural society to an industrial one. Its economy and demographics changed in fundamental ways, and the 1890s especially were a watershed in American politics. Increasing industrialization, the adoption of a new imperialist foreign policy, the widening wealth gap between the rich and poor, the end of isolationism, and the uniquely American manifestation of *fin de siècle* cultural attributes all had a substantial impact. This chapter will discuss the most important of these changes within American society and set them up as a backdrop for the rise of navalism in this period.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will examine economics, social trends, and domestic politics. The second section will examine foreign policy. Collectively they provide a societal context within which the transformation of the U.S. Navy into a modern, powerful power projection force took place. Like their contemporaries in Europe, for the Americans this period represented a stark break from the one that preceded it. For people living in this period their world seemed to be spiraling out of control. They witnessed the growth of new technologies, the growth of nationalism, growing social and economic problems, and the birth of imperialism in America. American foreign policy moved in a radically new and unprecedented direction, as Americans altered their conception of what their “Manifest Destiny” meant. This was the first time that the U.S. sought to actively compete with the Europeans instead of simply finding ways to contain them or keep them out of America’s sphere of influence.

Economics, Social Trends, and Domestic Politics

Industrialization accelerated in the late nineteenth century as America absorbed the effects of what historians call the Second Industrial Revolution, from about 1870 until the 1890s. Whereas the First Industrial Revolution involved replacing personal and animal power with basic machines like the steam jenny and cotton gin, the Second Industrial Revolution produced great, thundering machines of industry and further radical transformation of the economy.

Accelerated industrialization in America led to significant economic growth. The increase in production capacity was staggering. Coal production rose from 202.8 million tons in 1896 to 405.9 million tons in 1910.⁹ Petroleum production rose from 300 million gallons in 1901 to 1.7 billion gallons in 1909.¹⁰ Production of raw steel grew from 5.8 million tons in 1870 to 11.2 million in 1900. By the end of the century, the U.S. produced more steel than Germany and Great Britain combined.¹¹ Total manufacturing output increased fourfold between 1870 and 1900, to \$13 billion.¹²

The country's transportation infrastructure increased in size and complexity as well. The country's railroad network grew from 35,000 miles of track in 1865 to 193,000

⁹Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Age of Titans: The Progressive Era and World War I* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1988), 14.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: A Grassroots History of the Progressive Era* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), xiii.

¹²Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1993), 11.

miles in 1900, more than all the railroads in Europe at the time.¹³ With this expanded infrastructure came increased volume of transport. Railroads in the U.S. carried 10 billion tons of cargo per mile of track in 1865. By 1900, this had increased to 79 billion tons.¹⁴ New technologies fueled this rapid expansion, particularly the telephone and telegraph, as well as advancements in railroad technology. By the latter part of the nineteenth century this had created significant social disruption, as it had elsewhere in the world. Victorian laissez faire capitalism had led to explosive growth, but also economic volatility, and what became increasingly recognized as unfair wealth disparity—the lower classes living in squalor and poverty with no chance of improving their station in life, while the rich continued to amass greater wealth and political power.

The wealth gap was extreme. The top 1 percent of the population owned 51 percent of the wealth in the country. The bottom 44 percent owned only 1.2 percent.¹⁵ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the laboring classes were unemployed for as much as 30 percent of the year which fueled significant social unrest, and made the laboring classes much more sensitive to oscillations in the economy.¹⁶ As economic depressions became more frequent,¹⁷ laboring classes could increasingly expect to endure longer periods of unemployment, and this led to more frequent strikes and violent clashes

¹³Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 23.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵Painter, xvi.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Between 1870 and 1900 there were three economic depressions, from 1873-1878, 1882-1885, and 1893-1897.

with management. The unemployed “became symbols of the ‘dangerous classes,’ as though they were evil men who had chosen not to work.”¹⁸

The significance of the wealth gap was made worse by the conspicuous spending of the rich. Alva Vanderbilt (the wife of Cornelius Vanderbilt’s grandson) threw a party at the Waldorf in New York City in 1883. She advertised all of the party’s details in the newspapers, and it was headlined as the most extravagant party in the history of the city. This several hundred thousand dollar party took place while the economy was in depression, and it caused a significant public outcry.¹⁹

The Vanderbilt’s great wealth and lavishness were typical of the gap between the rich and poor that characterized the “Gilded Age.”²⁰ This was the age of the “Robber Barons”—industrialists who amassed great wealth, often dishonestly, and created an increasingly sharp divide between the wealthy and the laboring classes. At a time when the average manufacturing laborer earned \$435 per year, industrialists were amassing huge fortunes.²¹ When Cornelius Vanderbilt died in 1877, his net worth from his railroad and shipping interests amounted to \$90 million. His son then doubled his inheritance

¹⁸Painter, xvii.

¹⁹Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

²⁰Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 1. The “Gilded Age” refers to the period between the death of Abraham Lincoln in 1865 to the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt in 1901.

²¹McGerr, 16.

before he died 8 years later.²² In 1901 Andrew Carnegie's fortune totaled nearly \$500 million before he started giving it all away.²³

The increased concentration of wealth at the top also made the entire economy dependent on the success or failure of the industrialists, and the collapse of a few banks or companies could cause economic depression. Fully half the years in the quarter century after 1873 were years of depression: 1873-1878, 1882-1885, and 1893-1897.²⁴ The two most significant depressions began in 1873 and 1893, and had long lasting cultural effects.

The Depression in 1873 started because of a railroad collapse,²⁵ and caused 6,000 businesses to fail in 1874.²⁶ This was the longest economic depression in American history to date, lasting until 1879.²⁷ The Depression of 1893 was even worse. It also began with a railroad collapse, which wiped out 25 percent of the nation's railroad companies.²⁸ This had cascading effects. Compared to the relatively mild (though long)

²²Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1967), 8.

²³*Ibid.*, 18.

²⁴Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion: 1860-1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 8.

²⁵Wiebe, 2.

²⁶Painter, 4.

²⁷Wiebe, 5.

²⁸Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 271.

depression in the 1870s, 15,000 businesses failed after the depression in the 1890s, and 150 banks collapsed. Unemployment reached 20 percent.²⁹

These depressions eroded American confidence in laissez faire capitalism among the middle and lower classes. The increasing volatility of the economy undermined the claim that capitalism would improve the standard of living for the population as a whole.³⁰ Increasingly, as a result of the squalor of slums, the stagnation of workers' living conditions and wages, and the oscillations in the capitalist system that caused unemployment, questions about the fairness of the capitalist system grew among the lower classes.

Defenders of the capitalist system argued that economic depressions could be prevented by consolidating industries into large trusts, and by acquiring overseas markets.³¹ In elite circles, this became one of the main arguments for imperialism. Industrialists and ideologically aligned politicians argued that American industry was overproducing, owing to their superior organization and the racial quality of their workers, and that the only way to ensure America's long-term economic interest was to acquire the foreign markets necessary to accommodate America's vast industrial capacity.³²

In addition to its economic problems, America was also increasingly socially divided. The large wealth gap made these divisions worse, but it was not the only cause.

²⁹Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 271.

³⁰Painter, 15.

³¹Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 39.

³²Painter, 146.

Immigration was rapidly accelerating by the turn of the century. American immigration reached its highest levels between 1905 and 1914.³³ In each of the years 1905, 1906, 1907, 1910, 1913, and 1914 over a million people immigrated, mostly from Central and Southern Europe.³⁴ By 1910 first generation immigrants comprised 14 percent of the population and 25 percent of the labor force.³⁵ The sheer numbers of immigrants exacerbated the unemployment problem, which in turn fueled anti-alien attitudes among the population.³⁶

Coupled with this new nativism was an increasing belief in Social Darwinism, which argued that people were subject to the same laws of natural selection as animals.³⁷ While the influx of immigrants was the main cause of anti-alien attitudes, Social Darwinism provided a scientific explanation for why these attitudes were founded in reason. This was a particularly appealing intellectual notion for the wealthy, because it provided a scientific explanation for their superior station in life. Those who had failed to succeed deserved to fail, elites argued, which provided reassurance to the upper classes and an intellectual argument against social reform.

Adding to the dissatisfaction of the laboring classes, the cities in which they lived became horribly overcrowded. Between 1860 and 1900 the urban population quadrupled,

³³Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 146.

³⁴Cashman, *America in the Age of Titans*, 146-147.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 18-19.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 185.

³⁷McGerr, 214.

while the rural population only doubled.³⁸ In 1901 some parts of Chicago were three times as crowded as Tokyo or Calcutta. In one Chicago ghetto, there were 340 people per acre. This overcrowding, in addition to terrible living conditions, made the dense city populations susceptible to epidemics. For example, at the end of the nineteenth century Pittsburgh had the highest death rate from typhoid in the world, at 1.3 deaths per 1,000 people.³⁹

Another reason for growing popular dissatisfaction was the realignment of the traditional American community-based society. For all of American history up to this point American communities had largely been autonomous. With the expanding power of the federal government and the rising power of corporations this no longer seemed to be true. This was coupled with a larger sense that the world was becoming too complex to understand, and the pace of change seemed to be quickening, in industrialization, urbanization, and nationalization.⁴⁰ The community had historically defined a person's identity, but now communities could no longer manage their own affairs, as expanding central government control encroached upon them. While Americans still predominately lived in communities, they were no longer as defined by them as they were before. A person's occupation increasingly had more to do with his identity than the role that he occupied within his community. This fueled popular disquiet.⁴¹

³⁸Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 135.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 148.

⁴⁰Wiebe, 12.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 44.

In addition to growing government control, there was an increasing sense that predatory corporations were robbing Americans of their economic opportunities.⁴² Many Americans felt that they had lost control over their own lives, and that they were subject to vast impersonal forces.⁴³ In the wake of the decline of this traditional sense of community identity, a new national identity began to assert itself. This trend had started during the Civil War with the increase of the power of the federal government, but this finally reached a culminating point in the late nineteenth century. Increasing nationalism and the sense that all Americans were part of the same community had an important role to play in the advent of American imperialism, which was also fueled by the closure of the frontier in 1893. With the closure of the frontier, for the first time, Americans had a sense that their world was not infinite. This led to a kind of neo-mercantilist attitude about the world as a whole.⁴⁴ This left Americans feeling boxed in and contained, which in turn provided a cultural motivation for imperialism, along with the rational arguments for imperial expansion. This made previously unpalatable expansionist policies more easily explainable and acceptable to the American public.

The fractious political system proved ineffective at enacting social reform. Politicians during this period were predominately concerned with pleasing their special interests and those of their party. The kind of bold leadership exhibited by Abraham Lincoln did not exist in his immediate successors.⁴⁵ There was no unifying force within

⁴²Wiebe, 45-46.

⁴³Ibid., 47.

⁴⁴McGerr, 149.

⁴⁵Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 244.

the political class that could drive the country forward along coherent lines of domestic policy, and the elite industrial class had little incentive to try. With the backdrop of the widening economic disparity, increasing squalor and poverty, increasing racial tensions,⁴⁶ rising sentiments of anti-alien and anti-monopoly factions, new popular parties filled the vacuum.

There were two notable political movements during this period—the Populists and the Progressives. The Populists formed in response to the economic downturns that began in the 1870s, and they founded the People’s Party in 1892.⁴⁷ The Populists included representatives from the Knights of Labor, Nationalist and Land Labor Parties.⁴⁸ As the depression in 1873 was caused by a railroad collapse, which then filtered down into other areas of the economy, the Populists increasingly advocated government ownership of the means of production, particularly the railroads and telegraphs, which drew heavily on Marxist ideology. While Populists were not “pure” Socialists, and did not advocate replacing the capitalist system, they did share certain characteristics of the European socialist platform, which they thought would make capitalism fairer. They also advocated a progressive income tax, silver currency, an eight-hour workday for

⁴⁶After the Spanish-American War in 1898 notions of white racial unity and white reconciliation became popular among white elites, in both the North and South. The Jim Crow laws, which institutionalized segregation of African Americans, made this reconciliation possible. These laws contributed to racial tensions between whites and blacks as the forces of white reaction tried to reassert what it meant to be “American.”

⁴⁷Painter, 98.

⁴⁸Popular unrest had caused labor union membership to grow dramatically in the 1880s. For example, membership in the Knights of Labor grew from 50,000 members in 1884 to over 700,000 in 1886. See Wiebe, 44-45.

manufacturing laborers, and an end to alien land ownership.⁴⁹ The Populists were reacting out of a desire to protect a sense of community that had been taken away by the impersonal forces associated with immigration, corporate growth and consolidation of power, and the changing nature of central government control. They sought to return America to its “true self” and restore a sense of fairness to an economy that had been hijacked by opportunistic industrialists and robber barons.⁵⁰

The Populists reached their highest level of national prominence during the 1896 presidential campaign. At the Democratic National Convention that year, William Jennings Bryan delivered his famous “Cross of Gold” Speech, arguing for unlimited silver coinage in the economy to limit the injurious effects of the gold standard. The drop in the gold supply and a rise in the silver supply fueled the arguments for silver coinage, and gold became increasingly associated with wealthy parasitic bondholders.⁵¹ Silver coinage became a national political issue after the Depression of 1893, and its proponents believed that the adoption of silver coinage would arrest the deflationary trends that had become endemic in the late nineteenth century, which drove down wages.⁵²

The Populist movement provoked a harsh reaction from economic elites. Over the course of Bryan’s campaign against William McKinley, Bryan was portrayed as a radical, and his movement as something akin to the Paris Commune of 1871. Labor unrest was

⁴⁹Wiebe, 98-99.

⁵⁰Ibid., 67.

⁵¹Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 328.

⁵²Painter, 83.

seen as a prelude to anarchy.⁵³ McKinley's victory over Bryan was a serious blow to the power of the Populist movement from which it never recovered, but the specter of radical reform would echo through the next several political cycles.

After the defeat of the Populists, a predominately middle class movement formed in the first decade of the twentieth century that became known as the Progressives, composed mainly of professionals and intellectuals.⁵⁴ As the middle class was more conservative than the lower classes, the Progressive movement also was more conservative than the Populists.

Their political ideology was founded in the belief that society's ills were correctable within the existing system through rational reform. They advocated equality before the law, but also racial, social, and religious equality.⁵⁵ This was a reaction to what they perceived as the lopsided nature of American society, in that the American corporate system had left the middle class behind.⁵⁶ The Progressives sought to fix social problems via the elimination of child labor, ameliorating horrible working conditions, and social programs designed to correct injustice. They believed that all of this could be achieved within the existing system rather than the radical transformation advocated by

⁵³Wiebe, 78.

⁵⁴Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 363.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Cashman, *America in the Age of Titans*, 45-46.

the Populists.⁵⁷ They thought that progress within American society could be achieved by repairing democratic government and democratic institutions.⁵⁸

More moderate than the Populists, the Progressives sought to “adopt an existing order to their own ends.”⁵⁹ They believed in the moderation of vice and dampening the oscillations of the capitalist system which would improve the lives of all Americans. Particularly Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, who took progressivism and applied it to international politics, transposed aspects of this ideology onto the new American imperialist ideology.

These social, economic, and political transformations enabled the new American imperialism. The societal disruption associated with increased urbanization, immigration, nativism, and wealth disparity created an opening for alternate solutions to cure society’s ills. The Elite’s answer was to look to Social Darwinism to explain the reasons for class difference, and enshrine them as natural and inevitable. The Populist answer was to exert top-down control over certain portions of the economy in order to force the system to become more equitable. The Progressive answer was to take a more conservative and gradual approach, and to reform government institutions from within. Another answer, which would be coopted by the Progressives, was to project America’s power outward and acquire new outlets for American markets, which would provide another means of stabilizing the economy, and which was also in keeping with conventional wisdom among the European imperial powers. This contributed to an alternative line of thought

⁵⁷Cashman, *America in the Age of Titans*, 45-46.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Wiebe, 165.

about how to solve the problems in American society. This emerging philosophy about America's proper role in the world would increasingly inform America's foreign policy, which became steadily more interventionist.

Foreign Policy

For most of the nineteenth century, the traditional American view of the rest of the world was that everything outside their national borders simply did not exist.⁶⁰ This changed in the 1880s and 1890s, concurrent with the social and economic changes discussed in the previous section. The advent of a new more aggressive foreign policy was a reflection of increasing American recognition of its interests abroad, and an increasing willingness to get involved in international affairs.

From 1893 onward Americans no longer had a frontier.⁶¹ The notion of a frontier and an abundant, infinite continent had long been a part of the American identity. The American historian Frederick Jackson Turner, a professor at Wisconsin University, gave a speech at the Columbian Exposition in 1893 in which he announced that the western frontier was now closed. The next year he wrote an article titled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." In his article he argued that "the frontier" had allowed "the development of the New World [to] run a very different course from that of the Old World . . . acting as a safety valve for the East and [had] helped to make American society more fluid than European [society]."⁶² With no more frontier, and the perceived

⁶⁰Wiebe, 224.

⁶¹Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 282.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 282-283.

dissolution of the autonomous American community, Americans felt a sense of unease and disquiet, which would have been familiar to their European counterparts, though for different reasons. Whereas the Europeans, especially the British, felt their world position was slipping away in the face of an upstart Germany, the Americans felt that they could no longer realize their rightful place in the world without looking outward. They felt that the existence of the frontier had informed a special part of their national character, and had given it a quality of “earthiness and practicality.”⁶³ Manifest Destiny had run its course, and its reinvention would involve projecting American power abroad.

From the 1880s until the outbreak of World War One, the U.S. increasingly tried to secure its economic interests abroad in order to provide markets for its over-producing industry. Watching the Europeans divide up the remainder of the “uncivilized” world in the late nineteenth century, the U.S. sought to secure its economic future by safeguarding access to markets in Asia, and consolidating and strengthening its control over the Caribbean, Pacific, and Latin and South America.⁶⁴ Its attempts to do so in the context of greater imperial ambitions of the Europeans and the Japanese led to new American foreign policy issues.

The U.S. intervened in foreign affairs numerous times in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the summer of 1894 the British occupied a small island off the coast of Brazil, to use as a cable station. American policy makers saw this as an affront to the Monroe Doctrine, which since its adoption in 1823 had held that European

⁶³Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 283.

⁶⁴Dirk Bonker, *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 36-37.

nations were no longer allowed to interfere with countries in the Western Hemisphere.⁶⁵ Tensions heightened further when the French attempted to stake a claim in Brazil that same year, after gold was discovered there.⁶⁶ In 1896 the U.S. issued an ultimatum to Great Britain to settle a border dispute between British Guiana and Venezuela. Though this temporarily soured Anglo-American relations, the British acquiesced.⁶⁷ That same year the U.S. government sent Marines to Nicaragua to quell domestic disturbances there.⁶⁸ In 1902 the Germans and British blockaded Venezuela in order to compel the Venezuelan government to pay its debts. At the State of the Union Address in 1904, largely in response to the Venezuelan debt crisis, President Roosevelt issued the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, which announced that the U.S. would arbitrate future European disputes with countries in the Americas, in order to prevent European interference.⁶⁹ The U.S. intervened again in Nicaragua in 1910, in Haiti in 1915, and in the Dominican Republic and Mexico in 1916.⁷⁰

U.S. policy makers became increasingly concerned over the course of the 1890s and 1900s with the rise of Germany and Japan. Japan's victory over the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 demonstrated Japan's growing power and made the Japanese a possible threat to U.S. interests in the Pacific. In Germany, the ascension of

⁶⁵LaFeber, 246.

⁶⁶Ibid., 247.

⁶⁷Ibid., 260.

⁶⁸Ibid., 228.

⁶⁹Cashman, *America in the Age of Titans*, 447.

⁷⁰Wiebe, 247.

Kaiser Wilhelm II and his new foreign policy of *Weltpolitik* in the 1890s, Germany began an aggressive naval and imperial expansion, which the U.S. also saw as a potential threat to its interests.⁷¹ By contrast, relations with the British were good for most of the period, helped by the fact that the British allowed the U.S. commercial access to its overseas holdings.⁷²

The most significant U.S. military action in the 1890s was the Spanish-American War, which came about as a result of a near continuous state of rebellion in Cuba. This rebellion received widespread attention in the U.S. starting in the 1890s and created sympathy for the Cuban rebels because of reports of Spanish atrocities.⁷³ After the USS *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor, some American journalists and politicians blamed the Spanish, and demanded that Spain abandon Cuba. Spain refused, and the U.S. declared war in 1898.⁷⁴

The Spanish-American War began with Commodore George Dewey easily and almost bloodlessly (for the Americans) destroying the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay on May 1, 1898.⁷⁵ The Army's record of performance was less spectacular and exposed significant organizational weaknesses, though they were able accomplish their military objectives with a force of only 26,000 troops, compared to the 200,000 Spanish troops deployed to Cuba (only 13,000 of which were sent to Santiago to contest the American

⁷¹Bonker, 47.

⁷²Painter, 148.

⁷³Wiebe, 240.

⁷⁴Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 344.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 345.

landing).⁷⁶ At the conclusion of the conflict, which included not only the destruction of the Spanish fleet in the Philippines, but also a suicidal last stand of the Spanish fleet at Santiago, President McKinley signed a protocol that ordered the Spanish to give up Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico.⁷⁷

The U.S. established Cuba as an American protectorate, took control of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, and formally annexed Hawaii.⁷⁸ This was the beginning of the American Empire.⁷⁹ This also resulted in an explosion of new public interest in the Navy, in that the Navy had achieved spectacular success and delivered a crushing defeat to the Spanish, with minimal casualties. For pro-Navy advocates, this was proof of the wisdom of the naval rebuilding program begun in 1883, and naval expansion continued, with occasional fits and starts, through the end of World War One. The realization of expansionist objectives in annexing Hawaii and the Philippines was sold to the American people as an extension of Manifest Destiny.⁸⁰ Some warned of the ruin associated with acquiring an empire. Philosopher William James argued that the nation had “puke[d] up its ancient soul . . . in five minutes without a wink of squeamishness.”⁸¹ E. L. Godkin, a writer for the *New York Evening Post*, asserted that “we do not want any more States

⁷⁶Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 345.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 346.

⁷⁸LaFeber, 369.

⁷⁹Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 346.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 322.

until we can civilize Kansas,” a task that remains unfinished to this day.⁸² But, these voices were a small minority. Most of the country was “intoxicated” by the war’s triumphs, which “stok[ed] an already overheated chauvinism.”⁸³

The Spanish-American War was the harbinger of a new expansionist foreign policy.⁸⁴ In the early twentieth century the U.S. became more commercially dependent upon Europe, Asia, and Latin America.⁸⁵ This meant that traditional American isolationism was no longer tenable.⁸⁶ This process of growing international commercial interdependence continued unabated, and helped fuel arguments for further expansionism, and therefore further naval expansion. In 1912 Woodrow Wilson said “Our industries have expanded to such a point that they will burst their jackets if they cannot find a free outlet to the markets of the world . . . Our domestic markets can no longer suffice. We need foreign markets.”⁸⁷

Having acquired their new empire, the U.S. also found itself in an increasingly volatile international environment. Kaiser Wilhelm’s *Weltpolitik* and repeated bombastic gaffes, as well as a new German naval building program, had pushed Britain into the *Entente Cordial* in 1904 with France. A new British Alliance with Russia further increased tensions with Germany, as it aroused traditional German fears of

⁸²Herring, 323.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 316.

⁸⁴Cashman, *America in the Age of Titans*, 429.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 427.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 426.

encirclement.⁸⁸ The Russo-Japanese War from 1904-1905 undermined the Eurocentric world-view based on white racial supremacy, because an Asian power had defeated a European one.⁸⁹ All of these disruptions served to make the international political environment more unstable. Having declared its intentions for a new more aggressive foreign policy with the Spanish-American War, the U.S. found itself more directly involved in international affairs just as the old Eurocentric international order was coming apart. Pro-Navy advocates used this uncertainty to argue for ever-greater naval expansion, and this continued through World War One.

The next chapter will chronicle the rebuilding of the Navy and illustrate the significant degree to which the institution remade itself as it complemented and enabled the new American imperialism. This rebuilding occurred in the context of perceived American weakness and defenselessness, and was bolstered by the writings of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, which in turn helped to spur the Anglo-German naval arms race in the years leading up to World War One. In the process of rebuilding the navy, the Americans found themselves caught up in the European arms race, and were increasingly willing to compare themselves directly to their European counterparts. For the Navy as an institution, this involved fundamentally altering its advertised purpose. Its new purpose was to serve as the vehicle by which the Americans would spread the gift of their civilization to the world.

⁸⁸Herring, 338.

⁸⁹Ibid., 339.

CHAPTER 3

BUILDING THE “NEW NAVY”

At the end of the Civil War the U.S. Navy rivaled Great Britain’s Royal Navy. The U.S. Navy had developed important new technologies during the war, particularly the ironclad USS *Monitor*, which was the first warship to have armored rotating turrets. But, the demobilization following the Civil War and the widespread post-war feelings of abhorrence toward the military, coupled with America’s continuing isolationist tendencies, meant that there was no incentive for Congress to continue pushing the envelope on naval technology. In 1868 Congress started aggressively cutting naval funding as it focused on Reconstruction, and the U.S. quickly fell behind to a third or fourth rate naval power.⁹⁰

From 1865 to 1883, the U.S. did not add a single armored naval vessel to its inventory, and the technological advancements made in the European navies during this period were not replicated in the U.S.⁹¹ As a result of these spending cuts, by the 1870s the U.S. Navy was in terrible shape. Admiral David Dixon Porter, a prominent veteran of the Civil War, once described the U.S. fleet as consisting of “ancient Chinese forts on which dragons have been painted to frighten away the enemy.” Representative John Long

⁹⁰Lance C. Buhl, “Maintaining ‘An American Navy,’ 1865-1889,” in *In Peace and War: Interpretations of American Naval History*, ed. Kenneth J. Hagan (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 112-113.

⁹¹Jan S. Breemer, “Taking Our Share of the Turmoil of the World: America Builds a New Navy, 1890-1900,” in *In Peace and War: Interpretations of American Naval History*, ed. Kenneth J. Hagan (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 139.

of Massachusetts described them as “an alphabet of floating washtubs.”⁹² During a rare naval exercise off of Key West in 1874 the deployed squadron could only make a top speed of 4.5 knots because their engines had deteriorated so badly.⁹³ Of the 1,942 vessels in the U.S. Navy in the early 1880s, only 48 could fire a gun,⁹⁴ and those that could were still mainly using smoothbore muzzle-loaders.⁹⁵

The personnel system was not much better. The promotion rate for officers was extremely slow, and was tied strictly to seniority rather than merit. There was also a glut of new naval officers in the late nineteenth century, which compounded the upward mobility problem. In 1882 there was one naval officer for every four enlisted men.⁹⁶

Naval reform began in the 1880s with the appointment of William Hunt as the Secretary of the Navy. Hunt put in place the institutions that would facilitate naval modernization. In 1881, he created a naval advisory board, which provided a venue for professional discussions on naval matters such as new naval technologies, tactics, and personnel issues from serving officers, and also provided a formal means for naval leaders to influence policy makers.⁹⁷ In 1882 he formed the Office of Naval Intelligence, which went a long way toward keeping Americans abreast of technological

⁹²Peter Karston, *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1972), 278.

⁹³Buhl, 114.

⁹⁴LaFeber, 58.

⁹⁵Breemer, 139.

⁹⁶Karston, 284.

⁹⁷Buhl, 116.

advancements in foreign navies.⁹⁸ In 1884 Commodore Stephen B. Luce founded the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. The new War College enhanced the Navy's educational system for its serving officers and provided a means of stimulating professional discourse throughout the officer corps.⁹⁹

Successful lobbying by senior naval officers finally compelled Congress to approve construction of new armored cruisers in 1883. In that year four new modern ships were authorized, with a building plan for 30 more by 1889. The personnel system and bureaucracy were also improved during this period.¹⁰⁰ The Navy took another dramatic leap forward with the Naval Act of 1890, which authorized the first battleships.¹⁰¹ Additional battleships were authorized throughout the 1890s, and by 1900 the U.S. had the third largest Navy in the world, up from the twelfth largest in 1880.¹⁰²

Several key technological developments enabled this new round of naval expansion. First was the Bessemer process, which provided a low cost method of creating steel. This made the transition from a mostly wooden-hulled Navy to an all-steel one affordable. Second was the introduction of the triple expansion steam engine, which dramatically improved the efficiency of coal engines, and increased the effective range of ships so that they could reach the other side of the Atlantic from the east coast of the U.S. without refueling, which made the Navy more effective as a power projection force.

⁹⁸Buhl, 116.

⁹⁹LaFeber, 59.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 58.

¹⁰²Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 277.

Third was the British Navy's development of the Admiral-Class Battleship, which provided the standard for other navies to emulate until the introduction of the *Dreadnought* in 1906. The use of a standard battleship design allowed policy makers to authorize coherent building plans. Plus, the fact that the world's preeminent sea power was building them gave this design credibility.¹⁰³

America's perceived need for more overseas markets to absorb its excess industrial production further contributed to agitation for increased naval expansion. In response to the accelerated European imperial expansion in the 1870s, the Americans and two other emerging expansionist powers, Japan and Germany, sought to increase their overseas holdings before they had been effectively locked out of the imperial race by Great Britain and France.¹⁰⁴

In staking its claim along with the other imperialist powers, the U.S. sought to reassert the Monroe Doctrine in Central and South America, and to maintain the "Open Door" to China. As such, strategic priorities for naval leaders before World War One were the Western Hemisphere and the protection of the U.S.'s claims under the Monroe Doctrine, establishment and control of an Isthmian Canal, control of the Caribbean, and untrammelled access to Asian markets.¹⁰⁵ By the 1890s U.S. naval leaders had become

¹⁰³Bremer, 144.

¹⁰⁴Bonker, 26.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 36-37.

increasingly sensitive to developments in the Pacific, because of threats to the “Open Door” policy in China, and the rise of Japan.¹⁰⁶

Adding to their acquisition of Alaska and Midway Island in 1867,¹⁰⁷ the U.S. acquired Pago Pago in 1889, and Hawaii, the Philippines, and part of Samoa in 1898 at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War.¹⁰⁸ Each of these acquisitions produced fresh arguments for naval expansion so that the U.S. could protect what it had acquired.

Arguments for naval expansion also received a tremendous boost from Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, perhaps the most famous and influential naval historian of all time. He started lecturing at the Naval War College in 1886, advocating naval expansion and acquisition of naval bases in the Pacific. In 1890 he published his most famous work—*The Influence of Sea Power Upon History: 1660-1783*. In it he argued that the reason for Britain’s commercial supremacy was her control of the sea, and that Britain’s example provided a roadmap that any maritime country could use to achieve national greatness. The basic tenets of his argument included the importance of overseas commerce for national prosperity, the need for battleships to protect overseas commerce, and the need to acquire overseas bases to serve as coaling stations in order to sustain these battleships. Jon Sumida argues that Mahan was trying to jolt American policy makers into action: “His great fear at this time was that the isolationist sentiments of the [American] electorate would prevent the American state from building and maintaining

¹⁰⁶Mark Russell Schulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power: 1882-1893* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 76.

¹⁰⁷LaFeber, 28-29. Alaska was purchased from Russia, and Midway Island was an unclaimed territory until the U.S. Navy occupied it.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 408.

the strong Navy that he believed was essential to protect vital territorial and economic interests in a world in which competition between powerful nations was beginning to increase.”¹⁰⁹

Mahan’s book became famous all over the world. In 1890 *The Critic* published a review of Mahan’s book that said “This is an altogether exceptional work: there is nothing like it in the whole range of naval literature . . . No other author . . . has ever undertaken to treat the subject in such a liberal, not to say philosophical spirit, or to weave the story of the navy and its achievements into the affairs of state so as to bring out its value as a factor of national life.”¹¹⁰ Most Western European powers accepted Mahan’s thesis as fact. The Japanese navy used his book as a text at their War College. Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm II ordered a copy be placed in all of his ships’ wardrooms. He also had a personal copy of Mahan’s book at his private study at Sans Souci, within reach of his armchair, with significant hand-written notes in the margins.¹¹¹ Mahan’s ideas became an important part of the intellectual justification for the naval arms race before World War One, especially between Britain and Germany. Naval tonnage among the six leading naval powers quadrupled between 1890 and 1914.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 30.

¹¹⁰“Literature: The Influence of Sea Power Upon History,” Review of *Alfred Thayer Mahan Papers*. *The Critic* (July 26, 1890): 41.

¹¹¹W. D. Puleston, *The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, USN* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1939), 159.

¹¹²Bonker, 2.

In addition to Europe's enthusiastic adoption of Mahan's ideas, his book was also well received in the U.S. for two reasons. First, it played to an historical American fascination with technology, and battleships at that time were powerful symbols of technological modernity. Second, it was published at a time when Social Darwinism was in vogue, and Mahan's thesis was in line with its philosophical tenets.¹¹³ If Social Darwinism provided a scientific explanation for the different social classes, then Mahan provided a scientific formula for national prosperity, and a justification for imperialism. Sean Dennis Cashman argues that "[Mahan] reflected rather than provoked a changing mood in public opinion."¹¹⁴ Politicians like Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge welcomed these ideas because they reinforced their expansionist ideology.¹¹⁵

For these political and naval leaders, a strategic outlook that advocated naval expansion only made sense in the context of a hostile world, and the perceived threats to U.S. interests were plentiful. Naval elites were distrustful of the Russians, and believed after 1900 that they were a serious challenge to American Pacific interests.¹¹⁶ After Japan defeated the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan became a possible enemy.¹¹⁷ But, of all of the potential enemies of the U.S., Germany was the greatest

¹¹³Bremer, "Taking Our Share," 135.

¹¹⁴Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 276.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.* See also Wiebe, 232, and for more on the naval officers that agitated for increased naval expansion in the 1880s see John T. Kuehn, "The Martial Spirit—Naval Style: The Naval Reform Movement and the Establishment of the General Board of the Navy, 1873-1900," *The Northern Mariner* 2 (2012): 126.

¹¹⁶Bonker, 53.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

specter. Like the U.S., Germany had entered the imperial race later than the other European powers, and it was thought that Germany was the European power most likely to try to acquire colonial possessions within the U.S. sphere of influence. Unlike the British, who allowed the U.S. commercial access to British colonial possessions, the Germans blocked all foreign powers from accessing their colonies. American acquisition of Pago Pago, part of Samoa, and annexation of Hawaii and the Philippines was largely done in order to prevent the Germans from locking the U.S. out of Asian markets.¹¹⁸ The U.S. naval buildup, which accelerated in the 1890s, was partially for the purpose of countering growing German naval strength.¹¹⁹ Theodore Roosevelt in particular had a “pathological suspicion” of the Germans.¹²⁰

While suspicion of Germany grew, American policy makers renounced their old traditional Anglophobia. Americans, especially upper class Americans, increasingly identified themselves as being racial cousins of the British.¹²¹ Because the U.S. had originally been a collection of British colonies, the British were the “first” American race, as opposed to the immigrants who followed. Therefore emulating the British was the way to return America to its “true self.” While there were different hyphenated racial descriptions for different types of Americans—Irish-American, German-American, etc.,

¹¹⁸Painter, 148.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Kenneth J. Hagan, *This People’s Navy: The Making of American Sea Power* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991), 233.

¹²¹Painter, 149.

there was no equivalent disparaging term for “British-American.” “‘British-American’ was the norm by which one calculated deviations.”¹²²

This Anglo-Saxonism was also tied to Social Darwinism, which asserted that Anglo-Saxons were at the top of the racial hierarchy. Linking themselves to the British also enabled navalist arguments, because Britain had the most powerful navy in the world, and had a proud naval tradition. Mahan, America’s foremost naval philosopher, pointed to Nelson as the ultimate naval tactical genius, the embodiment of British Sea Power, and wrote a laudatory biography of him in 1897.¹²³ Nell Irvin Painter described the mythology associated with the virtues of the Anglo-Saxon race:

The arguments of the Anglo-Saxonists rested on a specially tailored version of English and American history. In this telling Americans were the descendants of the revolutionaries of 1776, who at Lexington and Concord threw off colonial rule and established the first successful republic in the history of mankind. Earlier attempts at republicanism all had failed for lack of intelligence, morality, self-restraint, and the genius for self-government that ran in the English “blood” of the American people.¹²⁴

This highlights how some Americans saw themselves as the natural allies of the British because of their shared racial heritage, and the desirability of an Anglo-American alliance based on naval power. The Anglo-Saxons were the “best of all races.”¹²⁵

While Anglo-Saxonism provided an argument for naval expansion, the Navy also had to advertise itself to the public in order to win popular support for greater expenditures. They did this in a deliberate fashion. The Navy portrayed itself as powerful,

¹²²Wiebe, 258.

¹²³Hagan, 190-191.

¹²⁴Painter, 151.

¹²⁵LaFeber, 98.

heroic, and romantic. *Youth's Companion* was a boy's monthly magazine, in general known for encouraging young boys to behave, and to follow Victorian standards of morality. In the 1880s, this magazine "increasingly show[ed] boys who abandoned their mother's apron strings for adventure and heroics in the man's sphere."¹²⁶ Commodore Stephen Luce wrote an article for *Youth's Companion* in 1889 that espoused the significant employer-coveted skills granted by apprenticeships in the Navy (an argument for joining the U.S. Navy that survives to this day).¹²⁷ Other magazines followed suit. *Harper's New Monthly*, *Century's*, and *North American Review* all showed a marked increase in Navy-related articles in the 1890s.¹²⁸

Navalists also used the *Army and Navy Journal* and the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings* to spread their ideas. Articles and essays espousing the importance of the Navy and the need for continued naval expansion became more frequent.¹²⁹ In order to help popularize the new fleet, the Navy participated in the International Naval Rendez-Vous [sic] and Review in New York, and the Columbian Exposition in 1893.¹³⁰ Twenty million people attended the Columbian Exposition and the naval exhibit was one of the most popular attractions.¹³¹ The Office of Naval Intelligence arranged a naval review in 1892 in New York Harbor, and another in 1903 in Oyster Bay. A large fleet including 16

¹²⁶Schulman, 47.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 48.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

¹²⁹Bonker, 214.

¹³⁰Schulman, 55.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, 56.

battleships participated in two naval reviews in April and June of 1907 as part of the Jamestown exhibition.¹³² President Roosevelt conducted a review of the Great White Fleet in Hampton Roads in December of 1907, right before the fleet left on its world tour.¹³³ The Navy held another fleet review in 1909 in New York, shortly after the Great White Fleet had returned. More reviews followed in the fall of 1911 and 1912, strategically scheduled to coincide with newly convening congressional sessions.¹³⁴

Re-introducing the people to their Navy was done to get them excited about American sea power. The British and the Germans conducted their own fleet reviews for the same purpose. The Navy's vision espoused that American sea power was a cure for society's ills—a check on the degeneracy of their society and the rising tide of socialism.

Another important aspect of the growth of navalism was the mythology surrounding the battleship, navalism's most potent symbol. The battleship was the focal point for naval adulation, and it was how naval power was measured. Jan Breemer likens the battleship in this period to the nuclear weapons of the twenty-first century:

Owning battleships signified a country had 'arrived.' Just as nations in the twenty-first century have become divided between nuclear haves and have-nots, so one century ago the world's pecking order separated between battleship-haves and have-nots. And the analogy goes further. While on the one hand battleships were admired as marvels of technological ingenuity, they were also portrayed as the day's weapons of mass destruction.¹³⁵

¹³²Bonker, 216.

¹³³Hagan, 239.

¹³⁴Bonker, 217.

¹³⁵Breemer, 146.

Therefore battleships were symbols of national power, and having them meant national prestige as well as physical security.

While these battleships provided a means of drumming up popular support for the “New Navy,” there was also a significant shift in how naval officers saw themselves during this period. The “old navy” officers saw themselves as seagoing policemen, with opportunity for the high adventure of travel. The officers of the “New Navy” saw themselves as fighting for a sense of their honor as warriors, and they had a much more aggressive mindset. This shift in ideology helped to infuse their professional discourse with new vigor and martial imagery.¹³⁶

The next two chapters will discuss what the Navy meant to the American people, and how it informed their worldview and their concept of their national identity. The Navy was a celebrated cultural phenomenon. A great and powerful Navy was an essential pre-requisite of American greatness, and would show that the U.S. had finally come of age. There were also significant cultural ties (manufactured or otherwise) to America’s British predecessors. Elite Americans believed that their own Anglo-Saxon heritage made them the natural “masters of the seas” just like the British, and policy makers and journalists used the notion of the sea being America’s natural sphere of dominance to continually bolster public support for the Navy. It also spoke to something in America’s character, or at least America’s own manufactured sense of its character. The Navy satisfied Americans’ sense of adventure that was denied them with the closure of the frontier. It satisfied Americans’ sense of wonder at technological marvels. Most importantly, it made Americans feel safe, and gave them a symbol of security and

¹³⁶Schulman, 154.

stability to rally behind. The Navy was the institution that would fulfill America's destiny, and spread the benefits of their virtuous civilization—the first successful republic in history—to the rest of the world. Theirs would be a virtuous imperialism, not like the oppressive European version, but instead carried out by a people that had thrown off their own oppressors.

Internal contradictions aside, for some, this was the popular conception of America's proper role in the world. This was a new, activist Manifest Destiny.¹³⁷ What the Navy meant to the American people as a cultural symbol, how it was linked to their past, how it was presented to the American people, and how this naval culture evolved in the years leading up to World War One will be the subject of the remaining chapters.

¹³⁷LaFeber, 77.

CHAPTER 4

EVOLVING POPULAR CONCEPTIONS AND ELITE DISCOURSE, 1889-1898

After the end of the Civil War in 1865 the U.S. government began demobilizing the military, and stopped authorizing new ships for the Navy. This period of stagnation continued until the 1880s, and by then the Navy barely had enough serviceable vessels to fulfill its traditional role as a coastal police force. Beginning in 1883, Congress at last began expanding and modernizing the Navy, which included building new armored warships. Once this naval expansion program had begun, it gained momentum from the emerging ideas of Alfred Thayer Mahan, the preeminence of Social Darwinism, the increasing volatility of the international political situation, the example of European countries that were also expanding their navies, and the closure of the frontier.

This chapter will examine the evolving imagery associated with the Navy in popular discourse from 1889 until the Spanish American War in 1898, in order to demonstrate that as the government continued to invest heavily in modernizing and expanding the Navy, there was an increase in naval discourse among politicians and journalists, which espoused the “New Navy’s” power and importance. The Navy had always been seen as a line of defense, but this new discourse portrayed it as the “main” line of defense.

While the American people had always seen the Navy as an instrument for protecting the American coastline from foreign attack, geographic separation was the primary source of American security. The traditional American view was that the nations of Europe and other foreign powers were too distant to threaten the U.S. directly. By the end of World War One this view had changed. Americans increasingly saw the world as a

more threatening place, and were not as confident as they had been about their security. In order to make America more secure, they continued to build up the Navy. In the process of building up the Navy the American people also changed how they viewed its proper role. By 1918 the Navy was no longer merely for protecting the American coastline. It was also an engine for projecting American power abroad, and it provided the vehicle for a new interpretation of Manifest Destiny. In order to begin to construct this cultural portrait, this chapter will examine two sources: debates on naval appropriations bills from the Congressional Record between 1889 and 1898, and various newspapers from the period across a variety of regions, which covered the appropriations debates themselves, fleet reviews, and the launching of new warships.

Elite and popular naval discourse between 1889 and 1898 exhibited four major themes. These were superior American craftsmanship, the Navy as a source of national pride, the perilous vulnerability of America's coastline, and the decisive break between the "old" and the "New Navy," in which political leaders and journalists argued that the Navy had taken a dramatic leap forward as a result of the new building program.

The first major theme was the superiority of American quality of craftsmanship and design. In 1890 Representative Hawley gave a speech in which he argued that American shipbuilding had historically proven superior to that of Europe. He said "we took the best in the Old World and made them better, and we did then just what some of us are asking that the nation shall partially do now: begin to build and build better than anybody else, begin to make guns and make guns better than anybody else. That has been

again and again the history of the country.”¹³⁸ Representative Herbert in 1891 emphasized that while the U.S. Navy was smaller than the navies of the great European powers, the American people had produced ships of unmatched quality. He said “taking them altogether, big and little, class for class, ship for ship, we expect to show a Navy that is superior to any in the world, taking an equal number of ships, for seagoing qualities, for speed, and for efficacy in every respect.”¹³⁹ Representative Hale echoed similar sentiments in 1893, saying that the U.S. Navy now possessed “the very best ships in the world, the best guns, equipped in the very best way.”¹⁴⁰ Representative Boutelle attributed the superior quality of the new ships to the superior workmanship of American shipbuilders, reminding people that these ships were built “by the hands of our own skilled mechanics.”¹⁴¹ In all of these excerpts the quality of the new American warships were a testament to the superior skill of American craftsmen and designers.¹⁴²

Newspapers also continuously lauded the achievements of American shipbuilders. *The New York Times* published an article in 1889 entitled “This Trip Will Change the Foreign Idea of American War Ships.” In discussing the “Squadron of Evolution,” a

¹³⁸U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 21st Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 26, 1890, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H5,288.

¹³⁹U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 22nd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, January 23, 1891, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H1,795.

¹⁴⁰U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 22nd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 10, 1891, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,428.

¹⁴¹U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 24th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 20, 1893, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H1,879.

¹⁴²See also U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 28th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, April 28, 1896, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H4,512.

small fleet of armored cruisers sent in 1889 to participate in a European fleet review,¹⁴³ the article said that the new squadron “represents a higher degree of excellence than can be found in any other known squadron composed of cruisers of similar tonnage displacement. The fleet is preeminently American and will excite the curiosity, if not the wonderment, of all foreign powers under whose observation it may come.”¹⁴⁴ The *Chicago Daily Tribune* ran an article in 1891 that asserted the superiority of the new American battleships compared to their European counterparts. It said “Compared with the navies of foreign governments the few unarmored ships which floated the flag of the navy of the U.S. until a few years ago were so insignificant as to be the fruitful source of newspaper jokes, but during the last decade the navy has been increased in strength until now it is at least worthy of the name.”¹⁴⁵ These arguments about superior American quality continued right up to the Spanish-American War. *The Graphic* (Postville, Iowa) ran an article in 1897 entitled “Strong on the Water,” that said of the “New Navy” “While its ships are not as many—and it is not necessary they should be—as those of some other great powers, they are, class for class, in power, speed, workmanship and offensive and defensive qualities the equal of vessels built anywhere else in the world.”¹⁴⁶ Several other

¹⁴³In 1891 it was sent to conduct maneuvers on the Great Lakes, and later references to the “Squadron of Evolution” are referring to the Great Lakes fleet review.

¹⁴⁴“This Trip Will Change the Foreign Idea of American War Ships,” *New York Times*, November 19, 1889, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

¹⁴⁵“Uncle Sam’s Warships: Powerful Vessels Included in the United States Navy,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 6, 1891, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

¹⁴⁶“Strong on the Water,” *Graphic*, December 2, 1897, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

newspapers made similar arguments.¹⁴⁷ All of these passages consistently emphasized the quality of the new ships, including those still under construction, and this was offered as one reason that Americans should be proud of the “New Navy.”

While politicians and journalists claimed superior quality of American design and craftsmanship, they also espoused the notion of the Navy as a source of national pride, which is the second major theme present in this discourse. In 1890 Representative Gorman called the “New Navy” “the pride of the American nation . . . equal to any of [its] class upon the ocean.”¹⁴⁸ In 1892 Representative Boutelle claimed that the

¹⁴⁷See also “Washington: Consideration of Election Frauds and Contested Cases,” *Hutchinson News*, February 13, 1889, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “Our Steel Ships of War: Results Obtained by the Squadron of Evolution, The Modern United States Navy Regarded Everywhere with Interest and Admiration,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1890, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “Our First Battle Ship: Although Only 9000 Tons Displacement, Will Have No Superior,” *Times-Picayune*, June 25, 1890, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “Our New Warships” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 28, 1891, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “Monarch of the Deep: The Magnificent Warship now on the Stalks,” *San Saba Weekly News*, December 11, 1891, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “Battle Ship Texas: Successful Launching at Norfolk Navy Yard: A Fighter, Not A Cruiser,” *Inter Ocean*, June 29, 1892, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “New War Vessels: Condition of the United States Navy,” *Newark Advocate*, December 12, 1892, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “She Rides the Wave: Launch of the Magnificent Battleship Indiana,” *Decatur Daily Republican*, March 1, 1893, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “Terror to Enemies. The Massachusetts Launched at Philadelphia,” *Inter Ocean*, June 11, 1893, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); Untitled Article, *Waterloo Press*, January 11, 1894, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “Glory of the Nation. The Latest Warship Added to Our World-Beating Navy,” *Daily Review*, June 3, 1894, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “It Is a Peerless Ship. Superiority of the Indiana Over the Magnificent,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 9, 1895, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “The New Kearsarge. Powerful American Battleships About to be Built,” *Record-Union*, November 23, 1895, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “The Defective Battle-Ship Texas,” *Times-Picayune*, December 1, 1896, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

¹⁴⁸U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 21st Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 23, 1890, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H5,165.

rebuilding of the Navy “ought to be a matter of national pride with every citizen of the American Republic.”¹⁴⁹ In 1894 Representative Dolliver said “the new steel ships [are] the pride and boast of the people of the United States.”¹⁵⁰ The reason for American pride in the “New Navy” was that the American people had built it, and had demonstrated superior skill in doing so. Later in the same speech he said “it is that ability within ourselves, and that alone, which creates a naval power.”¹⁵¹ In the same appropriations debate Representative Boutelle asserted that the new rejuvenated American Navy had given its citizens reason to hold their heads higher when travelling abroad. He said “any American traveling in any part of the world, when he hears an allusion made to the naval vessels of the world, can stand a little more erect and feel a little more pride in the knowledge that the American Navy to-day has afloat the most powerful and perfect armored cruiser [the *New York*] and the fastest steam war-ship [the *Columbia*] in the world.”¹⁵² Other congressional leaders made similar arguments.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 23rd Cong, Daily ed., Heinonline, April 14, 1892, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H3,319.

¹⁵⁰U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 26th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 9, 1894, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H4,550.

¹⁵¹Ibid., H4,551.

¹⁵²U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 26th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 11, 1894, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H4,624.

¹⁵³See also U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 23rd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, April 16, 1892, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H3,360; U.S. Congress, 26th Cong., May 11, 1894, H4,625; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 27th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 15, 1895, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,245, H2,247-H2,248; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 28th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, March 25, 1896, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H3,196.

Journalists also argued that Americans had a right to take pride in what they had accomplished in rebuilding their Navy. *The New York Times's* article about the "Squadron of Evolution" said that its fleet review "was made an occasion of congratulation and display such as must have made the thousands of plain citizens who watched the harbor maneuvers from the shores a bit prouder of their citizenship."¹⁵⁴ In 1891 *The Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, Georgia) told its readers "we will have no need to be ashamed of our Navy when the ships now building are completed."¹⁵⁵ Newspapers also used coverage of ship launchings to portray the Navy as a source of pride. *The Democratic Standard* (Coshocton, Ohio) ran an article in 1891 entitled "Our Navy's New Crack Warship." It told its readers that "the [USS] New York is the most magnificent vessel of our new navy, and we point with pride to her."¹⁵⁶ *The Newark Advocate* (Newark, Ohio) in 1893 argued that Americans no longer needed to feel inadequate when comparing their Navy to that of the Europeans. The article, titled "The American Navy: How It Compares with Others in the Great Review," said "our reproach is taken away. The U.S. now has a navy to proudly compare with that of England in the coming review at New York."¹⁵⁷ Other newspaper articles also expressed pride in the "New Navy."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴"This Trip Will Change the Foreign Idea of Our Warships."

¹⁵⁵"Our New Warships."

¹⁵⁶"Our Navy's New Crack Warship," *Democratic Standard*, December 18, 1891, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

¹⁵⁷"The American Navy: How It Compares with Others in the Great Review," *Newark Advocate*, April 22, 1893, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

¹⁵⁸"Our Steel Ships of War;" "Building a War-Ship: Interesting Scenes at the Brooklyn Navy Yard," *Weekly Wisconsin*, August 23, 1890, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); "Navies of the World: The Squadrons of Many Navies on

While Americans had much to be proud of about their “New Navy,” they also found reason to worry about their country’s lack of security. The third major theme during this period was the defenselessness of the American coastline, and the inadequacy of the Navy to defend the country. In 1896 Representative Low appealed for greater appropriations to ensure that the U.S. could defend itself against the European powers. He said “if we fail to provide for the outer lines of our defense we tempt foreign nations to interfere in our domestic affairs. Why, were a powerful nation to make war upon us tomorrow, the people of the U.S. would give up every railroad that runs from here to the Pacific, if they could, in exchange for a fleet of battle ships.”¹⁵⁹ This was the dominant fear of lawmakers, or at least of those inclined to argue for more naval appropriations. America’s geographic isolation had thus far protected it from the Europeans and allowed it to enforce the Monroe Doctrine. But, if the American people refused to recognize their vulnerabilities and take appropriate corrective action, naval expansion advocates argued that the Europeans would take advantage of these vulnerabilities.¹⁶⁰ These arguments appeared less often over time as the Navy grew more powerful, and then, at least in popular discourse, they virtually disappeared after the crushing victory over the Spanish in the Spanish-American War in 1898. But, before the Spanish-American War they appeared frequently.

Parade,” *Davenport Democrat and Leader*, April 23, 1893, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013); “Swift Destroyers. Fascinating Figures on the Newest Warships,” *Marion Star*, May 9, 1893, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

¹⁵⁹U.S. Congress, 28th Cong., March 25, 1896, H3,196.

¹⁶⁰See also U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 28th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, March 26, 1896, <http://heinonline.org/> (accessed August 1, 2013), H4,624.

Journalists also wrote articles that tried to educate people about the vulnerability of the U.S. to attack. *The Inter Ocean* (Chicago, Illinois) ran an article in 1889 in which the author said “it is questionable whether we have a single vessel finished and afloat at the present time that could be trusted to encounter the ships of any important power.”¹⁶¹ *The Hutchinson News* (Hutchinson, Kansas) ran an article a few days later that also highlighted the dangerous lack of America’s defensive capability, and argued that only a Navy could protect the coast. The article claimed “it is generally conceded that a coast cannot be successfully defended without armored fleets. All of the seaports of America would be fatally defenseless in case of war with a foreign power. Nothing but the ingenuity of the Yankee in the time of such an emergency could save such ports as New York, Boston, Charleston, and San Francisco from utter destruction.”¹⁶² *The New York Times* ran a similar article in 1896, in which the author wrote “We have had recently brought home to us the fact that we are absolutely helpless against the attack of any naval power, not only of the first, but of the second or the third rate. . . . Our coasts are in a scandalously vulnerable condition, and there is no time to be lost in making them defensible.”¹⁶³ In all of these passages, the authors were trying to raise public awareness of what they saw as a disaster waiting to happen, in order to galvanize the public and Congress to take appropriate measures to ensure the security of the country through

¹⁶¹“Need of a Navy, a Merchant Marine, and Coast Defenses,” *Inter Ocean*, April 27, 1889, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

¹⁶²“Our Navy,” *Hutchinson News*, May 2, 1889, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

¹⁶³“Our Coast Defenses,” *New York Times*, October 20, 1896, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

increased naval construction. Other articles also asserted that American defenses were inadequate.¹⁶⁴

While arguing that America was defenseless against foreign naval powers, Congress continued building new warships to correct this vulnerability. In order to help sell the new building program, politicians emphasized that these new warships were modern and powerful, and vastly superior to the older, obsolete vessels that had comprised the Navy before 1883. This was the final major theme present in the popular and elite discourse in the period leading up to the Spanish-American War—the decisive break between the “old” and the “New Navy.” The “New Navy” was still in its infancy, and politicians sought to highlight the recent strides made in revamping and strengthening the Navy so as to make the American people feel more secure, and to justify continuing naval expansion. In order to do this, lawmakers had to emphasize that the “New Navy” was nothing like the “old navy.” Representative Hiscock in 1890 said “we are now creating a Navy upon an entirely new and different model.”¹⁶⁵ In 1891 after the first battleships were authorized Representative Hale spoke of “what may be called the new Navy.”¹⁶⁶ Representative Herbert also used the term “New Navy” in 1892.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴See also “Need of a Navy, a Merchant Marine, and Coast Defenses,” and “American Prestige: Only a Strong Navy Can Preserve It,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 28, 1889, www.newspapers.com (accessed August 17, 2013).

¹⁶⁵U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 21st Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 23, 1890, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H5,172.

¹⁶⁶U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 22nd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 10, 1891, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2, 428.

¹⁶⁷U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 23rd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, April 14, 1892, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H3, 307. See

Newspaper articles adopted this new language as well. *The New York Times* article about the “Squadron of Evolution” called it “the combined forces of commissioned war ships known as the new navy.”¹⁶⁸ Later in the same article the author argued that this new squadron would “be [able] to demonstrate in a peaceable sort of way to the rest of the world that the United States Government has a navy, or rather the nucleus of a navy.”¹⁶⁹ Other newspaper articles used similar language when discussing the “New Navy.”¹⁷⁰ Like the political discourse, this popular discourse was designed to reassure the American people about their future security by pointing out that they were building a new modern Navy. It was also intended to galvanize support for continued naval building in order to ensure that American defenses were adequate.

The consistent themes present in naval discourse during this period were the quality of American craftsmanship over that of the Europeans, the notion that the Navy was a source of national pride, the perilous defensive situation of the American coasts, and the decisive break between the “New Navy” and the “old navy.” Three important things changed between the late 1880s and 1898. First, as the building program produced tangible results, including the Navy’s first battleships, the rhetoric shifted from optimism over what was to come with the “New Navy” to pride at what had been accomplished. Second, increasingly the rhetoric about the Navy recalled America’s proud naval history.

also U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record 20th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 28, 1889, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2, 460.

¹⁶⁸“This Trip will Change the Foreign Idea of American War Ships.”

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰See also “Building a War-Ship: Interesting Scenes at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.”

As the new powerful ships were completed, congressmen and the press used them as links to a heroic past in order to justify them as “natural” American symbols of power and prestige, the culmination of centuries of maritime tradition.¹⁷¹ Finally, as tensions with Spain over Cuba reached the boiling point, the press and congressional leaders used rhetoric that envisioned the Navy’s use against foreign powers—not simply as a defensive arm, but as an offensive weapon. With the Spanish-American War, the Americans would have a taste of crushing, one-sided naval victory—the first in their history. It would serve to prove the quality of the American race and the wisdom of continued naval expansion. In the period after the Spanish-American War, as tensions in Europe continued to build and the naval arms race between Britain and Germany accelerated, the American building program would take a decidedly more aggressive and ambitious turn, and it would change America’s relationship with the international community forever. That period is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁷¹These references to America’s naval tradition are not in the sources reproduced in the text, but are in the sources listed in the footnotes.

CHAPTER 5

EVOLVING POPULAR CONCEPTIONS AND ELITE DISCOURSE, 1898-1917

At seven o'clock in the evening on April 25, 1898, Commodore George Dewey, commander of the U.S. Asiatic Squadron, received a telegram from the Secretary of the Navy ordering him to proceed to Manila, to destroy or capture the Spanish fleet there.¹⁷² The American fleet arrived before dawn on May 1st and steamed into the harbor, with Dewey in the lead on the cruiser USS *Olympia*.¹⁷³ As dawn broke, he spotted the enemy fleet, and closed the Spanish to a range of just under 6,000 yards.¹⁷⁴ He then gave the order that he would be forever known for, but that at the time probably seemed rather innocuous: "You may fire when ready, Gridley." The American fleet opened up on the Spanish with all of its guns, while the band onboard the *Olympia* played "The Star Spangled Banner."¹⁷⁵ Dewey maneuvered around the anchored Spanish fleet five times while continuously firing. When Captain Gridley (captain of the *Olympia*) informed Dewey that the gun crews were low on ammunition, he ordered the fleet to withdraw.¹⁷⁶ When Dewey temporarily pulled away, the Spanish governor mistakenly thought that the Americans were retreating, and sent a reassuring message to Madrid.¹⁷⁷ After a brief

¹⁷²Thomas, 254.

¹⁷³Ibid., 255.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 256.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 257.

¹⁷⁷Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age*, 345.

respite for breakfast and for replenishing the gun crews' ammunition stores Dewey returned to shelling the Spanish fleet. By midday all seven ships in the Spanish fleet were burning or sunk.¹⁷⁸ The Spanish colonel in charge of the shore defenses committed suicide when he heard the American band on the *Olympia* playing Spanish songs at the conclusion of the battle.¹⁷⁹ When the smoke cleared 370 Spanish sailors had been killed. The Americans suffered eight wounded, and only a single American sailor died—of sunstroke.¹⁸⁰

The American people were ecstatic over the results of the battle. William Randolph Hearst immediately ran an article in his newspaper, the *New York Journal*, which proclaimed: “Victory!! Complete! Glorious!” Evan Thomas described in *The War Lovers* that “In Madison Square, Hearst threw a party in honor of Dewey that was attended by 100,000 people; they ate ice cream formed in the shape of battleships. Dewey’s name was everywhere—in songs and poems, on chewing gum and cigarettes, even on the birth certificates of newborn boys.”¹⁸¹ The battle received press coverage all over the country. *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans ran this article a week after the battle:

KEEP COOL; OBEY ORDERS. Commodore Dewey Gave His Men This Advice at Mira Bay, And the Work at Manila Shows That the Men Followed It . . . [Dewey] Has Proved Himself Worthy of His Teacher, Farragut, And, Like That Hero of the Civil War, He Drove His Ships Over Mines Without a Thought of Consequences . . . To the Victory Which is Destined to a Place in History With

¹⁷⁸Thomas, 257.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰Breemer, 148.

¹⁸¹Thomas, 259.

the Battles of the Greatest Admirals . . . IN HISTORY, The Battle of Manila Will Be a Bright Page. Admiral Thomas Brand, who has seen much service in the royal British navy before going on the retired list, was enthusiastic in his eulogies of Admiral Dewey's feat when seen at the Windsor Hotel this afternoon. 'Dewey's great victory at Manila were admirably conceived and pluckily carried out,' said the British admiral. 'It will go down to history as one of the most brilliant victories in the naval history of the world.'¹⁸²

The Courier-Journal (Louisville, Kentucky) ran an article highlighting the virtues of the American sailors who fought in the battle and the moral justification for toppling Spanish rule:

WON BY AMERICAN BRAVERY . . . Manila Bay has been filled with American glory. There was won one of our greatest triumphs, one of the greatest naval victories of the world—won by American courage and genius . . . I know that we can be of great assistance to the inhabitants of the Philippines . . . Spain is unfit to govern. Spain has always been a robber. She has never made an effort to civilize a human being. The history of Spain, I think, is the darkest page in the history of the world.¹⁸³

Therefore the battle not only showed off the best qualities of the American race—bravery, calm resolve, and pluck—it also successfully threw off the yoke of an oppressed people, and in doing so fulfilled a humanitarian purpose. *The San Francisco Chronicle's* (San Francisco, California) coverage described the battle as a vindication of the “new” American Navy: “The American Navy has just passed through the crucial test of war; certain theories of naval warfare have been verified, and certain others have proved

¹⁸²“Keep Cool; Obey Orders,” *Times-Picayune*, May 8, 1898, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

¹⁸³“R. G. Ingersoll on Philippines,” *Courier-Journal*, August 7, 1898, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

worthless; new issues and new conditions have appeared, and about the entire Navy Department hangs the luster of the glorious victories of Manila Bay and Santiago.”¹⁸⁴

Congressional leaders also gave laudatory accounts of the battle, and emphasized the crucial role the Navy played in the Spanish-American War. Representative Sulzer recalled the battle in a speech given in early 1899:

The recent war between Spain and this country demonstrated the power, the glory, and the effectiveness of the American Navy. Where would we have been in that combat if it had not been for our Navy? It was the Navy that lowered and humbled in the dust the proud banner of Spain in the Orient by the matchless genius and thundering guns of Dewey. It was the Navy that dethroned the haughty power of Spain on the Western Hemisphere under the great Commander Schley. It was the Navy—our Navy, the Navy of the Republic—that forced the proud and puffed-up Spaniards, who had derided and ridiculed us for years, to hastily sue for peace when Schley’s unerring guns sunk the Spanish fleet. It was the Navy that vindicated the greatness, the glory, and the power of the United States of America and placed us in the front rank of the great powers of the world. It was the Navy that settled the controversy and won the war. Without the Navy we would have been impotent and powerless.¹⁸⁵

Thus the Navy had shown the “puffed-up” Europeans what American sailors could accomplish, and had delivered a pair of crushing victories to the American people.

With the stunning naval victory at Manila, and another equally successful victory at the Battle of Santiago in Cuba, the American Navy climbed to new heights in the national consciousness, and this resulted in increased naval discourse. This chapter continues the analysis begun in chapter 4, beginning with the Spanish-American War in 1898, and ending in 1917, after the Naval Expansion Act of 1916 and America’s entry into World War One. Several themes from the previous chapter remained consistent in

¹⁸⁴“Affairs of the Navy,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 26, 1898, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

¹⁸⁵U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 32nd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 17, 1899, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2015.

Congressional speeches and newspaper coverage. These themes were the quality of American craftsmanship, the notion of the Navy as a source of national pride, and the decisive break between the “old” and the “New Navy.” The one theme not carried forward in this new period from the previous one was the vulnerability of the American coastline to foreign attack. References to America’s defenselessness did not appear as frequently, at least not in debates about Naval Appropriations,¹⁸⁶ as a result of newfound confidence in American naval power.

New themes also emerged in this period. First, the Spanish-American War and the great naval victories at Manila Bay and Santiago were consistently used as a site of memory and a line of demarcation—the point at which America had most recently proven its naval prowess. Congressional representatives and journalists frequently referred to events in relation to the Spanish-American War, or “the Spanish War,” highlighting its importance as a watershed moment. They also argued that the Battles of Manila Bay and Santiago demonstrated the wisdom of America’s years of effort and investment in rebuilding the Navy. Second, discourse about the Navy emphasized that the Navy was a national institution, one that was built by, representative of, and that protected all Americans.

Third, as the Americans continued their naval buildup in the years before World War One, they increasingly compared their Navy’s size and strength to the European navies. In the time period covered in the previous chapter congressmen had taken considerable pains to distinguish themselves from the “gaudy” Europeans, and journalists

¹⁸⁶Discussions of the need for coastal fortifications shifted to debates over army appropriations. As army leaders struggled to secure more funding, coastal defense was one function that they lobbied to take over.

had remarked that the American naval reviews could not compete with the European naval reviews in splendor and scale. After the Spanish-American War, these self-deprecating apologies appeared less frequently, and politicians and journalists were less shy about directly comparing the U.S. Navy with the navies of Britain, France, and Germany. Therefore the comparisons with other navies became more explicitly competitive, rather than being used as a means of distinguishing the Americans as being unwilling to compete in the naval arms race, or to assert that the naval arms race was somehow beneath them. The Americans had somewhat cautiously entered the race, but became increasingly comfortable with being a part of it over time.

Fourth, references to a new and virtuous American imperialism began to appear. After the U.S. acquired its first colonial possessions, American policy makers and journalists had to create a new spin on the old concept of imperialism, because until that time an important part of the American identity had been the legacy of the Americans liberating themselves from their colonial masters. Congress and the newspapers re-engineered the concept of imperialism by portraying it as America coming to share the gift of liberty with those less fortunate. In sharing the blessings of civilization with the world, the U.S. was executing a virtuous and enlightened imperialism, contrasted with the old oppressive European version. The notion of this new imperialism was naturally linked to the need for a powerful Navy that could protect America's new territories.

Finally, and most importantly, the Navy was increasingly identified as a symbol of American racial quality, and this was often tied to Anglo-Saxonism—the “natural” American race. Celebrations of the Navy and positive references to it were exercises in self-congratulation. Like the British, the racial health of the Navy was increasingly used

to indicate the racial health of the American people. Also like the British, this made the Americans a “martial race,” because they produced the world’s best sailors. The Navy represented the highest state of excellence that the American people could achieve.

Like in the period covered by chapter 4, congressional leaders and newspapers emphasized the superiority of American quality in craftsmanship, warship design, and personnel. Representative Foss gave a speech in 1901 in which he said “so far as our Navy is concerned to-day, we have no obsolete ships in it, and our Navy to-day, man for man and ship for ship, is the most efficient in the world.”¹⁸⁷ The following year he reiterated this point, saying “I believe we have better officers, better men, and that our ships, ship for ship, are better than those of any navy in the world . . . [and] superior men, superior ships—in tonnage, in armament, and in armor—superior gunnery, and superior marksmanship will win in the future as they have won in the past.”¹⁸⁸ In 1904 Representative Hitchcock gave a speech in which he argued that this superior American quality and ingenuity was timeless, and he used the ingenuity displayed during the Civil War as an example. He said “the greatest naval conflict of the civil war—the battle between the Monitor and Merrimac—sustains the claim that American genius—and at this time it was American genius on both sides of the Mason and Dixon line—can construct novel and effective means of naval warfare on short notice.”¹⁸⁹ Therefore

¹⁸⁷U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 34th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, January 23, 1901, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H1,353.

¹⁸⁸U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 35th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 13, 1902, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H5,374.

¹⁸⁹U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 38th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 20, 1904, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,154.

superior American quality could always be counted upon, and it existed both in terms of what the American people could accomplish in building powerful warships, but also in crewing them with superior men.

Newspapers also continued to claim that American warships were of superior quality. *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana) published an article in 1898 that recalled the exploits of the USS *Oregon* during the Spanish-American War. The article read “If her round-the-Horn voyage is any test, the Oregon, in speed and perfection of machinery, is the equal of anything ever produced by a British shipbuilder, and yet she was built on the far-off coast of California.”¹⁹⁰ Claims of superior American quality also coincided with each successful launching of a new American warship. *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky) ran an article about the USS *Alabama* in 1900, which claimed “There is a new queen of the American navy, the United States battleship Alabama, which today won the title in one of the most magnificent speed trials yet held in the history of the navy . . . it gave an idea of the yet undeveloped power in this latest product of American shipbuilders.”¹⁹¹ In 1904 the *Fort Wayne Daily News* (Fort Wayne, Indiana) praised the superior quality of the USS *Connecticut*, in an article that read “THE NAVY’S PRIDE LAUNCHED: Battleship Connecticut is the Finest Fighting Craft in the Whole World . . . When the battleship Connecticut is completed she will be the most powerful fighting engine in the US Navy. A comparison with the best ships of other nations shows that the Connecticut would more than hold her own in battle against any

¹⁹⁰“Our Naval Constructors. Three of the Famous Men Who Build our Ships,” *Times-Picayune*, June 26, 1898, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

¹⁹¹“Alabama: Now Queen of the American Navy,” *Courier-Journal*, August 29, 1900, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

ship in the world.”¹⁹² *The Reading Times* (Reading, Pennsylvania) ran a similar article about the USS *Texas*. It read “with launching here Saturday of the super-dreadnought Texas the American Navy counted as its most powerful battleship the world has ever seen. Other nations are trying desperately for the honor of owning the greatest warship, but it will be months after the Texas and her sister ship the New York.”¹⁹³ All of these articles, like the coverage of ship launchings before the Spanish-American War, emphasized that these new ships were better than anything that had come before them, which reinforced notions of ever-increasing American quality and ingenuity. Other newspapers also expressed similar opinions.¹⁹⁴

The second theme consistent with the earlier period is the notion of the Navy as a source of national pride. Representative Sulzer gave a speech in 1899 in which he said “The American people take a just pride in their Navy. They have every reason to be

¹⁹²“The Navy’s Pride Launched: Battleship Connecticut is the Finest Fighting Craft in the Whole World,” *Fort Wayne Daily News*, September 29, 1904, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

¹⁹³“Greatest Battleship Launched Saturday,” *Reading Times*, May 20, 1912, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

¹⁹⁴“Speed in Battle-Ships,” *Inter Ocean*, August 30, 1900, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Ohio’s Plunge,” *Arizona Republican*, May 19, 1901, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “A New Maine,” *Gettysburg Compiler*, July 30, 1901, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Thanks for Good Ships,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1901, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Sister to the Mississippi,” *Washington Post*, December 10, 1905, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “New Battleship Launched Today: The Iron Clad Kansas Dips Her Nose in the Sparkling Brine,” *Fort Wayne Daily News*, August 12, 1905, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Latest Sea Fighter Launched Today: New Battleship Wyomin Most Powerful Fighting Dog Yet Commissioned,” *Frederick Post*, May 25, 1911, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Our Cast-Off Ships For Little Navies: Craft Obsolete for Us are Well Suited to South American Countries,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1911, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

proud of it, to be proud of its past, to be proud of it now, and to be proud of its future.”¹⁹⁵

A few days later Representative Warren similarly said “I am proud of the Navy and its achievements . . . The nation loves the Navy, and the men of the Navy appreciate and are grateful accordingly.”¹⁹⁶ Representative Loudensalger went further in a speech in 1900, in which he explained that affection for a country’s Navy was natural, but that it was even more pronounced in the U.S. because of the Navy’s great history. He said:

The Navy occupies a unique position in the affections of the people. At all times and in every country possessing a navy there has always existed among all classes of people a warmth of pride for the sailor which has not been bestowed upon any other class of men. This may be due to the peculiar condition of peril that always surrounds him, not only in war, but in time of peace. But above and beyond all these considerations is the keen appreciation and deep love which our people entertain for our Navy and its heroes, whose gallant deeds in all our conflicts fill many gaps of history.¹⁹⁷

Representative Fitzgerald in 1904 echoed these sentiments, saying “It is popular to advocate a big navy. Its achievements are justly the source of pride and gratification for the American people.”¹⁹⁸ In 1909 Representative Dawson heaped praise on the Navy for the successful cruise of the Great White Fleet. He said “that voyage justified in full

¹⁹⁵U.S. Congress, 32nd Cong., February 17, 1899, H2,015.

¹⁹⁶U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 32nd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 21, 1899, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,141.

¹⁹⁷U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 33rd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, April 17, 1900, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H4,327.

¹⁹⁸U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 38th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 19, 1904, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,078.

measure the pride which the American people feel in their navy.”¹⁹⁹ Other lawmakers made similar assertions.²⁰⁰

Journalists also continued to write articles that claimed that Americans were proud of their “New Navy.” *The Scranton Republican* (Scranton, Pennsylvania) ran an article in 1903 in which the author wrote about a recent naval review. He wrote “the fleet, lying in the middle of the Sound in the bright rays of the sun, was a sight to stir the slowest pulse.”²⁰¹ *The Huntington Herald* (Huntington, Indiana) ran an article that quoted President Roosevelt following a fleet review in 1906. It read “‘any man who fails to be patriotically inspired by such a sight as this is a mighty poor American and every American who has seen it ought to be a better American for it.’ The sentiment was echoed enthusiastically by the group around the president.”²⁰² Following another fleet review in 1911, an author for *The Anaconda Standard* (Anaconda, Montana) argued that “Those who saw the fighting fleet which was assembled in New York harbor today could not fail to be struck with its preparedness, its high efficiency, and must have been proud

¹⁹⁹U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 43rd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, January 21, 1909, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H1,249.

²⁰⁰See also U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 36th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 18, 1903, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,362-H2,363; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 49th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 22, 1913, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H3,698; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 49th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 24, 1913, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H3,817.

²⁰¹“Squadron Review by the President,” *Scranton Republican*, August 18, 1903, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

²⁰²“Our Greatest Fleet: President Roosevelt in His Element at a Review of the Sea Terrors,” *Huntington Herald*, September 4, 1906, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

of its personnel.”²⁰³ In all of these passages, the authors either claimed or quoted others who claimed that the nation was justifiably proud of its Navy, and linked popular admiration of the Navy to patriotism. There were many other examples of similar articles.²⁰⁴

The third theme that existed both before and after the Spanish-American War is that of the decisive break between the “old” and the “New Navy.” As the Navy was in the process of reinventing itself, politicians and journalists emphasized the new direction the Navy had taken, in order to sell further expansion to the American people and to reassure them about their security. Representative Rixey said in 1901 “our Navy is a new one. It consists of the best ships and the best men.”²⁰⁵ In 1904 Representative Foss highlighted the progress made in rebuilding the Navy, and the fact that it was natural for a great country like the U.S. to have a great Navy. He said “Then [in 1880] we stood twentieth among the navies of the world. We had a smaller navy even than little Chile, in South

²⁰³“Mightiest Array of Ships is Reviewed by President,” *Anaconda Standard*, November 3, 1911, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

²⁰⁴See also “Great Naval Review: Fifty-one Vessels of Many Types in Brilliant Pageant Pass Before the President,” *Scranton Republican*, September 4, 1906, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Two Battleships a Year: Results of President’s Fight for a Bigger Navy,” *Kearney Daily Hub*, April 28, 1908, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “World-Round Trip Ended. Battleships Alabama and Maine Return Home,” *Humeston New Era*, October 28, 1908, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Scientific Management and Efficiency in the Navy,” *Bismarck Tribune*, June 29, 1911, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Reviews Big U.S. Fleet of Fighters,” *Williamsport Sun-Gazette*, May 18, 1915, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Citizen Sailors Learning War Game on Big Battleships,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 25, 1916, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

²⁰⁵U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 34th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, January 24, 1901, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H1,418.

America. But it was then that the country awoke to the fact that it was necessary to build up the American Navy, and then started the onward march of its growth and development.”²⁰⁶ Many other congressmen gave similar speeches.²⁰⁷

Journalists also continued to profess that the Navy had changed for the better, and that progress had been significant. *The Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, Georgia) in 1899 ran an article that read “Our new navy, of which the Chicago may be accepted as a type, had its birth in 1883. Since then there has been a steady advance.”²⁰⁸ In its coverage of the Jamestown Naval Review in 1907, the *Harrisburg Telegraph* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania) juxtaposed the new powerful naval vessels with the older obsolete vessels that had been in service before the “New Navy” was built. It read “from the ‘Little Yankee Cheesebox set up on a raft’ [the USS *Monitor*] and the rectangular mass of iron which carried the Confederate flag in 1862 [the CSS *Merrimac*], to the modern fighting machines typified by the flower of the American navy gathered in holiday assembly to-day is a far cry.”²⁰⁹ In another article about the Jamestown Naval Review, the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin) was more explicit in its comparison between the old ships and the new ones. Its article read “Great Naval Review Fifty Ships in Line: American Fleet, Thirty-Eight in Number, Saluted by the Guns of Five Foreign Nations.

²⁰⁶U.S. Congress, 38th Cong., February 19, 1904, H2,065.

²⁰⁷See also U.S. Congress, 32nd Cong., February 17, 1899, H2,004; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 48th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 23, 1912, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H7,039-H7,040.

²⁰⁸“American Naval Growth,” *Atlanta Constitution*, March 10, 1899, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

²⁰⁹“Jamestown Fair Opens with Great Naval Display,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, April 26, 1907, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

Scene Recalls the meeting of the Monitor and Merrimac on the same historic spot, the first battle of Ironclads—The strength displayed by United States is in striking contrast to that of fourteen years ago.”²¹⁰ Therefore journalists juxtaposed the old antiquated warships with the new modern ones, and like earlier articles they marked the birth of the “New Navy” in 1883.

While notions of American quality, pride in the Navy, and the clear break between the “New Navy” and the “old navy” continued to show up in naval discourse, after the Spanish-American War new additional themes appeared. The first of these new themes was associated with the Spanish-American War itself, in that the U.S. Navy’s crushing victories over the Spanish fleets at Manila Bay and Santiago were hailed as proof of American naval prowess and national greatness. Lawmakers and journalists used these victories in their arguments over the importance of the Navy and the need for its continued expansion. In addition to the excerpts from congressional speeches discussed in the first part of this chapter, in 1899 Representative Sulzer said “The recent war between Spain and this country demonstrated the power, the glory, and the effectiveness of the American Navy . . . Without the Navy we would have been impotent and powerless.”²¹¹ Later in the same speech he said of the men that won the battle “They all did, and they all do their duty. They are all heroes, each and every one . . . We are all proud of the heroism and the great deeds of valor and of gallantry of our immortal naval commanders. Their gallant names, their heroic deeds, and their matchless valor brighten

²¹⁰“Great Naval Review Fifty Ships in Line,” *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern*, April 26, 1907, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

²¹¹U.S. Congress, 32nd Cong., February 17, 1899, H2,015. The full passage appears on page 3 of this chapter.

and illumine every page of American history.”²¹² Therefore in addition to validating the “New Navy” as a revitalized institution, this war provided further proof of the superiority of American sailors.

While victory in the Spanish-American War had vindicated naval building up to this point, it was also a call for further building. Representative Foss said in 1902 “So the lesson that comes to us, as the result of our recent war with Spain, is not to stop building, but to build onward and upward the American Navy.”²¹³ Some politicians used religious imagery to infuse the victories over the Spanish with moral power. Representative Cushman said in 1903 that “The nation held its breath while that sheathed monster [the USS *Oregon*] . . . bore down on the Spanish fleet . . . like the great gray avenging angel of God Almighty. And when there was heard the boom of her mighty guns the yellow rag of Spain sank from sight forever on the Western Hemisphere, and the sky of Christendom was enriched with the folds of a new banner.”²¹⁴ Other lawmakers also praised the Navy for its victory over the Spanish, and argued for further naval building.²¹⁵ Several newspaper articles did as well.²¹⁶

²¹²U.S. Congress, 32nd Cong., February 17, 1899, H2,015. The full passage appears on page 3 of this chapter.

²¹³U.S. Congress, 35th Cong., May 13, 1902, H5,375.

²¹⁴U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 36th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 19, 1903, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,401.

²¹⁵See also U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 33rd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, April 16, 1900, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H4,250; U.S. Congress, 35th Cong., May 13, 1902, H5,374; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 39th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 20, 1905, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,941; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 40th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 10, 1906, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H6,632; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 42nd Cong., Daily ed.,

While Manila Bay and Santiago had given the American people something to be excited about and proud of, politicians and journalists in speeches and articles added to the praise lavished on the Navy by arguing that it represented the whole nation, which provided further justification for the American people taking pride in their Navy. This was the second new theme—the notion of the Navy as a national institution. Politicians and journalists claimed that the Navy was not beholden to local or sectarian loyalty, but instead represented all the people. The American people had built the Navy, and the Navy was a symbol of what they could achieve. Representative Dayton gave a speech in 1902 in which he said “This work of building up the American Navy . . . brings gratitude to every American heart . . . It is forged in American furnaces and nailed home by the hand of American laboring men.”²¹⁷ Representative Foss, discussing the cruise of the Great White Fleet, was more explicit about the Navy representing the whole country. He said “another thing which this cruise has called to the attention of the American people is that

Heinonline, April 10, 1908, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H4,576; U.S. Congress, 49th Cong., February 22, 1913, H3,702; U.S. Congress, 49th Cong., February 24, 1913, H3, 817.

²¹⁶See also “Affairs of the Navy;” “Won by American Bravery,” *Courier-Journal*, August 7, 1898, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “A Royal Welcome Home: New York Welcomes with Great Enthusiasm the Return of the Famous Sea Fighters,” *Algona Republican*, August 24, 1898, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Battle at Manila,” *Scranton Republican*, February 6, 1899, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Cheers for Dewey: Chicago’s Celebration of Anniversary of Manila Bay Battle,” *Scranton Republican*, May 2, 1900, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Scientific Management and Efficiency in the Navy.”

²¹⁷U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 35th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 14, 1902, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H5,438.

the American Navy is a national institution.”²¹⁸ Other lawmakers expressed similar opinions.²¹⁹

Newspapers also used imagery that portrayed the Navy as a national institution. *The New York Times* ran an article in 1902 entitled “A Constellation in Steel,” that read “Thirty-five stars in the constellation of the Union have given their names to units of the greatest power in our ‘first line of defense.’”²²⁰ Naming ships after cities and states helped to explicitly tie the Navy to the nation, which is why the practice continues to this day. Other articles similarly argued that the Navy represented the entire nation.²²¹

As this national institution continued to grow in size and power, American congressmen were increasingly willing to compare their Navy with those of the Europeans, which is the third new theme in this period. In the early 1890s, these comparisons were usually self-deprecating, because the American politicians and journalists did not feel that they could directly compete with the Europeans, even if this competition was only rhetorical. After the “New Navy’s” battleships became more plentiful and more powerful, lawmakers became bolder in their comparisons.

²¹⁸U.S. Congress, 42nd Cong., April 10, 1908, H4,577.

²¹⁹See also U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 32nd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 17, 1899, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,015; U.S. Congress, 36th Cong., February 19, 1903, H2,401; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 39th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 20, 1905, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,941.

²²⁰“A Constellation in Steel,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1902, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

²²¹See also “Naval Appropriation Bill Has Been Reported. 16,000-Ton Battleships,” *Lebanon Daily News*, April 30, 1902, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

Representative Beall in 1905 said “Comparing our ships, built and building now, in fighting capacity and strength with the navies built and building, we are second—Great Britain alone being superior.”²²²

Arguments that the Americans were falling behind in naval construction became increasingly common. In 1913 Representative Hobson said “We were the second naval power in the world a few years ago. We are now the fourth. Germany has gone ahead of us. France has gone ahead of us.”²²³ Representative Gerry, in arguing the foolishness of reducing the pace of naval building, pointed out that the Europeans were not slackening their own pace of warship construction. He said “The argument has been made that not to increase our Navy this year would be an example for other nations to follow, but our authorization of but one battleship last year and one the year before did not make England, Germany, France, or Japan decrease their navy building.”²²⁴ In arguing that the American Navy was losing ground to the Europeans, these passages show how the American Navy had increased in stature to the point that it had achieved a respectable ranking relative to the navies of Europe. The threat of losing that status had become a credible argument for additional naval building. This is striking, because before the “New

²²²U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 39th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 15, 1905, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,668.

²²³U.S. Congress, 49th Cong., February 22, 1913, H3,702.

²²⁴U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 51st Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, April 21, 1914, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H7,023.

Navy” direct naval competition with the Europeans would have been unthinkable. Other lawmakers made similar direct comparisons.²²⁵

Journalists were also increasingly willing to make these comparisons. *The Washington Post* ran an article in 1904 entitled “Destiny of Our Navy,” which said “Tremendous maritime power of England, Germany, and France being rapidly gained upon by the United States—Advance being made in ships, guns, and men, and their efficiency. Is the United States destined to become the greatest maritime power in the world? No nation is at present advancing so rapidly with her navy.”²²⁶ European esteem for the American Navy was newsworthy. In 1911 *The Washington Post* ran an article about an American naval squadron visiting a German naval base. It read “Emperor Likes our Ship: Emperor William of Germany and President Taft yesterday exchanged

²²⁵See also U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 45th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, March 25, 1910, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H3,779; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 39th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 14, 1905, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,577; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 40th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 5, 1906, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H6,422; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 41st Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 12, 1907, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,775; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 41st Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 15, 1907, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H3,048-H3,050; U.S. Congress, 42nd Cong., April 10, 1908, H4,577; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 43rd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, January 22, 1909, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H1,305; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 45th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, March 26, 1910, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H3,806, H3,810; U.S. Congress, 48th Cong., May 23, 1912, H7,033, H7,040; U.S. Congress, 51st Cong., April 21, 1914, H7,021; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 52nd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, January 29, 1915, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,673, H2,675, H2,689.

²²⁶“Destiny of Our Navy: Believed that Its Supremacy is Mere Matter of Time,” *Washington Post*, December 25, 1904, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

messages growing out of the visit of the American squadron to Kiel.”²²⁷ Like lawmakers, journalists were also sensitive to any loss of naval stature relative to the Europeans. *The Indiana Gazette* (Indiana, Pennsylvania) and *The Gettysburg Times* (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania) ran articles in 1914 that claimed “English Navy far ahead of ours, Germany also outdistancing the United States.”²²⁸ Like the politicians, journalists argued that the hard won approval and relative naval power that the U.S. had achieved compared to the Europeans was something that the Americans should fight to keep through further naval expansion.

Increasingly willing to compete with Europeans in naval building, Americans were also increasingly willing to use their new powerful Navy to project their power abroad. This is the fourth new theme that appeared during this period—the notion of a virtuous new American imperialism and its relation to navalism. This new imperialism’s purpose was to bring the blessings of American civilization to the world, in a way that lacked the despotism of the European version.

The Spanish-American War started this discussion, with the acquisition of America’s first colonial possessions. Politicians claimed that the purpose of acquiring colonial possessions was to save uncivilized people from themselves, or from less enlightened conquering powers, as Representative Foss claimed in a speech in 1900: “We

²²⁷“Emperor Likes Our Ship,” *Washington Post*, June 27, 1911, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

²²⁸“English Navy Far Ahead of Ours: Germany Also Outdistancing the United States,” *Gettysburg Times*, May 21, 1914, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “English Navy Far Ahead of Ours: Germany Also Outdistancing the United States,” *Indiana Gazette*, May 23, 1914, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

are building the Navy for peace, for the maintenance of our foreign policy, for commerce, and then we are building our Navy for civilization. This country embarked in the war with Spain for the purpose of freeing the suffering Cubans from the tyranny of Spanish rule.”²²⁹ Later in the same speech, speculating about the fate of the Philippines, he said “we may civilize them until they arrive at that stage of civilization and of progress where they can erect a government of their own, a republic whose influence will penetrate through all the darkened portions of the Orient and start the fires of liberty on every altar . . . our duty now is clear; our duty is to civilize those people, and toward that end there will be ten thousand ministering angels.”²³⁰ While these “ministering angels” were civilizing the Filipinos, the Navy would provide them with protection. This protection would come from “the American battleship, fashioned by American hands, filled by American seamen, answering to every call and command, with an American flag above it that never waved over any people but to bless and save.”²³¹

Representative Hobson gave a speech that touched on this theme in 1911 when he prophesied the next war, and argued that the American people had an obligation to protect weaker peoples from the oppression of the Europeans. He said “When the great war comes, let us realize that it will be a test of survival of our civilization. Let us realize that we owe it to our own future peace and tranquility, to our own posterity, to the people of South America, to the weaker peoples of the world; that we owe it to mankind that is looking up with streaming eyes to the day of deliverance from the load of militarism of

²²⁹U.S. Congress, 33rd Cong., April 16, 1900, H4,321.

²³⁰Ibid.

²³¹Ibid.

the old civilization.”²³² Therefore the Americans had assumed a new obligation, a new form of Manifest Destiny that was tied up in the Monroe Doctrine. America had a duty to become the protector of the weaker peoples of the world, just as they had become the protector of their new imperial possessions. Other lawmakers expressed similar opinions.²³³

Journalists also wrote about this new concept of benevolent imperialism. The best example is an article in *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky) that ran in 1909 that recalled the Spanish-American War. The author said “This is the first war, so far as I know, in the history of the world, that has been waged absolutely in the interest of humanity; the only war born of pity, of sympathy.”²³⁴ Therefore in the American consciousness imperialism had become a humanitarian endeavor. This justified imperialism on moral grounds, which helped to fuel arguments for further naval expansion.

The last new theme that emerged in this period was the Navy as a symbol of American racial quality. Just as the material quality of the Navy was a symbol of what American workers and designers could achieve, the Navy’s sailors represented the best of the American race. Because of their Anglo-Saxon heritage, the American navalists

²³²U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 46th Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, February 20, 1911, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H2,992.

²³³See also U.S. Congress, 33rd Cong., April 17, 1900, H4,313; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 42nd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, April 11, 1908, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H4,609; U.S. Congress, 48th Cong., May 23, 1912, H7,036; U.S. Congress, 51st Cong., April 21, 1914, H7,026; U.S. Congress, House, Congressional Record, 53rd Cong., Daily ed., Heinonline, May 27, 1916, <http://heinonline.org> (accessed August 1, 2013), H8,797.

²³⁴“R. G. Ingersoll on Philippines.”

claimed that Americans were natural sailors just like the British. Service in the Navy brought out the best attributes of the American people. Representative Dayton spoke of the moral virtue of the Navy in 1902. He said “there has never been in the world’s history as remarkable an example of bravery, honesty, character, integrity as the Navy personnel of the U.S. from the beginning to this day presents to the world. No navy has such a record. The spirit of the naval corps stands without a parallel; it stands alone in the world’s history. That very thing has kept out of it any corruption.”²³⁵ Representative Brock made more explicit references to American racial quality in 1905, and tied them to the Navy. He said “The genius of our people, the progression of the race, the prolific resources of our soil, the splendid bravery of the American soldier and seaman, dwelling all beneath the flag of American institutions, have combined to invoke the spirit of an evolution that makes us the central figure of a great international drama . . . The Navy is the most important factor of our security and progress in the future.”²³⁶ Representative Fitzgerald in 1907 said “I have no doubt whatever that the seamen and the marksmen on board of the ships of the American Navy excel in a very great degree those on board of the ships of any other naval power.”²³⁷ Tied to earlier arguments about American material quality, Americans were “in their element” in the Navy. This allowed American sailors to outperform all other sailors.

Representative Foss not only espoused the quality of the American sailors, but also argued that their quality was unprecedented. He said in 1908 “The character of the

²³⁵U.S. Congress, 35th Cong., May 14, 1902, H5,439.

²³⁶U.S. Congress, 39th Cong., February 14, 1905, H2,677.

²³⁷U.S. Congress, 41st Cong., February 12, 1907, H2,786.

men who are coming into the Navy to-day is better than ever before. They are coming from the Western farms and prairies; and while they come into the Navy without any knowledge of naval affairs . . . in a short time they become expert seamen . . . and there has never been a time in the history of the American Navy when the personnel stood so high in character, intelligence, and in patriotism.”²³⁸ Therefore the quality of the Navy was tied to the quality of the American race, and the Navy represented the best of that race. By asserting that the quality of American naval personnel had improved, Representative Foss was arguing indirectly that quality of the American race had improved. Other lawmakers also used the Navy as an illustration of superior American racial quality.²³⁹

Journalists also claimed that Americans made great sailors because of their racial superiority. Like the British, Americans possessed all the virtues of the Anglo-Saxon race, as the author of this article that ran in *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky) in 1898 claimed. He wrote “the Anglo-Saxon has courage and coolness—courage not blinded by passion, courage that is the absolute servant of intelligence. The Anglo-Saxon has a fixedness of purpose that is never interfered with by feeling; he does not become enraged—he becomes firm, unyielding, his mind is absolutely made up, clasped, locked,

²³⁸U.S. Congress, 42nd Cong., April 10, 1908, H4,574.

²³⁹See also U.S. Congress, 32nd Cong., February 17, 1899, H2,015; U.S. Congress, 33rd Cong., April 17, 1900, H4,327; U.S. Congress, 34th Cong., January 24, 1901, H1,418, H1,421; U.S. Congress, 35th Cong., May 13, 1902, H5,374; U.S. Congress, 41st Cong., February 14, 1907, H2,994; U.S. Congress, 42nd Cong., April 10, 1908, H4,575; U.S. Congress, 43rd Cong., January 21, 1909, H1,249; U.S. Congress, 49th Cong., February 22, 1913, H3,692; U.S. Congress, 51st Cong., April 21, 1914, H7015-7016; U.S. Congress, 52nd Cong., January 29, 1915, H2,667.

and he carries out his will.”²⁴⁰ *The Williamsport Sun-Gazette* (Williamsport, Pennsylvania) ran an article in 1915 in which the author argued that naval power was a natural part of the American identity. He wrote “I think it is a natural, instructive judgment of the people of the U.S. that they may express their power appropriately in an efficient navy, and their interest partly, I believe, because the navy somehow is expected to express their character, not within our own borders where that character is understood, but outside our border where it is hoped we may occasionally touch others with some slight vision of what America stands for.”²⁴¹ Therefore the sailors in the Navy were the best of the American race, and represented the highest American virtues. For Americans, the Navy “expressed their character,” and that character was uniquely suited to seamanship. Other articles also made these arguments.²⁴²

²⁴⁰“Anglo-Saxon Superiority,” *Courier-Journal*, August 7, 1898, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

²⁴¹“Reviews Big U.S. Fleet of Fighters,” *Williamsport Sun-Gazette*, May 18, 1915, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013).

²⁴²See also “How Long Saved the Codfish,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 13, 1899, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Alabama is Second: Plucky Battle-Ship Gives Fleet Rival a Desperate Chase,” *Inter Ocean*, November 22, 1902, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “This Was His Busiest Day. President Begins His Tour of the State of Maine. Compliments Navy,” *Fort Wayne News*, August 26, 1902, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “The Voyage of the Oregon,” *National Tribune*, May 28, 1903, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Naval Battle Only a Farce: American Officer Likens the Engagement in the Sea of Japan to Pot-Shooting,” *San Francisco Call*, July 17, 1905, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Ready for Sailing,” *Scranton Republican*, December 16, 1907, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Mightiest Array of Ships is Reviewed by President;” “Uncle Sam’s Warships at Target Practice in Chesapeake Bay,” *Lincoln Evening Journal*, April 2, 1913, www.newspapers.com (accessed September 10, 2013); “Citizen Sailors Learning War Game on Big Battleships.”

The five new themes that appeared in popular discourse during this period highlight how the Navy as an institution had changed in the popular consciousness. First, the Navy had demonstrated its prowess in a spectacular fashion at Manila Bay and Santiago, and had demonstrated the power of its ships and the bravery and skill of its commanders. Second, the Navy was a national institution that belonged to everyone. It was the birthright of every citizen, and it was thoroughly “American.” Americans designed, built, and crewed it, and so its achievements were reflective of American genius and virtue.

Third, with the continuing naval expansion, the American Navy gradually shed its inferiority complex and welcomed direct comparison with Europeans. Whereas the Americans had previously relied on their assertions of superior quality, “ship for ship,” they could now claim world-class competitiveness in the power of their fleet. Fourth, the Americans also chose to compete with Europe in a new foreign policy of imperialism, while choosing to believe that theirs was a more virtuous form of imperialism than that of the Old World. As opposed to the old, tired, oppressive policies of the Europeans, with the Spanish being the most important cultural example, the Americans were embarking on a mission to civilize the world, and “the peace civilization” would bring the benefits of its enlightened society to those less fortunate. Finally, the Navy represented the highest calling of the American race. It attracted the best American citizens, who became the best sailors and naval officers in the world. Drawing on their Anglo-Saxon maritime prowess, they fulfilled the promise of their racial legacy by expressing British racial characteristics—cool, calm, and collected—while adding their own uniquely American racial characteristics—energy and pluck.

While the American people grew to love their reborn Navy and celebrated its achievements, the naval elites created their own discourse about their institution, its proper role, and how it should be organized, manned, and employed for maximum effectiveness. This evolving professional naval discourse will be the subject of chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE IN THE U.S. NAVY, 1888-1917

While politicians and journalists produced discourse about the Navy in an attempt to justify its further expansion, and to sell that expansion to the American people while providing reassurance about the nation's security, professionals within the naval establishment (naval officers and naval policy makers) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also engaged in frequent discussion about the Navy's proper role, purpose, strengths, and weaknesses. This discourse was largely about self-congratulation, but also included identifying the most glaring deficiencies within their institution and how to correct them. This chapter will highlight the most prominent themes within this professional discourse, taken from analysis of the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings* magazine between 1888 and 1917.

This professional discourse exhibited four major themes. These were the notion of a new interpretation of Manifest Destiny; the inherent virtue of the Navy; the need to improve the Navy's personnel, which included increasing the share of American citizens in the enlisted force; and the concept of rising American degeneracy and uncertainty about the nation's future. Each of these major themes contained numerous smaller themes, which will be enumerated in each of the chapter's four sections.

The first major theme was the concept of a new Manifest Destiny. Whereas the more traditional interpretation of Manifest Destiny had been associated with westward expansion across the American continent, with the closing of the frontier in 1890 and the associated thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner, the American people increasingly sought to project their power outward. The most significant event resulting from this shift in

foreign policy was the Spanish-American War in 1898, which marked the birth of the American Empire. Having acquired the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and having established a protectorate in Cuba, naval officers and policy makers saw themselves as having assumed a new mantle of responsibility, to project power abroad and safeguard their new colonial possessions. At an address to the Naval War College in 1901, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Frank Warren Hackett said, “the United States in enlarging its borders and taking to itself foreign possessions has indeed assumed a grave responsibility. To the Navy is largely due their acquisition. Upon the people of these distant islands we are conferring the blessings of good government. For their protection and welfare we shall continue to look, in a large measure, to the Navy.”²⁴³ Similarly, in 1903 Rear Admiral H. C. Taylor wrote an article in *Proceedings* that claimed that the nation’s growing strength and power gave it an obligation to share the blessings of American civilization with the rest of the world. He wrote:

The vast development of our nation during the past forty years, which was hidden from our mental view until the Spanish War disclosed it, has imposed upon us the heavy burdens of responsibility which are inseparable from power, and which Fate never places upon the shoulders of feeble races. In 1898, a duty which had haunted us many years became plainly apparent. It was to rescue from misery a race of people who were our neighbors and friends. We determined to help them, not dreaming of profit for ourselves; but in this simple act of duty we unconsciously opened tidal gates, through which rushed upon us a flood of powers and duties which must be accepted and fulfilled—or we are not great. It is the test with which Fate tries our capacity for greatness.²⁴⁴

²⁴³Frank Warren Hackett, “An Address Delivered before the Naval War College,” *Proceedings* 27, no. 98 (1901): 299.

²⁴⁴RADM H. C. Taylor, USN, “The Fleet,” *Proceedings* 29, no. 108 (1903): 799.

Therefore the American people had an obligation to rescue those less fortunate, and in doing so they would realize their new national destiny, which involved using American military power for the benefit of others.²⁴⁵

While claiming a new national destiny that involved using the Navy in a benevolent new expansionist policy, naval leaders also asserted that Americans were naturally a maritime race, and had been since their early history. In describing early colonial America, Secretary of the Navy H. A. Herbert gave a speech in 1896 in which he said “the settlers of the colonies sat themselves down close to the sea and to the rivers that ran into the sea. It was the sea and the rivers that ran into it that were to furnish them their means of transportation and intercommunication.”²⁴⁶ Likewise, Edgar Maclay wrote an article in 1911 that more explicitly pointed to America’s maritime heritage, which dated back to the American Revolution. He wrote, “that Americans being a preeminently maritime race, were enabled to wage a most effective war against the common foe [the

²⁴⁵See also Hon. William McAdoo, “The Navy and the Nation,” *Proceedings* 20, no. 70 (1894): 422; LT James H. Reid, USN, “A Naval Training Policy and System,” *Proceedings* 29, no. 105 (1903): 2; Albert Bushnell Hart, “The Monroe Doctrine in its Territorial Extent and Application,” *Proceedings* 33, no. 119 (1906): 789; LCDR Edward L. Beach, USN, “The Pioneer of America’s Pacific Empire: David Porter,” *Proceedings* 34, no. 126 (1908): 543.

²⁴⁶Hon. H. A. Herbert, “The Sea and Sea Power as a Factor in the History of the United States, by Hon. H. A. Herbert, SECNAV, before the Naval War College, 10 August 1896,” *Proceedings* 22, no. 79 (1896): 561-562.

British] on the ocean.”²⁴⁷ Both of these passages portrayed the Americans as natural sailors, and their seafaring tradition as an important part of the American identity.²⁴⁸

Along with the inherent maritime quality of the American people, the mission of the Americans to reach outside their borders and civilize the world also included frequent references to Social Darwinism, an intellectual belief that was in vogue during this period, and which animated the need for the Americans to continue to struggle against the forces of the old world in order to create a better future for themselves and their benefactors. According to this view, nations had a duty to compete with each other, and this competition between peoples was consistent throughout human history. Lieutenant Commander Lyman A. Cotton wrote an article in 1911 in which he claimed “competition is nothing new, for records of its many forms have come down to us from earliest times.”²⁴⁹ After World War One began, references to the inherent truth of Social Darwinism became even more explicit. Lieutenant Commander John O. Jackson wrote in 1916 that the “present great world war has emphasized the fact that the survival of the fittest is as much a law of nature at the present stage of civilization as it was in prehistoric days. It applies to the nations of the world to an extent even greater than to individuals. There is no place in the present order of things for a weak nation. The only security is in

²⁴⁷Edgar S. Maclay, “A Sea View of Our Revolution,” *Proceedings* 37, no. 137 (1911): 237.

²⁴⁸See also LCDR W. P. Cronan, USN, “The Fighting Edge: A Tract for the Times,” *Proceedings* 37, no. 137 (1911): 88; Maclay, “A Sea View of Our Revolution,” 234-235.

²⁴⁹LCDR Lyman A. Cotton, USN, “Competition vs. Character,” *Proceedings* 37, no. 137 (1911): 134.

strength—such strength as to be immune from attack.”²⁵⁰ This reinforced notions of the righteousness of struggle, that Americans had a duty to share the gifts of their own society with the uncivilized world, and that the old world was actively competing with them for dominance. This active competition for dominance meant that the Americans were obligated to join in the struggle.²⁵¹

In joining in the struggle between nations, the Americans would bring a new more virtuous form of imperialism, untainted by the despotism of the Old World. In 1894 Assistant Secretary of the Navy William McAdoo asserted that the nation’s rightful place in the world would not involve repeating the mistakes of the Europeans. He wrote “when the surplus energies of our people find vent . . . we shall not . . . become the imitators of European governments, those international bullies who rob, under the guise of civilization and religion, the weak and ignorant, whilst evading, even to the point of humiliation, conflict with the great and powerful.”²⁵² Commodore W. H Beehler wrote an article in 1909 in which he described the Americans as reluctant imperialists. He wrote, “American policy is *utterly* opposed to conquest of any territory beyond the seas. The acquisition of the Philippines is sincerely regretted by the American people, but its possession involves the duty to provide for its protection, and having expended millions of wealth and sacrificed the lives of thousands of our citizens we can not shirk our

²⁵⁰LCDR John P. Jackson, USN, “Preparedness—A Vital Necessity,” *Proceedings* 42, no. 165 (1916): 1559.

²⁵¹See also CAPT Caspar Frederick Goodrich, USN, “Esprit de Corps—A Tract for the Times,” *Proceedings* 24, no. 85 (1898): 3; Cotton, “Competition vs. Character,” 131.

²⁵²McAdoo, “The Navy and the Nation,” 419.

responsibility to protect these islands until they can protect themselves.”²⁵³ Therefore the Americans had had no intention of acquiring an empire, and had only done so out of humanitarian necessity. American imperialist policies were solely for the safeguarding of people who could not defend themselves. This reinforced notions of the moral virtue of American imperialism, as opposed to the greedy European version.²⁵⁴

As part of the new concept of Manifest Destiny, and coupled with the duty of nations to struggle against each other in competition, naval leaders argued that war was inevitable, which sought to refute the naiveté of American pacifists. Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce wrote an article in 1904 which said:

War is one of the great agencies by which human progress is effected. Scourge though it be, and much as its practice is to be deplored, we must still recognize war as the operation of the economic laws of nature for the government of the human family. It stimulates national growth, solves otherwise insoluble problems of domestic and political economy, and purges a nation of its humors. According to an ancient proverb, *Purgamenta hujus mundi sunt tira, pestis, bellum, et frateria*. War is the malady of nations; the disease is terrible while it lasts, but purifying in its results. It tries a nation and chastens it, as sickness or adversity tries and chastens the individual. There is a wisdom that comes only of suffering, whether to the family or to the aggregation of families—the nation. Man is perfected through suffering.²⁵⁵

Therefore war was not only inevitable, it was desirable, and would help to cleanse the U.S. of its problems and purify the American race. This theme was also a popular

²⁵³Commodore W. H. Beehler, “The Navy and Coast Defence,” *Proceedings* 35, no. 130 (1909): 379.

²⁵⁴See also Hart, “The Monroe Doctrine in its Territorial Extent and Application,” 789.

²⁵⁵RADM S. B. Luce, USN, “War and its Prevention,” *Proceedings* 30, no. 111 (1904): 611.

argument among Europeans at that time seeking to cure the ills of their own societies.

Later in the same article he wrote:

The truth is that war is an ordnance of God. The flaming sword that guards the way to sinless Eden will continue to prevail, until man enters once more into that peace which passeth all understanding, when the lust of the eye and the pride of life shall no more be known. But mortal man cannot yet discern the coming of that day. Meanwhile let practical America recognize the truth that war is a calamity that may overtake the most peaceful nation, and that insurance against war by preparation for it is, of all methods, the most business-like, the most humane, and the most in accordance with the teachings of the Christian religion.²⁵⁶

For people who accepted this deterministic view, the need to prepare for war was obvious. In 1914 Captain Albert Gleaves made the same assertion, that “History teaches us that war is inevitable.”²⁵⁷ Other writers also shared this opinion.²⁵⁸

With war and competition being inevitable, and the Navy being the instrument through which the U.S. would compete with other nations, several authors reiterated the assertions of Alfred Thayer Mahan, who many felt had proven that powerful navies were a prerequisite for national greatness. In 1902, Representative Hannis Taylor wrote “the emphasis given by one of your own number, the illustrious Captain Mahan, to the importance of sea-power represents an invaluable contribution to the history of

²⁵⁶Luce, “War and its Prevention,” 622.

²⁵⁷CAPT Albert Gleaves, “Some Foreign and Other Views of War and the Study and Conduct of War,” *Proceedings* 40, no. 152 (1914): 1301.

²⁵⁸See also CDR Bradley A. Fiske, USN, “The Naval Profession,” *Proceedings* 33, no. 122 (1907): 478; Beach, “The Pioneer of America’s Pacific Empire: David Porter,” 543; CAPT George R. Clark, USN, “History Versus Prophecy,” *Proceedings* 41, no. 160 (1915): 1901; CDR A. W. Hinds, USN, “Military Prudence,” *Proceedings* 42, no. 165 (1916): 1443-1444.

mankind.”²⁵⁹ In 1911 Rear Admiral Bradley A. Fiske wrote, “Mahan proved that sea power has exercised a determining influence on history. He proved that sea power has been necessary for commercial success in peace and military success in war. He proved that, while many wars have culminated with the victory of some army, the victory of some navy had been the previous essential.”²⁶⁰ Mahan continued to provide an important intellectual underpinning for the importance of sea power and naval expansion, and his advocates presented his ideas as scientific fact.²⁶¹ For those who accepted Mahan’s ideas as fact, a powerful Navy was a necessity.

With Mahan providing a formula for national greatness that included building a great Navy, many naval leaders likened the Americans to the British, in that they were kindred races with a shared maritime heritage, and these naval leaders advocated emulating the British example. Some British officers felt the same way. In 1900 *Proceedings* published an article by British Colonel Sir G. S. Clarke, which discussed the recent Spanish-American and Boer Wars:

The year 1898 saw the English-speaking people engaged in warlike operations in regions widely separated. The conditions of the contests differed organically; but the objects were essentially similar. In both cases, strikingly complete success

²⁵⁹Hon. Hannis Taylor, “The Origin and Growth of the International System,” *Proceedings* 28, no. 104 (1902): 870.

²⁶⁰RADM Bradley A. Fiske, USN, “Naval Power,” *Proceedings* 37, no. 139 (1911): 683.

²⁶¹See also “Sea Power: Its Past and Its Future,” *Proceedings* 19, no. 68 (1893): 461; LCDR Richard Wainwright, USN, “Our Naval Power,” *Proceedings* 24, no. 85 (1898): 85; CDR J--- [sic], “Sketches from the Spanish-American War,” *Proceedings* 25, no. 89 (1899): 12; LT S. P. Fullinwider, USN, “The Fleet and Its Personnel,” *Proceedings* 30, no. 109 (1904): 1; Fiske, “Naval Power,” 706; “Alfred Thayer Mahan: In Memoriam,” *Proceedings* 41, no. 155 (1915): 1; H. C. Washburn, “What it Means to Be an Officer in the United States Navy,” *Proceedings* 43, no. 178 (1917): 2900-2901.

was attained, and while the disappearance of the remnants of the colonial empire of Spain is fraught with far greater consequences to the world than the overthrow of Dervish rule in the Eastern Sudan, the principal result is to increase the responsibilities of nations owning a common origin and upholding a common standard of progress and of liberty. This fact alone suffices to invest the wars of 1898 with peculiar significance, and to render their lessons specially important to the two English-speaking peoples. From the days of the Armada, it has been the ill fate of Spain to be frequently brought into collision with the British Navy. This has been caused directly by the struggle for colonial dominion which, beginning in the days of Elizabeth, assumed great dimensions in the wars of the 18th century, and indirectly by French alliance, voluntary or enforced, which have entailed nothing except loss of territory and naval disasters upon Spain.²⁶²

Therefore the U.S. Navy had taken up the mantle of the Royal Navy in frustrating the imperial ambitions of Spain. This served to further tie together the perceived common destiny of the British and the Americans. In 1914 Marine Lieutenant Renato Tittino more explicitly argued that the Royal Navy and the U.S. Navy were linked in a common destiny. He wrote that “the United States is on par with Great Britain relative to its distant possessions, and the constant call on the American navy to uphold the ‘Monroe Doctrine’ makes it a necessity that its navy be maintained in the strongest status possible; the following, which is applied to the British navy by an English authority, would apply to the United States.”²⁶³ Other authors espoused the U.S. link to Great Britain as being related primarily to their unique geography, in that their navies are the only way for them to interface with the rest of the world.²⁶⁴

²⁶²Colonel Sir G. S. Clarke, KCMG, FRS, “The War and its Lessons,” *Proceedings* 26, no. 93 (1900): 127.

²⁶³1LT Renato Tittino, USMC, “Early Signs of Intended Invasion,” *Proceedings* 40, no. 150 (1914): 349.

²⁶⁴See also Fiske, “Naval Power,” 713; Naval Constructor Richard D. Gatewood, USN, “Military Preparedness,” *Proceedings* 40, no. 151 (1914): 801.

With this common destiny with Great Britain, the inevitability of war, the virtue of competition, and the new need to project American power outward, the argument for further naval expansion and preparedness was naturally justified. In 1894 William Laird Clowes wrote that “Nations have not begun to lay aside their inherited rivalries; the increase of armaments goes on everywhere unchecked; and it is still part of prudence—no matter how costly and distasteful the business may be—to prepare, so far as possible, for whatever may betide.”²⁶⁵ Theodore Roosevelt wrote in 1897 that relying on international arbitration to settle disputes was naïve, and that preparation for war was the best way to prevent it. He wrote, “Preparation for war is the surest guarantee for peace. Arbitration is an excellent thing, but ultimately those who wish to see this country at peace with foreign nations will be wise if they place reliance upon a first-class fleet of first-class battle-ships, rather than on any arbitration treaty which the wit of man can devise.”²⁶⁶ Other writers also espoused this as a self-evident truth.²⁶⁷

The second major theme in American professional naval discourse was the virtue of the Navy as an institution. With America’s new destiny in the world as a naval power and a virtuous imperial power, naval leaders took great pains to argue that the Navy was

²⁶⁵William Laird Clowes, “Consideration on the Battleship in Action,” *Proceedings* 20, no. 70 (1894): 294.

²⁶⁶Theodore Roosevelt, “Washington’s Forgotten Maxim,” *Proceedings* 23, no. 83 (1897): 448.

²⁶⁷See also RADM S. B. Luce, “Our Future Navy,” *Proceedings* 15, no. 51 (1889): 544; Roosevelt, “Washington’s Forgotten Maxim,” 447, 461; CDR J. B. Murdock, USN, “Our Need of Fighting Ships,” *Proceedings* 27, no. 98 (1901): 267; CAPT F. E. Chadwick, USN, “Explanation of the Course at the Naval War College, June 4, 1901,” *Proceedings* 27, no. 98 (1901): 310; Hart, “The Monroe Doctrine in its Territorial Extent and Application,” 789; H. C. Washburn, “The War with Spain: A Study of Past Performance,” *Proceedings* 43, no. 173 (1917): 1391.

worthy and capable of bearing the burden of being America's first line of defense and for being the vehicle for delivering the blessings of American civilization to the world. This included espousing the unique danger that sailors placed themselves in, and this reinforced the notions that sailors were inherently brave. Rear Admiral Luce wrote an article in 1890 in which he contrasted the hardships endured by sailors to the relatively easy lives of soldiers, saying "during long years of peace the life of a soldier is one of comparative inactivity, and unattended by those dangers that 'try men's souls.' It is not so with the sailor. For although his country may enjoy continuous peace, yet he himself is constantly battling with the elements. His whole life may be said to be passed in confronting danger."²⁶⁸ Professor E. K. Rawson argued that the navies of the world were bulwarks of stability that safeguarded the security of the world order. He wrote that "Among the forces of civilization as it progresses with increasing purpose to the federation of the world; the naval profession has its place. It is a check upon disorderly and uncivilized outbreaks the world over; and is a representative of power no longer monarchical and despotic, but largely democratic and liberty loving."²⁶⁹ In 1916 Marine Major G. C. Thorpe asserted that the U.S. Navy specifically had "won approval in every

²⁶⁸RADM S. B. Luce, "Naval Training," *Proceedings* 16, no. 54 (1890): 369.

²⁶⁹Professor E. K. Rawson, USN, "The Naval Profession: Its History and Ideals," *Proceedings* 30, no. 110 (1904): 339.

quarter of the globe.”²⁷⁰ Other authors also lauded the virtues of navies in general and of the U.S. Navy in particular.²⁷¹

Notions of the virtuous Navy rested on the virtue of the American sailor. Naval leaders asserted that American sailors were unfailingly reliable, and had always been so. Rear Admiral Luce wrote in 1906 “the sailor has always been true and loyal.”²⁷² In a similar vein, Edgar Maclay in 1911 wrote about the difference between sailors and soldiers in their contribution to the American Revolution:

Lastly, but far from least, the loyalty of our seamen of the Revolution exerts a strong calm on the grateful record of the general histories of the United States. Not only as individuals, but collectively our sea fighters maintained a faith in the cause of freedom that forms a striking contrast to some conspicuous examples of treachery on the part of high army officers (such as Charles Lee and Benedict Arnold) and to the wholesale desertions of our troops during the encampment at Valley Forge and other winter quarters—to say nothing of the companies and even regiments that were openly enlisted under the king’s banner among the colonists.²⁷³

Therefore sailors could always be counted upon to do their duty, as opposed to the profoundly unreliable soldiers.

²⁷⁰Maj. G. C. Thorpe, USMC, “Psychology of Naval Personnel,” *Proceedings* 42, no. 161 (1916): 1.

²⁷¹See also Hon. William McAdoo, “Opening Address Delivered at the Naval War College, June 2, 1896,” *Proceedings* 22, no. 78 (1896): 429, 434-435; CAPT C. F. Goodrich, USN, “Closing Address, Session of 1897,” *Proceedings* 23, no. 84 (1897): 686; Fullinwider, “The Fleet and Its Personnel,” *Proceedings* 30, no. 109 (1904): 1; Fiske, “American Naval Policy,” *Proceedings* 31, no. 113 (1905): 2; RADM S. B. Luce, USN, “A Powerful Navy Not Dangerous to Civil Liberty,” *Proceedings* 32, no. 119 (1906): 1075; Fiske, “The Naval Profession,” *Proceedings* 33, no. 122 (1907): 476.

²⁷²Luce, “A Powerful Navy Not Dangerous to Civil Liberty,” 1070.

²⁷³Maclay, “A Sea View of Our Revolution,” 234-235.

Reinforcing this reliability, authors pointed to the recent Spanish-American War as proof of what American sailors could achieve, and proof that the historic reliability of sailors was still true in the modern U.S. Navy. In 1899 Lieutenant Carlos Gilman Calkins wrote about Dewey's achievements. He noted "the Olympia bore the flag of a leader whom all knew to be strenuous, alert, and unwavering in his resolute advance. That trust made it good to be there, and will make the memory of that morning's work a precious inheritance to be transmitted to our children and to those who may be called upon to keep alive the traditions of loyalty to the Navy and to the Great Nation which we should be proud to serve."²⁷⁴ Foreign officers shared this enthusiasm as well, as in this article printed by *Proceedings* in 1900, in which British Colonel Clarke wrote about the American naval officers at the Battle of Manila Bay. He observed "the most striking feature was the intense eagerness displayed by all the American captains to bring their ships into action . . . The navy had brilliantly discharged its task."²⁷⁵ Therefore Dewey was not the only American naval hero. All of the American captains at Manila Bay were also heroes. Therefore American naval heroes were ubiquitous.

In addition to possessing a heroic tradition untainted by treachery, the Navy was also fundamentally incapable of oppressing its people, and could only be directed against the nation's external enemies. Assistant Secretary of the Navy McAdoo wrote in 1894 "the natural suspicion against great military establishments did not apply to the Navy. Its guns are trained upon alien enemies, and have never subverted the liberty of a

²⁷⁴LT Carlos Gilman Calkins, USN, "Historical and Professional Notes on the Naval Campaign of Manila Bay in 1898," *Proceedings* 25, no. 90 (1899): 321.

²⁷⁵Clarke, "The War and Its Lessons," 137.

country.”²⁷⁶ Rear Admiral Luce also picked up this theme in 1906. He wrote, “Powerful navies are *not* dangerous to civil liberty. This may be proved by the testimony of all history, both ancient and modern.”²⁷⁷ Therefore, unlike armies, navies could not be used to oppress their populations. They could only be used to protect their people.²⁷⁸

The morally pure Navy with its unblemished record of loyalty, incapable of oppressing its own people, was also a national institution that represented all Americans. Secretary McAdoo gave a speech to the Naval War College in 1896 in which he said “I do sincerely trust that those in whose hands its administration will be entrusted in the future will continue, as their predecessors of all parties in the past have done, to treat the Navy as a national institution, far removed from all partisan and personal considerations, and entitled to a broad and catholic treatment on high national grounds.”²⁷⁹ In another address at the Naval War College in 1917 H. C. Washburn described the qualities required of a modern naval officer. He said “First of all, to be a naval officer means, I think, that you have left behind you a *local* point of view, and have acquired, perhaps unconsciously, a *national* point of view. You have ceased to think in terms of your city, your county, or your state; you now think in terms of the nation.”²⁸⁰ Therefore, not only

²⁷⁶McAdoo, “The Navy and the Nation,” 401.

²⁷⁷Luce, “A Powerful Navy Not Dangerous to Civil Liberty,” 1070.

²⁷⁸See also McAdoo, “The Navy and the Nation,” 400; McAdoo, “Opening Address Delivered at the Naval War College, June 2, 1896,” *Proceedings* 22, no. 78 (1896): 445.

²⁷⁹McAdoo, “Opening Address Delivered at the Naval War College, June 2, 1896,” 444-445.

²⁸⁰Washburn, “What it Means to be an Officer in the United States Navy To-Day,” 2897.

was the Navy a national institution by virtue of the fact that it represented all of the people, but its officers were encouraged to have a national perspective.²⁸¹ For navalists, this was not true of the Army. They believed that Army officers had a narrower perspective.

Naval leaders also argued that the American people had great affection for their Navy, which served to tie the people closer to their national institution. The American people took pride not only in the Navy's accomplishments, but also in the fact that Americans had built it. In 1900 Assistant Secretary of the Navy Frank W. Hackett argued:

The average American citizen, though he may be a little mystified at its technique, is proud of the Navy. The factory hand at the loom, the miner delving with the pick, the settler as he drives a furrow through virgin soil, each voicing that intelligence wherein lies the hope of the Republic, feels somehow that for him the Oregon in Manila bay, the Kearsarge and the Alabama (names now lined in perpetual love for the Union), mean protection and peace. He is conscious that their sleeping force warrants a surer return for his honest toil.²⁸²

Therefore the people's affection for their Navy rested on two things. One was the fact that the Navy was a proud achievement that represented the best that the American race could accomplish. The other was that the Navy was an investment that would ensure the security of the American people.

That affection was bolstered by a return on that investment during the Spanish-American War. LCDR Roy C. Smith wrote an article espousing this in 1902. He wrote

²⁸¹See also Hon. Frank W. Hackett, "An Address Delivered before the Naval War College," *Proceedings* 26, no. 95 (1900): 451; RADM Bradley A. Fiske, USN, "The Paramount Duty of the Army and Navy," *Proceedings* 40, no. 152 (1914): 1073-1074.

²⁸²Hackett, "An Address Delivered Before the Naval War College," *Proceedings* 26, 451.

“since the Spanish War, the people have appreciated the navy, and have been in favor of building it up to a point commensurate with our standing and influence as a nation. It is a rare occurrence to meet and talk with an educated man who does not express opinions of this general tenor.”²⁸³ Therefore in bringing victory to the American people, the Navy had validated the people’s affection.²⁸⁴

The virtuous Navy, crewed by loyal sailors, and popular with the American people, was also of the highest quality. As with other segments of society Navy men claimed that American ships were the envy of the world. In 1903 LCDR John H. Gibbons wrote “the foreign technical journals of to-day are full of praise for the inventive genius of our designers and builders. Where we formerly rivaled, we now excel.”²⁸⁵ American sailors were also the best in the world. LCDR W. P. Cronan wrote in 1911 of the US Navy sailors that “ours [are] fortunately of the best type; our men are young and their minds are plastic; the high degree of efficiency which can be attained within a short time, during short enlistments, is best evidenced by the notable strides which have been made

²⁸³LCDR Roy C. Smith, USN, “The Recruiting of Navy Personnel,” *Proceedings* 28, no. 101 (1902): 39.

²⁸⁴See also Hackett, “An Address Delivered before the Naval War College,” *Proceedings* 27, no. 98 (1901): 292-293, 299; MIDN Edward Ellsberg, USN, “Naval Strength in Naval Bases,” *Proceedings* 39, no. 147 (1913): 975.

²⁸⁵LCDR John H. Gibbons, USN, “The Need of a Building Program for Our Navy,” *Proceedings* 29, no. 106 (1903): 323.

in gunnery.”²⁸⁶ This also reinforced notions that Americans were natural seafarers. In a short time young inexperienced Americans could be made into effective sailors.²⁸⁷

Another virtue of the Navy was that it had recently been revitalized. While Americans were inherent masters of the seas, this had only recently been fully realized, in the formation of the “New Navy.” The “New Navy” was an oft-used term to describe the new powerful form of the institution as opposed to the older, decrepit, and inadequate “old navy.” Specific references to the “New Navy” appeared in articles by Captain William T. Sampson in 1889²⁸⁸ and by LCDR John H. Gibbons in 1903.²⁸⁹ This “New Navy” with its new modern ships was the epitome of modernity. Naval Constructor William J. Baxter wrote in 1895 that “the warship of to-day is the most wonderful product of the fertile brain of man; the skill of every art, the theory of every science, and the practice of every trade have contributed to its development, while for its efficient use a special talent of the highest order is necessary.”²⁹⁰ Therefore the “New Navy” was a

²⁸⁶Cronan, “The Fighting Edge: A Tract for the Times,” 89.

²⁸⁷See also CDR C. D. Sigsbee, USN, “Progressive Naval Seamanship,” *Proceedings* 15, no. 48 (1889): 129; Fiske, “Naval Power,” 712; H. C. Washburn, “The American Blind Spot,” *Proceedings* 43, no. 167 (1917): 41.

²⁸⁸CAPT W. T. Sampson, USN, “Outline of a Scheme for the Naval Defense of the Coast,” *Proceedings* 15, no. 49 (1889): 170.

²⁸⁹Gibbons, “The Need of a Building Program for our Navy,” 323.

²⁹⁰Naval Constructor William J. Baxter, USN, “Suggestions for Increasing the Efficiency of our New Ships,” *Proceedings* 21, no. 75 (1895): 439.

reflection of how modern the country had become, and of what American ingenuity had achieved.²⁹¹

As effective and wonderful as the “New Navy” was portrayed, professional discourse also included perceived deficiencies within their institution, and made frequent references to proposed remedies. While some articles pointed to specific technical deficiencies and deficiencies in the navy’s organization, the most consistent fear among naval writers was over the service’s personnel system. This included the Navy’s ability to recruit, train, and retain high quality individuals that would allow the Navy to fulfill its culturally constructed purpose.

The first part of this discourse about personnel involved the absolute importance of high quality sailors to the effectiveness of the Navy. While the congressional leaders argued for or against building more and bigger battleships, and newspapers predominately focused on these warships as symbols of power and modernity, naval leaders argued that the personnel issues in the Navy were equally as important as acquiring the right kinds of ships. They maintained that this issue had been ignored by policy makers. Naval Engineer F. M. Bennett wrote in 1894 “We must not forget that it takes something more than war vessels to make a navy, and that fine vessels alone do not necessarily make a fine navy. Laying aside the question of men with which to man the new fleet, which question is one of such grave importance that it should be dealt with separately, let us ask as to the fitness of the present corps of officers for the new

²⁹¹See also Sigsbee, “Progressive Naval Seamanship,” 98, 101; Assistant Engineer F. M. Bennett, USN, “Naval Reform,” *Proceedings* 20, no. 70 (1894): 251.

conditions that confront them.”²⁹² Theodore Roosevelt echoed this argument in 1897. He wrote “In building this navy we must remember two things: first, that our ships and guns should be the very best of their kind; and second, that no matter how good they are they will be useless unless the man in the conning tower and the man behind the gun are also the best of their kind.”²⁹³ W. B. Norris, an instructor at the Naval Academy, wrote in 1916 that “In the last analysis, the strength of a navy lies in its men, for superiority in this respect will mean victory more often than guns, ships, wealth, or numbers.”²⁹⁴ In all of these passages, the authors sought to remind the public that the most important determinant of the Navy’s power was the quality of the people who crewed the ships. These are only a few examples. These arguments were frequent, and fed into a larger argument over the nature of warfare, and into emerging ideas about what was needed to achieve victory in war. Obtaining the best people was vital to success, because of the moral factor in war.²⁹⁵

²⁹²Bennett, “Naval Reform,” 252.

²⁹³Roosevelt, “Washington’s Forgotten Maxim,” 456.

²⁹⁴W. B. Norris, “Leadership and Freedom,” *Proceedings* 42, no. 161 (1916): 47.

²⁹⁵See also CAPT A. T. Mahan, USN, “Address of Captain A. T. Mahan, delivered at the opening of the Fourth Session of the College, August 6, 1888,” *Proceedings* 14, no. 47 (1888): 627; Luce, “Naval Training,” 367; ENS A. P. Niblack, USN, “The Enlistment, Training, and Organization of Crews for our New Ships,” *Proceedings* 27, no. 57 (1891): 3-4; Baxter, “Suggestions for Increasing the Efficiency of Our New Ships,” 440; Reid, “A Naval Training Policy and System,” 57; CAPT Seaton Schroeder, USN, “Gleanings from the Sea of Japan,” *Proceedings* 32, no. 117 (1906): 53, 92; LCDR A. L. Key, USN, “The Alarming Condition of the Navy Personnel—Responsibility and Remedy,” *Proceedings* 32, no. 117 (1906): 299; LT H. H. Frost, USN, “The People’s Role in War,” *Proceedings* 43, no. 172 (1917): 1113-1114.

Coupled with arguments over the importance of high quality sailors were arguments about the moral factor in determining the outcome of wars. An increasingly common view in the years leading up to World War One was the belief in national will and the zeal of the people in achieving victory, for navies as well as armies. For some, the “moral factor” in naval warfare was just as important as possessing powerful battleships. The results of the Battle of Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese War seemed to bear this out. Captain Seaton Schroeder wrote in 1906 “On the memorable 28th day of May in the Strait of Tsushima, where physical and moral forces had full play, the tragedy enacted was, in its mode of enactment, in its swiftness, and in its ultimate completeness, certainly without a parallel in military history.”²⁹⁶ Lieutenant (junior grade) H. H. Frost’s article in 1916 was even more explicit about the importance of moral power. He wrote “In the end, it is the moral power of the opposing nations that decides a war and the moral powers of the armed forces that decide a campaign or battle.”²⁹⁷ Later in the same article he wrote that “War to-day is not, as it once used to be, a struggle between governments, or rulers, but is a struggle between people . . . The role of the people is . . . to inspire the personnel with this divine fighting spirit, that sacred fire, without which even the largest fighting forces, equipped with the best material, cannot accomplish great results . . . They must have the greatest national spirit.”²⁹⁸ While the power and number of battleships was

²⁹⁶Schroeder, “Gleanings from the Sea of Japan,” 47.

²⁹⁷LTJG H. H. Frost, USN, “The Moral Factor in War,” *Proceedings* 42, no. 162 (1916): 352.

²⁹⁸Frost, “The People’s Role in War,” 1113-1114.

important, they were merely one prerequisite for victory. The real determinant would be how hard the men fought, and how well trained they were to do so.²⁹⁹

While writers espoused the importance of personnel, and the importance of the moral factor in war, naval writers argued over how to optimize their own personnel system. They tried to highlight how deficient that system was, and how it might be corrected so that the Navy could acquire the right kinds of people, and could train them to a level of effectiveness and enthusiasm that would allow them to prevail when the next war came. In 1890 Lieutenant W. F. Fullum wrote that “The efficiency of these ships in battle will depend upon the organization and training of the personnel . . . and it may be well to consider the service today, particularly the enlisted man as we find him on board ship—his habits, character, and training—with a view to improvement in organization and esprit.”³⁰⁰ LT Fullum’s solution to the personnel problem, which reappeared in the coming years with increasing frequency, involved increasing the percentage of American citizens in the enlisted ranks. He wrote “to prepare the personnel of the United States Navy for war [we must] attract Americans and create a true national spirit in the service afloat.”³⁰¹ He argued “a body of intelligent Americans [will] give a far better account of themselves when war comes.”³⁰²

²⁹⁹See also Frost, “The Moral Factor in War,” 384-385.

³⁰⁰LT W. F. Fullum, USN, “The System of Naval Training and Discipline required to Promote Efficiency and attract Americans,” *Proceedings* 16, no. 55 (1890): 473.

³⁰¹*Ibid.*, 485.

³⁰²*Ibid.*, 487.

Compelling the best American citizens to enlist required making life in the Navy as appealing as life in the civilian world. In 1896 Ensign Ryland D. Tisdale wrote that “for the American Navy, inducements for enlistment must equal those for civil trades and professions; the best in the land must enlist. We do not want those who are incapable of doing anything on shore, nor those who, by reason of their unreliability, cannot keep a position on shore. Some may state that the woods are full of men willing to enlist in the Navy.”³⁰³ Reforming quality of life conditions in the Navy was necessary to compete for talent, and once the Navy was sufficiently enriched with a greater percentage of American citizens, full of national spirit and zeal, the new powerful battleships could be optimally employed and victory in the next war would be assured.³⁰⁴

While the personnel system and the ability to recruit and train its personnel was the most significant internal criticism that the Navy offered for its own reform, naval leaders also criticized American society for holding the Navy back. The Navy was a

³⁰³ENS Ryland D. Tisdale, USN, “Subject: ‘Naval Apprentices, Inducements, Enlisting, and Training. The Seaman Branch of the Navy,” *Proceedings* 22, no. 78 (1896): 268.

³⁰⁴See also Smith, “The Recruiting of Navy Personnel,” 39; Mahan, “Address of Captain A. T. Mahan, delivered at the opening of the Fourth Session of the College, August 6, 1888,” 629; Fullum, “The System of Naval Training and Discipline Required to Promote Efficiency and Attract Americans,” 473-474, 477, 483, 485; Niblack, “The Enlistment, Training, and Organization of Crews for our New Ships,” 3-4, 48; Bennett, “Naval Reform,” 252; LT William F. Fullum, USN, “The Organization, Training, and Discipline of the Navy Personnel as Viewed from the Ship,” *Proceedings* 22, no. 77 (1896): 87; Tisdale, “Subject: ‘Naval Apprentices, Inducements, Enlisting, and Training. The Seaman Branch of the Navy,” 272; LCDR John Hood, USN, “The School of the Officer,” *Proceedings* 28, no. 102 (1902): 195, 200; Reid, “A Naval Training Policy and System,” 4; CAPT A. C. Dillingham, USN, “How Shall we Induce our Men to Continue in the Navy,” *Proceedings* 35, no. 132 (1909): 1019, 1028; RADM Stephen B. Luce, USN, “The US Naval War College,” *Proceedings* 36, no. 134 (1910): 559; Washburn, “The American Blind Spot,” 1; LCDR John P. Jackson, USN, “A Plea for Universal Service,” *Proceedings* 43, no. 168 (1917): 295.

virtuous institution, primed to carry the U.S. to its new destiny by projecting its power abroad, but naval officers and policy makers saw themselves as hobbled by the forces within their society that were acting against them. These were uncertain times, in an increasingly unstable international political environment, and in the process of trying to prepare themselves for war naval leaders looked around at what they saw as the widespread complacency and ignorance of the American people and their government.

The first culprit was the government, which was retarding the forward progress of the Navy by refusing to listen to the wise counsel of naval officers. Instead of steady preparations for war, Rear Admiral Luce argued that preparations were sporadic, and only undertaken at the last possible moment. He wrote in 1888 “the settled policy of our national legislature, covered by a period of over a century, shows that war must be imminent and immediate before preparations to meet it are undertaken.”³⁰⁵ Later in the same article he accused the political class of petty jealousy of the military, and that this was the reason for their intransigence in adopting sound naval policies. He wrote “there should be taken into account the great jealousy of the military and naval classes which has from time immemorial existed in the Anglo-Saxon race on the part of the civil authorities.”³⁰⁶ Commander Bradley A. Fiske argued in 1906 that the government should give greater control of the Navy to naval officers, because of the ignorance of the civilian government of naval matters, and that their refusal to do so was undercutting the effectiveness of the Navy. He wrote “the refusal of the civil authorities to give the navy

³⁰⁵RADM S. B. Luce, USN, “Annual Address, 1888,” *Proceedings* 14, no. 44 (1888): 8.

³⁰⁶RADM S. B. Luce, USN, “Naval Administration,” *Proceedings* 14, no. 46 (1888): 562.

the responsibility and authority which it needs, to be efficient, and the fact that the navy needs them even more than the army does, are both due to the same cause: the non-acquaintance of civilians with naval conditions.”³⁰⁷

While the government was ignorant of naval matters, the greater American public was complacent about their own security. Naval leaders ascribed to them a peace-loving nature that prevented them from undertaking appropriate preparations in peacetime. Rear Admiral Luce described the U.S. as “a great country placidly awaiting some national disaster to generate its mighty forces.”³⁰⁸ Ensign Ryland Tisdale in 1896 described the U.S. as “a peace-loving country, and her people are domestic; not yet fully developed.”³⁰⁹ Rear Admiral Luce returned to this theme again in 1904, and also railed against pacifists, claiming that they were naïve. He wrote:

The United States are known of all the world to be wanting in the disposition to utilize their abundant resources for military purposes—not with a view to conquest, but even for the defenses suggested by the most ordinary prudence. Ready as they are to wage a commercial warfare, our people close their eyes to the possibilities of an actual collision of arms. There are false prophets who proclaim that war is to be abolished and that preparation for war is a useless extravagancy; who offer a cheap nostrum for a dreadful disease.³¹⁰

Therefore “false prophets” who refused to see the truth about human nature were leading the American people astray. This prevented the American people from reaching their full potential, and from fully realizing the importance of the Navy and taking appropriate

³⁰⁷CDR Bradley A. Fiske, USN, “The Civil and the Military Authority,” *Proceedings* 32, no. 117 (1906): 129. See also Luce, “Annual Address, 1888,” 3-4.

³⁰⁸Luce, “Our Future Navy,” 552.

³⁰⁹Tisdale, “Subject: ‘Naval Apprentices, Inducements, Enlisting, and Training: The Seaman Branch of the Navy,” 267.

³¹⁰Luce, “War and Its Prevention,” 622.

steps to ensure its effectiveness. Naval Constructor Richard D. Gatewood argued that it was uniquely difficult in the U.S. to obtain popular support for military preparedness, because of its unique geography, culture, and history. He wrote in 1914 “military preparedness and the direction of arms are difficult enough in every country but nowhere in the world are they more difficult than in the U.S. Our geographical position and freedom from entangling alliances have placed us in a position of such ‘splendid isolation’ that the masses of this peace-loving and peace-professing nation refuse to realize the necessity for preparedness.”³¹¹ Other authors repeatedly returned to this theme.³¹² These naval leaders saw themselves as trapped in an unfavorable cultural environment. This environment frustrated their efforts to awaken the country to its real security concerns and to take appropriate action.

Naval leaders also accused the public of suffering from the same ignorance as the politicians. Midshipman Edward Ellsberg ascribed to the population “popular ignorance of the essentials of a well-balanced navy.”³¹³ This ignorance could only be corrected

³¹¹Gatewood, “Military Preparedness,” 631.

³¹²See also Mahan, “Address of Captain A. T. Mahan, delivered at the opening of the Fourth Session of the College, August 6, 1888,” 622; Wainwright, “Our Naval Power,” 40; Fiske, “The Naval Profession,” 482; Cronan, “The Fighting Edge: A Tract for the Times,” 87-88; Cotton, “Competition vs. Character,” 132; Fiske, “The Paramount Duty of the Army and Navy,” 1073-1074; Maj. Henry C. Davis, USMC, “Some Thoughts on our Lack of a Naval Policy,” *Proceedings* 41, no. 155 (1915): 66; CDR A. W. Hinds, USN, “Peace, or War?” *Proceedings* 41, no. 159 (1915): 1409; CDR Dudley W. Knox, USN, “The General Problem of Naval Warfare,” *Proceedings* 42, no. 161 (1916): 23; Frost, “The Moral Factor in War,” 357-358; LCDR W. P. Cronan, USN, “The Greatest Need of the United States Navy: Proper Organization for the Successful Conduct of War: An Estimate of the Situation,” *Proceedings* 42, no. 164 (1916): 1145-1146; Hinds, “Military Prudence,” 1443-1444.

³¹³Ellsberg, “Naval Strength in Naval Bases,” 975.

through education. Likewise, Rear Admiral Bradley A. Fiske wrote in 1914 of the Navy's duty to educate the people. He wrote, "things military are struggling for existence. The principle that the military should be subordinate to the civil authority is being interpreted in a spirit more adverse to the military than in any other powerful country . . . On the army and navy devolves the task of keeping them in the foreground."³¹⁴ Similarly, H. C. Washburn described the "blind spot" in American society associated with necessary military preparedness, "the result of ignorance and prejudice in one particular field. Once let this ignorance and this prejudice be overcome by knowledge, and it is unthinkable that American intelligence will not be brought to bear upon our military and naval affairs."³¹⁵ This represented a call to arms, both in recognition of American popular ignorance and the duty of the naval establishment to educate the people.³¹⁶

Part of educating the public involved breaking them out of their sense of complacency, and the greatest source of that complacency was the crushing victory in the Spanish-American War. In the immediate aftermath of the war, naval leaders used the Spanish defeat to demonstrate what happened to a country when it neglected its navy. In 1899 one naval officer wrote that "If the Spanish government had not been so blinded, and had had eyes for what was going on in their immediate vicinity and in the country of their powerful neighbors during the last few years, they could not have hesitated to set aside their pride, and even to give up their right to colonies."³¹⁷ The American victories

³¹⁴Fiske, "The Paramount Duty of the Army and Navy," 1073.

³¹⁵Washburn, "The American Blind Spot," 41.

³¹⁶See also Jackson, "A Plea for Universal Service," 295.

³¹⁷CDR J---, "Sketches from the Spanish-American War," 13-14.

in that war were celebrated as proof of American naval power. This had been intentionally done by politicians, naval leaders, and journalists to get the American people excited about their “New Navy,” but in the years after the Spanish-American War popular memory of the battles had to be deconstructed in order to compel the people to continue to take military preparedness more seriously. This involved arguing that the Americans had not been adequately prepared for the Spanish-American War, and had only won through luck. H. C. Washburn wrote in 1917 that:

If the United States had lost the war with Spain, the American people would have been aroused for the past 18 years to the prime importance of thoroughgoing military preparedness. Conversely, it was the apparent ease, the quickness, and the completeness of our victory in 1898 which constituted, and still constitutes, by far the most important cause of all opposition to greater measures of preparedness . . . The American people have never even begun to realize how *lucky* they were to *escape the penalty of unpreparedness* in 1898. To that lucky escape—misunderstood as the natural triumph of a superior people—may be attributed the fact that the United States learned no serious lessons from the conflict with Spain, and that even the greatest war in history has hardly sufficed to awaken the average American citizen to the need of preparedness of a kind and an extent which he can hardly comprehend.³¹⁸

Therefore the Americans risked being defeated by their own success. This reinterpretation of the great American victories constituted an example of attempts by naval leaders to educate the American public on the dangers that they faced.³¹⁹

In seeing the environment in which they found themselves, with a peace loving and complacent population, difficult and ignorant political leaders, and dangerous pacifist movements, the rapid change of the period made naval leaders uneasy, and this rapid

³¹⁸Washburn, “The War with Spain, A Study of Past Performance,” 1391.

³¹⁹See also Richardson Clover, “Views of Admiral Cervera Regarding the Spanish Navy in the Last War,” *Proceedings* 24, no. 88 (1898): 748; Washburn, “The War with Spain: A Study of Past Performance,” 1415-1416.

change created a sense of uncertainty about the future. All of their theories about modern naval warfare were untested. From their perspective, this heightened the danger of complacency in the population, and was a reason for ever-greater preparedness to deal with unforeseen contingencies. Language that highlighted this sense of unease and uncertainty due to bewildering rapid change was common throughout the period. In 1894 William Laird Clowes wrote about the theoretical nature of modern naval war. He wrote, “most of the conditions which must regulate the conduct of the modern battleship in action have yet to be discovered. We have, at present, very little save speculation of a more or less academic kind to aid us in arriving at any definite conclusions as to what manner of thing the next fleet action will be.”³²⁰ The following year Lieutenant Commander Richard Wainwright wrote that “the [technological] improvements now came so rapidly, and the differences between the new and the old weapons became so great that the minds of naval men were unsettled.”³²¹ Commander Bradley A. Fiske echoed these sentiments in 1906 when he asserted, “naval conditions are changing with such dizzying rapidity.”³²² The following year he returned to this theme, and wrote that the Navy had “endured a succession of changes so great as to bewilder the understanding, greater than any other profession has endured.”³²³ This uncertainty only compounded the problems associated with breaking the American people out of their complacency,

³²⁰Clowes, “Consideration on the Battleship in Action,” 293.

³²¹LCDR Richard Wainwright, USN, “Tactical Problems in Naval Warfare,” *Proceedings* 21, no. 74 (1895): 218.

³²²Fiske, “The Civil and the Military Authority,” 129.

³²³Fiske, “The Naval Profession,” 476.

because naval professionals were themselves not sure about what the next war would bring. Other authors also echoed these sentiments.³²⁴

Professional discourse by naval leaders and policy makers throughout this period revealed a complex and often contradictory self-conception about their institution. The Navy was a celebrated source of national pride, morally pure and capable of only being directed against the nation's enemies. It was the vehicle by which the American people would achieve their rightful place on the world stage. It would provide an outlet for American power and allow them to share the gifts of American civilization with the rest of the uncivilized world, and in so doing protect the uncivilized world from the despotic domination of the Europeans. But, for all its virtue, the Navy was struggling to achieve its full potential, in attracting the right people to make it effective, and fighting its own countrymen for the resources it needed to protect them. Naval leaders also looked at the future with great uncertainty, which only served to heighten the urgency with which they sought ever-greater preparedness. In this way the U.S. Navy was aligned with the experience of the Royal Navy in Britain. Sharing a common (perceived) racial heritage, they both saw themselves as enlightened institutions that served as a check on forces of degeneracy and instability. Unlike the British, the American Navy was striking out in new directions, instead of trying to hold onto its existing position of dominance. This was a new unprecedented phase of existence for the U.S. Navy, fueled by the intellectual

³²⁴See also LT D. H. Mahan, "Three Considered as a Tactical Unit," *Proceedings* 14, no. 45 (1888): 343; LT Richard Wainwright, USN, "Fleet Tactics," *Proceedings* 16, no. 52 (1890): 65; Baxter, "Suggestions for Increasing the Efficiency of our New Ships," 448; CDR Bradley A. Fiske, USN, "Why Togo Won," *Proceedings* 31, no. 116 (1905): 809.

trends of the *fin de siècle* period, and especially the ideas of Mahan. It had remade itself in a new modern way, on an unprecedented scale and with unprecedented ambition.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that the discourse surrounding the Navy in the *fin de siècle* period in the U.S. provides a cultural portrait that links the American experience to the European one, while still retaining uniquely American characteristics. This cultural portrait shows how the Americans saw themselves. Many at the time believed that with the closure of the frontier in 1893, the rise in immigration, the increasingly frequent social disruptions associated with labor strikes and economic depressions, and concerns about racial degeneracy were hobbling the American people and keeping them from realizing their true potential. The “New Navy” and America’s new virtuous imperialism associated with it provided a relief valve for the bottled-up potential of American power.

In addition to its practical value, the Navy was an important cultural institution. It played into American conceptions of its Anglo-Saxon heritage, by aligning the Americans to the British and their all-powerful navy. It provided a promise of future economic prosperity, by safeguarding trade and ensuring access to overseas markets. It also provided an archetype of the American race for the rest of American society to emulate. Having inherited a distrust of armies as potentially oppressive institutions from the British, the Americans saw their Navy as their only purely defensive arm, and therefore the one most worthy of their praise and investment. It was a national institution, not beholden to regional interests, sectarianism, or partisanship. It represented the whole society, and it represented the highest state of being that the American people could achieve.

This cultural portrait of America's greatest defensive institution is significant for four reasons. First, it provides an example of popular discourse driving, or at least enabling, government action. Rallying public support for the Navy enabled the American government to strike out in unprecedented directions. The promise of Manifest Destiny had previously been associated with the abundant wealth and opportunity of westward expansion across the American continent. The presence of the open frontier had given the American people a sense that their world was infinite, and this became an important, romantic part of the American identity. With the closure of the western frontier, the high seas became the new frontier. This new frontier would fulfill the same function as the old frontier, in that it would ensure continued American prosperity. Rallying around the Navy enabled this shift in foreign policy, because the Navy was an institution that the people could identify with and take pride in.

Second, because this study of the Navy is associated with professional, popular, and elite discourse, it lacks the simple, dry quality of a mere retelling of the evolution of naval and foreign policy. This portrait reveals what people "felt" about their Navy, not simply what policy makers chose to do with it. This serves to connect the events of the period more closely with the population as a whole, rather than a narrow study of political elites and pressure groups.

Third, it links the American naval expansion and modernization to the Anglo-German naval arms race, which provides a unique perspective on the period leading up to World War One. While the Anglo-German naval arms race is typically treated as an isolated event, this study shows that the forces driving Britain and Germany into opposing alliances were more widespread, and at least in the American case had some

similar effects. The only reason that the Americans were not exclusively polarized against another power before World War One was that there was no sufficiently credible enemy for them to polarize against. While concern over the rise of Japan was certainly present in American discourse, this apprehension was not at the same level as Britain's concern over the rise of Germany, due to America's geographic isolation. The simplest way to conceptualize the American experience is to treat it as a hybrid of the British and German cases. Like the British, the "naturally" Anglo-Saxon American navalists saw naval power as their birthright, and saw their capacity for good government as a moral justification for their own unique form of virtuous imperialism. Like the Germans, the Americans saw themselves as possessing vast untapped potential, and also like the Germans, Americans sought to acquire their "place in the sun." This involved projecting their power overseas.

The fourth reason is that this period represents an important watershed in American history. The *fin de siècle* period marked the origins of American global power, and aspects of the cultural portrait constructed in this thesis are still present today. Today American global dominance is seen as "natural," and the American willingness to project its benevolent power outward for the benefit of others is a cornerstone of American foreign policy. Recent practical difficulties in Iraq and Afghanistan notwithstanding, the mainstream view of many Americans is that the U.S. has a duty to keep the peace around the world, to export democracy and liberal capitalism, and to contain or overthrow despotism. While the American people have long since shed their fear of armies as oppressive institutions, and now hold their Army in the same high regard as the other branches of their military, the notion of the U.S. Navy as a national institution and a

cultural artifact have not changed significantly. While it now dwarfs all other navies in size and sophistication, the way that the U.S. Navy brands itself today would be familiar to Stephen Luce, Theodore Roosevelt, and Bradley Fiske. Calling itself “A Global Force for Good,” the Navy still portrays itself as a bastion of stability, a guardian of world order, and an institution that safeguards American interests around the world.

In one sense, the modern U.S. Navy was born in 1883, with appropriations for the first modern armored warships. In another, more fundamental sense, the modern U.S. Navy was born when Americans shifted their view of their proper role in the world. The cultural shift in attitudes toward the Navy, and the new narrative written by journalists, politicians, and naval officers to sell that “New Navy” to the American people, inform much of how the Navy sees itself today, and also how the American people see it. This was not a gradual evolution in perception. It was a revolution, started by Frederick Jackson Turner, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Stephen B. Luce, Theodore Roosevelt, and many others of that generation, and that revolution has done a great deal to shape the twentieth century and has contributed to the realization of American hegemony.

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