WINNING SILVER: CONTINENTAL GREAT POWERS AND NAVAL DEVELOPMENT

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A DISSERTATION

in

Political Science

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2020

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To Dad and Mom and Lynn

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

"Oh, you owe me a lot."
—Avery Mark Goldstein C'76 GEd'76, 2015

"Again, Brian: no!"
—Michael Horowitz, 2016

"I would also prefer that your theoretical discussion offer at least some accuracy."
—Alexander Richard Weisiger, 2017

This dissertation has been four years in the making, and the path would have taken even longer and been more tortuous were it not for the support of many. My professors and classmates have improved this work immeasurably through their constructive criticism and encouragement; a good many institutions and people supported conference presentations and research endeavors; and family and friends have proved an enduring harbor in which I have found comfort and restoration. Together, they have formed a sturdy keel. The fact that I write this in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic—self-isolated for so long that I can empathize with Robinson Crusoe—hammers home the gratitude I feel for others.

I thank my dissertation committee, particularly its chair and my dissertation supervisor, Avery Goldstein. Before accepting the University of Pennsylvania's offer of admission, I called my undergraduate major advisor, who had once been Avery's colleague, and asked him to tell me of the venerable sage of Stiteler, whose lunches are spartan. My undergraduate advisor said to me, "Brian, I think you're a good guy. And I'd like to think that I'm a good guy too. But Avery? Avery's a *great* guy." Clearly, I had an offer I could not refuse.

For six years, the David M. Knott Professor of Global Politics and International Relations has patiently put up with my half-baked ideas, silly questions, wordy writing, and assorted Philadelphia Phillies Baseball Club monthly wall calendars, pocket schedules, and promotional giveaway items. In return, Avery has seen fit to offer me nothing but sound advice, helpful criticisms, and much-needed encouragement, all dispensed with good humor and his trademark pessimism; for example, when I asked whether it would be a bad idea or a terrible idea to attend a San Francisco 49ers-Philadelphia Eagles game at Lincoln Financial Field alone and in 49ers apparel, Avery reassured me, "You'll be fine . . . but things do happen." His guidance for over one-half decade is a debt I cannot begin to repay, but it is a debt I am privileged to owe.

I thank Michael C. Horowitz and Alex Weisiger. Mike's sharp questions have repeatedly made me think through and re-think assumptions in my own logic and to defend my arguments as robustly as I could. In particular, his incisive comments at the beginning of this journey forced me to come to grips with some very basic issues that helped me clarify what I was arguing and, just as importantly, what I was not arguing. The foundation of this dissertation would be fatally cracked without Mike. It was also interesting to hear his frequent discourses on American sport. Watching TD12 lead Celtic to all those Stanley Cups at Fenway Pahk must have been fun, though I have always preferred a day (or five) of cricket myself. I am grateful for Mike's time, especially given his commitments at Perry World House (Pennsylvania's hub for *global* engagement!).

Alex's attention to detail on drafts improved this dissertation in many small ways that might not appear obvious in the final product. By teasing out all the imperfections in

logic and writing, he has helped this dissertation look and read a lot more smoothly and logically than it otherwise would have. His passion for comprehensive and well-rounded research can be seen in his suggestion that I clarify some 1930s German views on naval development, which led me to amass a stack of Hitler biographies, *Mein Kampf*, and its sequel on my desk, which, in turn, led alarmed officemates to inquire about my wellbeing. I am grateful for Alex's time, especially given his commitments as our graduate group chair.

In addition to my dissertation committee, other institutions and persons have helped on various occasions. I thank Larrie D. Ferreiro for his comments and Evan Wilson for his edits on the France chapter. I thank Loren Charles Goldman for treating me to lunch before accompanying me to the Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center to collect the aforementioned copy of *Mein Kampf*, serving as a character witness on my behalf to any inquisitive staff. I thank Andrew Lambert for electronically sharing parts of his book during this pandemic, when I have been unable to access my own copy on campus. I thank Nicholas Okrent, Lauris Olson C'79 G'85, and Brian T. Vivier for putting up with all my library purchase requests and for graciously thinking of me when they received new books. I thank Isabel María Perera G'14 Gr'18 for archival and France research advice over afternoon tea and for inviting me to join her dissertation writing group. I thank Mikhail Alekseyevich Strokan G'19 and the Strokan family for a tour of St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Cathedral and its exhibit on the Imperial Russian Navy's relationship with Philadelphia. I thank William Curti Wohlforth for chatting with me

about Russian and Soviet naval development in the midst of his own family time. I thank my home Graduate Group in Political Science for funding me in the 2019 Fall Term.

For their attention and comments on various parts of the dissertation, I thank participants at a 2018 Christopher H. Browne Center for International Politics Brown(e) Bag Lunch, the 2018 Yale University Naval History Conference (especially John F. Beeler), a 2019 Brown(e) Bag Lunch, the 2019 International Studies Association Annual Convention, the 2019 Cornell University Interdisciplinary Graduate Workshop on Peace and Conflict, and the 2019 United States Naval Academy McMullen Naval History Symposium. I thank the Browne Center and the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly for funding conference participation. With all the help that I have received, any remaining errors in the dissertation are my sole responsibility.

Life around and parallel to dissertation research and writing is immeasurably enriched by people who understand the process; who offer friendship, sumptuous viands, and ambrosial beverages; and who help leaven the bread of life with good cheer and company. I thank my fellow (Game) Theory Brothers, David Piereduardo Ragazzoni and Nathaniel Abraham Stanley Shils G'16. I simply do not have the words to express my gratitude to them. That our friendship has been renewed across two or three different cities (sometimes spanning ten time zones) on a daily basis for five years running is nothing short of extraordinary. The Gran Caffè L'Aquila and my kippa collection are just two tangible reminders of a triumvirate that transcends space, time, and . . . uh . . . politics!

I thank cohort-mates Lt. Col. Keith Lambert Carter USA Gr'19 and the Carter family, Christopher Chiego Gr'20, and Eunji Kim WG'17 Gr'19. Keith is a good man and a badass, and the fact that he could only stay so long before duty called makes me cherish his time here all the more. His family's generosity in repeatedly opening its home to me and classmates was deeply appreciated; I miss the barbecues. Chris has been an intellectual sounding board as we have navigated academia alongside each other. I have enjoyed so many drinks, dinners, and conversations with him over the years that it would be tedious to list them all; I am simply glad that there will be more. Eunji's homemade bulgogi was always welcome; indeed, generosity is one of her hallmarks. I stand in awe of what she has accomplished. These cohort-mates have made the doctoral odyssey far more enjoyable than it otherwise would have been.

I thank Hyun-Binn Cho Gr'18. Whether it be taking the lead to organize the world's premier China and International Relations graduate student workshop, or advising us younger ones on how to navigate the doctoral program, or treating me to an English breakfast at the Dandelion, he has been minister-mentor to me and countless others. Binn is the consummate gentleman and reminds us that the British remain, simply put, a cut above.

I thank Yaniv Gal, Shira Eini Pindyck, and Vashti. Vini has shown that vegan food does not have to taste like regret—in fact, his creations are downright delicious. He is not quite turning water into wine, but it is still impressive. I got to know Vini through his obsession with squirrels, and the furry creature is an apt representation of the man: alert and friendly, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, and intimately familiar with man-made

physical infrastructure. Shira is someone whose personality exudes warmth and welcome; her penetrating insights in the academic halls and her conviviality outside of work make her a formidable colleague and a heartening friend. Vashti reigns with an air of nobility to which pretenders can only aspire. A just sovereign, she inspires courage in the righteous and instills fear in the wicked. And she proves Lipset right on the enduring power of monarchy.

I thank Gregory Vincent Koutnik G'17 for endlessly enjoyable company, a shared love of tasty victuals, and a mutual passion for sports. The wide-ranging nature of our conversations is a testament to his intellect, and his love of barbecue is a testament to his taste. He is simply someone fun to be around. I also thank him for letting me share his office the summer I was studying for comprehensive examinations. Greg knows who Aristotle is.

I thank Rachel Ann Hulvey, Siyao Li, James Evans Morone Gr'20, Daniel Joseph O'Brien and Kaite Yang, William Barry Piekos, Mikhail, Scott Caldwell Wingo, Robinson Woodward-Burns G'14 Gr'17, and sundry officemates. It would be impossible for me to reminisce of Pennsylvania without thinking of them too. They are why I look back on my time here with such fondness. I thank the City of New York, to which I have repeatedly repaired for succor. How fortunate am I to live so close to a first-class city! I look forward to reveling in its unending charms once again.

I have been the beneficiary of many kindnesses. I thank Andrew Paul Barnard and Heidi Kathleen Norton GEng'17 for graciously hosting me when I visited Pennsylvania as an admitted applicant; Gemma Dipoppa, for expertly advising on merchants to

patronize at the Italian Market; Matthew Stephen Levendusky, for sharing his knowledge of local boulangeries and pâtisseries, and for shepherding my cohort through the Derek Zoolander Center for Kids Who Can't Read Good; Siyao, for fetching a change of clothes from my office after my horse deliberately bucked me off into the mud; Max Zeldes Margulies Gr'18, for getting me a bottle of Brendan O'Leary's favorite scotch while on holiday in the United Kingdom; Elizabeth Anne Norton, for appointing me a honorary political theorist; Brendan, for recommending the aforementioned scotch in the first place; Isabel, for interrupting dissertation research while in France to traipse through La Grande Épicerie to find Maison Dutriez jam to bring back for me; . . . alas, for the sake of space, I must stop here, but I thank everyone for their generosity over the years.

I thank my family. Their steadfast and unconditional love and support has sustained me through all my endeavors, and my sister's presence here for my last year has proved a wonderful way to conclude my Pennsylvania career. I hope I have made them proud. Finally, I thank God: non mihi, Domine, non mihi, sed nomini tuo da gloriam.

ABSTRACT

WINNING SILVER: CONTINENTAL GREAT POWERS AND NAVAL DEVELOPMENT

Brian C. Chao

Avery Goldstein

In the realm of geopolitics, one major question that preoccupies scholars and policymakers alike is whether China will surpass or challenge US domination of the international system; crucial to this discussion is the role of China's developing navy. However, when one looks at the history of continental great-power naval development (a process called hybridization), one sees different outcomes. What explains the variation in outcome of continental great-power hybridization, and what are the lessons for international politics? I argue that two factors explain where a continental great power's attempt at hybridization will fall on the success-failure spectrum: *investment persistence* and *threat diffusion*. Investment persistence is the sustained financial support and political will to engage in naval development, despite perennial landward security challenges that threaten diversion of attention and resources to the army. Threat diffusion is the deployment of one's navy to places or for purposes that do not antagonize the dominant naval power. When a continental great power engages in both investment persistence and threat diffusion, it is more likely to not only build a strong navy, but to be able to use that navy to execute policy objectives. Through archival and historiographical research of France, Germany, Imperial Russia, and the Soviet Union, I show how investment persistence and threat diffusion explain the varying degrees of success in continental great-power hybridization, and how such a combination could help China

build a navy without irreparably damaging its relationship with the United States this century.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

> There is every reason to regard as fundamental throughout history the opposition of land and sea, of continental power and seafaring power.
>
> —Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*

For much of human civilization, our species has concerned itself with the exercise of temporal power in two realms: on land and at sea. The simultaneous possession of military power in both domains—in the form of one of the world's strongest armies and one of the world's strongest navies—is what I call *hybridity*, and the process by which it is achieved is *hybridization*. In the fulsome annals of history, however, the record of great powers that have held magisterial sway over both environments simultaneously—for on great powers only is this plausibility even bestowed—is a miserable one: some have tried, few have succeeded, and many have never bothered with the attempt. The few successes have tended to be naval great powers whose geographic isolation and domestic unity allow them to devote time and resources to army development. The perceived failures, on the other hand, tend to be continental great powers, whose attempts to hybridize (i.e., simultaneously become naval powers) have occurred with varying levels of persistence and met with varying degrees of success. Yet the causes of these variations are seen through a glass darkly and remain understudied, and failure has not stopped other continental great powers from trying. What explains a continental great power's likelihood of becoming a hybrid great power?

I propose a theory of continental great-power military hybridization. I argue that where a continental great power's hybridization attempt falls on the success-failure spectrum will depend primarily on two factors: investment persistence (continued support for naval development despite perennial landward security challenges) and threat diffusion (deployment of naval power to places or for purposes that do not antagonize the dominant naval power). This dissertation's case studies from 1801 to the present show that the combination of investment persistence and threat diffusion is more likely to lead to a continental great power possessing a strong navy and that, without both, the hybridization attempt is more likely to fail.

In Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson's 2010 *International Security* article on balancing against continental and naval powers, the authors point out, "This raises the interesting question about the conditions under which states develop war-making capabilities both on land and at sea, how they prioritize their efforts, and whether other great powers feel most threatened by the leading state's land power, sea power, or their combination."[1] Levy and Thompson do not consider the point again. This footnote buried in the middle of their 37-page paper was the seed from which this project germinated. In the pages ahead, I explain hybridization's importance, review existing work, lay out my theory in greater detail, define and explain important concepts, and discuss my research design and case studies.

1. Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea: Do States Ally against the Leading Global Power?" *International Security* 35, no. 1 (Summer 2010): 26n58.

The Importance of Hybridization and Naval Power

In describing the characteristics of the ideal city-state, Aristotle argues, "A certain amount of naval power is obviously a great advantage. A city must not only be formidable to its own citizens and to certain of its neighbours, but must also be in a position to assist them by sea as well as by land."[2] How much more so for a great power, whose ability to employ particular types of military force to defend national security, execute foreign policy, and effect grand strategy is certainly no trivial matter. The (attempted) fulfillment of these objectives has often led to momentous clashes with other great powers that have divergent interests, clashes that can result in various great powers' creation or destruction. The urge of both continental and naval powers to hybridize has had profound consequences for world history. It has not only been the cause of great conflicts; its manifestation in the form of armies and navies has shaped the outcomes of those conflicts, as great powers have used the new military tools they have built to better combat their adversaries.

Even a brief tour of history reveals hybridization's importance. Pre-Aristotelian Athens asserted itself most vigorously when it complemented its superior navy with an army, cowing many other Greek city-states into submission and going so far as to colonize the southern Italian peninsula, before its hubris brought about its humbling. Ancient Rome's first step in establishing suzerainty over the Mediterranean basin came after its military, exemplified in a formidable army, built a navy to challenge maritime

2. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1327a40-1327b4.

Carthage. Only after destroying Carthage both on land and at sea did Rome then enjoy the luxury of turning its attention to empire-building farther afield.

Examples are not limited to the days of antiquity. The Mongol khans of the world's largest contiguous empire—and commanders of one of the most feared and (in)famous armies in history—ordered the construction of massive navies to subjugate the Japanese islands, failing twice in eight years, thanks to the kamikaze. These failed invasions put a limit on Mongol China's expansion and all but enshrined Japanese independence in the centuries to come. In the West, Imperial Spain's attempt at using land power and naval power as a one-two punch against Elizabethan England ended in disaster, setting the stage for England's eventual ascension in world politics. In centuries closer to our own, Germany sought a place in the sun both through and for its military hybridization, only to be broken twice by multinational force, and Japan's hybridization in Asia mired it in ultimately disastrous conflicts against multiple great powers in multiple directions.

Understanding how continental great powers in particular arrive at different points on the hybridization success-failure spectrum is essential to our understanding of world politics of the past and to our analyses of possible futures. China is the most obvious example today of a continental great power whose hybridization could reshape the international order as we know it, and India is also suggested as a potential hybridizer, if lagging China both temporally and in global impact. Even Russia is supposed in some circles to be resurgent. What these countries' actions portend for the status quo—US

supremacy in both land and naval warfare—is nothing short of epochal. At some point this century, the world may see an inflection point at which US global supremacy either inexorably declines in the face of rivals or is rejuvenated, turning rivals into partners or footstools. How that inflection point tilts will depend heavily on the military tools at each great power's disposal.

But as consequential as hybridization has been to foreign affairs, its importance is not limited to the international system. Why and how a great power succeeds or fails to hybridize depend in part on domestic factors as well. Hybridization is neither easy nor simple, neither quick nor trivial. It requires political commitment and financial investment, and it is essentially a question of strategic decision-making: what is the country's place in the world? How does a country think and plan responses to external opportunities and threats?

Understanding how it is that states make decisions regarding hybridization sheds light on our understanding of state decision-making and behavior as they relate to issues of war and peace. If domestic politics heavily influence states' foreign policies, then decisions such as hybridization should be the outward manifestation of internal machinations and mechanisms. Looking at the process of hybridization allows us to see how political consensus is achieved or, if it is not, how particular interests can assert themselves to advance parochial goals that result in substantive changes to military force structure and foreign policy. It also permits us to examine the interaction between

external and internal influences of governmental decision-making and if or how domestic constituencies can use external conditions to alter the forms of state power.

Hybridization is thus important for understanding the international system, the inner workings of the state, and the interaction between these two realms. Hybridization has arguably shaped the present international system into what it is, just as hybridization in previous centuries shaped the international orders of those eras. Hybridization also offers another angle from which one can examine a state's policymaking and strategic decision-making, as well as how the external environment and intragovernmental politics react to each other to create new policies consequential to that state's foreign relations and domestic politics. Hybridization affects all these politically salient and weighty issues, and merits examination.

As the historical examples above suggest, naval power is an ancient military weapon. Before proceeding further, it is worth considering whether more recent technologies have superseded or defeated it; in other words, is naval power still worth studying? Naval power remains a remarkably durable and flexible tool of state power: a naval force can loiter just off the horizon in international waters, an imminent threat of force that is not actually realized; it can stay on station for long periods of time, while not violating any state's sovereignty.[3] A blue-water navy, by definition, is self-reliant for both provisions and defense, requiring only minimal land support. Naval power combines

3. See Larissa Forster, *Influence without Boots on the Ground: Seaborne Crisis Response*, Newport Paper 39 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), https://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/63a90e67-8a57-40d2-ad82-ba29983bc318/NP_39-Web.pdf.

endurance, flexibility, and self-reliance to a degree that remains unmatched by any other manifestation of military power.

One may consider the role of air power, including missile technology. The argument that air power has rendered naval power obsolete is of a distinguished heritage: South African Gen. Jan Smuts argued a century ago that aerial operations would become the "principal operations of war, to which the older forms of military [i.e., land] and naval questions may become secondary and subordinate."[4] The argument of today's air power advocates is essentially the same. However, while air power may be quick, it is also temporary. Aircraft cannot stay in the air for months at a time; they must return to base to be refueled. Their pilots, usually operating singly or in pairs, suffer from the fatigue that plagues every human being. Air power requires bases from which to project, but bases are immobile and require great geographic distribution for expedient global air support; furthermore, air power can be hampered by foreign denial of overflight rights.

Missiles, if targeted accurately, may be able to disable ships and, indeed, much has been made of China's DF-21D "carrier killer" anti-ship ballistic missile. But, here again, the threat is overdrawn: highly-precise and continuously updated information must flow through a complicated chain of communication in real time for such a missile to even have a chance of hitting a naval vessel—and this difficulty arises only after the adversary has found the target, which could be a relatively minute ship in a very large

4. Quoted in Neville Jones, *The Origins of Strategic Bombing* (London: William Kimber, 1973), 136.

ocean.[5] Furthermore, navies have known of these threats for years and have built robust anti-missile defenses to combat such a deadly threat.

If there is a military technology that ought to render a navy (or any conventional military force) as trifling, it ought to be nuclear weapons. If a state has nuclear weapons, why would it bother to possess any other type of military force? Nuclear weapons are a state's guardian angels, guarantors of existential security. Yet, below the nuclear threshold, there is much geopolitics to conduct, politics that do not rise to the level of existential threat and for which nuclear weapons would be an unbelievable tool of statecraft. Conventional force, however, is far more readily accepted as a credible threat in circumstances short of national extinction. By and large, nuclear force is a reinforcement of or a complement to, not a replacement for, conventional force.[6]

Cyberwarfare is a new and developing field, and it is certainly possible that its evolution in future may hold tremendous consequences for the utility of naval power. For the present, it is enough to say here that its efficacy and political utility may be exaggerated.[7] It will be used by and against navies, but that is far from saying that it will defeat or replace naval power. When one considers naval aviation, sea-launched missiles

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5. See Otto Kreisher, "China's Carrier Killer: Threats and Theatrics," *Air Force Magazine*, December 2013, 44-47, https://www.airforcemag.com/PDF/MagazineArchive/Documents/2013/December%202013/1213china.pdf.

6. Tactical nuclear weapons clearly do not compensate for armies (land warfare being the context in which they have usually been discussed) and face equally daunting operational challenges if applied to naval warfare. For a discussion of the Cold War debate over the feasibility of using tactical nuclear weapons, see Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 101-5.

7. Erik Gartzke, "The Myth of Cyberwar: Bringing War in Cyberspace Back Down to Earth," *International Security* 38, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 41-73; and Maj. R. T. Stimpson, "Cyberwarfare Will Not Replace Conventional Warfare" (paper written for JCSP 41: Exercise *Solo Flight* at the Canadian Forces College, 2015), https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/317/305/stimpson.pdf.

(including ballistic), and naval use of cyberweapons, one sees very clearly that, far from being replaced or defeated by new technologies, naval power has the protean ability to adapt those very technologies to its own purposes and, rather than becoming out of date or ineffective, emerges more powerful, relevant, and useful than ever.

Literature Review

Attempts to understand hybrid powers have not gotten very far—none of the schools of thought to be discussed below explicitly treats military hybridization. The naval history literature does not admit the existence of military hybrids to begin with. Studies of great powers couched in the major International Relations (IR) theories, as well as works on domestic politics, all have something to offer by inference. Scholarship has tended to focus on great-power capabilities in aggregate, and analysis of geographically related factors have long fallen out of favor.

The importance of geography and geographically defined variables in political science generally and IR specifically has ebbed and flowed over the decades: geography enjoyed eminence in the early twentieth century, before declining sharply after World War II. While it has since seen a limited resurgence, overall, scholarly considerations of geography's role in framing state military behavior in world politics is neither prominent nor consistent. This is not to say that geopolitics has somehow disappeared from research programs; that is manifestly not the case. But the consideration of geography and related variables as important factors in international politics is certainly not given the priority it once was.

This decline in emphasis is due to a number of reasons: first, H. J. Mackinder's famous heartland thesis can be interpreted as giving geography a deterministic hue.[8] Second, it has become fashionable to dismiss geography because of advances in technology (such as those discussed above) and because of globalization, which is said to diminish the importance of control of specific geographic spaces.[9] I would argue that these assumptions actually indicate geography's continued and real importance. The very increase in connectedness today means that geographic spaces and the actors who control them are even more important than otherwise, for what happens in one space can now affect more places more quickly, in a more consequential manner.

Third, Mackinder's ideas were tainted by Germany's usage of them to justify its atrocities in the 1930s-1940s.[10] Tainted by association, geography came to be seen as an unsavory topic and fell out of favor. Finally, American political science's favoritism towards abstract, general theories sacrifices geographic nuance at the altar of theoretical universality.[11] Kenneth N. Waltz's landmark *Theory of International Politics* is an exemplar: what is of paramount importance in his consequential theory is a state's

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8. Mackinder's point is, in fact, the opposite: that human beings can and do use technology to overcome their geographic situations. Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, 8th ed. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1984), 202-3. Unless otherwise cited, translations from foreign-language sources throughout this dissertation are my own.

9. Jakub J. Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 165.

10. Ibid., 7-8; and Colin S. Gray, *The Soviet-American Arms Race* (Farnborough, UK: Saxon House, 1976), 69.

11. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 91 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 69, https://doi-org.proxy.library.upenn.edu/10.1017/CBO9780511491252.

position in a hierarchical, mentally conceived system; that position is not a literal, physical, geographic one.[12]

To be sure, geography has not completely disappeared; it has sometimes assumed other guises. Kenneth E. Boulding analyzed the relationship between distance and force projection strength. Boulding put overseas bases within the context of augmenting force projection and overcoming the loss-of-strength gradient that degrades power projection.[13] Robert Gilpin drew on Boulding's work to highlight advances in transportation: "The rises of great empires and the eras of political unification appear to have been associated with major reductions in the cost of transportation."[14] Stephen M. Walt notes that distance is a major factor in threat perception.[15] Robert S. Ross explicitly acknowledges geography's role, arguing that continental China and the maritime United States will enjoy relatively peaceful relations because of their differing geographies in East Asia.[16] Barry R. Posen has highlighted the importance of US command of not just the seas, but of other commons, such as air and space.[17] And the consensus that states closer to each other are more likely to fight each other than states that are farther apart is as close to an

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12. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1979). See also Buzan and Wæver, 28.

13. Kenneth E. Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 262.

14. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 57.

15. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

16. Robert S. Ross, "The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century," *International Security* 23, no. 4 (Spring 1999): 81-118, https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.library.upenn.edu/article/446965/pdf.

17. Barry R. Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of US Hegemony," *International Security* 28, no. 1 (summer 2003): 5-46.

iron law of IR as there is.[18] On the whole, while there are various literatures that could (or ought) to consider an issue like military hybridization, they do not address the subject explicitly or in any systematic depth. But if they were to do so, what might they suggest?

Great-power Politics and Hybridization

One possible explanation for how a continental great power fares at hybridization is the reactions of other great powers. Power transition and hegemonic stability theories might analyze hybridization within the context of rising powers, the status quo international system, and that system's distribution of benefits.[19] A rising state attempting hybridization could be a great power that seeks to challenge the dominant state or hegemon and to revise the status quo. This theoretical lens would suggest that great powers seeking to hybridize are probably dissatisfied with the status quo and that those who do not hybridize are probably satisfied with the status quo. The dispute here is largely a material one: the rising state is not getting its "fair share" of the global system's benefits. This explanation may have some truth to it. For example, it can be argued that twentieth-century Japan's hybridization attempt was partly due to the desire to grab a

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18. Stuart Bremer, "Dangerous Dyads: Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816-1945," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 2 (June 1992): 309-41; John R. Oneal and Bruce Russett, "The Kantian Peace: The Pacific Benefits of Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations, 1885-1992," *World Politics* 52, no. 1 (October 1999): 1-37; and Lewis F. Richardson, *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels*, ed. Quincy Wright and C. C. Lienau (Pittsburgh: Boxwood Press, and Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1960).

19. Jonathan M. DiCicco and Jack S. Levy, "Power Shifts and Problem Shifts: The Evolution of the Power Transition Research Program," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, no. 6 (December 1999): 675-704; Gilpin; Woosang Kim, "Power Transitions and Great Power War from Westphalia to Waterloo," *World Politics* 45, no. 1 (October 1992): 153-72; Douglas Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004); A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968); A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); and Ronald L. Tammen et al., *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000)

share of the imperialist spoils due every great power; likewise, Imperial Germany's naval arms race with the United Kingdom. However, power transition and like theories do not do an adequate job of explaining cases of hybridization not involving dissatisfaction (such as the twentieth-century United States) or a power transition (such as nineteenth-century France).

Paul Kennedy's *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* undertakes a substantive examination of the issue of hybridization. Describing the European tumult of 1660-1815, he gives explicit consideration to geography's role, noting the problems faced by countries with both continental and maritime geopolitical concerns: France could never fully devote its attention to either realm, resulting in a zero-sum game over attention and finances. "Every war against the maritime powers involved a certain division of French energies and attention from the continent, and thus made a successful land campaign less likely."[20] For the Dutch, the problem of dealing with the English in the maritime realm and the French landward meant that they too were cursed with enemies everywhere.[21]

Paul Kennedy thus offers some clues as to why states might attempt hybridization: facing threats from multiple fronts, states must act to counter them. However, the very act of juggling priorities means that one is less likely to do hybridization well, resulting either in 1) sufficiently strong but not overwhelmingly powerful forces in both the continental and maritime domains, or 2) a state in general decline, as happened to the Netherlands when trying to navigate between the Scylla that

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20. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), 89.

21. Ibid., 88-90.

was France and the Charybdis that was England. State revenue was also a factor: states may have the motive to hybridize, but not the means, and they sometimes discover this too late.[22] Paul Kennedy's analysis of France is given as an overview to Europe, but while his examples do not overlap with my scope of inquiry (and his research question is different), his discussion advances the dialogue on state hybridization.

John J. Mearsheimer's highly influential *Tragedy of Great Power Politics* also gives explicit consideration to geography. He defines great powers as states "with sufficient military assets" to defeat or seriously weaken the world's most powerful state in all-out conventional conflicts. Mearsheimer categorizes such powers as either *continental* or *insular*, defining them by where their enemies attack from (over land or by sea), not by what type of force they themselves employ.[23] Mearsheimer and I thus both think of great powers in geographic terms, but whereas he defines them by how they respond to opposing forces, I am concerned with how they proactively use their own forces.

In typically bold fashion, Mearsheimer argues that the amount of each type of fighting force a great power accumulates has important effects on the balance of power. He then proceeds to assert two points about geography: 1) land power is the dominant form of military power and 2) large bodies of water limit land power's projection

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22. For reasons why naval powers might have an easier go at hybridization, see Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 145-46.

23. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 5, 126.

capability.[24] These highlight further important differences from my thinking. First, I disagree with his view of water as a "stopping power"; as Capt. A. T. Mahan argues, water, far from being a barrier, is a conduit for force employment. Second, one must note that Mearsheimer limits his discussion of force employment to wartime specifically. This restricts his analysis of the use of state power to a particular circumstance (albeit a very important one) and foregoes in-depth consideration of the uses of military force in situations aside from war. I am concerned with the build-up of particular types of military force and not simply for war-making.

Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro highlight the relative dearth of attention to power shifts that occur prior to war; such an oversight would include military hybridization. Debs and Monteiro note that scholars have tended to treat power shifts as exogenous to whatever war they are more interested in studying; writing in the context of preventive war, the authors argue that shifts can, in fact, be endogenous and that, under circumstances in which a state's military development is opaque, preventive wars are more likely.[25] Their critique of this oversight in the literature on preventive war is one that can be applied equally well to the lack of attention given to military hybridization. As noted above, military hybridization often has a large role to play in the conduct of a war, and a continental great power with a newly built and strong navy would represent quite the power shift indeed.

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24. Ibid., 83-137.

25. Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro, "Known Unknowns: Power Shifts, Uncertainty, and War," *International Organization* 68, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 1-31.

The above ideas together suggest the first general explanation for hybridization's chance of success: conflict with other great powers. A hybridizer could be stopped by another great power, particularly one that already possesses the second type of military force that would give the attempted hybridizer a hybrid status (e.g., a naval great power opposing a continental great power that is attempting to achieve naval power). This opposition can take a number of forms. First, there could be actual conflict, in which the hybridization attempt is stopped (whether this conflict is designed to prevent hybridity or simply serves as a convenient opportunity for doing so is another matter). In post-Reconquista Spain, the conflict took the form of the continental power annexing its neighbor, Portugal, and appropriating the latter's naval power. Second, there could be an arms race, in which the threatened power seeks to maintain its superiority in whatever geographic realm is being challenged by the hybridizer.

Clashes between titans tend to have system-changing effects, including the destruction of a great power's military. Power transition theory, offensive realism, and defensive realism all prioritize great-power conflict in how they conceptualize inter-state relations. Regardless of whether a continental great power seeks to hybridize to increase its ability to challenge the dominant power and redistribute the international system's benefits (power transition theory); or to amass as much power as possible, decreasing its odds of being preyed on by another state and increasing its own odds of successfully preying on other states (offensive realism); or to maintain the status quo, restore a previous balance of power, or counter a geographically proximate threat (defensive

realism), the obstacle in the way of hybridization is the same: another great power in the international system that reacts negatively to the hybridizer and attempts to disrupt hybridization.[26]

Status and Hybridization

The yearning for "a place in the sun," exemplified most famously by Imperial Germany, points to a second reason for hybridization: some countries want to achieve and affirm great-power status. Through an examination of contemporary China's naval modernization program, especially Beijing's obsession with possessing aircraft carriers, Xiaoyu Pu and Randall L. Schweller note that possession of great-power accoutrements can drive hybridization: China wants a carrier because other great powers have them.[27] Even Thailand has an aircraft carrier.

Thus, another explanation for hybridization is status.[28] Great-power status is both achieved and ascriptive—a state not only must be able to do certain things that most other states cannot; it must also be recognized by others.[29] A state that considers itself a great power may feel that it is being rejected as one; it may choose to undertake hybridization

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26. I will leave aside the issue of whether it is possible to truly "restore" a temporally antecedent state of affairs. Avery Goldstein points out that time is, in fact, linear.

27. See Xiaoyu Pu and Randall L. Schweller, "Status Signaling, Multiple Audiences, and China's Blue-water Naval Ambition," in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 141-62.

28. See, for example, Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 4th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

29. For a review of the literature on how to define great power, see Vesna Danilovic, *When the Stakes are High: Deterrence and Conflict among Major Powers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 26-28, 225-30. Bull's discussion is notably absent from Danilovic's review.

to further boost its prestige. If, however, the state becomes satisfied with its status and recognition by other powers, it could choose to halt its hybridization attempt because it is no longer necessary. Alternatively, as in the case of Thailand, a state may decide to build a militarily useless but symbolically flashy navy, thus rendering threat diffusion unnecessary because the showpiece navy does not actually pose a threat.

This argument, while valid, may be taken too far. Status was one of hybridizing Germany's objectives, but it was not the only important one. Today, there are plenty of reasons why China is building an aircraft carrier that have very little to do with gaining respect. Furthermore, hybridization is a very difficult accomplishment: there are myriad other ways to gain stature on the world stage, and having a particular kind of weapon does not automatically confer prestige. As the case studies will show, status is usually an explicitly posited reason for naval development in and of itself, but it is also usually not the only or primary objective. Furthermore, the navy is seen as a tangible instrument of achieving more concrete objectives that will, among other things, also boost the state's prestige, so naval development can be pursued not simply as a symbol of status in itself, but as a tool to achieve (more) status.

Domestic Politics and Hybridization

Another explanation for hybridization's chance of success lies in domestic politics. The military innovation literature takes an indirect route to studying hybrid powers, poring over the bureaucratic processes that drive or hinder innovations in various war matériel and their uses in battle. However, this body of research tends to leave in the

background the political motivation driving the initial decision to embark on an innovation (leaving aside the issue of whether that innovation actually works) and concentrates instead on specific weapon systems and internecine bickering that do not comprehensively encapsulate the broader, geostrategic developments in which a particular geographically organized type of armed force can be contextualized.

The ability to innovate has been addressed by scholars such as Michael C. Horowitz, Posen, and Stephen Peter Rosen. A country that wants to become a hybrid power must necessarily make a large investment in the weaker military force and perhaps reshape its bureaucracy. Whether a state can successfully become a hybrid power depends in part on whether it can address some of the issues that military innovation scholars examine.[30] Horowitz has looked at cases of successful and failed military innovation and diffusion, and his adoption-capacity theory may be an explanans for why some states succeed as hybrids and others do not.[31] My dissertation complements this literature by offering more analysis of how and when a state decides to build a particular military force, as well as the bureaucratic and personalistic dynamics at play that determine whether hybridization is successful or not.

The work on military innovation fits into a larger argument about the role of bureaucratic politics. Perhaps hybridization succeeds because a bureaucracy manages to

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30. See Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); and Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). Rosen restricts his argument to peacetime innovation, as different dynamics are at play in wartime.

31. Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=539794.

get the ear of a sympathetic political master, who then supports those bureaucratic interests over others. One could interpret the modernization and expansion of the US Navy in the early twentieth century as largely being the result of Theodore Roosevelt's political power and Mahan's rhetorical weight: each being the right man in the right place at the right time.[32] Here, then, explanations focus on particular persons or organizations that take advantage of opportunities (or make them) to further their agendas.

Bureaucratic politics may also say something about hybridization's failure. The process of hybridization is long and, aside from dictators or monarchs who rule for decades, successful hybridization requires the political affirmation and support of multiple generations of leaders. This situation may not obtain in all cases. Furthermore, even if the political support is there, economic strength might not be. Through economic downturn, the financial spring for hybridization can dry up. Unpleasant economic circumstances have thwarted many a government initiative, and hybridization is no exception.

There is also the issue of intra-governmental strife, which may occur despite—or because of—a growing fiscal pie. Even the wealthiest country's budget is finite. It is not unheard of for military branches to bicker over who gets more funding. Army-navy infighting in Japan's military arguably proved fatal to that country's performance in World War II. In some cases, hybridization's failure may even be a result of intra-governmental struggles not between military branches, but between other interests that

32. See Cdr. Henry J. Hendrix USN, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy: The US Navy and the Birth of the American Century* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009).

collaterally affect military affairs in the administrative war; for example, the abrupt ending of Ming China's naval moment is sometimes described as the collateral damage of factional in-fighting at court.

In each of the case studies, the attempt at naval development within an army-centric military can be seen as a type of innovation, in the sense of a relatively unfamiliar military technology facing entrenched bureaucratic opposition. It takes a political heavyweight to overcome such internecine fighting, and that is what can be seen in Emperor Napoléon III of France, German Emperor Wilhelm II, and Adm. of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Sergei Gorshkov in their countries' respective chapters. Sometimes, the navy, through no fault of its own, becomes embroiled in some other domestic political struggle and risks becoming a casualty through guilt by association with the losing side. This would be the case in late nineteenth-century France, when the ascendant liberals saw the navy as the home of their reactionary, conservative rivals; whenever in power, the liberals opposed the navy's traditionalists (who supported battlefleet warfare) by supporting the up-and-coming *Jeune École* (Young School), which favored commerce raiding.

The literature on domestic politics usually assumes that there is some competition going on—there is always something to fight about, especially when the government budget is constrained. As this dissertation shows, however, it is possible (though admittedly rare) for an army to acquiesce to naval development. Chapter 3 will highlight this, as Germany at the turn of the twentieth century invested heavily in the navy without

army opposition because the latter feared any further expansion on its part would result in socially undesirable people entering the aristocratic officer corps. For better or for worse, then, a hybridization attempt's chance of success can be determined by the ability of domestic interest groups to acquire greater and more sustained government investment in one particular type of military force.

Naval History: No Such Thing as Hybridization

While the above literatures do not treat military hybridization, one can at least infer some implications from their theories. This cannot be said of naval history, with which my research engages heavily, but which precludes the very idea of military hybrid powers in the first place. This is due primarily to the fact that naval historians tend to define naval or maritime powers based not so much on military capabilities as on things like culture, identity, and socioeconomic characteristics. Peter Padfield, who appears to be the originator of the term *hybrid power* in the military sense used in this dissertation, defines it as a power whose continental power and naval power are fairly evenly balanced, resulting in a geostrategic drive that "wobbles."[33] He gives France, Germany, and the Soviet Union as examples of hybrid powers and contrasts them with "true" naval powers, such as the Netherlands, Portugal, and the United Kingdom, for whom naval power "predominates so decisively as to give that power its distinctive drive."[34]

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33. Peter Padfield, *Tide of Empires: Decisive Naval Campaigns in the Rise of the West*, vol. 1, *1481-1654* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 18.

34. Ibid., 8-9, 10-11, 12-13, 18.

Padfield therefore seems to assume that hybrid powers are simply failed naval powers. I consider Padfield's definitions to be, at best, unnuanced and premature and, at worst, inaccurate and misleading.[35] As will be discussed further in the France case study, the implication of Padfield's examples is that only the country with the best navy in the world can be a naval power. However, one does not have to have the best navy to be a naval power any more than one must have the best army to be a land power. One may not need to be the best: "good enough" may be good enough. Furthermore, the implication that only the dominant naval power is successful is far too simplistic. As the France chapter and, to a lesser extent, the post-Imperial Russia chapter will show, even great powers that do not possess the best navy can and do achieve substantive and substantial political goals by using their navies. The actions of navies below No. 1 still carry with them geopolitical consequences with major impacts on the conduct of global affairs and the relationships that obtain between great powers, including the dominant naval power.

Other scholars simply assume states to be either continental or maritime in character, implying that hybrid powers are actually mythical. Writing on maritime empires, Clark G. Reynolds asserts, "Each nation tends to orient its political, economic, and military life around the advantages of its geographical position vis-à-vis other nations. And history reveals that this orientation has usually favored either the ocean-maritime element or the continental. No nation has yet been able to afford the sheer

35. See ibid., 14-15. Padfield distinguishes naval powers and non-naval powers by noting differences in economy, government, and society, positing various relationships that tie themselves together into a confused knot of causal directionality.

expense of sustaining both a large army to control its continental frontiers and a large navy to maintain control over vast areas of water."[36]

Colin S. Gray argues, "In recent centuries, no country simultaneously has enjoyed the benefits of a truly excellent fighting instrument on land and at sea."[37] In a later work, he writes, "Most states in most eras have had an identifiably continental or maritime inclination in their strategic orientation and culture. Sea powers and land powers are rarely only sea or land powers, but their geopolitical identity is not often in doubt."[38]

Explanations revolving around culture and identity (as well as equally deterministic arguments based on geography) are not unimportant; they surely play some role in shaping perceptions and bounding the realm of what is considered politically possible in the social consciousness. However, an emphasis on such factors risks eliding two important issues. First, whether a state's geopolitical identity is in doubt or not can be informed by the success or failure of hybridization, and authors who argue that hybrid powers do not exist sidestep the iterative relationship between what can be perceived as a state's natural geopolitical identity and its military force composition. Second, because a state's geopolitical identity can be both cause and effect of its military focus, the truly

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36. Clark G. Reynolds, *Command of the Sea: The History and Strategy of Maritime Empires* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), 2.

37. Colin S. Gray, *War, Peace, and Victory: Strategy and Statecraft for the Next Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 57.

38. Colin S. Gray, *The Leverage of Sea Power: The Strategic Advantage of Navies in War* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 2. Gray seems to only go so far as to say that continental powers and naval powers try to use their successes in one geographic domain to influence events in the other geographic domain. Colin S. Gray, "Puissance maritime, puissance continentale et la recherche de l'avantage stratégique," trans. Jean Pagès, in *La Lutte pour l'empire de la mer*, ed. Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, Hautes études stratégiques (Paris: Economica, 1995), 72.

interesting query is why some states should seek to change their geopolitical identities and how they do so.

Explaining a state's military force priorities by way of cultural identity or geographic situation overlooks the attempts that are made to transcend identity or overcome geography and, when it comes to historical analysis, can result in circular reasoning a posteriori, e.g., "Country *X* was not a naval power because it failed in its attempt to build a strong navy, and country *X* failed in its attempt to build a strong navy because it was not a naval power." As will be discussed in greater detail below, my labeling of a great power will be based solely on the character of its military strength: the ultimate measure of whether a power is militarily continental, naval, or hybrid. Finally, it is worth considering that critiques such as the ones above, which were written after World War II, utterly fail to explain the obvious example of the United States today, arguably the most successful hybrid military power of all time.

My Theory

None of the theories discussed has been formulated to explain hybridization. While retrospective—and usually ad hoc—explanations for great powers' hybridization attempts and outcomes are abundant, I am unaware of a theory of (continental) great-power hybridization that can encapsulate the phenomenon. I develop a theory that can holistically explain something as consequential and history-making as great-power hybridization. My theory is targeted at the puzzle of continental great-power

hybridization and so will address the issue in a manner both more comprehensive and more focused than the extant theories discussed above.

I argue that two factors—investment persistence and threat diffusion—are the primary factors determining where a continental great power's hybridization attempt falls on the success-failure spectrum. I assume as the essence of a hybridization attempt this fundamental paradox: the greater the motivation to hybridize, the more likely the attempt will fail; the lesser the motivation to hybridize, the more likely the attempt will succeed. For example, the presence of a threat may motivate hybridization, propelling it forward through sustained and united financial investment and political will. Yet that threat's very presence might also retard, if not outright destroy, a country's effort to hybridize. Alternatively, the absence of a foreign threat may be a golden opportunity to build a great navy, but is less likely to motivate support, even though the relative tranquility may increase hybridization's success. The logic of this paradox posits an inverse relationship between motivation and success, which gives rise to hybridization's defining quality: *urgency*. And it is manifestations of this urgency, such as a sudden and massive naval armament program, that can raise alarm in foreign capitals. I argue that the way for a hybridizer to get around this urgency problem is to combine investment persistence and threat diffusion.

Investment persistence is the sustained financial support and political will for naval development, achieving hybridization in the face of perennial landward security challenges that threaten to divert resources back to the army. The key is for this

commitment to be sustained through both relatively secure and relatively insecure times. A continental great power that devotes the necessary resources to military hybridization and makes a sustained commitment to it is more likely to succeed, even though landward security challenges inevitably and repeatedly arise.

Threat diffusion is the deployment of one's navy to places or for purposes that do not antagonize the dominant naval power, which is the great power most likely to oppose a continental great power's hybridization attempt. While the dominant naval power nominally exercises global naval superiority, it does not in practice exercise naval dominance in all parts of the world at once, nor does it generally care about all the world's places equally. A continental great-power hybridizer will be more likely to succeed if it can diffuse the threat it poses to the dominant naval power through complementary or, at a minimum, non-overlapping interests—it is a conflict of interests in overlapping geographic spaces, not geography per se, that is the problem. Therefore, if the hybridizer uses its growing navy in geographic places of less value to the dominant naval power or if the hybridizer uses its growing navy to achieve goals that do not oppose those of the dominant naval power, then the continental great power is less likely to appear as a serious threat; indeed, in some cases, it can even be a partner. The threat that could have been the hybridizer's navy is instead diffused to other parts of the world and for non-antagonistic purposes.[39]

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39. My concept of threat diffusion assumes that a dominant naval power will behave hostilely to continental great-power hybridization, an assumption that I believe is historically justified. However, my concept does not (need to) assume that a hostile dominant naval power will definitely succeed at stopping the continental great power's hybridization attempt.

Investment persistence and threat diffusion together are solutions to the problems that hybridization's inherent urgency causes. Investment persistence and threat diffusion work in tandem: a hybridization attempt is most likely to succeed if both are deployed. Threat diffusion in particular is essential, for without this muffling of the alarm that investment persistence would trigger, the hybridizing continental great power will almost assuredly appear as a threat to the dominant naval power, as well as to others. It is perfectly possible that a continental great power hybridizes precisely with the goal of overthrowing the dominant naval power, as Rome did vis-à-vis Carthage in the ancient Mediterranean world. However, this is an extremely risky mission. It is to avoid what could be a literal dead end that I offer the alternative of "winning silver."

As will be shown throughout the case studies, investment persistence and threat diffusion are ecumenical in the range of actions that would fit under their respective definitions. One does not have to pursue a specific form of investment (e.g., building battlefleets instead of commerce-raiding fleets) to have persistent investment, nor does one have to execute a certain type of action (e.g., partaking in multilateral operations instead of unilateral ones) to diffuse the threat. There is more than one way for my two variables to manifest themselves, and what might be effective in one context for one country may not be so in another context for another country. The key is that, whatever forms of investment persistence and threat diffusion are pursued, they are effective in achieving the political goals for which military hybridization was initiated.

Concepts and Assumptions: Defining and Explaining Key Terms

I define a great power to be *a state that possesses one of the highest proportions of global material capabilities and that is viewed by others as having enormous influence on and a privileged place in the international system.* Although there is no scholarly consensus on the precise determinants of great-power status, my definition is in line with the ones commonly used. Vesna Danilovic's analysis suggests that the criteria employed by scholars can be generally grouped into three: capabilities (primarily economic and military strength), an expansive scope of interests that is geographically beyond one's own region, and status (recognition as a great power by other countries, particularly other great powers).[40] The capability measure is relatively uncontroversial and is usually accepted as a criterion—if not *the* criterion—for a great power. Specific measures include, but are not limited to, industrial production, size of the economy, and various measures of kinetic military capabilities.

The scope-of-interests measure is much more disputed, simply because the requirement of extra-regional interests would exclude certain "common-sense" great powers, based on how their respective "home regions" are defined. The Imperial Japan of 1868-1945, for example, might not count because its interests arguably did not move beyond the Asia-Pacific. One could instead modify this requirement to mean the geographic scope of power projection capabilities, but this would simply make it another measure of capabilities. The third measure, status, is entirely subjective: either the state in

40. Danilovic, 26-28, 225-30. Much of this paragraph's discussion is derived from Danilovic's review.

question is viewed and treated by others as a great power or that state explicitly asserts its behavior as being that of a great power. It means deference toward a state that is recognized as possessing special rights and privileges, and measures include, but are not limited to, membership in exclusive groups, naming in diplomatic communications, and a voice in multilateral organizations whose approval is a necessary (if not formalized) condition to achieve an objective.[41]

The lack of one universally accepted definition of a great power does not, however, preclude the reasonable and broadly consistent identification of great powers in particular eras. Despite distinct definitions and different methodologies, there is a broad consensus among scholars as to which countries have been great powers in what time periods. Comparing nine lists, each with distinct definitions and criteria and written at different moments in time, one nonetheless finds a relatively stable universe of great powers for 1865-2011, as shown in table 1.1.[42]

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41. Deborah Welch Larson, T. V. Paul, and William C. Wohlforth, "Status and World Order," in Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, 10. See also Marina G. Duque, "Recognizing International Status: A Relational Approach," *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (September 2018): 577-92.

42. I limit discussion of the time period to 1865-2011 for ease of comparison with two datasets that I use and that will be discussed below. I examined Danilovic, 46; Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 48; George Modelski, *Principles of World Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1972); Organski and Kugler, 43; Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, *The Great Powers and Global Struggle, 1490-1990* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1994), 17, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1915118&query=; J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *The Wages of War, 1816-1965: A Statistical Handbook* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972); Thomas J. Volgy et al., "Status Considerations in International Politics and the Rise of Regional Powers," in Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, 68; and Waltz, 162.

Table 1.1 Great powers, 1865-2011

Country	Sources Listing as Great Power
Austria | Austria-Hungary	6[a]
China	7
France	9
Prussia | Germany | West Germany | Germany	9
Italy	6
Japan	9
Russia | Soviet Union | Russia	9
United Kingdom	9
United States	9

[a]Two of the three lists that omit Austria-Hungary do so because the time periods considered start in 1951.

The lists of great powers from which table 1.1 is drawn are largely measures of capabilities and status—most are not explicitly concerned with geographic scope of interests.[43] This tendency to prioritize capabilities and status accords with my own thinking on how to define a great power: the capabilities account for the "power" in "great power," while status is the subjective recognition of the "great" in "great power."

I therefore define a great power as a state that possesses one of the highest proportions of global material capabilities and that is viewed by others as having enormous influence on and a privileged place in the international system. The United States clearly satisfies these requirements, as does China and arguably all the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Germany and Japan may also be considered great powers, even today: they may not have strong militaries, but their economic clout is undeniable; they may not hold permanent seats on the Security

43. Danilovic, as well as Organski and Kugler, create two lists—one of *major powers* and one of *contenders*, which are great powers with geographically broad interests and capabilities. For each source, I merged the "major powers" and "contenders" lists into one comprehensive list of great powers.

Council, but they play major roles in other multilateral groupings. States that are not great powers do not possess globally high proportions of material capabilities and they are not viewed or treated as holding privileged positions in the international system. Brazil and Iran, for example, are not great powers, as they do not hold privileged places and their material capabilities are proportionally low, even if they play consequential roles in their respective regions. States like Israel and Pakistan are not great powers just because of nuclear weapons: such devices may guarantee existence, but they do not guarantee eminence.

A continental great power is *a great power whose military might manifests itself primarily as one of the world's most powerful armies*. A naval great power is *a great power whose military might manifests itself primarily as one of the world's most powerful navies*. A hybrid great power is *a great power whose military might manifests itself simultaneously as one of the world's most powerful armies and as one of the world's most powerful navies.* A country that already has a strong army and that is trying to build a strong navy is considered a continental power, and vice versa. If the country should succeed at simultaneously maintaining a strong army and a strong navy, then it is classified as a hybrid power.

My research concerns great powers, the states that, relative to others, have had the greatest impact on world politics. I do not consider every state that desires to simultaneously possess an army and a navy, and I have limited my scope for two related reasons. First, the most consequential states in the system are those that, by definition,

have an outsized impact on world affairs as a whole, as well as on the behavior of individual states. Most other actors have no such influence and what they do tends to be little noticed.[44] The second reason follows from the first: my question is not about why *any* state would have both an army and a navy. Many of the world's countries past and present have had some form of both, so the mere possession of an army and a navy would be neither a particularly astonishing accomplishment nor a theoretically interesting one. Raymond Aron calls possession of both strong armies and strong navies the "double vocation": a vocation is neither a hobby nor a trifle, but an occupation "requiring great dedication."[45] Becoming a hybrid power requires a level of attention, determination, investment, and skill that only the most powerful states are in a position to reach.

But, if simultaneously possessing armies and navies in any form is so easy for inconsequential states, why is it somehow more difficult for the most powerful states, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity should be more secure and which should be able to draw upon greater economic strength, more advanced technologies, and more skilled human capital? The answer for naval powers is more obvious, as they tend to be geographically insular and can afford all manner of political luxuries without distraction. For continental powers, however, the mystery is less of why they "fail," but more of why their exertions have resulted in a range of substantively different outcomes, whose

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44. As a certain great power's foreign minister stated undiplomatically to his Singaporean counterpart at a multilateral meeting: "China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that's just a fact." John Pomfret, "US Takes a Tougher Tone with China," *The Washington Post*, July 30, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/29/AR2010072906416.html.

45. *Oxford Living Dictionaries English*, s.v. "vocation," https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/vocation.

variation does not seem to inhibit others from also trying. For these reasons, I believe that a focus on great powers—and continental great powers, to be precise—would be most fruitful in terms of what it can offer the scholastic and policymaking communities in advancing our understanding of world politics.

A hybridization attempt is *an intentional and deliberate effort by a great power that already possesses either an army or navy that is one of the world's strongest to build the other military service as one of the world's strongest as well.* Evidence that a great power is attempting hybridization should show at least three things: effort—actions whose completion would plausibly lead to hybridity are executed; deliberateness—the actions executed are pursued purposefully; and knowledge and intentionality—the actors executing the actions are conscious of the fact that the actions, if completed, would result in hybridity, and the actors execute these actions for the purpose of achieving hybridity.

Evidence of effort includes, but is not limited to, increases in a military service's annual budgets; organized development of first-rate, modern weapon systems; reorganization of military education; and increases in manpower and matériel in absolute terms. Evidence of deliberateness includes, but is not limited to, continuation of the above efforts for some sustained period of time, the absence of back-and-forth policy changes within a relatively short period of time, the existence of plans laying out processes that will result in a military service's growth and development, and the execution of actions at a pace that is consistent or that, at a minimum, does not slacken. Evidence of knowledge and intentionality includes, but is not limited to, leaders'

pronouncements of the intention for hybridity, arguments for hybridity in private governmental deliberations, documents that justify specific policies and actions on the grounds of achieving hybridity, and consistency in affirmations of the intention to hybridize.

Hybridity (i.e., successful hybridization) is *a condition in which a great power simultaneously possesses one of the world's strongest armies and one of the world's strongest navies*. Furthermore, that great power must believe it has reached a condition in which its hybrid military forces can execute the policies for which they were built. In other words, if a great power tries to hybridize to accomplish mission *x* and manages to build a hybrid military, but still finds the accomplishment of mission *x* to be unlikely, then it is debatable whether hybridization has truly been a success, i.e., an accomplishment of an aim or purpose. My definition of successful hybridization therefore precludes hybridization for the sake of hybridization. Hybridization is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Evidence of successful hybridization entails two components: 1) recognition that the hybridization process has made substantive and substantial progress, e.g., the military force being built is now a world-class weapon that can be used, and 2) recognition that the resulting hybrid military can now accomplish state objectives that were previously out of reach. Evidence for these two components includes, but is not limited to, acknowledgment by decision-makers that they now possess a hybrid military, discussion by decision-makers of using their hybrid military to achieve policy objectives for which

hybridization was designed, actual or threatened use of the hybrid military to achieve those objectives, other great powers' acknowledgment that the hybridizer now possesses a hybrid military, discussion by other great powers of how the hybridizer's military may be used to achieve policy objectives previously unattainable, and new actions by other great powers that respond to the hybridizer's new capabilities and objectives.

Success and failure do not constitute a binary pair of possible outcomes; a more nuanced view, rather, sees the two outcomes as occupying opposite ends of a spectrum. A country could experience success, failure, or some mixture of both. Gauging the extent of a hybridization attempt's success is necessarily a subjective one because such a judgment has to take into account the hybridizer's geopolitical and historical context. Determining where each of my case studies falls on the success-failure spectrum requires first understanding what the hybridizer itself wished to achieve when it embarked on hybridization. Such ex ante goals serve as fixed benchmarks by which the country's hybridization attempt is judged. I do not consider ex post rationales for whatever naval force ends up being built: this way, there is less danger of the goalposts moving. By measuring a country's hybridization with the very yardstick its leadership carved for the attempt, subjective judgment can be turned into a more objective evaluation.

Research Design and Case Studies

I start this section by laying out how I categorize continental great powers and naval great powers. Using three different data sources and a number of qualitative analytical comparisons, I am able to create a universe of potential historical examples to

investigate. I also discuss the temporal scope of my analysis, before outlining the dissertation's organization and laying out my argument as it appears in the case studies.

Identifying Continental Great Powers

No comprehensive dataset measuring land power exists.[46] The Correlates of War Project does, however, have a measure of national military manpower in its National Material Capabilities (NMC) dataset, and I tested whether this measure could serve as an acceptable proxy for army strength; if so, I could use this relatively comprehensive dataset.[47] I compared the NMC's figures for military manpower with the International Institute for Strategic Studies' (IISS) *Military Balance* figures for army manpower every five years, starting in 1965 and going through 2010.[48] My aim was to see how many countries with the largest militaries in the NMC dataset also ranked among the largest

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46. This was lamented at the start of the millennium: "Although a number of studies have attempted to measure force balances in particular historical cases, no study available has systematically and carefully compared force levels in different armies over long periods of time." Mearsheimer, 134. The problem remains.

47. J. David Singer, "Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985," *International Interactions* 14, no. 2 (1988): 115-32. I used version 5.0 of the dataset, which can be accessed at https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/national-material-capabilities. I thank Michael C. Horowitz for the manpower proxy suggestion.

48. Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1965-1966* (London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1965); Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1970-1971* (London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1970); IISS, *The Military Balance, 1975-1976* (London: IISS, 1975); IISS, *The Military Balance, 1980-1981* (London: IISS, 1980); IISS, *The Military Balance, 1985-1986* (London: IISS, 1985); IISS, *The Military Balance, 1990-1991* (London: Brassey's, 1990); IISS, *The Military Balance, 1995-1996* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); IISS, *The Military Balance, 2000-2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); IISS, *The Military Balance, 2005-2006* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2005); and IISS, *The Military Balance, 2010* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010).

armies in *The Military Balance*. I arbitrarily chose to compare the top fifteen countries in each database, and the results are in table 1.2.[49]

Table 1.2. NMC military manpower and *Military Balance* army manpower comparison, 1965-2010

Year	Number of Countries in Both Sources' Top 15	NMC-*Military Balance* Top 15 Correlation Coefficient
1965	14	0.89
1970	14	0.91
1975	13	0.94
1980	14	0.93
1985	14	0.93
1990	13	0.90
1995	13	0.91
2000	14	0.88
2005	13	0.89
2010	12	0.87

I believe that such strong correlations should only be stronger the further one moves back in time. First, the creation of air forces in the twentieth century ought to lower army manpower proportion, ceteris paribus, because there is now an additional service with its own financial, human resource, and matériel desires, operating in an environment of finite resources. Second, countries—particularly great powers—have grown increasingly reliant on technology from the twentieth century onwards, which means that the strong relationship between manpower strength and a military's fighting effectiveness ought to be attenuated somewhat in the modern day. Based on both the correlation shown from 1965 through 2010 and on what should be an even stronger

49. Choosing to focus on the top fifteen states (as opposed to ten or twenty) may seem arbitrary, but fifteen extends far enough down the list to capture states that no one I know of has ever claimed to be a politico-military power of any sort.

relationship between military manpower strength and army manpower strength before 1965, I believe that the NMC dataset is a sufficient proxy upon which to base my judgment of which countries are and are not continental great powers, and for how long and when.

Using the NMC dataset's figures, I was able to measure each country's proportion of global manpower strength in each year. Once I did this, I ranked the countries in each year by the global proportion of people in uniform for which their respective militaries accounted, and I could trace the development or regression of each country's military power from 1865 through 2011.[50] Three figures illustrate my findings: figure 1.1 shows countries that had manpower strength that accounted for at least 5 percent of global manpower strength at any point in the 1865-2011 period, figure 1.2 shows the countries that met a threshold of 10 percent, and figure 1.3 shows the countries that met a threshold of 15 percent.

50. The NMC dataset covers 1816-2012, but for ease of comparison with the to-be-discussed naval power dataset of 1865-2011, I limit my time frame here to the same span.

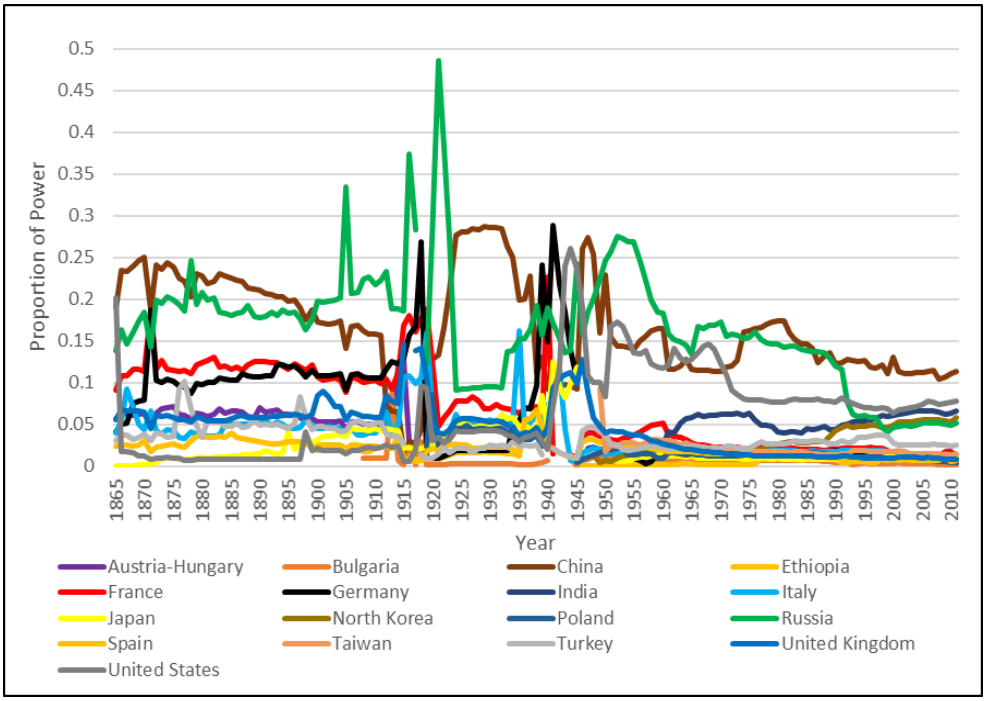

Figure 1.1. States with minimum of 5 percent of global manpower strength, 1865-2011

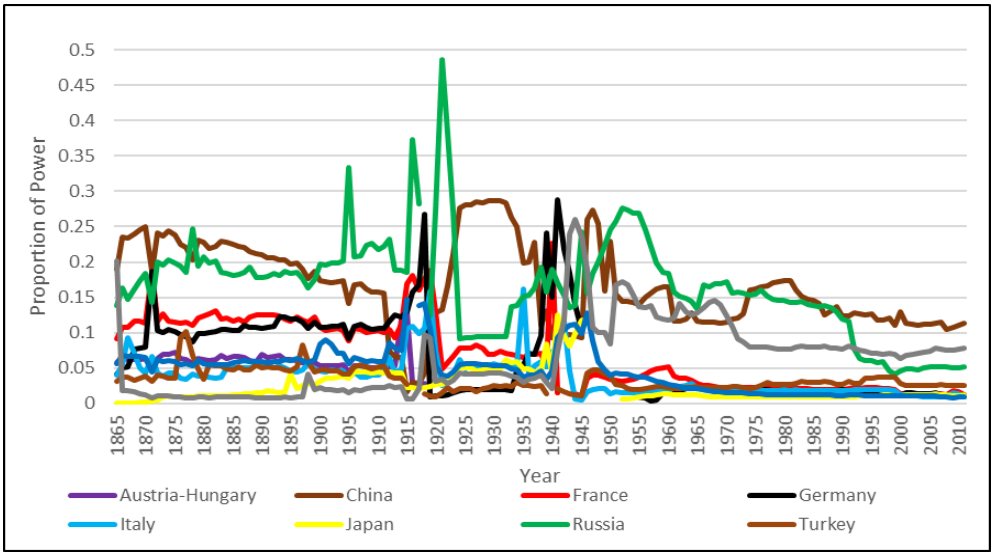

Figure 1.2. States with minimum of 10 percent of global manpower strength, 1865-2011

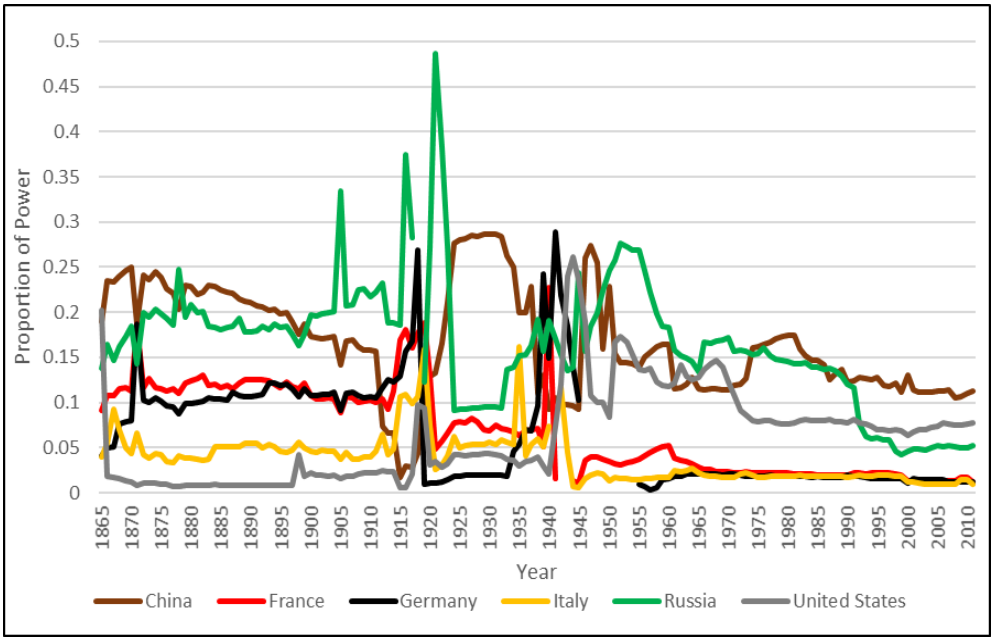

Figure 1.3. States with minimum of 15 percent of global manpower strength, 1865-2011

The NMC data thus show which countries could be classified as land powers, depending on which threshold one wishes to use. Moving from the 5 percent to the 10 percent to the 15 percent thresholds, the list of land powers in 1865-2011 dwindles from seventeen to ten and, finally, to six. However, relying solely on a quantitative measure, while simple, is not the most convincing. Some qualitative, subjective assessment is required. One problem to overcome is the issue that land power is often conflated with military power overall; indeed, in times past, the adjective *military* referred to land forces specifically.[51] Due in part to this overlap, I consulted writings that either explicitly examine land power or that, while seeming to talk about military power in the aggregate sense, actually base their measures wholly or primarily on land power.

51. This linguistic legacy can be seen today in examples such as the United States Military (i.e., Army) Academy and in the Library of Congress Classification, in which *U* is for *military* science and *V* is for *naval* science.

Despite different sources using distinct measures, these sources all more or less suggest the same list of land powers in the 1865-2011 era. Mearsheimer (whose detailed analysis seems to run only to 1941) has a list of powers that dovetails with the NMC's 10 percent threshold (figure 1.2), with two exceptions: China and Turkey are omitted. Mearsheimer discounts China because of economic poverty, but offers no explicit reason for omitting Turkey, though he does argue generally that the quality of an army counts as much as the quantity.[52] Levy, who expands his scope to 1495-1975 (and his 2010 paper with Thompson would update part of this 1983 list), prioritizes land power over naval power, and his list of powers for the 1865-2011 time period also accords with the 10 percent threshold in figure 1.2.[53] Karen A. Rasler and Thompson's 1994 work on army manpower counts would suggest, in an otherwise confusing appendix, that figure 1.2's 10 percent threshold is quite accurate, though again omitting China and Turkey.[54] Between the NMC's 10 percent threshold and these authors, then, what is remarkable is not disagreement, but the degree to which they all agree.

It seems that in the 1865-2011 period, states that were land powers at some point included Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with China and Turkey being questionable cases. Historical analysis shows that, of these, the United Kingdom and the United States were naval powers before they developed land power. Japan was historically dominated by the army, given the long samurai tradition and the central government's geopolitical insularity. Yet,

52. Mearsheimer, 6, 62, 133-35.
53. Levy, 48.
54. Rasler and Thompson, 192-99.

despite this prejudice, Japanese naval power rose to great-power status before its army did, so is excluded from the universe of potential cases, alongside America and Britain. Of the remaining cases—Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia—each sought at various times (sometimes multiple times) to develop naval power, but it is France, Germany, and Russia that stand out.

Identifying Naval Great Powers

Brian Benjamin Crisher and Mark Souva have created a dataset that measures a country's naval power as the cumulative tonnage of primary warships.[55] Crisher and Souva not only provide figures for each state from 1865 through 2011, they also provide each country's proportion of global tonnage in each year. This dataset allows for sorting by both country and year; I thus ranked countries by the proportion of global tonnage for which their respective navies account, and traced the development or regression of each country's naval power over the dataset's 147-year timespan. As with the land power measures above, I discovered states that were responsible for at least 5 percent, 10 percent, and 15 percent of global primary warship tonnage. There are only two figures (1.4 and 1.5) because there is no difference in the set of states when one moves from the 10 percent to the 15 percent threshold.

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55. Brian Benjamin Crisher and Mark Souva, "Power at Sea: A Naval Power Dataset, 1865-2011," *International Interactions* 40, no. 4 (August 2014): 602-29. The database itself is available at https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/24098. Weighing tonnage is preferable to counting ships, as the former better proxies for warship size, itself a proxy for firepower.

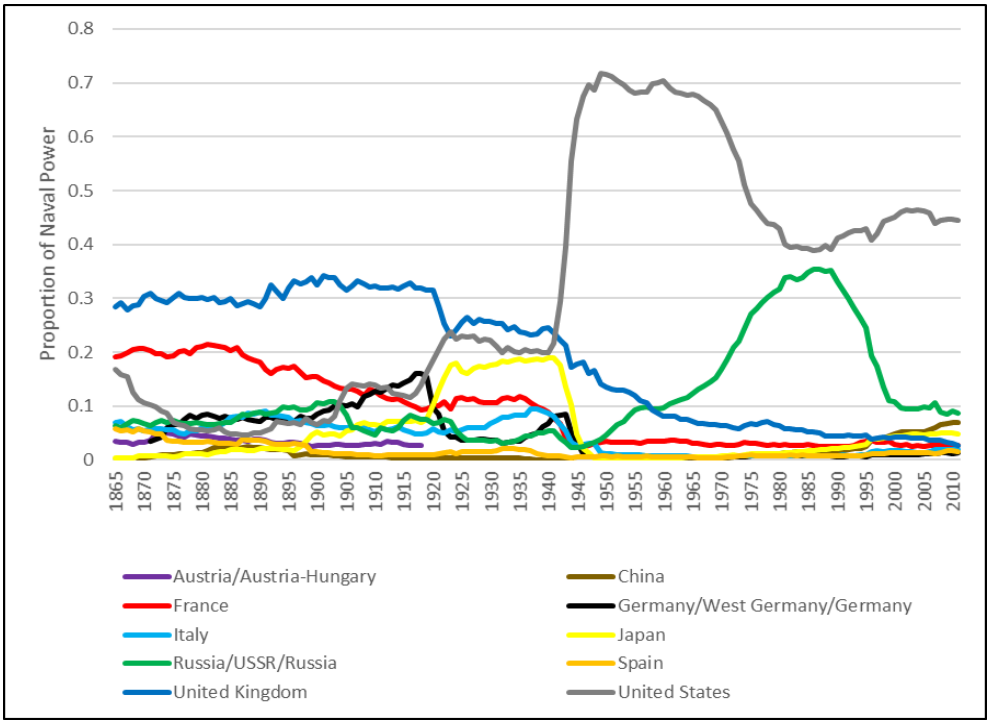

Figure 1.4. States with minimum of 5 percent of global primary warship tonnage, 1865-2011

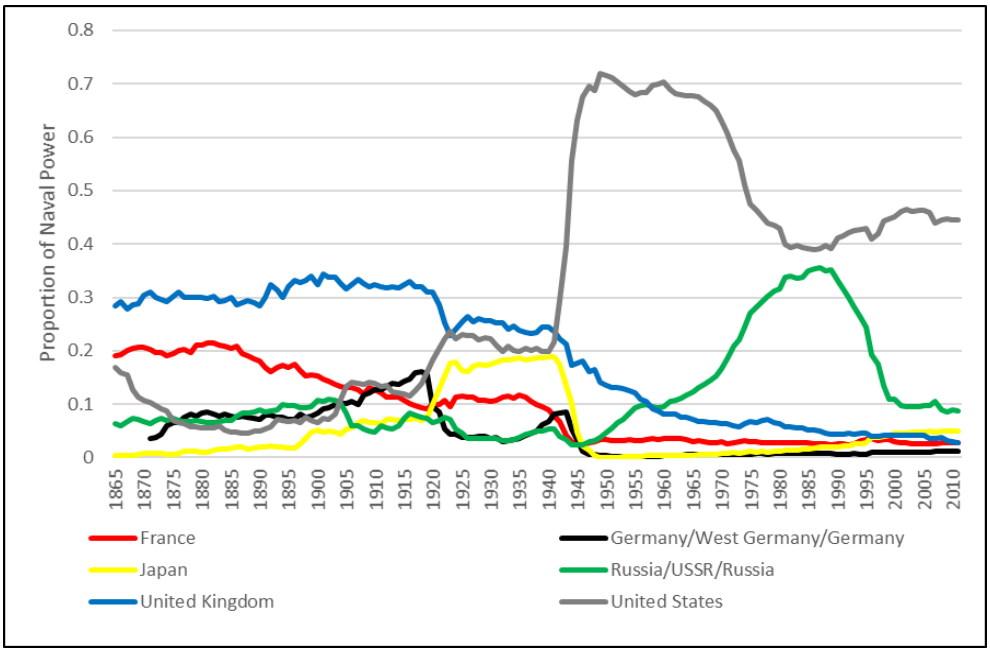

Figure 1.5. States with minimum of 10 percent of global primary warship tonnage, 1865-2011

The case studies that I propose to analyze are all confirmed continental powers that meet the 10 percent naval tonnage threshold: France, Imperial Germany, Imperial Russia, and the Soviet Union. These four represent the entire universe of continental great-power hybridizers in the years 1801 to present. I choose this somewhat arbitrary time frame because the turn of the nineteenth century marks a convenient breakpoint between pre-*levée en masse* warfare and the era of mass militaries. With my focus on continental great powers, limiting variation in factors important to land warfare, such as manpower recruitment, is highly desirable.

My research is qualitatively intensive. It involves process-tracing the case studies, with a firm reliance on primary sources (when available), political science writings that focus on strategic studies, and historiography. In fact, many histories of my case studies touch on hybridization, even if they never mention the concept. Unfortunately, such country histories are, by definition, framed in contexts peculiar to the states under study. While useful, they do not (presume to) offer a treatment of hybrid powers qua hybrid powers. Nonetheless, these histories are ripe for analysis from IR scholars' perspectives.

What Lies Ahead

This dissertation proceeds as follows: chapters 2-6 will cover France, Germany, Imperial Russia, post-Imperial Russia, and China, respectively. The France chapter will focus primarily on the Pax Britannica era of 1815-1914, with brief treatments of 1801-15 and 1914-present for context. The Germany chapter will focus on the empire under Wilhelm II in 1890-1918, with brief treatments of 1871-90 and 1918-present for context.

The Imperial Russia chapter is comprised primarily of two equal parts, 1801-56 and 1856-1905, with a coda covering the empire's drawn-out demise in 1905-17. The post-Imperial Russia chapter will focus on the Soviet Union in 1956-91, with brief treatments of 1917-56 and 1991-present for context. Finally, the China chapter will focus on 1995-present, with a brief treatment of 1801-1995 for context; a discussion on China post-2020 will appear in the conclusion (chapter 7) as part of a broader consideration of the future.

Chapter 2 on France will illustrate the power of investment persistence and threat diffusion in continental great-power military hybridization. Drawing on previously ignored French-language primary and secondary sources, I will show that France, for a hundred years after Waterloo, deployed a navy that persistently maintained its status as the world's second best—and this is not damnation by faint praise. With a naval force that deterred the superior British fleet across the Channel, that sailed overseas to build what would become the world's second largest empire, and that was the naval technological innovator par excellence, the French state successfully hybridized its military through persistent investment and the deployment of a fleet that largely managed to not antagonize the United Kingdom and, indeed, cooperated with Britain on major foreign ventures.

If chapter 2 will be a positive illustration of the importance of combining investment persistence and threat diffusion, chapter 3 on Germany will be a negative illustration of the same importance, showing the disaster awaiting a hybridizer if it does not combine investment persistence and threat diffusion. Reframing the familiar Anglo-

German naval arms race within the context of my theory, I will show that Imperial Germany's failure at military hybridization was due to its failure to join threat diffusion to its investment persistence. While Berlin robustly devoted resources to the construction of a major naval force, it also deliberately chose to concentrate, rather than diffuse, its fleet, exacerbating a British threat perception already alarmed by the size and modernity of the German navy. Germany's persistent refusal to give up the manner in which it pursued naval development sent Anglo-German relations into a vicious spiral that could not be halted before July 1914.

Chapter 4 on Imperial Russia will show another kind of failure, this time not through a failure to combine investment persistence and threat diffusion, but through a failure to invest persistently in the first place, which made threat diffusion extremely difficult on the few occasions when St. Petersburg bothered to try and build its navy. Of all my historical case studies, this is certainly the least studied and understood in the Anglophone world. Throughout the nineteenth century, as other great powers built navies and deployed them ever farther around the world, Imperial Russia did not devote itself to military hybridization, pursuing naval investment in fits and starts, and for discrete politico-military objectives. This meant that, by the end of the 1800s, when Imperial Russia began naval modernization in earnest and had a naval force that could deploy somewhere, there was virtually nowhere left that was not already in some other great power's sphere of interest. Imperial Russia's start-stop attempts at naval investment left it

lagging so far behind that, when it finally cobbled a fleet together, there was nowhere to diffuse the threat, and Russian naval aspirations were sunk off the Japanese coast.

Chapter 5 on post-Imperial Russia will show an incomplete or partial success: far more successful than either its monarchical predecessor or the German Empire, yet clearly a lesser light when compared to the achievements of nineteenth-century France. The Soviet Union's navy of the 1950s through 1980s saw investment persistence, but investment was imbalanced and technologically second class. Threat diffusion fared no better: trying to reconcile a need to advance policy and prestige, while simultaneously avoiding conflict with the United States, the Soviet Union was not wholly successful at either, balancing diplomatic victories and assertion of status in the Third World with behavior threatening enough to cause a massive US military buildup that Moscow could not possibly match.

Chapter 6 on China will consider that country's military hybridization to date. Investment persistence has been impressively robust, with the navy of 2020 nearly unrecognizable from what it was even at the beginning of the century. New and increasingly advanced and sophisticated weapon systems are being deployed, with entire classes of vessels coming into existence seemingly overnight. But, for all the evidence of investment persistence, indications of threat diffusion are scant, partly due to a lack of information on which to pass judgment and partly due to conflicting signals. Some Chinese actions in the maritime environment are widely applauded, e.g., anti-piracy patrols, while others are roundly condemned, e.g., aggressive behavior in the China Seas

territorial and resource disputes. Whether Chinese investment persistence will continue and whether threat diffusion can play its critical role in the future will be discussed in the concluding chapter 7, which summarizes this dissertation and looks ahead to further inquiries.

Conclusion

Earth's surface is the canvas on which we leave our imprints, but geography does not have to be destiny. Geography is ever present, but its permanence also means that it can be taken for granted or dismissed in considerations of political behavior. My dissertation examines how certain great powers have sought to break out of their geographic frames and paint new portraits for themselves and the world. I show how the combination of investment persistence and threat diffusion allows a continental great power to successfully hybridize its military without either succumbing to perennial landward security concerns or falling to the dominant naval power's backlash. In the past, military hybridization has often led to acrimonious relations that, directly or indirectly, contributed to the outbreak of wars and influenced their outcomes. This dissertation offers another way.

Chapter 2

"A Brilliant Second": France's Hybridization as a Great Power

> We do not have the means (who does?) to be a first-class power on land and sea at the same time.
>
> —Patiens, *L'Alsace-Lorraine devant l'Europe: Essai de politique positive*

Along the western edge of Eurasia sits the country of France. Nicknamed the "Hexagon," the French state's geographic shape began to assume its distinctive form after the Hundred Years' War finally ended in the fifteenth century.[56] Of the Hexagon's six sides, half are land borders and half face the sea: "All the drama in French history derives from this dualism."[57] Marianne gazes out across eight sovereign states on the three landward sides and a different body of water on each of the three seaward sides (see figure 2.1). Geographer Françoise Péron observes that France is landowning in its historical construction, yet torn between land and sea in its hexagonal geography.[58] Geopolitical scholar Olivier Kempf notes that France is essentially a headland of the European continent, an "important blend of land and sea" whose ambivalence marks French geopolitics as one that always hesitates between a continental vocation and a maritime vocation.[59] The Hexagon's contours are an obvious and simple illustration of a

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56. This was a rather complex process. See Jordan Branch, *The Cartographic State: Maps, Territory, and the Origins of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chap. 7.

57. Rear Adm. Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *The French Navy in World War II*, trans. Capt. A. C. J. Sabalot (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1959), 1.

58. Françoise Péron, "Au-delà du fonctionnel, le culturel et l'idéel," in *Les Français, la terre et la mer, XIIIe-XXe siècle*, ed. Alain Cabantous, André Lespagnol, and Françoise Péron (Ligugés, France: Fayard, 2005), 778.

59. Olivier Kempf, *Géopolitique de la France: Entre déclin et renaissance* (Paris: Éditions Technip, 2013), 12-13.

difficult and longstanding problem for France: how to balance interests, opportunities, and threats in a multifaceted geostrategic environment that has often been leavened with villainy.

Figure 2.1. France in its geostrategic context

Throughout the centuries, France has tried on numerous occasions to be a hybrid great power, one capable of bringing to bear to global affairs a world-leading army and a world-leading navy simultaneously. The French army could be impressive and, at its apogee under Emperor Napoléon I, was master of Europe and the envy of the world. The

French navy, however, has seemed decidedly less imposing, though not for lack of effort. From Cardinal Armand Jean du Plessis, Duke of Richelieu and of Fronsac, to Emperor Napoléon III, various French leaders have tried to develop a navy that would be for the maritime realm what the vaunted French army has been for the continental.

The traditional interpretation of French naval development has been to describe it as a failure, and this perspective arises largely from scholarship that gauges French efforts relative to all the successes that the British accumulated. Viewed from the commanding height of the world's leading naval power, France must necessarily look a perennial flop. Naval historian Lawrence Sondhaus's first sentence in a 2004 chapter-length assessment of France is an exemplar of this perspective: "After 1815, the French navy maintained both its rank as the world's second largest and its long record of repeated failures in challenging the British navy's dominant position."[60]

Peter Padfield labeled France the best example of a "relatively unsuccessful" naval power.[61] George Modelski and William R. Thompson offered a similar putdown: "France may easily be the best example of a global power whose 'drives wobbled' between continental and maritime aspirations to the very clear detriment of its often-interrupted development of seapower." Despite its coastlines, population, and wealth, France never achieved "global preeminence."[62] As recently as 2018, noted naval scholar James Holmes described late nineteenth-century France as a positively "second-rate naval

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60. Lawrence Sondhaus, *Navies in Modern World History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 49.

61. Peter Padfield, *Tide of Empires: Decisive Naval Campaigns in the Rise of the West*, vol. 1, *1481-1654* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 9-11.

62. George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Seapower in Global Politics, 1494-1993* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 246.

power" whose focus on a lighter, smaller fleet was "good enough for a continental power."[63] Yet opinions exemplified by these tend to conflate being the dominant naval power with being a hybrid power, implying that only the former can be the latter. Nineteenth-century France shows that this is not the case, for France was the world's second naval power for the entirety of the 1800s—and not an inconsequential one.

Michael Howard observed in 1981 that the "longest and perhaps the bitterest arms race in modern history was that between the French and British navies between 1815 and 1904, a period of 90 years in which peace was successfully preserved between two powers who had for 125 years before that been engaged in virtually continuous official or unofficial conflict."[64] This chapter is the story of how French military hybridization helped to both sustain such a remarkable peace and advance France's interests. Drawing in part from French-language primary sources and historiography (largely ignored by the Anglo-American scholarly community), I show that it was when investment persistence and threat diffusion were paired together during the Pax Britannica (1815-1914) that French hybridity enjoyed its zenith, with a combination of power and power projection that enabled France to reach the height of its prestige and to realize the widest breadth of its geopolitical ambition. This century under examination is bookended by shorter sections on 1801-15 and 1914-present.

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63. James Holmes, "Visualize Chinese Sea Power," *Proceedings*, June 2018, 31.
64. Michael Howard, *The Lessons of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 11.

1801-15: French Hybridization in the Napoleonic Era

One need not look far or long to find weighty tomes about Europe in 1801-15. Napoléon I's martial prowess enlarged France to encompass vast swaths of Europe, with many more nominally independent political entities pledging their allegiance. France and its dependents controlled nearly the entire continental seaboard, yet the French navy of this time was not nearly as imposing as the empire's territorial breadth and coastline length might have suggested. With the benefit of hindsight, one could say that Paris' navy under Napoléon I was the final embodiment of two important French desires: 1) the construction of a battlefleet that could match the United Kingdom and defeat the Royal Navy in a head-to-head battle and 2) the posing of an existential threat to the British Isles by invading it.

Napoléon I was obsessed with taking the fight directly to the United Kingdom.[65] In 1803, when hostilities with Britain recommenced, "construction fever" took hold of French shipyards, as they churned out warships for an invasion.[66] The plan was for the French and Spanish fleets to break out of the British blockade of their bases and sail to the Caribbean Sea, ostensibly to threaten British colonies. Once there, the fleets were to lose their British pursuers, double back to Europe, rendezvous with the Grand Army, and invade Britain.[67] It was not to be. When the plan was put into action in 1805, only the fleet under Adm. Pierre-Charles Villeneuve managed to escape the blockade and sail to

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65. Alain Boulaire, *La Marine française: De la Royale de Richelieu aux missions d'aujourd'hui* (Quimper, France: Palantines, 2011), 199-200.

66. Peter Padfield, *Maritime Power and the Struggle for Freedom: Naval Campaigns that Shaped the Modern World, 1788-1851* (London: John Murray, 2003), 207.

67. Rémi Monaque, *Une histoire de la marine de guerre française* (Paris: Perrin, 2016), 258-60.

the Caribbean. On the way back to Europe, however, Villeneuve unexpectedly encountered a British squadron off the French coast; believing this signaled that the Royal Navy must have reinforced its defensive positions, Villeneuve aborted the rendezvous and sailed south to harbor at Cádiz. This rendered the invasion impossible. Incensed, Napoléon I ordered Villeneuve to join the Spanish fleet to fight the British, even if in an inferior position.[68] Just off Cape Trafalgar, the Franco-Spanish force met Nelson's British warships and was defeated.

The Battle of Trafalgar did not temper Napoléon I's dream of defeating the United Kingdom.[69] From 1806 onwards, the emperor focused on rebuilding; in fact, from 1791 through 1810, France actually out-built Britain, constructing warships totaling 440,000 tons to Britain's 400,000 tons.[70] The naval budget grew from ₣92 million in 1801 to nearly ₣150 million in 1804, and did not fall below ₣100 million again until 1814. In 1811, Napoléon I boasted that, with an annual construction rate of twenty-five warships, he would be able to take on the British in four years' time (i.e., 1815).[71] The practical result of endless French construction was a fleet-in-being whose firepower,

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68. Boulaire, 190-92; David Howarth, "The Man Who Lost Trafalgar," *The Mariner's Mirror* 57, no. 4 (November 1971): 368; and Monaque, 260-61. Howarth describes Napoléon I as essentially ordering Villeneuve's fleet to "self-immolate."

69. Monaque, 256.

70. Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860*, vol. 2, Stockholm Studies in History 48 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1993), 2:387-88.

71. Quoted in Auguste Thomazi, *Les Marins de Napoléon* (Paris: Librairie Jules Tallandier, 1978), 243.

proximity, and size necessitated continued British attention in the form of long-term blockade.[72]

Due in part to battle defeats and the continued blockade, French naval forays abroad did not amount to much. France sought to reassert control over Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti) in the face of an 1802 uprising, but failed.[73] Napoléon I sold Louisiana to the United States, using most of the proceeds for his ambitious naval construction.[74] The United Kingdom persistently attacked isolated and poorly defended French overseas possessions; the Cape Colony in southern Africa, along with colonies in the Caribbean Sea, Indian Ocean, and Southeast Asia, were all lost.[75] France was comprehensively and globally defeated, its extra-European empire "amply mutilated."[76]

In the Napoleonic Era, France tried to defeat British naval might, but the battles lost (epitomized by Trafalgar), the rebuilt fleet that never slipped anchor thanks to a perpetual blockade, and the piecemeal dispossession of a globe-spanning empire suggested that a new approach was needed. If hybridization was to be achieved, head-to-head competition against the dominant naval power was not the way, and directing one's foreign policy to destroy that naval power would only compound the difficulty of a continental great power trying to hybridize.

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72. Glete, 2:389.

73. Boulaire, 188-89.

74. Padfield, *Maritime Power*, 208. Napoléon I saw the Louisiana Purchase as a strike against British naval might in two ways: 1) funding his own navy's construction in the short term and 2) strengthening the United States in the long term so as to give the United Kingdom a naval rival that would sooner or later lower Britain's pride. J. Saintoyant, *La Colonisation française pendant la période Napoléonienne (1799-1815)* (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1931), 282.

75. Jean Martin, *L'Empire renaissant, 1789-1871* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1987), 78-80.

76. Ibid., 81.

1815-1914: French Hybridization in the Pax Britannica

Writing in 1993, naval scholar Jan Glete averred that little attention had been paid to the French navy of the 1800s.[77] Over a quarter-century on, little has improved. This section focuses on French hybridization in the largely ignored century of 1815-1914. More has been written on France at sea both during the Napoleonic Wars and from World War I onwards, but the interlude in between presents arguably the most interesting historical episodes of French hybridization.

Collecting itself after the Congress of Vienna, France saw hybridization as both ends and means: a symbol of and tool for national resurgence. Unlike in Napoléon I's day, however, French hybridization was going to be different this time round. Stephen Shephard Roberts drives to the heart of the issue: "The problem for the French was thus how to be number two at sea—*how to make seapower work to their advantage without having the world's largest navy* [emphasis mine]."[78] The French hybridization strategy would be one designed not to best Britain or challenge it head-on, but to allow France to compete indirectly with the United Kingdom as imperial master, commercial entrepôt, and all-around "Great Power." France was determined to have a navy, Bernard Brodie writes, that could still challenge the United Kingdom's exclusive command of the seas, even if it still was not Britain's equal.[79]

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77. Glete, 494n5.

78. The author goes on to note, "This problem is as difficult as it is important, and no generally satisfactory answer has ever been found." Stephen Shephard Roberts, "The Introduction of Steam Technology in the French Navy, 1818-1852" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1976), 17.

79. Bernard Brodie, *Sea Power in the Machine Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 40.

"French naval policy was also apparently based on the assumption that in a world where Europe's influence was ascendant and France a leading European nation, there must be an important role for France on the seas without antagonizing Britain."[80] France essentially sought to imitate the United Kingdom's position globally, while somehow still wielding a strong enough deterrent for self-defense across the English Channel. "The navy was to be able to promote French political and economic interests in all parts of the world *as long as British security interest was not involved*. French trade should be protected, the coasts should be secured against blockades and invasion, and the navy should be able to enforce blockade or undertake invasions against any European state, except Great Britain."[81]

Hybridizing France thus sought to build a navy that could perform many of the same functions as the Royal Navy did, that could deter any British attack on France itself, and that could enhance French prestige and help acquire colonies abroad. As heavyweight politician Adolphe Thiers put it, France needed a navy "not to dominate, but to prevent all domination on the seas."[82] Coupled with a strong French army, this naval policy amounted to a very robust hybrid strategy on France's part. Paris managed to flex its muscles abroad, cooperate with London on major foreign ventures, and avoid a direct clash across the English Channel, while maintaining a fleet capable enough to check any

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80. Glete, 2:428.
81. Ibid.
82. Quoted in Brodie, 41-42; and in Joannès Tramond and André Reussner, *Éléments d'histoire maritime et coloniale contemporaine (1815-1914)*, rev. ed. (Paris: Société d'Éditions Géographiques, Maritimes, et Coloniales, 1943), 44.

presumptions a superior British navy might have had about doing anything it wanted anywhere, anytime.

Investment and Diffusion: Building and Using a Navy

In the wake of Napoléon I's banishment to inhospitable St. Helena, the French navy stood decrepit and dishonored.[83] It mirrored the mood of a defeated France, whose glory and honor King Louis XVIII was determined to restore—and the navy soon proved a fit instrument for this national rejuvenation. Shortly into this king's reign, a vigorous new minister for the navy and colonies arrived in the form of Pierre-Barthélémy Portal d'Albarèdes, Baron Portal. Portal's tenure marked the introduction of two things that would stay with French naval strategic planning for decades: first, the recognition that the United Kingdom had to be countered in some way other than direct battlefleet engagement and, second, the idea that French might could be flexed and glory gleaned from forays abroad.

Portal and his king wished to restore French naval (and, through the navy, national) pride, but countering Britain in the face of financial constraints presented a conundrum. Portal's solution was pragmatic and realistic: he resolved to make the French navy as powerful as it could be, as much as national means could allow—among naval powers, this meant somehow conserving a position second only to Britain.[84] Portal apprised Louis XVIII of his naval budget request: more money for more frigates and

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83. Michèle Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III: Une politique navale* (Vincennes: Service historique de la marine, 1997), 1:15-16.

84. Ibid., 1:16.

corvettes so that, if war came, the French could "desolate their [British] trade wherever we could reach it."[85] The goal was not to surpass British might, but to maintain a fleet powerful enough so that it could deter the one superior navy and defeat the other inferior navies.

Portal also considered a multilateral solution to French hybridization, though it never came to pass. Analyzing Russian and US potential, Portal saw an opportunity to ally with other second-rank powers to balance the United Kingdom in case of hostilities: "But I could not ignore that Russia and the United States dreaded England's naval supremacy as much as we did, and if we could show them the creation and the organization of a force that could become the center of a union between second-rank maritime powers, not only could we, if necessary, count on their sympathies and their help, we could immediately acquire a real respect and even a real influence on their cabinets."[86] Portal also hoped France might fill the void left by Spain as the latter lost its Latin American colonies one by one.[87]

In his memoirs, Portal recounted, "We certainly have neither the intention nor the means to be aggressors, but we can be faced with unbearable demands and vanities, and it was good to show that we would have at least the means to make all failures to give us

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85. Pierre-Barthélémy Portal d'Albarèdes, *Mémoires du baron Portal* (Paris: Librairie d'Amyot, 1846), 38.

86. Ibid., 36. Portal's memoirs are silent as to why such an alliance never came into being. It is possible that any coalition would have foundered on the rocks of intra-alliance geopolitical competition (how would the United States have felt about Portal's desire to take over for Spain in Latin America?) and the fact that, in case of war, it would not be immediately clear that France, Russia, and the United States would all necessarily be on the same side against the United Kingdom.

87. Ibid., 54-63, 228, 232-35; and Tramond and Reussner, 12-13. Portal early on sought to use the navy as the arm of diplomatic contact with those infant countries.

due respect pay dearly."[88] During his tenure, the baron managed to secure increased funding from the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of parliament charged with appropriations, and the funding levels Portal won became a standard that far outlasted his ministry.[89] In Portal one sees the primordial indication of two trends that would stay part of French thinking about hybridization right through to the twentieth century: 1) the attempt to do as much as possible to deter, rather than defeat, the United Kingdom and 2) the widening of the geographic aperture to think about how France might use other parts of the world to its benefit and for its glory.

Technological Asymmetry: Deterrence through Disruption

While France could not be superior to the United Kingdom in ship numbers, it could try to deter Britain by continually disrupting the technological status quo, and the Industrial Revolution was the foundation of the new technologies that France deployed one after another to asymmetrically oppose British domination. Some of these technologies were simply others' innovations that the French perfected (or at least substantively improved); other technologies were genuine innovations that the world owes to French creativity. The ironclad and the steel-hulled warship, the motorized submarine, the Paixhans gun (emblematic of improvements in naval gunnery that

88. Portal d'Albarèdes, 239-40.

89. From 1818 through 1870, the French navy and colonies ministry budget constituted less than 5 percent of the annual national budget only twice, and it was usually at or above 6 percent. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 1:19, and 2:772. One should bear in mind that budgets only go so far as proxy measures of state priorities; even the United Kingdom routinely spent more on its army than on its navy because the latter tended to be, pound for pound, more expensive. A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), xxvii, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39076006668946.

provoked a defensive reaction in the form of iron and steel warships), the screw propeller, steam propulsion, and the torpedo and torpedo boat were all new technologies that changed the way naval vessels looked and fought—and that owed their military appreciation and diffusion, if not invention, to French ingenuity.[90]

"By maintaining a strong French navy and by keeping naval technology in a state of turmoil, France might deter Britain from going to war over minor questions or using its naval power with arrogance and total confidence in success. . . . Rapidly changing naval technology might make Britain cautious in her foreign policy as the policy-makers could not be sure of what its chief instrument of power, the navy, really might achieve."[91] In the words of two French naval historians describing the French-invented flat-trajectory shell gun that turned wooden warships into tinder boxes, technological advancement was emblematic of "our eternal desire to make the weak stronger than the strong."[92] "It is by technical progress or strategic innovation that the French will seek to rival again the leading global maritime power," opines Rear Adm. Rémi Monaque in his assessment of the nineteenth-century French navy.[93] While the language was different, this French strategy of the 1800s is recognizable today as being asymmetric, countering a superior foe via indirect means, rather than trying to beat it head on.[94] What France was proposing

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90. Monaque, 287. Today, US Navy Chief of Naval Research Rear Adm. David J. Hahn considers the Paixhans gun to be the foreign invention or innovation that has most influenced the US Navy. Asked & Answered, *Proceedings*, March 2020, 96.

91. Glete, 2:429.

92. Tramond and Reussner, 62.

93. Monaque, 268.

94. See Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 32, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=539794.

to do was to disrupt the technological status quo and harness the Industrial Age's energy to maintain its place on the world stage.

Steam propulsion provides an illustration of the French focus on disruptive asymmetry and the use of a new technology whose mastery would give France a decided edge over the mighty British navy.[95] With a reliable and powerful propulsion system that was not reliant on the vagaries of nature, the French could hope to possess a fleet that, while still numerically inferior to their British counterparts, could run circles around the Royal Navy. Early on, however, French steamship construction was rather unimaginative. It was assumed by elements of the naval bureaucracy that steam technology, like sail, would quickly stabilize, and all that was needed in the future was to keep current ships in good service and reproduce copies of them.[96]

The early steamships and their components were thus standardized, which allowed for quicker construction, but discouraged further experimentation. By the end of the 1830s, France was still dependent on the United Kingdom for engine design.[97] The navy faced a choice: whether to adopt a short-term perspective and procure the best (i.e., British) engines needed for the moment or to adopt a long-term perspective and invest in building an indigenous industrial base and expertise to produce French steam engines.[98] The short-term choice would probably have allowed for a marginally more competitive

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95. Roberts, 41.

96. Ibid., 158. This is understandable when one considers that technological innovation before the mid-nineteenth century tended to be slow and not particularly complex; to eyes accustomed to such deliberate evolution, the leaps and bounds of new developments such as steam propulsion appeared bewilderingly rapid. C. I. Hamilton, *Anglo-French Naval Rivalry, 1840-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 280-81.

97. Roberts, 194-95.

98. Ibid., 222-23.

French navy at the time; taking the longer view, investment would help build French self-sufficiency and allow the French navy to have the needed expertise and technology at its own disposal, without fear of reliance on a geopolitical rival.

As it happened, the year 1840 would decide the question in favor of long-term investment and self-sufficiency. A decade-long concord that had existed between London and Paris was broken by the Oriental Crisis (to be discussed in the next sub-section), which exposed the weakness of, among other things, the French sailing fleet, and which caused France both to increase the stagnant naval budget and to take seriously the national-security threat of relying on Britain for steam technology. The ₣65 million initially won by Portal for the navy's annual budget had become the default amount; the Oriental Crisis shocked the legislature into raising the naval budget to ₣125 million.[99]

A new office devoted to steam technology was created in the Navy Ministry, emphasis was placed on training qualified officers for this technology, and orders were placed for immediate production.[100] As could be expected, initial teething troubles occurred, but were overcome, and the result by the middle 1840s was that "trials of the [steam]ships were successful and demonstrated that, for all practical purposes, France had achieved the ability to build the largest size of steam engine independently of Britain."[101] With the consolidation of French control over Algeria, communication across

99. Monaque, 286.
100. Roberts, 238-42.
101. Ibid., 263.

the Mediterranean Sea became essential and steamships proved themselves natural to the task.[102]

Additional proof of French asymmetric technological progress in the form of steam propulsion can be found in the British reaction to it. The dominating statesman Henry Temple, Viscount Palmerston, argued before the House of Commons in 1845: "France . . . has now a standing army of 340,000 men, . . . France has a fleet equal to ours. . . . The Channel is no longer a barrier. Steam navigation has rendered that which was impassable by a military force nothing more than a river passable by a steam bridge."[103] A private letter from no less an authority than Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington was leaked and gave added credence: "I say that, excepting immediately under the fire of Dover Castle, there is not a spot on the coast on which infantry might not be thrown on shore, at any time of tide, with any wind and in any weather, and from which such body of infantry, so thrown on shore, would not find within the distance of five miles a road into the interior of the country through the cliffs practicable for the march of a body of troops."[104] The British were so persuaded of the new French steam-powered menace that they fortified coastal defenses, improved

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102. Ibid., 129-30.

103. UK Parliament, *Hansard*, July 30, 1845, vol. 82, columns 1223-24, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1845/jul/30/national-defences#S3V0082P0_18450730_HOC_77.

104. Quoted in Hans Busk, *The Navies of the World; Their Present State, and Future Capabilities* (London: Routledge, Warnes, and Routledge, 1859), 116, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044014183347.

communications infrastructure to the coast, bulked up the home militia, and redoubled their own steamship construction.[105]

An asymmetric focus on technology would persist in France. Facing a steam vessel's pivotal weakness (a gigantic and vulnerable paddlewheel), the French pioneered the screw propeller, which solved the paddlewheel problem, while simultaneously giving those who clung to sail the one thing they envied about steam—reliable propulsion.[106] The screw propeller had been created near-simultaneously by different private inventors in the 1830s-1840s, but its physical incorporation into a warship created all manner of design problems that impinged upon other physical aspects of ship configuration and propulsion. Working through such considerations as engine size, horsepower, hull design, rudder position, and other practical concerns, the French not only resolved these issues without relying on British technological skill, their vessels could actually exceed the British in test runs by the early 1850s.[107]

Despite an industrial disadvantage and slower start, France pulled even with the United Kingdom in steamship experience and was capable of steam-propelled warship construction independent of British expertise.[108] "By 1853-4, the French navy was taking up a position in advance of the Royal Navy, pushing ahead with vessels that were good in themselves, homogeneous in the principles behind them, and which well-suited French

105. Hamilton, 22; and Roberts, 306, 314.

106. Roberts, 352-55. For an overview of the operational difficulties that a warship with a paddlewheel would encounter in battle, see Hamilton, 23-25.

107. Roberts, 404.

108. Ibid., 414-15.

naval policy aims."[109] Roberts concludes in his assessment, "The final success showed the degree to which France had achieved mastery both of steam technology and of mechanical engineering in general."[110]

Through domestic turmoil and regime change, French investment persistence continued to take the form of technological asymmetry. The Second Republic's inauguration in 1848 (ending the July Monarchy) did not change this, nor did this republic's own transition to the Second Empire in 1851-52, when Prince Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte promoted himself from president to emperor, taking the name of Napoléon III.[111] With another emperor named Napoléon across the Channel, the British press once again began publishing stories about a purportedly aggressive France on the war path. Rumors abounded: that the French army was itching to invade Britain and sack London, that the French were plotting to seize a naval station in the Caribbean, that a French warship had been seen off Dover (later found to have been driven in by inclement weather), and that French vessels were taking soundings in British waters to update their charts.[112]

Napoléon III "manifested a keen interest in the sea in all its aspects (sailing, etc.) and for everything that concerned technology in general—the navy and artillery in

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109. Hamilton, 62-63.

110. Roberts, 401.

111. Napoléon III was Napoléon I's nephew. Napoléon I's son, Napoléon II, nominally reigned for a short while after his father's Waterloo-induced abdication and died in exile in 1832. In 1846, headship of the imperial house and, with it, the Bonapartist claim to the throne devolved upon Prince Louis-Napoléon.

112. Richard Cobden, *The Three Panics: An Historical Episode* (1862; repr., New York: Kraus Reprint, 1970), 36-37.

particular—to the point of being an 'agitator of ideas.'"[113] C. I. Hamilton sums up this monarch's heavy influence: "We cannot understand the major French naval innovation of the end of the 1850s without accepting the importance of the Emperor."[114] Under Napoléon III, the naval budget grew steadily from 5.8 percent of government expenditure in 1852 to 11.1 percent by 1870. This helped give France, in historian Jean Martin's estimation, the "most beautiful" war fleet since the seventeenth-century days of Jean-Baptiste Colbert.[115]

The French navy of the Second Empire was still a naval force that was undersized compared to the Royal Navy (see figures 2.2 and 2.3)—on account of a refusal to try to achieve parity—but that was technologically in the vanguard and still appreciably bigger than any other power's navy.[116] In the midst of the ongoing Industrial Revolution, the emperor saw technology as a key component of French naval strength.[117] Throughout Napoléon III's reign, he appointed navy ministers who encouraged technological research and development.[118] He pushed armored warship construction; without Napoléon III, Michèle Battesti estimates that the French navy would have been a decade behind in technological advancement.[119]

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113. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 1:254.
114. Hamilton, 268-69.
115. Martin, 177. King Louis XIV's éminence grise and sometime navy minister, Colbert built a powerful and successful navy for the Sun King.
116. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 2:694.
117. Ibid., 1:10.
118. Monaque, 292-94.
119. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 1:256.

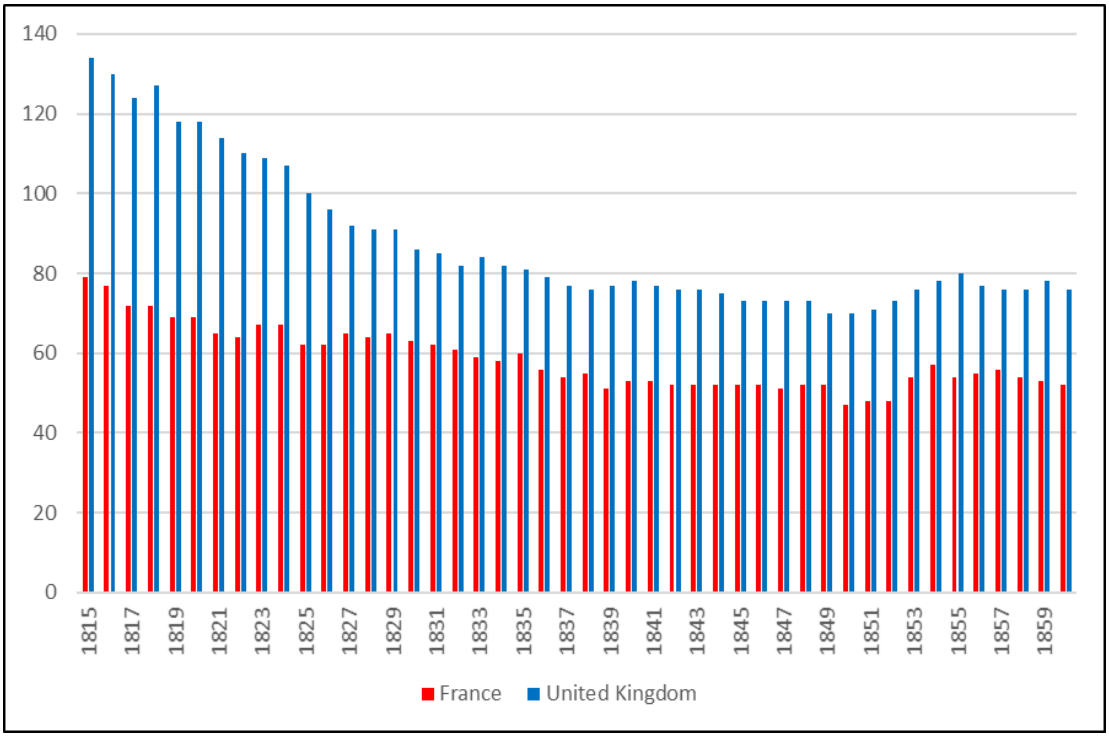

Figure 2.2. French and British warship numbers, 1815-60. Data from Modelski and Thompson, 226-29, 264-65.

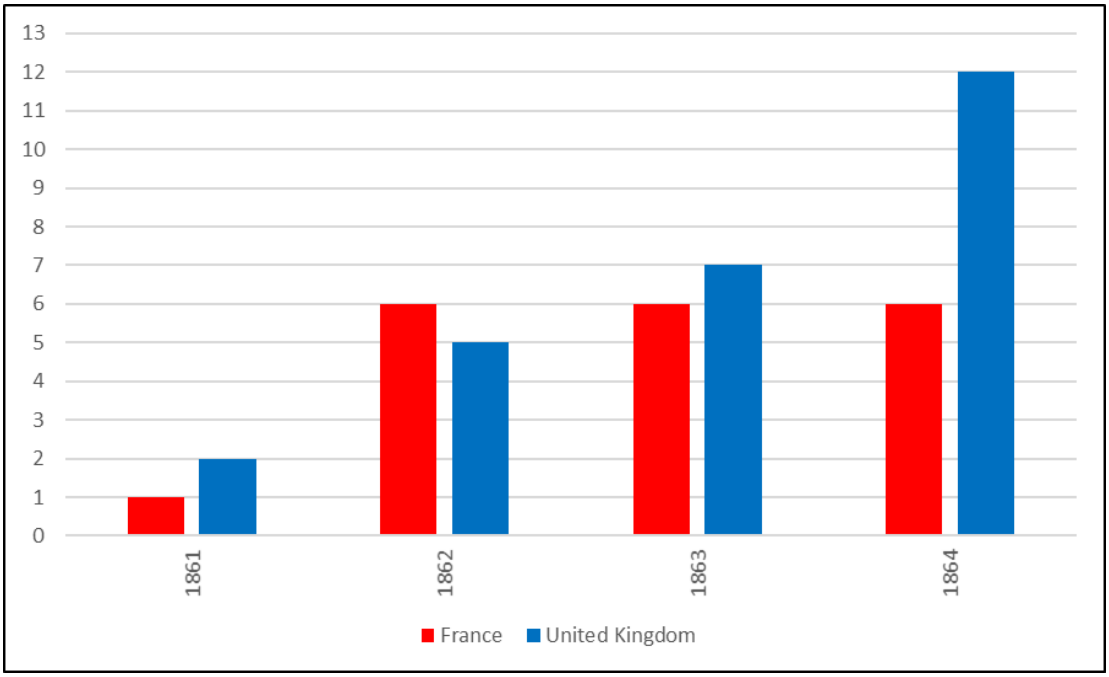

Figure 2.3. French and British ironclad battleship numbers, 1861-64. Data from Modelski and Thompson, 230, 266.

Napoléon III's answer to the predicament of perpetual numerical inferiority was quality over quantity, as embodied in new technologies. Technological asymmetry could cancel out whatever numerical inferiority France may have suffered in an outdated technology, thus leveling the proverbial playing field.[120] Speaking of new ship armor, one of France's chief naval constructors, Henri Dupuy de Lôme, enthused that its protection of ships against artillery fire "has been incontestably favorable to the secondary powers that cannot possess the numerically largest fleets of war."[121] Continuous French technological development was driven by the desire for an asymmetric advantage against the United Kingdom's dominance.

Even the draining of the French naval budget after the Franco-Prussian War, while relatively serious, was not enough to cripple France's hybridization. France was still clearly the second naval power, with what was still the second largest naval budget. Into the 1880s, new ships being built in France were still technologically better in armor, guns, and projectiles when compared with those of Britain.[122] Having been the first to launch an ironclad in the 1850s, France became the first to launch a steel warship in the 1870s.[123] But money still had to be carefully spent: the question was how to maintain French national power in the face of domestic budget constraints. Two-time Minister of the Navy Édouard Lockroy summed up the geopolitical problem succinctly: to have an

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120. Sondhaus, 56.

121. Henri Dupuy de Lôme, quoted in Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, "Budget de la Marine et des colonies pour l'exercice 1867," *Revue maritime et coloniale* 18 (1866): 169, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015073460316;view=1up;seq=7.

122. Theodore Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy, 1871-1904*, ed. Stephen S. Roberts (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 102.

123. Ray Walser, *France's Search for a Battlefleet: Naval Policy and Naval Power, 1898-1914* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 4-5.

army as considerable as Germany's and a navy as powerful as the United Kingdom's—France's resources would not be enough. It would be the way to ruin.[124]

The way out of this conundrum was provided in the 1880s by a group of officers known as the *Jeune École* (Young School). Often portrayed as a new and heterodox strand of naval strategy, this group should more accurately be seen as part of a long nineteenth-century French tradition, emphasizing asymmetric warfare using new and disruptive technologies, as well as operating defensively and against enemy commerce.[125] As *Jeune École* sympathizer Lockroy noted, "We should not think of equaling the English fleet in power or in numbers. This doesn't mean that the struggle would be impossible for us. If England has more ships than we do and more crews, then it also has more things to protect, to guard, and to defend."[126] Under the *Jeune École*'s primary proponent, Vice Adm. Théophile Aube, whose leadership of the navy ministry was a short but impactful seventeen months (1886-87), experimentation with submarines, torpedo boats, torpedoes themselves, and the tactics for using such new technologies helped modernize the French navy in the face of fiscal pressure and foreign

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124. Édouard Lockroy, *La Défense navale* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1900), viii, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hnx9x5.

125. Boulaire, 223; Michel Depeyre, *Entre vent et eau: Un siècle d'hésitations tactiques et stratégiques, 1790-1890* (Paris: Economica, 2003), 106-9; and Theodore Ropp, "Continental Doctrines of Sea Power," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*, ed. Edward Mead Earle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), 446. I thank Jean-Marie Kowalski for the Depeyre reference. It was pointed out to *Jeune École* advocates that commerce raiding was tantamount to a knowing, deliberate, and willful violation of international law. The *Jeune École* accepted this criticism, but argued that self-preservation took priority over justice. Arne Røksund, *The* Jeune École*: The Strategy of the Weak*, History of War 43 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 25-35, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=468356#.

126. Lockroy, x.

competition.[127] In fact, France constructed no battleships in 1883-89; under the *Jeune École*'s influence, other powers followed suit and halted construction of new battleships as well.[128]

For the *Jeune École*, emphasis was placed on asymmetric solutions to creatively upset the status quo. An exemplar was the submarine: testing as far back as the 1860s had suggested that the submarine, while good in theory, was built too soon for the state of extant technology to make militarily effective.[129] Despite internal opposition, Aube pushed sub-surface experimentation forward in the 1880s.[130] The submarine showed strong staying power and was increasingly incorporated into French naval plans.[131] *Jeune École* advocates for a commerce-raiding strategy applauded new technologies like submarines and torpedoes; traditionalist opponents pointed out that commerce raiding had never won a war and that the new technologies were not yet as reliable as their advocates would suggest.[132] This debate pushed to the fore the disagreement between traditionalists, who favored a large battlefleet to take on the Triple Alliance of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Italy (but especially Italy), and the *Jeune École*, which favored commerce raiding to puncture the United Kingdom's naval pride.

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127. Boulaire, 224-25.

128. It was reported that Aube had threatened to resign if his battleship holiday were not approved by the Cabinet. Walser, 24. This battleship allergy peaked in 1887, the only year from 1858 (France's construction of the *Gloire*, the world's first ironclad) to 1922 (the first naval armaments treaty) in which no country in the world began construction of a battleship.

129. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 1:214.

130. Herbert C. Fyfe, *Submarine Warfare, Past and Present*, 2nd ed., ed. John Leyland (London: E. Grant Richards, 1907), 257-58, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b16586.

131. Røksund, 196; and Ropp, "Continental Doctrines," 453.

132. Fyfe, 259-62.

Despite the *Jeune École*'s relatively brief burst of power, its energy nonetheless caught London's attention. For Britain, the *Jeune École* and France's geographic position were headaches. The *Jeune École*'s focus on commerce raiding was a particularly acute threat to industrialized Britain: the United Kingdom had been relatively self-sufficient as late as the 1850s, but by the 1880s, however, thanks to economic specialization, Britain counted on imports for national sustenance.[133] From Britain's point of view, France's two coastlines represented French advantage, as it meant British shipping could be menaced in both the English Channel and the Mediterranean Sea.[134] For the first time, the world's leading navy adopted a multi-year construction program to better plan future fleet composition. Britain also adopted the famous two-power standard in 1889, a response to French strategic and technological vigor that seemed to blunt the Royal Navy's numerical superiority.[135]

The *Jeune École* was a star that burned brightly, however briefly, and whose gleam was seen clear across the Channel in Britain. Once again, the United Kingdom was sufficiently alarmed by French technological prowess to respond with programs of its own. Despite internal bickering and the burning national desire to recover Alsace and Lorraine, the French navy in the Third Republic's first few decades managed to maintain its traditional purpose as a force not to dominate, but to prevent domination on the seas.

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133. Rolf Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea: Naval Strategic Thought, the Ideology of Sea Power, and the Tirpitz Plan, 1875-1914*, Studies in Central European Histories (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 25; and Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy*, 213.

134. Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy*, 213.

135. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 178; and Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy*, 116-17, 206.

At the turn of the twentieth century, France coalesced around a moderate policy of both the *Jeune École*'s commerce-raiding strategy and a traditional battlefleet.[136] French naval planners correctly saw that Berlin and its Triple Alliance partners had to be the primary opponent against which to plan, both on land and at sea, even as Paris maintained that London's fleet was the standard by which its own was to be measured.[137] With a common adversary, Britain and France's nineteenth-century on-again/off-again alliance was made permanent in the Entente Cordiale of 1904, which was technically a mutual recognition of respective spheres of influence on five different continents. This would prove to be the last year France was naval No. 2, for in 1905, the Americans would pip the French for the second position (as measured by proportion of global primary warship tonnage).

Despite falling to third (and to fourth in 1911, thanks to Germany), the French navy was still part of a hybrid military that ranked among the world's more formidable powers.[138] In 1913, London and Paris agreed that, in case of war against Berlin, the Royal Navy would defend the North Sea, including France's northern coast, while the French navy would defend the Mediterranean, including British interests there.[139] This Anglo-French understanding powerfully illustrates just how differently the Pax Britannica's death would be from its birth a century prior.

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136. Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy*, 324, 330, 332; and [Henri] Salaün, *La Marine française*, La Troisième République de 1870 à nos jours (Paris: Les Éditions de France, 1934), 46.

137. Walser, 138.

138. Monaque, 357.

139. Ibid., 360. Indeed, the British foreign secretary began to view British and French interests as essentially the same, seeing Berlin's attempts to undermine Paris tantamount to an attempt to undermine London itself. Paul M. Kennedy, 283-84.

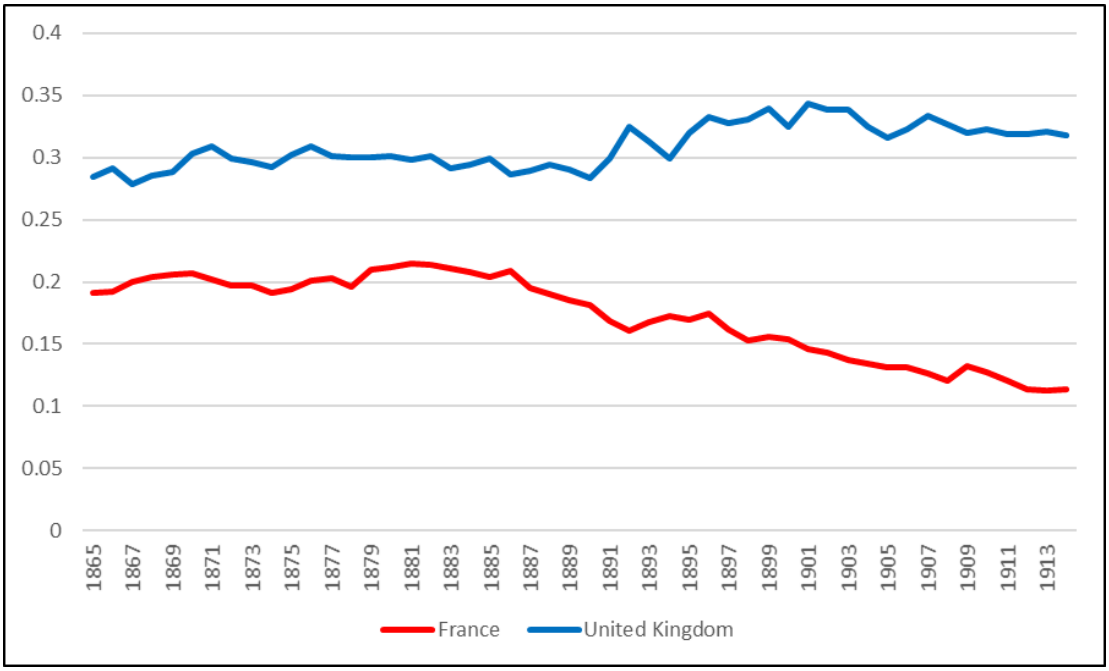

Figure 2.4. French and British proportions of global primary warship tonnage, 1865-1914. Data from Brian Benjamin Crisher and Mark Souva, "Power at Sea: A Naval Power Dataset, 1865-2011," *International Interactions* 40, no. 4 (August 2014): 602-29.

French naval development had a serious impact on the terms of the debate in the United Kingdom, as well as British responses. Technological asymmetry was key to French naval rejuvenation and, while quality ultimately did meet its limits, French efforts ensured that Britain's attempt to maintain the status quo in naval technology was continually upset, sewing enough doubt in the minds of British policymakers about the naval balance so as to give France breathing room and some sense of security across the Channel. Because of the French navy's ability to maintain a sizeable fleet and to continually disrupt the technological status quo, the British and French governments seemed to have reached an understanding by the mid-nineteenth century: the Royal Navy

maintained a numerical superiority, but respected its French counterpart and recognized it as a force not far from itself.[140]

Over the Seas: Empire and Glory

Investment persistence was coupled with threat diffusion: the French navy was busily deployed around the globe to claim, secure, defend, and maintain what would become the world's second largest empire. Expansion would show the world that France was, despite recent history, still among the world's great powers.[141] Beginning with the Bourbon Louis XVIII, planting, flying, and defending the flag abroad was a means for France to achieve some post-Napoleonic stature and satiate that inestimably French of obsessions: national amour-propre.[142] This manifested itself in the restoration of Fernando VII to the throne of Spain; aid to the Greeks fighting for their independence from the Ottoman Empire; attempts at establishing a foothold in the Americas; interventions in the Levant and North Africa under the Orléanist King Louis-Philippe, exhibited most clearly in the colonization of Algeria; and adventures under the Bonapartist Napoléon III as far apart as Mexico and Southeast Asia. One of Louis XVIII's first foreign acts was to reestablish the Levant naval station in September

140. Hamilton, 303-4.

141. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 1:20-21.

142. "France cannot be France without greatness. [To me], a certain anxious pride in our country came as second nature." —Charles de Gaulle, *War Memoirs*, vol. 1, *The Call to Honor, 1940-1942*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (New York: Viking Press, 1955), 3-4.

1815.[143] The Bourbons even reintroduced naval expeditions throughout the Southern Hemisphere, continuing their forebears' practice in the Age of Exploration.[144]

In one sense, the desire to acquire French glory and prestige abroad could be seen not only as an attempt to ape (but not unduly antagonize) the British Empire, but also as a lesson learned from the Napoleonic Wars: attempted French expansion landward into the heart of Europe would be met by united great-power resistance. French expansion across the oceans, however, would be less threatening and would allow Paris to more easily recover some of its standing. The construction of an overseas empire and the nineteenth-century logistical and technological requirements of a blue-water fleet would require a French navy that could sail the world and would necessitate colonial possessions. Remarking on the navy's particular connection to empire in France, Theodore Ropp writes that "the relationship between the navy and the colonial movement was closer than in any other European state. Naval officers were among the most ardent supporters of colonialism. Even after the colonial administration was finally separated from the Ministry of Marine in 1893, the navy retained sole responsibility for colonial defense."[145] Alain Boulaire goes so far as to argue that colonies were the principal reason why the European great powers bothered to have navies at all.[146]

One could also phrase Boulaire's point the other way around: the navy was a primary driver of French colonialism and even helps to explain why France ended up

143. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 1:20; and Sondhaus, 69.
144. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 1:23; and Tramond and Reussner, 21-24.
145. Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy*, 141.
146. Boulaire, 211, 230-35.

with some of the colonies that it did. As Robert Aldrich notes, the precipitant of general French expansion beyond Europe was oftentimes the search for naval bases: "The navy held an especially important place in expansion. . . . Many colonial acquisitions were chosen to afford the navy good harbors and facilities for provisioning."[147] It would be difficult to assert a unidirectional relationship between colonialism and hybridization: the navy not only played an active role in conquest, but it also chose places to conquer partly due to their ability to sustain a naval presence. This is not to say that all overseas conquests were driven by naval interests, nor were all French naval activities conducted with colonialism in mind. In practice, however, the French navy and the French empire advanced together.[148]

Portal's suggestion to expand French influence to other parts of the world would continue to be taken to heart long after his ministry. The first instance occurred in 1838-39, when France sailed a fleet to Veracruz, Mexico, to demand compensation and protection for French citizens, after various reports of looting of French-owned businesses.[149] Shortly after this first foray into Mexico, a spat with Argentina over

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147. Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion*, European Studies Series (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 131-32.

148. A further sign of the intimacy of the empire-navy relationship is evidenced from the 1920s, when, in anticipation of a smaller navy, a French admiral suggested that the empire be shrunk as well. Jean Meyer and Martine Acerra, *Histoire de la marine française: Des origines à nos jours* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 1994), 329.

149. And so this conflict's name: the Pastry War. It was France's successful use of the new Paixhans gun in this conflict that convinced the British they needed the same technology on their ships post-haste.

imprisoned French citizens and access to trade resulted in a fruitless two-year-long blockade that did not overthrow the country's dictator, as hoped.[150]

The objective of somehow coexisting alongside the United Kingdom while mimicking London's empire could have been made easier if the two powers enjoyed cordial bilateral relations overall. However, while the 1830s were relatively peaceful times across the Channel, the 1840s proved the opposite. The decade began with the Oriental Crisis in Egypt, whose ruler, Muhammad Ali Pasha, France had supported for some time.[151] Nominally the Ottoman Empire's governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali rebelled: by 1840, he had seized the Levant and gained the support of the defecting Ottoman navy. France was prepared to support Muhammad Ali and dispatched a squadron to Egypt. Alarmed at the prospect of a French-backed ruler seizing Anatolia and the Turkish Straits, the United Kingdom responded forcefully and demanded Egyptian withdrawal.[152] Without other great powers' support, France found itself isolated and backed down, especially since its army was engaged in Algeria and the navy was still in no position to challenge its British opponent.[153]

Broadly speaking, however, France's general approach was to take an indirect route to challenge British power. Southeast Asia furnishes an example: concerned with Britain's acquisition of Hong Kong as a commercial harbor and naval base, France sought to acquire its own post in the Far East. An attempt to take the island of Basilan in

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150. Tramond and Reussner, 30.

151. It was this Muhammad Ali who gifted the obelisk now standing in the Place de la Concorde.

152. Monaque, 285.

153. [Charles] Mangin and [Louis] Franchet d'Espèrey, *Histoire militaire et navale*, vol. 8, *Histoire de la nation française* (Paris: Société de l'Histoire Nationale and Librairie Plon, 1927), 274.

the Philippine archipelago was short-lived: Spain had already claimed it from the local sultan. The concession at Shanghai, China, was too small, consisting of ten Frenchmen (of whom half were the consul and his family).[154] This consul, Charles de Montigny, tried to negotiate a French base in Phu Quoc, Cambodia, which failed due to the opposition of Cambodia's overlord, Siam. Finally, in 1859, the Vietnamese murdered one too many Christians, and France took the opportunity to punish Vietnam by taking Saigon.[155] "France was now in possession of a major port, which promoters hoped would become the French Hong Kong; considering its strategic value, some observers labelled Saigon a French Gibraltar." In 1867, the French commander stationed at Saigon took it upon himself to annex the rest of South Vietnam.[156]

Napoléon III in particular saw the navy as "an indispensable instrument for the ambitious foreign policy that he intended to lead."[157] An admirer of the United Kingdom who bookended his reign with exile in Britain, Napoléon III placed special emphasis on the navy as an instrument for expanding and showing French great power. Napoléon III was well aware of the French navy's secondary status within both his country and the international system, and was realistic enough to not try and go toe to toe against British naval supremacy, but he did want "a dissuasive navy to hold its rank as the second

154. Aldrich, 83.

155. Ibid., 76-77. It should be noted that the nominal reasons given for French naval action in these examples may have been convenient pretexts for imperialist expansion.

156. Ibid., 78. French Indochina would be particularly dominated by naval officers in its colonial administration, prompting the British to nickname it the "quarterdeck government," the quarterdeck being the location of the ship's captain and colors. Martin, 233-34.

157. Monaque, 290.

maritime power and to enforce respect for the French flag on all the seas of the world."[158] The French fleet could still be a powerful tool of diplomacy.[159]

With this goal in mind, Napoléon III sought to create a global navy that, akin to its predecessors, could execute multiple missions in multiple places, but that would not cause too much alarm in the United Kingdom. Largely successful, the navy that existed by 1870 was one that could execute the three combat missions necessary to France: major battlefleet war, commerce raiding, and coastal defense of the metropole.[160] In addition, it could fly the flag around the world, police the far-flung empire, and engage in kinetic operations against those perceived as insulting French honor. The French navy was not the dominant naval power, but it was a service with a worldwide reach and the formidable arm of a hybrid great power and global empire.

To the emperor, global influence through the navy was something even his uncle would not have accomplished:

> The Empire needed a means of finding glory and material prosperity. Nothing could serve the desire for glory and material prosperity better than maritime expansion; it would be nearly as brilliant and infinitely less perilous than European territorial aggrandizement. On the sea, France could find a place in the world; by overseas expansion and increased foreign trade, France could have glory for her armies [sic] and prosperity for her people. The Napoleonic dream of the Second Empire, an empire of peace, glory and prosperity, could be achieved.[161]

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158. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 2:694; and Monaque, 290.
159. Sondhaus, 54.
160. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 2:694.
161. Franklin Whittelsey Wallin, "The French Navy during the Second Empire: A Study of the Effects of Technological Development on French Governmental Policy" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1953), 121-22.

Imperial expansion would be a triumph for all: French commerce would benefit by new markets, the French navy would have a robust mission and global presence, and French technological sophistication would be yet another reminder of the country's continuing great-power status.[162]

All this could be accomplished without leading to the sort of British response that the first Napoléon provoked, when the French Empire of his day was dismantled by the Royal Navy in piecemeal fashion. The third Napoléon would not make his uncle's mistake at sea, and his two-decade-long rule showed a French great power vigorously exerting itself on the world stage:

> In the 1840s, she [France] had been a serious contender in European waters [to Britain]. That remained twenty years later, but now, she was also a potent global rival. In the 1860s, her construction of frigates and lesser cruising vessels, the essential workhorses of a global naval power, was little inferior in number to British construction. She had also been the prime mover in the introduction to colonial waters of her greatest innovation, the ironclad, in the shape of the *cuirassé de station*.[163]

During the Second Empire, naval stations proliferated, flying the Tricolor and protecting French interests in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans.[164] In this time, the empire quadrupled in size to nearly four hundred thousand square miles.[165] It was French backing that created the Suez Canal, which was seen as a French riposte to the British-dominated route around the Cape of Good Hope at Africa's

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162. Ibid., 127.
163. Hamilton, 101.
164. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 2:783; and Martin, 179-80.
165. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 2:976. By comparison, the Hexagon is about two hundred thousand square miles.

southern end. The canal's opening in 1869, after a fifteen-year effort, was an "ecstatic" celebration of French national triumph.[166]

In the Empire's first year, France entered the Crimean War, joining the United Kingdom to war against Russia and to check the latter's expansion into western and central Asia. The war's trigger was jurisdiction over various religious minorities in the fading and Islamic Ottoman Empire, but the precipitant was Russia's growing might and obsession with breaking through the chokepoint that was the Ottoman-controlled Turkish Straits. The United Kingdom needed a continental power to aid in its defeat of the vast Russian army; France contributed both land and naval power, but focused on the former in an attempt to de-emphasize its naval development and not arouse post-war British concern.[167]

The geography of the conflict as a whole was one that demanded both inter-alliance and inter-service cooperation, so the French navy was still active. At Kerch, at Kinburn (notable as the first instance of ironclad warships engaged in action), and at Sevastopol, land and sea forces had to work together to prosecute battle plans in the littoral. Anglo-French bombardment of the island fortress of Sweaborg was so successful that some strategists concluded that warfare on land and at sea had at last fused together, that troops would be used extensively at sea, and that naval forces would play decisive

166. Emmanuelle Guenot, "Napoléon III and France's Colonial Expansion: National Grandeur, Territorial Conquests, and Colonial Embellishment, 1852-70," in *Crowns and Colonies: European Monarchies and Overseas Empires*, ed. Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2016), 215-16.

167. Wallin, 149-50.

roles in land warfare.[168] At the end of the three-year conflict, it could be said that French naval forces more than held their own: "The French navy had shown the ability to compete effectively in missions of force projection, and had held with a certain brilliance its rank as the second maritime power."[169] The prosecution of the conflict even suggested French naval advances had moved it ahead of the Royal Navy in some aspects, such as capital-ship steam propulsion, embodied by the *Napoléon*, the world's first steam battleship built as one (as opposed to converted). In a sign of the navy's contributions in the Crimean War, the emperor awarded three admiral's batons, equal to the number of marshal's batons handed out.[170]

The Crimean War would serve as merely the most prominent of a series of engagements that the Imperial French Navy would join throughout the world during the Second Empire; if the Empire was peace, as Napoléon III proclaimed, it was a sentiment honored in the breach.[171] Battesti counts seventeen separate military campaigns during the Empire's eighteen-year existence.[172] Close to home, France inserted itself into the Italian Risorgimento beginning in 1858, supporting Italian nationalists' fight to unify the peninsula in the face of Austrian (later Austro-Hungarian) dominance. While the French navy served largely as an auxiliary ferrying army troops to the Italian mainland, France's ability to repeatedly intervene in Italian affairs by way of the sea would not be forgotten by the new Italian state afterwards. On the other side of the world, France took Tahiti and

168. Hamilton, 126.
169. Monaque, 311.
170. Tramond and Reussner, 98-99.
171. Monaque, 311.
172. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 2:797.

its surrounding islands as a protectorate and naval base in 1842. From this paradisiacal perch, France expanded to cover eastern Polynesia, also claiming New Caledonia. The government proclaimed that this takeover "had as its goal to assure France the position in the Pacific that the interests of the military and commercial fleet require."[173]

France partnered with the United Kingdom to fight the Second Opium War in 1856-60; led a multinational naval force to protect the Catholic minority in Syria; returned to China to fight the Taiping rebels in 1862; purchased from the Ottoman Empire in the same year the port of Obock at the mouth of the Red Sea for use as a coaling station; joined a multinational force in 1863 to punish the Japanese Choshu daimyo for firing on Western ships in the Strait of Shimonoseki on the emperor's orders (but defying the shogun's); and launched a punitive expedition against Korea for the execution of French Catholics, such expedition ultimately retreating in the face of stiff Korean resistance against an isolated French force.[174]

Lest one think Napoléon III limited his vision to the Old World, the New was not immune from his affection either, as a disastrous adventure in Mexico highlights. France landed forces on Mexico's Gulf Coast in late 1861, ostensibly to compel resumption of debt repayments. Sensing an opportunity to establish a Catholic and Latin monarchy to balance the Protestant and Anglo-Saxon US democracy, Napoléon III partnered with Mexican conservatives to invite Archduke and Prince Maximilian, younger brother of Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria, to become Mexican emperor under French

173. Aldrich, 70-71.
174. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 2:857, 813, 897-900, 950-52, 962-68, 970-74, 995.

protection.[175] This state of affairs lasted until a reunified America's hostility compelled Napoléon III to withdraw his military protection.[176] Within months, Maximilian was executed and his empire with him.

Napoléon III's frenetic globe-trotting did not go unnoticed in London, which sometimes viewed all the activity across the Channel with great worry. When a new ministry entered government and took an account of matters in 1859, First Lord of the Admiralty Sir John Pakington Bt. (later Lord Hampton) reported that Her Majesty's Government had undertaken a review of the Royal and Imperial French Navies and discovered that France was already on par with Britain and set to overpass it.[177] During Pakington's speech, France was in fact readying for war against Austria on the side of the Italians and was building up forces for that conflict. Nonetheless, Pakington's speech set off a new panic: concern grew that France was simply arming itself against Britain covertly.[178]

Among the various grandees warning of British unpreparedness and French hostility were Vice Adm. Charles Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke; former Lord High Chancellor the Lord Lyndhurst; former Governor-General of India the Earl of Ellenborough; and diplomat John Caradoc, Lord Howden.[179] How deeply affected British

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175. One may wonder how a group of Mexicans, through French intervention, came to invite an Austrian to become their ruler. The fascinating (and unsurprisingly circuitous) tale is recounted elsewhere.

176. Monaque, 317. The United States was also piqued at Maximilian's support of Confederate rebels.

177. Cobden, 64.

178. Lynn M. Case, *French Opinion on War and Diplomacy during the Second Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954), 97.

179. Cobden, 80, 82. For the speeches themselves, see UK Parliament, *Hansard*, July 1, 1859, vol. 154, columns 517-19, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1859/jul/01/question#column_517; UK

public sentiment was can be seen from a meeting of the innocuous Agricultural Society, at which a speaker was asked, "How much will you charge the French for your corn when they land?" The speaker replied to rousing applause: "They shall pay for it with their blood." "The assumption everywhere was—founded on the declarations made in Parliament—that France was surpassing us [the United Kingdom] as a naval power; that she was our equal in the largest ships, and was now providing herself with an iron-cased fleet, in which description of vessels we were quite unprepared, and that we must, therefore, be ready to fight for freedom on our own soil."[180]

After the Franco-Prussian War, France did retrench quite a bit in foreign ventures, and bickering among naval officers over whether Britain or Italy was the bigger threat lowered the urgency of achieving glory overseas. Colonial ventures were seen as distant follies made at the expense of attention to the home front.[181] Diplomatically, France was perceived as withdrawing from its traditional sphere of influence in the Levant, although cultural and economic influence remained robust.[182] Even possession of Algeria—Napoléon III had once declared that he was emperor of the Arabs as much as he was emperor of the French—was seen as a questionable commitment.

Parliament, *Hansard*, July 1, 1859, vol. 154, column 528, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1859/jul/01/question-1#column_528; and UK Parliament, *Hansard*, July 5, 1859, vol. 154, column 645, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1859/jul/05/the-national-defences#column_645. Lyndhurst's remarks are particularly entertaining: UK Parliament, *Hansard*, July 5, 1859, vol. 154, column 626, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1859/jul/05/the-national-defences#column_626.

180. Cobden, 95.

181. Tramond and Reussner, 321.

182. Ibid., 614.

But the Scramble for Africa begun in the early 1880s rejuvenated French enthusiasm for foreign sightseeing, which was also encouraged by German Chancellor Otto, Prince von Bismarck, who was uncharacteristically naïve enough to believe that supporting France's colonial ambitions would help Paris to forget Alsace and Lorraine.[183] Heeding the global trend, France began paying more attention to colonization again: success in the Sino-French War of 1884-85 forced China to recognize French interests in Southeast Asia.[184] In the Pacific, France and the United Kingdom decided upon joint sovereignty of the New Hebrides, which lasted until its independence as Vanuatu in 1980. Crossing the Indian Ocean, the French entered Madagascar in 1883, finally conquering it in 1895, Britain ceding to French influence in that part of the world.[185]

Indeed, it was in Africa where the French renewed their vows to imperialism with the most ardent passion.[186] It was once again the navy that initiated affairs and brought military force to bear. Senegal, largely ignored in years prior, was brought back under more attentive French administration; farther south, the colony in Congo was established. Despite disagreements with the United Kingdom over who exercised influence over what parts of the continent, by the end of the 1880s, France had established a firm grip on the entire West African region, pushing ever inwards through Central Africa.[187] It was this

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183. Erich Brandenburg, *From Bismarck to the World War: A History of German Foreign Policy, 1890-1914*, trans. Annie Elizabeth Adams (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 9-10; and Nathan N. Orgill, "Between Coercion and Conciliation: Franco-German Relations in the Bismarck Era, 1871-90," in *A History of Franco-German Relations in Europe: From "Hereditary Enemies" to Partners*, ed. Carine Germond and Henning Türk (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 54-55.

184. Sondhaus, 75-76.

185. Tramond and Reussner, 375-78.

186. Røksund, 55.

187. Tramond and Reussner, 383-87.

expansion in which one can contextualize the push up Sudan to the River Nile, where France realized that its grossly outnumbered force at Fashoda could not possibly be delivered with any success. Nevertheless, Paris consolidated control over nearly the entirety of the African continent's northwest bulge, a sizeable contribution to an empire that would grow to touch three oceans and span all seven continents.

As Battesti observes, "Because of the navy, France was the sole power, with Great Britain, to have a global policy. Its very active diplomacy and its interventions in non-European spaces prevented Great Britain from exercising an exclusive monopoly along the African and Chinese coasts."[188] The late nineteenth century represented the culmination of nearly nine decades of French imperial rebuilding, largely intended to replicate British overseas power without agitating British feeling. It was a largely successful endeavor: "energetic and bold imperialists," the Third Republic would, in its first thirty years, expand the French Empire by 3.5 million square miles—the world's second largest empire, grown and defended by the world's second most powerful navy.[189]

France was able to do so much in so many places because it generally sought to avoid antagonizing Britain. A. J. P. Taylor notes that France and the United Kingdom were often partners in a common civilizing mission: "Though conflicts arose outside Europe, conflicts aggravated by blunders on both sides, there was enough common sentiment to ensure that these would be settled finally by negotiation, not by war."[190]

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188. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 2:1091.

189. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 2000), 219-20.

190. Taylor, 285.

France managed to strike out on its own, pursue its foreign policy as it saw fit, and even partner with Britain on ad hoc imperialist enterprises. While not all foreign ventures ended successfully, the French navy's ability to project force and complement formidable land forces made it possible for France to pursue the vigorous foreign policy that it did.

The End of the Pax

For France, acknowledgment of the infeasibility of matching the United Kingdom drove its century-long goal of equipping a navy that would somehow be both survivable and useful.[191] Throughout the century, despite various continental concerns, France persistently invested in its naval force by relying on technological asymmetry to destabilize the naval armament status quo. France no longer sought to defeat Britain, but to deter it. France complemented its investment persistence through imperial conquest: sending its navy out to places not key to the dominant naval power's interests or for purposes that would not antagonize the dominant naval power. Exceptions did exist; I have mentioned them. But against these contretemps, one ought to consider such weighty ventures as the Crimean War, the repeated wars against China, and all the other instances in which French power—usually manifested in naval form—was acknowledged and respected around the globe, and not harassed by British naval power, as it had been in the first decade and a-half of the 1800s.

I have argued that investment persistence and threat diffusion help explain France's success as a continental great power turned hybrid great power. I would also

191. One might view this as an example of the stimulating pressure of blows. See Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 2: 100-112.

note some other contributory factors. First, British threat perception was ameliorated somewhat by London's hybridization in the form of increasing its land power: Britain moved in a hybridizing direction itself by strengthening the army and shoring up coastal land defenses. Through a little hybridization of its own, London could feel a little more secure too.[192]

Second, united Germany's rise meant that France gradually appeared as less of a threat to the United Kingdom: as Germany attempted its own hybridization, Britain subsequently grew just as worried about Germany at sea as France was worried about Germany on land. London and Paris would then depend on each other to provide *both* formidable land and naval power to bear against Berlin.[193] This situation of multiple great powers in geographic proximity attempting hybridization meant that France and the United Kingdom would become natural partners in the early twentieth century against a Germany that threatened them both, but in different ways. Hybridization was thus a curse and a blessing for France, contributing both to the cause and the solution of French geostrategic problems. The Great War would close the doors on Anglo-French political enmity, sealed with the blood of two million men soldered in the furnace of the Western Front.

1914-Present: French Hybridization in a New Era

In the summer of 1914, Europe dissolved into cataclysmic war. Per a 1913 agreement, the Royal Navy took charge of the North Sea and English Channel, while the

192. Hamilton, 304.
193. Ibid., 297.

French navy took primary responsibility for the Mediterranean.[194] On the whole, the French navy's contribution to victory was relatively small, as evidenced indirectly by service losses: against the army's 1.4 million casualties, the navy lost 11,500. At war's end, Parliament "'forgot'" to mention the navy when it formally offered the Republic's thanks to the armed forces.[195]

France emerged from World War I on the victors' side, but the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty put France in a foul mood. The French were incensed upon discovering that they had to accept a capital-ship tonnage limit equal to the Italians (175,000 tons), ranking fourth behind third-place Japan (315,000 tons). A compromise was brokered, whereby France accepted the limit in tonnage, but was not limited in the number of vessels it could build.[196] French naval war plans continued to focus on Germany and Italy, with the broader strategic goals of defending the Hexagon and maintaining access to the colonies.[197] Most of the French navy would not make it through the Second World War. The Franco-German armistice of 1940 had stated that all French naval vessels not needed for colonial administration had to remain in port under German or Italian supervision, but would not be used for fighting.[198] In 1942, the Germans attempted to take over the French fleet, attacking the main naval base at Toulon. This prompted

194. Boulaire, 239-40.
195. Monaque, 383.
196. Meyer and Acerra, 327-29.
197. Gérard Le Bouëdec, "Résistances et continuités," in Cabantous, Lespagnol, and Péron, 584.
198. Boulaire, 263.

French officers and sailors to dramatically scuttle their ships, sending the bulk of their own navy to the bottom of the port.[199]

Post-war French grand strategy has largely been an exercise in reassurance of self and reassertion of status. It was President Charles de Gaulle who set the tone: France was to pursue a grand strategy that would affirm its status as a great power, and that meant executing an autonomous defense and foreign policy. The navy was a key component, as embodied in the ballistic missile submarine (SSBN). In 1965, with the SSBN program underway, de Gaulle asserted, "The navy finds itself today—and doubtless for the first time in our history—in the foreground of France's martial power, and this will become truer with each passing day in the future."[200]

In addition to the nuclear deterrent, the navy has had to defend French prestige and national interests abroad. France has sought a force that looks like a great-power navy and that can sail the world to advance government policy. For example, construction still emphasizes capital ships. France has embarked on a number of overseas ventures, from the attempted retention of Indochina to the Suez Crisis, to the rancorous divorce of Algeria. Relatively more successful endeavors have occurred in the Balkans and the Persian Gulf.[201] Acting independently on the world stage has given the French

199. Ibid., 272-75.

200. Quoted in Monaque, 464; see also Boulaire, 293-94. Nuclear weapons testing in France's Pacific possessions was also used as justification to hold on to some rump of the colonial empire. Pierre Hassner, "Perceptions of the Soviet Threat in the 1950s and the 1980s: The Case of France," in *The Changing Western Analysis of the Soviet Threat*, ed. Carl-Christoph Schweitzer (New York: St. Martin Press, 1990), 179.

201. Boulaire, 284-86, 290-91, 300-302.

"both a degree of unity and a renewed measure of self-esteem, which had been badly shaken in the preceding years."[202]

France's liberal exercise of individuality since 1945 stands out among the other non-superpower great powers, but it also shows that the country's geopolitical reach sometimes exceeds its grasp. The French navy of today remains among the world's largest and most advanced, but it clearly faces constraints. It is still the backbone of the national nuclear deterrent, to be sure, and it can still exercise global power projection, but only in small, limited ways, circumscribed by what the national budget will allow and, as the Suez Crisis showed, by what its superpower ally will tolerate.

Conclusion

France has always had an idea of itself in the modern era's unified international system that has necessarily been hybrid, even if Frenchmen themselves have not always recognized it: the dominant continental power in Europe, with a sphere of influence at the global level.[203] No less a Frenchman than de Gaulle stated, "France without a great navy would not remain France. It is one's duty to form it [the navy], to inspire it, to use it as an instrument of the national interest."[204] For hexagonal France, balancing its landward and seaward commitments has never been easy or simple.

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202. Alan Ned Sabrosky, "France," in *The Defense Policies of Nations: A Comparative Study*, ed. Douglas J. Murray and Paul R. Viotti, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 208.

203. Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 1:10.

204. Quoted in Boulaire, 293. One may compare this with the cavalier attitudes of some of de Gaulle's predecessors, who saw the navy as a mere luxury. See Michèle Battesti, *La Marine au XIXe siècle: Interventions extérieures et colonies* (Paris: Éditions Du May, 1993), 84; Battesti, *La Marine de Napoléon III*, 1:1; Meyer and Acerra, 195; Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy*, 2, 32; and Étienne Taillemite, *L'Histoire ignorée de la marine française* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1988), 343.

Yet France could be—and was—successful at sea. Despite the strong post-Napoleonic headwind blowing against it, France not only managed to have a leading navy after 1815, but to sustain it for the next hundred years. As late as 1901, First Lord of the Admiralty the Earl of Selborne admitted, "I do not think that we can safely claim any superiority for our ships over the modern French designs or for our guns and crews over the French."[205] Summarizing a century of French exertions on both land and sea, a British observer remarked in 1903, "With a courage that is worthy of admiration, the French people have sought to meet the demands of a large army and of the increased navy, which the changing situation in Europe has seemed to demand of them."[206] The demands were heavy, but the French rose to the challenge.

It may surprise those who think of France as a land power or in continental terms that Paris' investment in its navy from 1801 onwards has broadly been persistent and substantial. To be clear, it has not generally matched the funding received by the army, but it has been enough to support a fighting fleet in the top tier of the world's navies for the majority of these past 220 years. I have shown in this chapter that investment persistence served as the bedrock upon which a globally influential French naval capability could be constructed. From the First Republic through the First Empire, the Restoration, the July Monarchy, the Second Republic, the Second Empire, the Third Republic, the Fourth Republic, and the present-day Fifth Republic, France has

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205. UK Cabinet Office, Photographic Copies of Cabinet Papers, 1880-1916, CAB 37/56/8 (1901), http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017.12/1326176.

206. Archibald S. Hurd, "French Friendship and Naval Economy." *The Fortnightly Review* 74 (July-December 1903): 660.

persistently invested in a navy that could count among the world's best. With the exception of the deep but brief split between Vichy and Free, France has generally had a navy worthy of it.

Technological asymmetry has been a common thread running through the post-Napoleonic French navy: from steam power to nuclear power, France has sought qualitative advantages to deter adversaries. This persistent investment in security has, in turn, allowed France to more boldly set its own course in foreign policy, whether in colonialism's heyday or in the anti-colonial world that has followed. In the nearly two and one-quarter centuries examined in this chapter, when investment persistence and threat diffusion are simultaneously present, French power has waxed, and when investment persistence and threat diffusion are not simultaneously present, French power has waned.

Not only did a hybrid military allow France to hold its own on the world stage, but the robust naval force that France built allowed the country to expand its horizons and maintain the practical benefits and symbolic honors accruing to a Great Power. The French navy was strong enough to prevent British action against the French Hexagon and to stymie any unilateral British domination of the seas, despite what the common impression otherwise suggests. The French navy helped build the world's second largest empire (which helped build the navy in turn) and reaped for the metropole the riches of imperialism. The presence or absence of investment persistence and threat diffusion is a major explanation for when France was a hybrid power and how it achieved that status.

Chapter 3

"Too Large to Die Gloriously": Germany's Hybridization as a Great Power

> We cannot have both the greatest army and the biggest navy. We cannot weaken the army, for our destiny will be decided on land.
>
> —Bernhard, Prince von Bülow

At the heart of *Mitteleuropa* sits Germany. The country's present borders date only to 1990, though German states of various geographic contours and political structures can be traced back centuries. And from the day Germania entered history through Julius Caesar's *Seven Commentaries on the Gallic War*, its lands have been contested ground. Indeed, it was out of one such particularly bloody, interminable contest—a war that shook Christendom, ravaged the Holy Roman Empire, and ensnared the neighbors—that there emerged the Westphalian peace, that reputed milestone of international relations.[207]

While Germany has only two coasts, split by the Jutland peninsula, it shares land borders with nine countries in all directions (see figure 3.1). No state wholly on the European continent has so many landward neighbors and, while today's borders lack an ancient pedigree, the present-day geopolitical configuration still bears the imprint of a centuries-long German anxiety, to wit: the deep knowledge of and long experience with

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207. In actuality, territorial sovereignty as it is understood today was enshrined at the 1815 Congress of Vienna. See Jordan Branch, *The Cartographic State: Maps, Territory, and the Origins of Sovereignty*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 127 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 125-30; Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 309-10; and Samuel E. Finer, "State-building, State Boundaries, and Border Control: An Essay on Certain Aspects of the First Phase of State-building in Western Europe, Considered in the Light of the Rokkan-Hirschman Model," *Social Science Information* 13, nos. 4-5 (August 1974): 79-126, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F053901847401300407.

predatory powers converging in Central Europe from both east and west. “Germany and the Germans have always found themselves sandwiched in a situation not of their choosing. . . . The Germans, whatever their history lessons at school, have always found it difficult to forget that being in the centre has its price.”[208]

Figure 3.1. Germany in its geostrategic context

208. Michael Stürmer, “A Nation State against History and Geography: The German Dilemma,” in *Escape into War? The Foreign Policy of Imperial Germany*, ed. Gregor Schöllgen, German Historical Perspectives 6 (Oxford: Berg, 1990), 66.

The Germans have long been preoccupied with continental intrigues and, while inhabitants on the coast, such as the Hanseatic citizens, were by no means ignorant of the maritime world, the nation(-state) as a whole has tended to focus on land power in the form of a competent army. This tradition can be seen most powerfully in Prussia, from King Friedrich II (the Great), who launched his state onto the world stage, to Field Marshal Helmuth, Count von Moltke, who helped unite other German states around an enlarged Prussia to form a unified German Empire. It was the Prussian army that took Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark, that knocked Austria from its perch as the leading German polity, and that, in beating France, finally created a political reality called "Germany." The Prussian army was the state's creator and protector, and it was Prussia's land forces that formed the bulk of the federal army in the German Empire. At unification in 1871, the Prussian/German army's history was glorious, its ethos admired, its maneuvers feared.

The reputation of Germany's navy at the empire's founding was rather less commanding. The institution could trace its roots back only four years, to the North German Confederation's constitution of 1867—the new Germany seemed to have no naval heritage of which to speak. Unlike the army, the navy played no role in the state's unification, nor did Germany or any of its predecessor states have any colonial ventures that required naval power.[209] Rolf Hobson summarizes the navy's influence on national

209. Rolf Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea: Naval Strategic Thought, the Ideology of Sea Power, and the Tirpitz Plan, 1875-1914*, Studies in Central European Histories (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 110-11.

life before the 1890s: "Public opinion ignored it; politicians did not care about it; the army looked down its nose at it."[210]

This chapter is about how the German navy, with such a mean pedigree, rose to become one of the chief obsessions of great-power politics in a dramatically short period of time. The German Empire was founded in 1871 with a navy that seemed more novelty or trinket than instrument of statecraft. The empire would collapse in 1918 with a navy that was modern, muscular, and feared—and that spent most of the war sitting in port. When sailors were finally ordered to sail to uphold national honor after the war had already been lost, they mutinied and sparked the revolts that would lead to the empire's dissolution.

The story of Germany's naval ambition and its hybridization attempt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a familiar one to any International Relations scholar or naval historian. The historical events presented herein will not be unfamiliar, but they will be couched in terms of my theory's two factors, investment persistence and threat diffusion. I argue that, while German hybridization was certainly not the first cause of Anglo-German tensions (imperialist rivalry was, as will be shown), it was the sticking point that kept Anglo-German relations in a disagreeable state and prevented the two powers from mending their relations in the early twentieth century. But for Germany's continued insistence on hybridization, Berlin and London would most likely have resolved their differences to mutual satisfaction. So, while German hybridization was not the initial cause of poor relations, it was the most important reason for the bilateral

210. Ibid., 132.

relationship's continued deterioration. Imperialist rivalry led to German hybridization, which prevented Anglo-German relations from improving and, in fact (coupled with threat concentration), worsened bilateral ties. Poor relations led to hybridization, but hybridization reinforced poor relations and, more than any other single factor, kept those poor relations from getting better.

Whereas the previous chapter showed that, contrary to the prevailing wisdom, France deserves to be interpreted as a successful hybridizer, this chapter shows that, consistent with the prevailing wisdom, Germany deserves to be interpreted as a failed hybridizer. However, it is not simply a case of Germany failing at both investment persistence and threat diffusion; rather, Germany succeeded at the former, but failed miserably at the latter. It is not enough to persistently invest in naval development; one must diffuse the threat that one's growing navy poses. This chapter highlights, through threat diffusion's absence, this variable's critical role, even if investment persistence is robust. I begin with a brief discussion of the German Empire's first decades. The bulk of the chapter then focuses on the critical period from the 1890s through World War I, followed by a summary of Germany's post-1918 experience.

1871-90: Bismarck and the Beginning of Empire

The baroque opulence of the Palace of Versailles' Hall of Mirrors in which the German Empire proclaimed itself was an overly grand setting for such an arriviste's debut. While army regiments figured prominently in the crowded gallery on the day, if any naval officer or sailor were present, he probably would have been hidden by the

room's chiaroscuro, and just as well. The Imperial Navy was small and unremarkable, a mere extension of the army: "Strategically, the chief of the General Staff, General Helmuth von Moltke, organized the navy as he organized a defensive sector on land: the navy was merely the part of the army that happened to watch the sea frontier."[211] Simultaneously, conservatives in the legislature regarded the navy as "a dangerous competitor with the more imperative claims of the army. The naval estimates were submitted to severe pruning."[212] Chancellor Otto, Prince von Bismarck (1871-90), saw the navy as a tool of limited use, both politically and geographically. To the chancellor, the navy was simply one facet of his balance-of-power politics vis-à-vis France and the United Kingdom, and he did not consider a global role for it, as British and French policymakers did for theirs.[213]

Counter to this view was the opinion that a newly unified Germany, having taken its seat among the great powers, needed to build a navy and to colonize an empire. Given the geopolitical zeitgeist of the times—imperialist and social Darwinist, as exemplified by the Scramble for Africa—there existed a constituency that pushed Berlin to acquire an empire and to build a navy to protect both that empire and the commerce that would flow between metropole and colonies. As Prince-Adm. Adalbert of Prussia put it, "For a

211. Theodore Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy, 1871-1904*, ed. Stephen S. Roberts (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 28.

212. Charles Sanford Terry, *German Sea-Power* (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), 8.

213. Hobson, 116.

growing people, there is no prosperity without expansion, no expansion without an oversea policy, and no oversea policy without a navy."[214]

From the beginning, therefore, the navy and empire were intimately intertwined, conceptually and politically. Mary Evelyn Townsend writes, "The desire to enhance the importance of their service to the nation made German naval officers enthusiastic recipients of social Darwinist and imperialist ideas. . . . German navalism, more than in any other country, grew out of an imperialist ideology of undefined 'expansion without object.'"[215] Carl-Axel Gemzell echoes Townsend: "The essential instrument for colonial expansion was the navy; thus, colonial and naval interests were closely related to each other. The *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* (German Colonial League), founded in 1888, took a very active part in the propaganda for a bigger fleet."[216] Woodruff D. Smith summarizes the symbiotic relationship in similar fashion: "The navy had a vested interest in colonial acquisitions, since colonies could be used to justify a more powerful fleet in order to protect them. It was possible to reverse the argument once the navy had started to expand by claiming that more colonies were needed as naval bases. . . . The Colonial

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214. Quoted in Mary Evelyn Townsend, *The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire, 1884-1918* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 57. Townsend misidentifies Adalbert as *Albrecht*, Adalbert's first cousin.

215. Hobson, 112.

216. Carl-Axel Gemzell, *Organization, Conflict, and Innovation: A Study of German Naval Strategic Planning, 1888-1940*, Lund Studies in International History 4 (Lund, Sweden: Scandinavian University Books, 1973), 63.

Society officially favored naval expansion, and connections between a large fleet and a large colonial empire seemed natural to the procolonial public."[217]

Bismarck felt imperialism to be a distraction that could upset his careful balancing act among the great powers. "A colonial policy involved expense and friction with other Powers; . . . it would interfere with the attainment of German security in Europe by means of concentration upon the strengthening of internal resources, and the maintenance of friendship with England."[218] However, by the 1880s, pressure began mounting on the German government to get into the imperialist game: "Not only were colonies being viewed in general in a much more favourable light . . . , but there were growing up within German society powerful pressure groups who were articulating the pro-imperialist message and asking the government for assistance."[219]

There was a sudden volte-face from the Iron Chancellor in the middle 1880s, when Bismarck answered such calls for government assistance and approved new German possessions in various parts of Oceania and sub-Saharan Africa. The United Kingdom was dealing with a variety of domestic and foreign policy problems simultaneously, and Germany saw an opportunity to extract concessions from Britain in return for not throwing its diplomatic weight into behind other great powers. For the United Kingdom, letting Germany into specific parts of East and West Africa, as well as

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217. Woodruff D. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 126, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1107602&query=.

218. Bismarck would repeatedly cite "friction with other Powers" as the reason for rejecting many other imperialist adventures. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980), 169-70; and Townsend, 58, 67.

219. Kennedy, 168.

New Guinea and the Samoan islands, seemed like a bargain.[220] British prime minister William Ewart Gladstone went so far as to wish Germany the best of luck with its colonial ambitions.[221] Bismarck thus saw limited imperialism as a way to extract concessions from the British, while placating some domestic interests.

A typically clever Bismarckian exploitation of balance-of-power politics is how Germany began to play the imperialist game. Bismarck's imperialist ventures were gradual and tentative, conducted in the knowledge that Germany's latecomer status meant that its activities abroad should not excite the concern of other great powers (particularly the United Kingdom), but rather, required their approval or acquiescence.[222] The veteran statesman did not set out to build an empire for imperialism's sake and he realized that, as growing German interests inevitably required state protection and made imperialism more attractive, it was all the more necessary to tread carefully.[223]

Bismarck and the adroitness he brought to German foreign policy would not last much longer: Emperor Wilhelm I died in March 1888; his son and successor, Friedrich III, followed his father to the grave ninety-nine days later; in turn, Friedrich's son, Wilhelm II, ascended the throne in June. In his second year as emperor, the second Wilhelm—a far different character from the first—would jettison Bismarck and steer the ship of state on a course quite different from what his grandfather's chancellor had taken. The German Empire's first two decades had seen a carefully balanced and opportunistic

220. Kennedy, 181, 199; and Townsend, 105-6.
221. Townsend, 111.
222. Townsend, 67.
223. Kennedy, 176.

foreign policy, one that might have been risky at times, but never reckless, and whose reward was national unification and great-power respectability. With the old chancellor dismissed from office and a new emperor in the palace, Germany from 1890 onwards would be increasingly influenced by the imperialist and naval lobbies that Bismarck had tried to keep at bay, with consequences that would prove fatal to the country of his creation.

1890-1918: Towards a Place in the Sun

The trials and tribulations of post-Bismarckian Germany are well known, as is the Great War in which those travails culminated. Unlike in the previous chapter, I do not here critique the prevailing wisdom or argue for a new interpretation of history per se. Instead, what may appear to be familiar history will be revisited in the context of my theory's focus on the roles of investment persistence and threat diffusion for a continental great power's military hybridization. In particular, this section highlights the pivotal importance of threat diffusion. It shows that Germany invested persistently and robustly in a navy. However, such investment persistence was not coupled with threat diffusion, and so the growing fleet in German naval bases remained there—with little logical alternative explanation other than that it was designed to threaten the British homeland (which it was). This proverbial dagger pointed at Britannia's throat proved to be the sticking point in Anglo-German diplomatic correspondence, negotiations, royal tête-à-têtes, and state visits throughout the two decades preceding July 1914.

It was a sense of threat or, more accurately, frustrated ambition that caused Germany to embark on the path that it did. Bismarck's immediate successor was Leo, Count von Caprivi, who served from 1890 to 1894.[224] His view of the navy was not dissimilar from Bismarck's: "I have always held the opinion that the Navy must be kept within narrow limits, as narrow as our situation permits." Caprivi was not a Mahanian convert and, in Germany's geostrategic context, saw battleships as forming a part of the defense of and operations in coastal areas, important for ensuring that vital imports would not be interdicted.[225] Caprivi argued, "We do not need the armored ships to seek adventure abroad but to ensure our existence in a land war; for if we cannot count on imports during a war, our existence can be dangerously threatened."[226] Caprivi was still thinking of the navy fundamentally in terms of Europe, not the wider world, and in purely functional terms within a wartime scenario, as opposed to thinking more broadly about a navy's general purpose. He hung on to Bismarck's colonies because they were already there and saw them merely as useful pawns in playing the balance of power to maintain Germany's position in Europe.

Wilhelm II saw things differently: he desired more colonial acquisitions to expand his empire and transform Germany from a dominant power on the Continent into a world power.[227] Out of this ambition emerged a more assertive German foreign policy known as *Weltpolitik* ("World Politics"), an expansionist, imperialist, and nationalist strategy that

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224. Caprivi served as chief of the Admiralty in 1883-88 while a general in the army.
225. Hobson, 117-25.
226. Quoted in ibid., 125.
227. Townsend, 179-80.

would finally give Germany all the trappings of a modern great power—including a globe-spanning empire and the navy it justified. As the emperor stated modestly: "My grandfather founded the empire, my father was a victor in the great battles [of the three wars of German unification]; it is my duty to the nation to create for it a place in the world."[228] To accomplish this, the German navy was to play a pivotal role: against a seemingly hostile British Empire, the navy as a projection of maritime force was to be the key to Germany's destiny.[229]

One problem with Weltpolitik that soon became evident was that, given Germany's relatively late arrival to the imperialist scramble for colonies, there were not very many places left in the world on which to plant the German flag. This was evident in Bismarck's day and, as noted above, the Iron Chancellor had gone out of his way to not unduly antagonize the United Kingdom. But, due in part to its empire's sheer size, Britain seemed to stand in the way wherever German influence and interests tried to expand.[230] So admitted Cecil Spring Rice, serving in the British Embassy in Berlin from 1895 to 1898: "The sensitive point is this, that the expansion of Germany is banned in Europe and that, out of Europe, Germany encounters England everywhere."[231] Upon being told in 1885 that some recent British annexations in Africa were not because of a desire to check

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228. Quoted in ibid., 219n4.

229. Dirk Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I*, The United States in the World (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 58, https://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2457/lib/upenn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=3138295&query=.

230. Kennedy, 175.

231. Quoted in Wm. Roger Louis, "Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa, 1884-1919," in *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, ed. Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 25. Later Sir Cecil Spring Rice, this diplomat also wrote what would become the lyrics to that great patriotic hymn, "I Vow to Thee, My Country."

Germany, but simply because those annexed territories were essential to British interests due to their proximity to other British possessions, Bismarck retorted that this logic meant the entire world could be annexed by the United Kingdom.[232]

The specific incident often cited for the beginning of Anglo-German antagonism and of the navy-centric manner in which Germany pursued Weltpolitik is the 1895 Jameson Raid and Kruger Telegram. British colonial Leander Starr Jameson (later Sir Leander Starr Jameson Bt.) led a private army from the British Cape Colony into the neighboring Transvaal to incite rebellion by the British residents against the Boers who administered that country.[233] The raid was a rather comical failure, though it would prove a precipitant of the Boer War four years later, and London quickly disowned Jameson's adventure.

Shortly after New Year's Day 1896, Wilhelm II sent a telegram to the Transvaal president, Paul Kruger, congratulating him on repelling Jameson's raid and implying that Germany would have sent aid had the raid been known of beforehand. The telegram was seen in London as gross interference in a British sphere of influence. The Kruger Telegram would merely be the first of many instances in which the German emperor's tactlessness engendered annoyance at best and, at worst, caused real diplomatic consequences.[234] The fact that the British in southern Africa were already concerned

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232. Kennedy, 175.

233. Jameson after his raid is whom Rudyard Kipling had in mind when he composed "If—."

234. The circumstances surrounding the telegram's wording and who actually drafted it are more complicated; in short, Wilhelm II did not write it, but he still approved it and had it sent in his name. It appears that the telegram was also meant to arouse German public support for a new naval bill that was about to go before the Reichstag; apparently, neither the emperor nor his counsellors bothered to consider the telegram's effect on British opinion. See Friedrich von Holstein to Paul von Hatzfeldt, April 12, 1897

about a growing German presence in the region made the telegram appear even more maleficent than otherwise.[235] Remarked one local British colonial politician: "We are told that the Germans are good neighbours, but we prefer to have no neighbours at all."[236]

The events in southern Africa over who controlled what parcels of land would have repercussions on the bilateral relationship between the continental great power and the naval great power in northern Europe. For Germany, the United Kingdom's inexplicable reaction implied hostility against German interests around the world, as Germany's commercial presence was growing in southern Africa and Berlin was hoping to find new footholds in the region. Caprivi's successor as chancellor, Chlodwig, Prince of Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst (1894-1900), wrote in his journal that the United Kingdom had become hostile on account of "our colonial policy and the flourishing of our industry and the competition thereby created in world trade."[237] Germany felt that the United Kingdom was not budging an inch on any colonial matters with anyone.

For the United Kingdom, Germany's implied support for the Boers (who enjoyed the backing of much of the German public) suggested that Berlin would try to achieve its imperialist objectives at London's expense by hook or by crook. In the ensuing years,

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(No. 608), in Friedrich von Holstein, *The Holstein Papers: The Memoirs, Diaries, and Correspondence of Friedrich von Holstein, 1837-1909*, vol. 4, *Correspondence, 1897-1909*, ed. Norman Rich and M. H. Fisher (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 4:23; and Ivo Nikolai Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862-1914* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1984), 113-14. Comparing British reaction to the Kruger Telegram with reactions to other discourteous behavior, such as the United States' warning about Venezuela, the Kruger Telegram would hardly appear the most insulting, but it probably aroused the greatest indignation because its sender was an adversary with a fleet too small to pose any challenge to Britain's navy. William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 244.

235. Langer, 219-22; and Townsend, 94n67.

236. Quoted in Kennedy, 179. It is difficult to account for the naïveté expressed in the first clause.

237. Quoted in Lambi, 116.

each side would conveniently find plenty of evidence for its assumption about the other. It is in the above bilateral and geopolitical contexts that Germany persisted in its naval investment—and did so while deliberately eschewing threat diffusion. A classic security dilemma was about to unfold.

Investment Persistence: A "Risk Fleet" against Britain

The combination of Germany's growing extra-European interests and the United Kingdom's unwavering imperialist commitments (backed up by a widely distributed navy) meant that the Germany of the 1890s had to find a way to advance its agenda in the face of strong headwinds. Fortunately for naval advocates, US Navy Capt. A. T. Mahan's epic tome on sea power's historical influence gave a boost to navalism everywhere. In Germany, one naval officer who would play a consequential role in things to come was Rear Adm. Alfred Tirpitz, whose two-decade influence over naval affairs was so profound that he would step down in 1916 as *Grand* Adm. Alfred *von* Tirpitz. Along with his master, Wilhelm II, Tirpitz would be the driving force behind the shape and power of the Imperial German Navy from the mid-1890s to the mid-1910s.

Wilhelm II wanted an empire and a navy to go with it. His fascination with navies is often traced to his British heritage—his mother was Queen-Empress Victoria's eldest child and he delighted in visiting Britain and his British relations.[238] Shortly after his 1888 accession, Victoria had appointed him admiral of the fleet in the Royal Navy,

238. In 1901, against the advice of his ministers, Wilhelm II insisted on rushing to the United Kingdom to be at his grandmother's side as she lay on her deathbed. After Anglo-German relations took a permanent turn for the worse, one of Wilhelm II's first complaints was that it would no longer be possible for him to attend Cowes Week, a sailing regatta that is a highlight of the British social season.

whose uniform he wore with great pride, much to the embarrassment of his grandmother's new ambassadors presenting their credentials to him upon arrival in Berlin. A full report on Wilhelm II's psychological disposition is surely outside the bounds of this dissertation, but it is enough to simply point out that his lifelong love-hate relationship with the United Kingdom, its navy, and its empire is most likely bound up with his love-hate relationship with his British mother.

The Kruger Telegram's impression on Wilhelm II and his subjects was as deep as it was on his British cousins and theirs. As Paul M. Kennedy notes, it is perhaps not coincidental that, from this telegram furor onward, the United Kingdom and its Royal Navy would be reliable straw men for future German propaganda. "Henceforth, proposed naval increases and a propaganda campaign against Britain would always go hand in hand, for if the political parties and press were still dubious about fleet expansion, there seemed no doubt about their resentment of the British."[239]

Indeed, one of the conclusions that Wilhelm II drew about his country's place in the world—partly from the Kruger Telegram, but partly informed by the era's general zeitgeist—was that Germany needed further naval increases so that it could secure an empire, the trade associated with that empire, and a place in the top flight of great powers. Seeing the French back down at Fashoda only affirmed the correctness of German assumptions: "At the British Admiralty, Fashoda became the classic example of how a predominant British fleet was the best guarantee of peace! For the Germans, it was a demonstration of the vulnerability of their own world position without any counter to

239. Kennedy, 221.

the British Navy."[240] Building up a navy would prove to be a momentous decision: "The resolve gradually formed by Kaiser Wilhelm II in the 1890s to build a 'giant fleet' of battleships with which to confront Great Britain was one of the most momentous and catastrophic decisions of his long reign," opines John C. G. Röhl, ranking it alongside the emperor's dismissal of Bismarck in 1890 and World War I's outbreak in 1914.[241]

By the mid-1890s, Wilhelm II had found a like-minded flag officer who was infused with the Mahanian spirit and sought to construct a German navy that would be worthy of a great power and that would help secure German interests off the Continent. Tirpitz became secretary of state for the navy office in 1897. Once he did so, he was finally in a position of sufficient power to redirect the navy toward his ideas. He steered the navy

> in a completely new direction by identifying Britain as Germany's most dangerous enemy at sea, against whom it was necessary to possess a measure of sea power as a *political* power factor. When he doubled the size of the projected fleet two years later, the objective of his program had become the deterrence of a British attack against its growing commercial and colonial rival. Only such deterrence, Tirpitz claimed, could secure Germany's peacetime rise to world power status.[242]

To Tirpitz may be ascribed the infamous "risk theory" and its components of a "risk fleet" and a "risk period." The theory assumed that Germany at present had no political leverage over the United Kingdom and that, without any leverage, London could

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240. Peter Padfield, *The Great Naval Race: The Anglo-German Naval Rivalry, 1900-1914* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1974), 70.

241. John C. G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: The Kaiser's Personal Monarchy, 1888-1900*, trans. Sheila de Bellaigue (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 999.

242. Hobson, 214. Post-World War I, Tirpitz tried to blame the fallout from the 1896 Kruger Telegram for causing Anglo-German antagonism; in reality, Tirpitz had already determined that Britain was Germany's foe before the events in Africa. Hobson, 215, 220.

browbeat Berlin over any extra-European issue. Tirpitz argued that Germany could build leverage in the form of a powerful navy. "If Germany had such a powerful fleet, Britain could attack it and probably defeat it; but, in the process, Britain's naval position against the other continental powers, France and Russia, would be gravely endangered and its supremacy lost."[243] With a stronger navy, Berlin could threaten London with a Pyrrhic victory that the latter would dare not risk.

The risk theory entailed the construction of a powerful navy a mere twenty-four hours' sail from the British coast. Tirpitz theorized that, in the course of German naval construction, there would be a specific period of time known as the risk period, when the German navy would be large enough to be alarming to the British, but still small enough that the Royal Navy could plausibly launch a preventive strike to crush it. If the German navy could pass through this risk period unmolested, than the fleet that would emerge on the other side of this period of danger would be large enough so that Britain could no longer conceivably destroy it, and London would face a fait accompli and would be forced to make concessions to German Weltpolitik.

The risk theory, while elegant in its simplicity, also suffered from a fatal flaw. "It was almost as if he [Tirpitz] believed that Germany could hide for more than a decade while the fleet was being built and then pop out as a full-blown contender for world power when the fleet neared completion. For such a policy to succeed would require an

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243. Patrick J. Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 196, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/lib/upenn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=713706.

astonishing degree of blindness on the part of Germany's potential adversaries."[244] This "astonishing blindness" would not materialize in the United Kingdom or anywhere else, and Tirpitz's risk period would be repeatedly delayed whenever he was asked when exactly that risk period would end. Doubts about the risk theory would eventually be expressed by senior government officials, but Tirpitz retained the favor of Wilhelm II well into World War I. So logically puzzling is the risk theory that Patrick J. Kelly concludes that the risk fleet was nothing more considered than a chance "throw of the dice."[245]

While a branch of the military must have some political purpose, it is nonetheless remarkable just how closely tied to political (as opposed to militarily operational) objectives the growing German navy was. Kennedy explains, "Yet the blunt fact remains that Tirpitz's overriding motivation was not technical, but political: to create, as he himself put it, a 'political power factor' against England." Wilhelm II was of the same mind: "He most clearly felt that possession of a large navy by Germany would gain him the respect and *Ebenbürtigkeit* [equality] which the proud yet practical British only paid to powerful states."[246] As the emperor explained to a minister, "Only when we can hold out our mailed fist against his face, will the British lion draw back."[247] The text of an

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244. Ibid., 198.

245. Ibid., 202.

246. Kennedy, 224; see also Lambi, 141.

247. Quoted in Kennedy, 224. When Adm. of the Fleet Sir John Fisher was ennobled in 1909 as Baron Fisher of Kilverstone, he briefly thought of trolling (to use modern language) Wilhelm II by putting on his new coat-of-arms a mailed fist clutching a trident. J[ohn] F[isher] to Mrs. Reginald McKenna, November 14, 1909, in [John Arbuthnot] Fisher, *Fear God and Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, ed. Arthur J. Marder, vol. 2, *Years of Power, 1904-1914* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), 2:279.

undelivered Tirpitz speech highlights the contrast well: when referring to France, German naval buildup was justified solely in terms of its militarily operational importance. Referring to Britain, however, the justification for German fleet size was political: to ensure that Germany could not be pushed around and would have the respect it deserved.[248]

Bernhard, Prince von Bülow, chancellor in the pivotal years of 1900-1909, who would later fall out with Tirpitz over the risk period's continued prolongation, was nonetheless charmed enough by the risk theory at first to write in his *post*-war memoirs, "We must avoid everything that might become an occasion of unnecessary mistrust and friction between us and the greatest naval power. Our concept of the 'risk' must exclusively guide us in German naval construction and must remain well in the foreground. We must never fail to insist that our naval construction had no offensive purpose behind it, but was intended only to create a steady increase in the risk which any power threatening our peace must take to attack us."[249] This is essentially what the German government tried to do, even as the German press simultaneously portrayed the navy as opposing the British one and even though naval construction laws passed in the Reichstag—with their prioritization of battleships and stated objective of achieving

248. Hobson, 225.

249. [Bernhard,] Prince von Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, vol. 1, *From Secretary of State to Imperial Chancellor, 1897-1903*, trans. F. A. Voigt (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931), 134.

"world power status"—seemed to target the United Kingdom's battlefleet and general naval dominance in all but name.[250]

Tirpitz's long tenure as the navy's professional head was repeatedly marked by this tension: the need to not portray the fleet as a threat against Britain for the sake of bilateral relations, and the need to encourage public resentment of Britain so that the legislature would feel pressure to support naval expenditure. Tirpitz went so far as to order his public relations department to censor press coverage that portrayed Britain as the enemy. But, as Jan Rüger notes, "This anxiety about the effect of the naval theatre on Germany's relations with Britain betrayed the fundamental flaw in the 'Tirpitz Plan.' In order to raise support at home, the Imperial Navy had to be staged and celebrated publicly. Yet, in the foreign arena exactly the opposite was needed. Naval muscle-flexing had to be avoided during the *Gefahrenzone* ["danger zone"], those years in which the Germany [sic] Navy would not be strong enough to confront the Royal Navy."[251]

Two naval laws (and three subsequent amendments) passed in the late 1890s-1900s legally enshrined the risk fleet that Tirpitz proposed. The laws committed the government to a particular building schedule, with vessels of particular types replaced at set intervals—this was a legal, publicly declared existential guarantor of the navy. While it is true that the specific appropriation amounts were still at the Reichstag's discretion, Tirpitz himself realized that the laws' very existence as the legislature's public

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250. Lawrence Sondhaus, *Preparing for* Weltpolitik*: German Sea Power before the Tirpitz Era* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 222-23; and Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871-1918*, trans. Kim Traynor (Leamington Spa, UK: Berg Publishers, 1985), 167.

251. Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire*, Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 223.

commitment to a navy meant that any starvation of naval expenditure would turn into a political problem.[252]

It would again be southern Africa that affected German naval armament. In the midst of the Boer War (1899-1902), German vessels were detained by British naval vessels on suspicion of carrying contraband to the Boers. Tirpitz used the ensuing uproar to pass the Second Naval Law, which legally obligated the state to construct what would amount to a great-power navy. The memorandum attached to the bill is often cited as the succinct explanation of Tirpitz's risk theory:

> To protect Germany's sea trade and colonies in the existing circumstances there is only one means: Germany must have a battle fleet so strong that even for the adversary with the greatest sea power a war against it would involve such dangers as to imperil her position in the world. For this purpose it is not absolutely necessary that the German battle fleet should be as strong as that of the greatest naval power, for a great Power will not, as a rule, be in a position to concentrate all its striking forces against us. But even if it should succeed in meeting us with considerable superiority in strength, the defeat of the strong German fleet would so substantially weaken the enemy, that in spite of [the] victory he might have obtained, his own position in the world would no longer be secured by an adequate fleet.[253]

Tirpitz was not interested in a German equivalent of the French *Jeune École* and a belief in asymmetry to puncture British naval conceit. He was a Mahanian who wanted to challenge the United Kingdom at its own battleship game.[254] The Second Naval Law was supposed to give him enough battleships to do just that. By 1900, Tirpitz was firmly ensconced in office and the emperor was firmly in accord with his navy secretary's

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252. Lambi, 150.

253. Quoted in Archibald Hurd and Henry Castle, *German Sea-power: Its Rise, Progress, and Economic Basis* (London: John Murray, 1914), 348, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951002166921g; and in Padfield, 93.

254. Padfield, 100.

purpose. Figure 3.2 shows the proportion of the world's tonnage of primary warships that were German during Wilhelm II's thirty-year reign. For comparison, the British proportion during the same time period is also given.

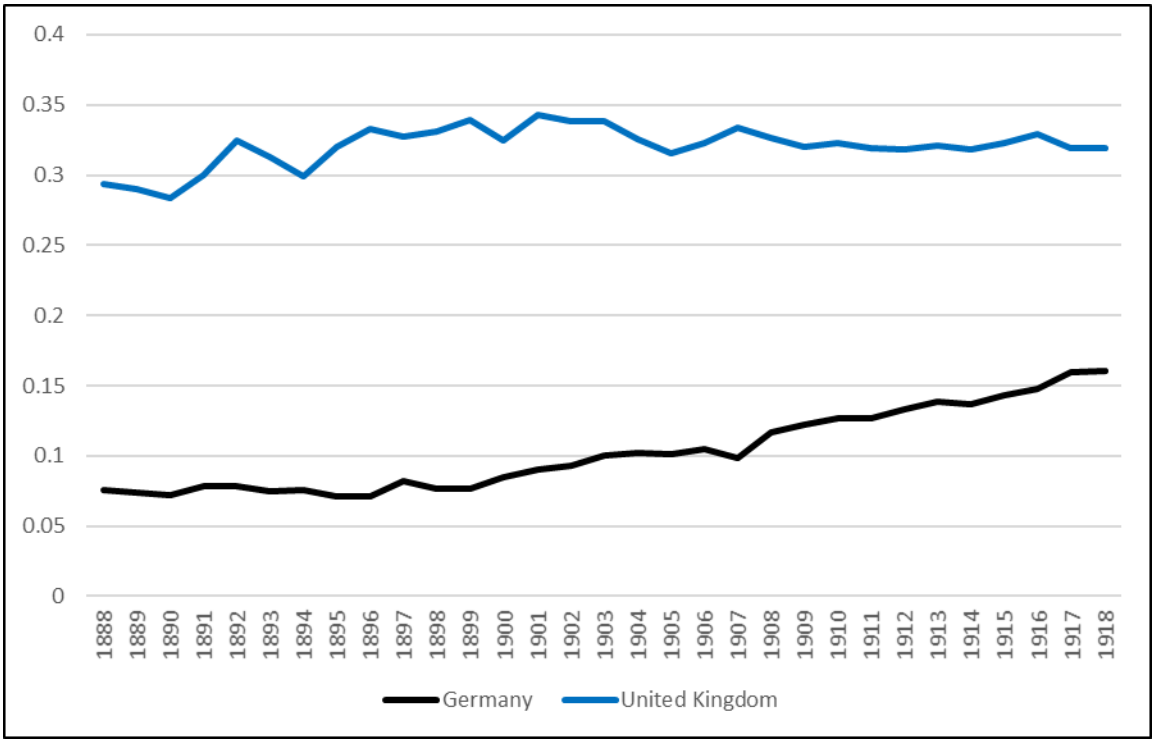

Figure 3.2. German and British proportions of global primary warship tonnage, 1888-1918. Data from Brian Benjamin Crisher and Mark Souva, "Power at Sea: A Naval Power Dataset, 1865-2011," *International Interactions* 40, no. 4 (August 2014): 602-29.

One sees from figure 3.2 that, while the British proportion of global primary warship tonnage remained fairly constant over that thirty-year span, the German proportion more than doubled. Furthermore, as the next section on threat diffusion will discuss, the margin of superiority that ought to have appeared rather comfortable from above was deceiving,

for the sizeable British fleet was dispersed around the world, while the admittedly smaller German fleet was compactly preserved at the edge of the North Sea.

By the Second Naval Law, the decision was reached that the navy would be prioritized over the army.[255] German investment in its navy was both persistent and politically supported—crucially by the emperor, but also his chancellors. Even the army was relatively quiescent: war ministers were concerned that if the army increased too much, it would have to rely more on the non-aristocratic segment of the population for its officer corps—and those commoners could not be trusted to defend the Empire, what with their liberal and socialist infections. The navy thus saw budgetary prioritization as the twentieth century began, while the army's portion of the fiscal pie shrank in relative terms.[256] By 1904, Field Marshal Alfred, Count von Waldersee, could complain that the army was "coming off badly" because of the state's attention to the navy.[257]

When Germany embarked on its new naval program, Tirpitz had forecast that the "risk period" would end by 1904-5. When those years arrived and Tirpitz was pressed for an update, he revised his forecast to sometime around 1908. Extensions of the risk period would become a pattern and lead to increasing Cabinet discord in the years right up to World War I. As early as 1904, Bülow was voicing doubts about Tirpitz's strategy, writing to the Foreign Office, "This deduction [the risk theory] is false, as if our navy

255. Lambi, 160-62.

256. My reading of the sources suggests that the army's budget was not cut per se, but was simply kept stagnant. Kelly, 132-33; and Lambi, 160-62.

257. Quoted in Lambi, 164.

would be 'ready' in two years' time. The discrepancy between us and England will be the same in two, four, or six years as it is to-day."[258]

Bülow's observation hit on the uncomfortable truth: rather than give up the race and come to terms with Germany, as Tirpitz and others seemed to assume, the United Kingdom was responding in kind and building enough capital ships (as well as fielding new technologies) to maintain its lead over Tirpitz's navy.[259] Friedrich von Holstein, the longtime éminence grise at the German Foreign Office, fumed shortly before his retirement in 1906 (the year His Majesty's Ship *Dreadnought* was commissioned): "What can we achieve by continuing our naval armaments? Could we ever challenge *both* England and France at sea? Can we expect that England will ever separate herself from France as long as there is the danger of a German invasion? Is a German fleet that is unable to cope with an Anglo-French fleet an asset in war or a liability?"[260]

By 1908, Bülow had become more forthcoming with his concerns to Tirpitz. In a back-and-forth exchange lasting months, the chancellor asked the admiral for his opinion on whether Germany could withstand a British assault. Tirpitz calmly replied that risk of war with Britain would soon decline, as the growing German navy would make it ever riskier for the United Kingdom to attack Germany. Tirpitz also argued that Britain could

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258. Quoted in Erich Brandenburg, *From Bismarck to the World War: A History of German Foreign Policy, 1890-1914*, trans. Annie Elizabeth Adams (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 285.

259. A more cynical view is that Tirpitz gave risk period end dates with no real meaning, as the more important objective was to maintain the German business community's support for his naval program, which was based on that community believing in the risk theory's logic. If Tirpitz could extend the risk period's end, but to a date still in the near future, he could plausibly claim the risk theory was making progress, and so maintain enough popular support for shipbuilding. Smith, 127.

260. Holstein to retired German diplomat Maximilian von Brandt, April 10, 1906 (No. 959), in Holstein, 4:410-11.

not possibly sustain its two-power standard, so Germany should be able to tilt the warship ratio in its favor without undue strain on its budget; besides, giving in to the United Kingdom would only invite further humiliation and threats from London.[261] Bülow flatly disagreed and responded to Tirpitz's assurances that the "risk period" would be ending in a few short years with a pithy, "This is very nice. But the question is once again: how do we get over the current danger?"[262]

By 1911, even as it was becoming ever clearer that Tirpitz was underestimating British resolve and capabilities, he insisted on continuing with the risk fleet. Resorting to the sunk-cost fallacy, Tirpitz told Wilhelm II that they could not stop now because, if the British at this stage of the competition built enough superiority to attack the German fleet with little risk, then all their exertions would be considered a "historical fiasco."[263] The reality was that, as Bülow suspected, the danger would remain "current" because it was permanent. The assumption that the United Kingdom, in failing to maintain its two-power standard, would just simply sit idle while Germany roared ever closer proved wishful rather than realistic.

The British Cabinet had first taken notice of Germany's naval development as early as 1898, when the first lord of the Admiralty reported that the German navy was

261. Lambi, 296-97. German assessment of the state of British finances continued to be optimistic as late as 1913: Tirpitz's aide, Adm. Eduard von Capelle, wrote, "In respect to naval policy, the English are at the limit of their strength in terms of finances, politics, and naval technology." Quoted in Lambi, 379-80.

262. Quoted in ibid., 301.

263. Kelly, 309.

"becoming a new factor."[264] By 1902, the issue of a possible war against Germany was broached: "Granted that Germany is already a formidable naval Power, and will soon be much more formidable, the question naturally suggests itself, 'Is it reasonable to count Germany among our possible enemies'? It would be a mere affectation to deny that Germany must be so counted."[265] So wrote the Parliamentary secretary to the Admiralty in a memorandum circulated to the Cabinet. Cabinet discussions and memoranda on German naval armament increased, with sometimes intense debates over reported changes in German shipbuilding numbers and pace, and how strongly Britain had to respond via its own shipbuilding.[266]

In 1909, London quietly dropped the two-power standard for the 60 percent standard: the British Home Fleet's battleships were to be superior to all the battleships in the German navy by a margin of 60 percent.[267] As if all these steps were not enough, First Sea Lord Adm. of the Fleet the Lord Fisher pushed development of submarines and torpedoes.[268] By the 1910s, it was becoming clear that serious attempts at mending the Anglo-German relationship were not going to succeed. Bülow's successor, Theobald von

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264. UK Cabinet Office, Photographic Copies of Cabinet Papers, 1880-1916, CAB 37/46/20 (1898), http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017.12/1326176. Subsequent citations to this collection will appear simply as "CAB 37/[Vol.]/[No.] ([Year])."

265. CAB 37/62/133 (1902).

266. See, in particular, the intense debate between First Lord of the Admiralty Reginald McKenna and Secretary of State for the Home Department Winston S. Churchill: CAB 37/97/19 (1909); CAB 37/97/24 (1909); CAB 37/100/97 (1909); CAB 37/100/99 (1909); CAB 37/103/32 (1910); CAB 37/103/51 (1910); CAB 37/105/7 (1911); and CAB 37/105/12 (1911). In October 1911, Churchill and McKenna would swap offices in a Cabinet reshuffle. Further discussion of British calculations and debate is provided in the appendix.

267. CAB 37/111/89 (1912); and CAB 37/118/6 (1914).

268. See Arthur Herman, *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005); and Nicholas A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

Bethmann-Hollweg (1909-17), engaged in multiple rounds of naval arms limitation talks. The United Kingdom appeared rather flexible: "At the end of 1911, word reached Wilhelm that the British government was prepared to help Germany acquire further colonies in return for concessions on the naval question."[269] As Winston S. Churchill reflected after the war: "We were no enemies to German Colonial expansion, and we would even have taken active steps to further her wishes in this respect. Surely something could be done to break the chain of blind causation. If aiding Germany in the colonial sphere was a means of procuring a stable situation, it was a price we were well prepared to pay."[270]

If Churchill, writing retrospectively, seemed rather conciliatory, a 1912 book by the journalist Archibald Hurd was more reflective of British concerns at the time:

> We know that Germany possesses an army without its equal in the world in numbers—an army which on a war footing would rise to a strength of 3,500,000, and that this army is being increased, and we know that Germany, already possessing the second largest navy in the world, has now passed an Act for increasing her standing fleet above the strength which the British Navy has ever attained in the past; but we do not know what policy is held by the Germans to justify this vast and unprecedented accumulation of armaments, both on land and on sea.[271]

Hurd breathlessly informed his readers of Germany's real intentions: "Germany is endeavouring to become as supreme upon the sea as she is upon the land . . . . The

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269. Padfield, 274.

270. Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1911-1914* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1924), 94. Additional color on British perceptions of the German naval threat, particularly as it relates to investment persistence, can be found in Andrew Roberts, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny* ([London?]: Allen Lane, 2018), 128, 165, 169-70, 182-83. I thank Avery Goldstein for recommending this sublime biography.

271. Archibald Hurd, *The Command of the Sea: Some Problems of Imperial Defence Considered in the Light of the German Navy Act, 1912* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1912), x, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t9n29s976.

situation is one which is well calculated to arouse the fears of all the nations of the world, because for the first time in history a great Power has definitely asserted its intention of being supremely powerful both by sea and by land."[272] In a later writing with his co-author, Hurd argued, "It is often said that she [Germany] cannot maintain both the strongest Army and the strongest Navy in Europe. The statement sounds plausible, but it is in reality an unreasoned begging of the question."[273]

Germany was very enthusiastic about British assurances of colonial support, but the talks ultimately foundered because what the United Kingdom wanted in return—limits to German naval armament—was not acceptable. Wilhelm II was adamant that only Germany dictated what its navy looked like. Responding to a memorandum from Paul, Count Metternich, German ambassador to the Court of St. James's, who favored an understanding with London, Wilhelm II wrote, "If England only intends graciously to offer us her hand on condition that we reduce our fleet, that is an unparalleled impertinence . . . . The [naval] law will be carried out to the last iota. Whether the British like it or not is immaterial. If they want war, they can begin it. We are not afraid of it."[274]

A war would come soon enough. Anglo-German naval antagonism was not the short-term trigger for the First World War, but it was certainly a medium-term precipitant, for the inability of Berlin and London to reach an understanding meant that

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272. Ibid., xvi. Germany was not the first.

273. Hurd and Castle, 250.

274. Quoted in Brandenburg, 284. Wilhelm II's exasperated uncle, King-Emperor Edward VII of the United Kingdom, was informed of his nephew's reliance on German law as an excuse and retorted, "As if the law could not be altered by those who made it!" Quoted in Friedrich von Holstein, *The Holstein Papers: The Memoirs, Diaries, and Correspondence of Friedrich von Holstein, 1837-1909*, ed. Norman Rich and M. H. Fisher, vol. 1, *Memoirs and Political Observations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 179.

the United Kingdom dealt with a hybridizing Germany by enmeshing itself in alliances and partnerships with great powers that were hostile to Germany or to Germany's own allies and partners. By insisting on and persisting with heavy investment in the navy, Germany necessarily attracted British countermoves.

British concern was supposed to have been dealt with progress through a temporally defined risk period. But so long as Germany's naval investment persisted, so would the dominant naval power's attention to such a growing navy. Erich Brandenburg observes, "It is difficult to understand how Tirpitz, the Kaiser, and to a certain extent also Prince Bülow, could believe that it was merely a matter of passing through a definitely limited period of danger. The truth was that the period was unlimited, as long as England was in a position to keep up the competition, protected by the old standard of power. At no time in future should we be relatively stronger with regard to England than we were then."[275] It was as if the German navy were running in place.

Germany possessed investment persistence in spades: it not only engaged in a robust round of naval development for the better part of two decades, but it actually enshrined in law naval vessels' construction rates and service lengths. A quintessential security dilemma developed, in which each state armed in self-defense out of concern for the other, resulting in a vicious cycle of misperception, worst-case-scenario thinking, and mutual accusations of haughty disregard for the other side's point of view. Investment in one country begat investment in the other. But the story of this antagonism does not end at investment persistence. Such German naval investment persistence was puzzling

275. Brandenburg, 298.

enough to the United Kingdom, but equally vexing would be Germany's habit of concentrating its naval force in homeport.

Threat Concentration: A Shortcut to Weltpolitik

The failure of German hybridization lies in Berlin's refusal to pair its investment persistence with threat diffusion. Indeed, Germany took the opposite tack and settled on threat *concentration*. As with investment persistence, threat concentration was born out of the risk theory and its presumptions. The risk theory not only laid out what was to be built (a battleship-dominated fleet); it also laid out where the fleet was to be deployed: in homeport, with only the North Sea separating it from the British Isles. Sitting a day's sail from the east coast of Great Britain, the Imperial German Navy was to present a silent but obvious threat to the British homeland, in the expectation that such a naval force would compel the United Kingdom, with its globally committed navy, to acquiesce to German empire-building and commercial interests abroad.

Tirpitz "fostered the belief that the further growth of the German Empire could only be assured by a measure of sea power 'commensurate with its overseas interests.' As it grew together with those interests, the navy would increasingly command the respect of the other sea powers. In fact commanding respect rather than commanding the sea seemed to be the main objective of the ideology of sea power."[276] Inspired by both Mahan and influential German historian Heinrich von Treitschke, Tirpitz believed that "without a strong navy as leverage against its maritime rivals and as an instrument of

276. Hobson, 211-12.

colonial expansion, Germany could not become a global power."[277] By concentrating in the North Sea, the quantitatively inferior German navy could hope to exploit local superiority, and should Britain recall vessels back to home waters and engage in battle with the German navy, the Royal Navy would risk suffering losses so great as to fatally cripple its naval power generally—a Pyrrhic victory. "Tirpitz concentrated upon building a North Sea battlefleet which, once it had emerged from the 'danger zone,' would be so powerful that the British would hesitate to attack without risking their overall maritime superiority."[278]

The risk theory proposed a fleet large enough to credibly threaten British naval superiority and, thus, compel London to yield to Berlin the respect that the Germans thought was their due. "The aim was to gain diplomatic concessions from the dominating naval and imperial power that seemed to stand in the way of German expansion. In Tirpitz's words, the waters between the two countries were to be turned into the 'lever of Germany's world policy.'"[279] "A comparatively small German fleet stationed in the North Sea would be a political lever and a deterrent—a shortcut to *Weltpolitik*."[280] Thus, naval construction resulted in capital ships designed for speed, not endurance or fuel capacity, which would have been more essential for ships actually deployed overseas.[281]

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277. Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 38. See also Raffael Scheck, *Alfred von Tirpitz and German Right-wing Politics, 1914-1930*, Studies in Central European Histories (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1998), 12-14.

278. Kennedy, 417.

279. Rüger, 204.

280. Michelle Murray, "Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics: The Tragedy of German Naval Ambition before the First World War," *Security Studies* 19, no. 4 (October-December 2010): 680.

281. Bönker, 121-22.

Because of its global commitments, Britain could only deploy a fraction of its vast fleet to the North Sea. "Thence is the weak point of England the North Sea, then here can *we* concentrate all our ships," noted Tirpitz.[282] Worth quoting in full is Adm. Max von der Goltz, speaking for many in the German naval officer corps:

> The opinion is generally held in this country that any resistance against England at sea would be impossible, and that all our naval preparations are but wasted efforts. It is time that this childish fear, which would put a stop to all our progress, should be pulled up by the roots and destroyed. . . . The maritime superiority of Great Britain, overwhelming now, will certainly remain considerable in the future; but she is compelled to scatter her forces all over the world. In the event of war in home waters, the greater part of the foreign squadrons would no doubt be recalled; but that would be a matter of time, and then all the stations oversea could not be abandoned. On the other hand, the German fleet, though much smaller, can remain concentrated in European waters.[283]

And even if the British were somehow able to concentrate force in the North Sea to counter the German battlefleet, it would be too risky for London. Chief of the Great General Staff Gen. Helmuth von Moltke (the Younger) confided to the Belgian military attaché what would happen in an Anglo-German North Sea naval battle: "In the event of war our fleet will be ordered to attack the British fleet. It will be defeated—that is very possible, even probable, because the English have numerical superiority. But what will the English fleet have after the destruction of the last German armored cruiser? Certainly we shall lose our ships; England, however, will lose her control of the seas, which will for ever pass on to the Americans."[284] Such was the confidence of many German elites in the risk theory.

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282. Quoted in Padfield, 77.
283. Quoted in Hurd and Castle, 122.
284. Quoted in Lambi, 426-27.

Just as the investment persistence component of the risk theory suffered from some fatally optimistic presumptions, so the threat concentration component also proved too buoyant. The expectation that concentrating the growing German navy near the British coast would more easily advance German interests everywhere else seemed counter-intuitive: "To defend worldwide trade the fleet would, paradoxically, be concentrated in the North Sea. . . . This approach was Tirpitz's seemingly elegant deterrence strategy to deal with the insoluble geographic dilemma of how to defend German interests abroad."[285]

Tirpitz's risk fleet was a risk in two senses: it was a bold strategy on Germany's part to take on the world's dominant naval power, but it was also meant to be dangerous for the United Kingdom. The German navy was supposed to be big enough that battle would cause the British Home Fleet to risk defeat and Britain to risk losing its naval superiority for the first time since Trafalgar a century before. Given the United Kingdom's reliance on the sea, such a defeat "would mean a disaster of almost unparalleled magnitude in history," to use First Lord of the Admiralty the Earl of Selborne's words. The foreign secretary expressed the sentiment with equal directness: "The Navy is our one and only means of defence and our life depends upon it and on it alone."[286]

To the Germans, an eventuality such as a North Sea confrontation was moot, because they could not believe that the British would actually redeploy forces from

285. Kelly, 196.
286. Quoted in Kennedy, 416-17.

around the world to counter the concentrated German threat. From Berlin's perspective, "The British Empire could not amass its entire fleet against Germany in the North Sea because of its worldwide strategic interests and, particularly, its antagonistic relationship to Russia and its French ally. The North Sea would constitute the British Empire's 'weakest point' from a geostrategic point of view."[287] Germany assumed that British alliance with either France or Russia would be unthinkable, due to historical antagonism with the former and festering imperialist disputes in Central Asia and the Middle East with the latter. Berlin did not count on London taking the great step of settling differences with Paris and St. Petersburg.[288] "Confronted with the increasing concentration of the British fleet in home waters and the formation of political alliances among France, Russia, and Britain, the Germans did not fully change their views on the issue. By 1908, they began to argue that British military concentration against Germany could only be a temporary measure."[289]

The British had noticed German fleet concentration and picked up rather quickly on the threat that it posed. "The German naval programme . . . through geographical proximity (the operational radius of the German fleet did not extend beyond the North Sea) and by virtue of the fact that it assumed the form of a battleship fleet, presented an immediate threat to the British Isles."[290] As Fisher explained to his king-emperor, "Our only probable enemy is Germany. Germany keeps her *whole* Fleet always concentrated

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287. Bönker, 77-78.
288. Kennedy, 266.
289. Bönker, 78.
290. Fritz Fischer, "The Foreign Policy of Imperial Germany and the Outbreak of the First World War," in Schöllgen, 19-20.

within a few hours of England. We must therefore keep a Fleet twice as powerful concentrated within a few hours of Germany."[291] Indeed, the fear was not simply that such a German fleet could defeat its British rival; it was that, after such a defeat, it would escort a German invading force—the threat of Emperor Napoléon I all over again, but a century on.[292]

Former prime minister and future foreign secretary Arthur Balfour (later Earl of Balfour) noted the danger hybridization was causing:

> Ordinary Englishmen do not believe, and I certainly do not believe, either that the great body of the German people wish to make an attack on their neighbours or that the German Government intend it.[293] . . . The danger lies elsewhere. It lies in the coexistence of that marvelous instrument of warfare which embraces the German Army and Navy, with the assiduous, I had almost said the organized, advocacy of a policy which it seems impossible to reconcile with the peace of the world or the rights of nations.

Balfour continued: "It is the most natural thing that they [the British people] should regard with jealous anxiety the growth of a great war fleet, when that war fleet has behind it vast land forces to which the ships can give transport and a policy which is too frequently represented by leading Germans as being aimed at British security."[294]

The British response was relatively swift. Shortly after the Entente Cordiale, Metternich had a conversation with Spring Rice, first secretary at the British Embassy in St. Petersburg and son-in-law of Sir Frank Lascelles, His Britannic Majesty's then-

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291. Fisher to King Edward VII, October 22, 1906, to approve a draft of a letter from Fisher to His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, in Fisher, 2:103.

292. Adm. James Stavridis USN (Ret.), *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of the World's Oceans* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 76.

293. It is difficult to account for such naïveté.

294. Quoted in Hurd and Castle, xiv.

Ambassador to Germany, and dolefully noted the consequences of his own country's actions: "Up till now England had maintained no fleet in home waters equal to the German one. . . . Even those Englishmen who suspected the German fleet of no directly aggressive intentions against England had reflected that supposing England were entangled in a war elsewhere the German fleet could be used as a means of diplomatic pressure for obtaining British concessions to Germany. . . ." Noting the extraordinary step that the United Kingdom was taking in diverting battleships from places from which drawdown had been previously unthinkable, Metternich continued, "England had weakened herself in the Mediterranean and had sunk to the rank of a second-class maritime Power there so to speak, simply in order to insure her home against all eventualities."[295]

Two visible signs of British rebalancing against the German threat in the North Sea can be seen in the geographic redirection of naval bases and in the redistribution of the fleet to home waters, as evidenced by London's replacement of the two-power standard (brought in against France, as discussed in the previous chapter) with the 60 percent standard, now aimed squarely at Germany. Fresh off a 1902 tour of German naval dockyards, British Parliamentary and Financial Secretary to the Admiralty H. O. Arnold-Forster warned that the China and Mediterranean squadrons needed to be drawn down and that new naval bases needed to be built on the British North Sea coast.[296] The

295. Count von Metternich to Bülow, December 25, 1904, in E. T. S. Dugdale, trans., *German Diplomatic Documents, 1871-1914*, vol. 3, *The Growing Antagonism, 1898-1910* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930), 209.

296. CAB 37/62/133 (1902). See also CAB 37/73/159 (1904).

Mediterranean Fleet was reduced to a shadow of itself, losing eight of its sixteen battleships by 1907.[297] The existing base at Rosyth was greatly expanded, while Scapa Flow in the Orkneys was created as a new base for a new home fleet, eventually berthing 22 dreadnoughts, 14 battlecruisers, 22 pre-*Dreadnought* battleships, and 160 reserve cruisers and destroyers, all to lie in wait for any German attempts to break out into the Atlantic Ocean.[298]

The new naval bases helped to accommodate a growing fleet in home waters that would symbolize a new standard of measuring British naval superiority—the two-power standard devised in the 1880s had "lost much of its good sense and its reality."[299] In a memorandum prepared for the Canadian prime minister to encourage him to contribute Canadian money to the British navy, the United Kingdom reported that it had now settled on a 60 percent standard in home waters, whereby London was to enjoy a dreadnought battleship superiority in home waters of not less than 3:2. "The growth of the German Navy has compelled us to concentrate our Fleet at home."[300]

German attempts to assuage British concern proved wholly unconvincing. In 1904, Wilhelm II offered this rationale for his fleet's concentration in the North Sea: "The questions (1) why we built our ships and (2) why we keep them at home are to be answered: (1) because we had no more and required them and had first to replace the old

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297. James Goldrick, "The Battleship Fleet: The Test of War, 1895-1919," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Royal Navy*, ed. J. R. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 287. Churchill would go further in 1911, calling for the Mediterranean Fleet's complete abolition. CAB 37/105/27 (1911).

298. Herman, 487.

299. CAB 37/117/97 (1913).

300. CAB 37/112/100 (1912).

ones, (2) because we really did not know where in the whole world to put them! We had no Gibraltar, Malta, nor anywhere else in Europe!! Formerly we used to sail the Mediterranean, but we gave that up in order not to be a nuisance to the British."[301] In 1908, the emperor ignored diplomatic protocol and wrote a letter directly to the first lord of the Admiralty in London, asserting of a German Naval Law amendment increasing construction: "It is absolutely *nonsensical* and *untrue* that the German Naval Bill is to provide a Navy meant as a 'Challenge to British naval supremacy.' The German Fleet is being built against nobody at all."[302]

Wilhelm II's extraordinary conversation with Sir Charles Hardinge (later Lord Hardinge), the Foreign Office's permanent undersecretary, and recorded by the emperor himself, is worth quoting at length:

> HARDINGE. It [the German fleet] is always kept at Kiel or Wilhelmshaven and the North Sea.
>
> WILHELM II. Because we have no colonies or coaling stations, that is our base; we have no Gibraltar or Malta.
>
> HARDINGE. Your trade cannot be protected from your base. Why do you not sail further afield?
>
> WILHELM II. Because the London Embassy and our Foreign Office thought that the less the Britons see our fleet the better; its appearance in the Channel would cause annoyance.
>
> HARDINGE. Are you trying to make a bad joke?
>
> WILHELM II. I am deeply in earnest. My men have suffered enough from having to do their service in northern waters.

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301. Wilhelm II, commenting on a letter to him from Bülow, December 26, 1904 (Ch. 17, No. 372), in Dugdale, 213.

302. Quoted in Padfield, 181.

> HARDINGE. That is quite incredible. In England, it is understood quite differently.
>
> WILHELM II. This summer I sent my fleet abroad during your grand manœuvres in the North Sea—an obvious token of my wish for peace and my trust in England.
>
> HARDINGE. It was fine and did a great deal of good; send your fleet away often, and then our people will really be reassured. It would be still more desirable to remove our anxiety about the ship-building, for in a few years you will be as strong as we are.[303]

Hardinge's last reply is essentially a request for the German government to decrease investment persistence ("remove our anxiety about the ship-building") and diffuse the threat ("send your fleet away often"). The conversation continued the next day and, unfortunately, ended rather disagreeably with a dispute over ship construction rates. When Hardinge defended his figures obtained from the British Admiralty, Wilhelm II retorted, "Your data are wrong; I am an admiral of the British Navy and know all about it and understand it better than you, who are a civilian and know nothing about it."[304] Upon seeing that he had offended the monarch, Hardinge quickly apologized, and the conversation ended as fruitlessly as it had begun.

The failure of threat concentration was exacerbated by Germany's clumsy, contradictory assurances that, despite all evidence, its naval buildup was somehow not directed against the United Kingdom. The trifling excuses that were presented and that sought to portray the Germans as being acutely sensitive to British sensibilities were not, however, the ones most consistently deployed to parry Britain's inquiring thrusts. By far,

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303. Wilhelm II to Bülow, August 12, 1908 (Ch. 23, No. 125), in Dugdale, 292.
304. Wilhelm II to Bülow, August 13, 1908 (Ch. 23, No. 125), in Dugdale, 293.

the most common justification given by Germany for its growing navy was the need to protect its burgeoning interests abroad, commercial and imperial. German commerce did indeed have a robust presence on the high seas. Led by the old Hansa cities and their maritime heritage, German commercial and shipping companies were globally ubiquitous, old hands on the world's oceans by the time the navy began growing in the 1890s.[305] There was plenty of German merchant shipping for a German navy to protect.

But this commerce protection argument was flatly rejected. The British Admiralty noted the contradiction between supposedly building a fleet to defend overseas commitments and keeping that fleet at home: "We might have expected to see a Navy of numerous and powerful cruisers distributed widely all over the world, showing the German flag in distant seas and aiding German commerce and colonial developments by their presence and influence. Instead of this, we are confronted with a very strong fleet of battleships concentrated and kept concentrated in close proximity to the German shores and our own."[306] The scathing remark of influential British diplomat Eyre Crowe (later Sir Eyre Crowe) is representative of the general British attitude to that German claim: "It is quite ridiculous to believe that we are taken in by the pretence of the necessities of 'defending German commerce,' etc., as the reason for a bigger fleet. Commerce is defended in one way and one way only: namely the destruction of the opponent's naval

305. Sondhaus, 116-17, 204; and Townsend, 44-50. So dominant in international trade were the former Hansa cities that a Prussian trader making landfall in the South Pacific was asked by a curious native if Prussia were a tributary state of Hamburg.

306. CAB 37/100/112 (1912).

force."[307] At a Committee of Imperial Defense meeting in July 1912, Churchill (as First Lord of the Admiralty) summarily noted, "The whole German naval force is always concentrated there . . . . It is always concentrated in Home waters, and that is the problem, that is the essence of our difficulty."[308] Concentrating the threat not only failed to mitigate the perception that investment persistence would give, it actually exacerbated it.[309]

Just as Germany did not anticipate that a supposedly financially constrained Britain would respond as robustly in shipbuilding as it did, so Berlin did not seriously think London would draw down vessels from across its vast empire and rebalance the fleet to home waters, but that is precisely what the United Kingdom did. Alliances with France and Japan, as well as a quiet recognition that US naval supremacy in the Western Hemisphere could not be successfully opposed, allowed Britain to redeploy warships to its creatively named Home Fleet.[310] German threat concentration was met with a British response, also in the form of concentration. The German hope to get away with pointing a dagger at Britain's throat proved ill-founded.

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307. Quoted in Kennedy, 421.

308. CAB 37/118/6 (1914).

309. In 1904, Wilhelm II wanted to invite Edward VII to the Kiel naval base. Bülow and Tirpitz both advised against this, arguing that the psychological impact of actually seeing the German fleet concentrated would be categorically different from simply receiving written reports about German naval strength: "The English especially were open to direct impressions." Wilhelm II got his way, and the fleet paraded before his uncle made exactly the impression on the British delegation that Bülow and Tirpitz had feared. [Bernhard,] Prince von Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, vol. 2, *From the Morocco Crisis to Resignation, 1903-1909*, trans. Geoffrey Dunlop (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931), 2:27-28.

310. Goldrick, 286; and CAB 37/73/159 (1904).

Great War: The Dénouement

Upon leaving office in 1913, German Chief of the Naval General Staff Adm. August von Heeringen gravely opined, "I fear that our fleet is too small to win but too large to die gloriously."[311] Unwittingly or otherwise, Heeringen's lament pointed out one more flaw in the risk theory that World War I would expose: there was no backup plan.[312] If the risk theory failed, Germany would be caught with no credible alternative for naval operations. Both the war's beginning and end illustrate the point: at the commencement of hostilities, both the British and German navies expected, as did their army counterparts, that the war would be short. The United Kingdom anticipated another Trafalgar-like battle at the outset of the war, which would result in a decisive engagement and command of the sea for the remainder of the conflict.[313] However, the Germans stayed in port because they very quickly realized that the risk theory's failure meant that they had no answer to the British Home Fleet.[314]

From that realization, one can trace the now-familiar tale of reliance on submarines (whose development Tirpitz had deliberately ignored on the grounds that they diverted attention and resources from his prized battleships), Berlin's indecisiveness over whether to restrict submarine warfare, and the eventually fateful unleashing of unrestricted U-boat warfare that led to US entry into World War I. Aside from the

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311. Quoted in Kelly, 364.

312. Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 336, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/fulcrum.m326m195q.

313. N. A. M. Rodger, "Navies Through Others' Eyes" (keynote session, Yale Naval History Conference, New Haven, CT, April 20, 2018).

314. Padfield, 334. The German sailors themselves were rather confident, but their commanding officers did not share the view.

inconclusive Battle of Jutland, the German fleet spent the war in homeport.[315] In the war's waning days, the German naval command decided that to have the navy sitting idle throughout the duration of the war was not only shameful, but potentially fatal to any post-war budgetary considerations. So, in late October, the German surface fleet was ordered to sea to engage the Royal Navy in what would have been a pointless action.[316] Open mutiny broke out and could not be quelled: revolt soon spread throughout the land, and the empire that the navy served and the emperor to whom sailors swore allegiance would both be overthrown.

To a despondent Wilhelm II, who had viewed his navy with especial favor, "the fact that it was in my proud navy, my creation, that there was first open rebellion, cut me most deeply to the heart."[317] He would live to see worse: the fleet was escorted to a British naval base and interned while peace negotiations were conducted; in 1919, the fleet's commanding admiral, fearful of having the fleet commandeered by the Allies in the event that Germany refused to accept the peace terms, ordered the fleet scuttled. It sank as one to the bottom of Scapa Flow.[318] As the risk theory's flaws arguably

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315. British Vice Adm. C. V. Usborne details how bored British sailors got sitting in port every day. He contributed a poem to the officers' periodical, calling on the German fleet to go out: "We know you love your home, dear, / Somewhat narrow though it be; / But when Daddy spends his days, dear, / Up at Berlin, on the Spree, / It isn't fair to keep you / Shut up by lock and quay— / You ought to see the world, dear, / So do come out to sea." Vice Adm. C. V. Usborne, *Blast and Counterblast: A Naval Impression of the War* (London: John Murray, 1935), 61.

316. Holger H. Herwig, *The German Naval Officer Corps: A Social and Political History, 1890-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 243-44.

317. Wilhelm II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs*, trans. Thomas R. Ybarra (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), 289.

318. Charles S. Thomas, *The German Navy in the Nazi Era* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 26. A number of the vessels are still there: they were put up for auction in 2019 by their private owner. See "Scapa Flow: Sunken WW1 Battleships Up for Sale on eBay," BBC News, June 19, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-48684400.

neutralized the Imperial German Navy strategically, so the risk theory's ultimate result was the destruction of the Imperial German Navy materially.

These were the consequences of an unsuccessful risk theory: a large battlefleet dominated by the latest capital-ship technology whose very concentration of firepower in the North Sea had, against all assumptions, caused the dominant naval power to sacrifice its own naval posture, contract alliances with long-standing rivals, and embrace new technologies to ensure the defense of its home islands. It is indeed extraordinary to consider the breadth and depth of the United Kingdom's response—had Germany followed Hardinge's advice and at least diffused its navy, one may very well ask whether a still-annoyed Britain would have persevered in the drastic steps it took to ward off German hybridization, and whether Anglo-German relations could have taken a different turn. As it is, two decades after Weltpolitik's inauguration, the new direction in which Wilhelm II embarked led only into waters so turbulent as to sink his ship of state.

1918-Present: Republic, Reich, Rift, and Reunification

The end of the German Empire meant the end of Wilhelm II's reign in particular and of monarchical government in Germany; it also meant the end of the Imperial German Navy specifically and, in retrospect, German naval pretensions more generally. The Treaty of Versailles enshrined strict limitations on the German military's size and power.[319] The political and social conditions created by the combination of Allied demands at Versailles and financial troubles during the Weimar Republic are well

319. For a summary, see Jak P Mallmann Showell, *Hitler's Navy: A Reference Guide to the Kriegsmarine, 1935-1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 11-13.

documented, and the German navy did not escape such constraints. Indeed, much like the rest of the nation, the German navy of the 1920s and early 1930s was consumed from within by domestic politics.[320]

Things did not necessarily look better for the navy upon Adolf Hitler's ascension to power. Hitler had made known early on in *Mein Kampf* (as well as in the sequel, published posthumously) his contempt for German naval aspirations. With the view that a hybridizing Germany would have inevitably clashed with the United Kingdom, Hitler wrote, "Only if Germany had complete rear cover from Russia could the nation shift to a naval policy that aimed deliberately at the day of reckoning [with Britain]. Only then could one commit the enormous resources necessary to upgrade a fleet that lagged five years behind—not in every way, but in terms of construction, especially in speed and therefore [*sic*] displacement."[321]

Hitler argued instead that Germany's greatness could only be achieved through continental expansion, and he even proposed placating the United Kingdom through the wholesale renunciation of Weltpolitik: "renunciation of world trade and colonies; renunciation of a German war fleet; concentration of all the state's instrument of power on the land army. The result, to be sure, would have been a momentary limitation, but a

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320. See Thomas, 27-77.

321. Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to* Mein Kampf, ed. Gerhard L. Weinberg, trans. Krista Smith (New York: Enigma Books, 2003), 79. The "[*sic*]" appears in the translation (and rightly so). Hitler dictated this book in 1928, but it was not published in his lifetime. The manuscript was recovered by the Allies in 1945 and first published in Germany in 1961. Weinberg recounts how this manuscript saw the light of day in his introduction.

great and mighty future."[322] In Hitler's mind, Germany ought to renounce both naval power and overseas colonies.[323] Once in power, however, Hitler proved more welcoming of naval might. In 1935, Germany negotiated an agreement with the United Kingdom that "limited" the German fleet's capital-ship tonnage to 35 percent of that of the British fleet. In reality, given the Versailles treaty restrictions, this meant that Germany's tiny navy was allowed to grow to three or four times its size.[324]

Each side interpreted this new understanding differently: London thought its accommodation ought to be repaid with greater German willingness to abide by the League of Nations, while Berlin felt that its generous self-imposed limit on naval expansion ought to be repaid with British acquiescence to continental expansion. It is in this context that one may consider Germany's bellicosity in the 1930s: not simply a fulfillment of Hitler's priorities, but also an attempt to make the British "recognize the folly of opposing Germany and join it instead." When further German galivanting on the Continent incurred British disapproval, Berlin threatened to abrogate this new naval agreement. "By the spring of 1937, then, naval considerations were contributing to the gradual deterioration of Anglo-German relations."[325] Again.

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322. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 140. Hitler warmed to the idea of overseas colonies for strategic reasons after occupying France in 1940. Baranowski, 140.

323. Thomas, 65.

324. Ibid., 95-97. Aside from the appeasement policy itself, London had another reason to acquiesce to German demands: Japan's attitude in East Asia was already clearly hostile and Britain was concerned it might not be able to maintain naval superiority against Germany and Japan simultaneously. Showell, 17.

325. Thomas, 168-69. Germany renounced the naval agreement in April 1939 as retaliation for the Anglo-Polish agreement of mutual assistance; Berlin was also motivated by its navy's complaint that the

On the day Britain and France declared war in response to Germany's aggression against Poland, German naval commander-in-chief Adm. Erich Raeder recorded in his diary:

> As far as the Kriegsmarine ["War Navy," its formal name under the Greater German Reich] is concerned, it is obvious that it is not remotely ready for the titanic struggle against England. To be sure, the brief period of time that has elapsed since the Agreement of 1935 has witnessed the creation of a well-trained and well-conceived force of U-boats, of which approximately twenty-six are currently ready for Atlantic operations, but these boats are still too few to exert a *decisive* influence upon the war [emphasis in Thomas]. The surface forces, moreover, are so weak and so few in number vis-à-vis the British fleet that the only course open for them—presupposing their active employment—is to show that they know how to die gallantly and thereby to create the basis for an eventual rebirth in the future.[326]

Events would bear Raeder out. As in the First World War, the submarine fleet's effectiveness was blunted by Allied countermeasures and, in retrospect, one might argue that the risk posed was always greater psychologically than practically. By 1943, the German submarine service had largely withdrawn from open ocean.[327] The German surface fleet proved no match for Allied naval power either: in the half-year leading up to German surrender, the navy had to fight without any capital ships, the last one having been destroyed by the Royal Air Force on November 12, 1944.[328] That last German capital ship's name was *Tirpitz* and, when Germany finally surrendered to the Allied Powers in May 1945, it was under the leadership of the navy's commander-in-chief,

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naval agreement was still restricting shipbuilding plans. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-45: Nemesis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 178, 190.

326. Quoted in Thomas, 187.

327. Gordon Corrigan, *The Second World War: A Military History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010), 434-36.

328. Thomas, 248.

Grand Adm. Karl Dönitz. In these two events, one may feel some symbolic weight when considering the saga of German great power and the role that the navy played in that power's waxing and waning.

Today, the German navy stands as one of the lesser lights in the firmament of naval power, even if its fleet is technologically advanced and its personnel professional and well trained. It has, in a sense, returned to the state of its birth in the mid-nineteenth century, a small fleet that would be, at most, a distraction in any great-power conflict. The German state as a whole may still don the garb of a great power, but such a vestment does not drape over any weapons.

Conclusion

Germany's experience with hybridization proved a traumatic one—far more traumatic than France's, even though the latter's was pitted against a geographically closer and historically despised foe. This chapter stands in stark contrast to chapter 2, but does so not because it is the perfect opposite (i.e., no investment persistence or threat diffusion). Rather, it is the presence of one (investment persistence) and the absence of the other (threat diffusion) that led to an outcome so extraordinarily different from that of nineteenth-century France. By coupling persistent investment with threat concentration, Germany managed to only heighten the threat that it posed to the United Kingdom. The dominant naval power defied all German expectations, responding forcefully and consistently to guard its home islands and maintain its naval supremacy.

The risk theory did indeed prove too risky in the end—but for its creator, not its target. Reflecting from the comfort of the 1920s on the Anglo-German naval arms race and the war that followed, Churchill chastised his once and future adversary with an eloquence only he could summon: "Ah! foolish-diligent Germans, working so hard, thinking so deeply, marching and counter-marching on the parade grounds of the Fatherland, poring over long calculations, fuming in new-found prosperity, discontented amid the splendor of mundane success, how many bulwarks to your peace and glory did you not, with your own hands, successfully tear down!"[329] The self-scuttled Imperial German Navy serves as an example: it sits on the seabed still, far out of the sun.

329. Churchill, 41.

Chapter 4

"An Artificial Imposition": Imperial Russia's Hybridization as a Great Power

Any ruler with an army has one hand, but he who also has a fleet has two hands.
—Emperor Peter I (the Great) of Russia

Along the northern edge of Eurasia sits the country of Russia. At the cost of detail and scale, one might just be able to squeeze a map of it onto one page. Like the united and the eastern Roman Empires that were supposedly its politico-religious predecessors, Imperial Russia was a geographically wide-ranging entity. Until this Third Rome's collapse in 1917—on the Ides of March, no less—St. Petersburg's imperium had touched places as distant from each other as the Arctic north and the Karakum Desert, and as far apart as California and Poland. This was quite an achievement for what began as a small duchy centered on a village of no consequence called Moscow. Over the course of four centuries, this duchy conquered various neighbors, spread its dominion to encompass nearly 180 degrees of longitude, and promoted itself to a tsardom, before flowering into a full-fledged empire under the dynamic Peter I.

At its height, Imperial Russia controlled one-sixth of all the world's landmass. But its size belied a disadvantageous location: despite thirty thousand miles of coastline, Imperial Russia was hard-pressed to find ports that both fronted open ocean and did not freeze over in the long, bitter winter. Geography seemed a cruel taunt: the Arctic and Pacific coasts faced open ocean, but were choked with ice for part of the year; the Baltic Sea—which also froze—was cut off from the Atlantic Ocean by the Kattegat and the

Skagerrak; the Black Sea was separated from the Mediterranean Sea by the Ottoman-controlled Turkish Straits; and the Caspian Sea was merely the world's largest *totally enclosed* body of water. In such circumstances, the construction, maintenance, and utilization of a navy would be an ambitious undertaking for any power.

Figure 4.1. Imperial Russia in its geostrategic context, 1913. Map by Rand, McNally & Co.

Russian military activity was mostly contiguous and overland. Relying in part on a massive population and the dictation of an absolutist government, Russia could summon overwhelming land forces against its adversaries. Indeed, Russia has usually fielded (along with China) the largest armies of the modern era. The Russian territory displayed in figure 4.1 was the result of conquests over land; unlike its Western European and (later) Japanese counterparts, Russia did not have to "put to sea" to make an empire

of itself; it stands out (alongside the United States and, again, China) for the decidedly continental nature of its imperial acquisitions during the expansionist zeitgeist of the 1500s-1800s.

But as other great powers sailed their way to intercontinental empires, defeating mostly weaker native adversaries, Russian authority met more formidable opponents: Qing China, Safavid Persia, the Ottoman Empire, the Austria-centered Habsburg domains, and the Swedish Empire, among others. "Territorial conquests . . . procured for Russia a seaboard in all respects inferior to that possessed by other great Powers. Having attained that seaboard, it was necessary to build up a navy, which, unlike that of Great Britain, was thus an artificial creation."[330] The creator was the Westernizing Peter I, but this emperor's zeal for the navy, like so many of the qualities he tried to foist upon his countrymen, did not long outlive him.

The Imperial Navy never enjoyed the status that the Imperial Army had achieved in Russian society and collective memory. Its role in national defense was adjunctive; in territorial enlargement, minimal; in grand strategy, expendable.[331] In a British surgeon's anonymous account of his time spent onboard a Russian naval vessel, he records, "The difference of the *esprit du corps* between the army and the navy is obvious. The former know and feel the value, not only of their late services [in the Napoleonic Wars], but of their usual weight in the country: the latter appear to labour under a feeling of inferiority,

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330. Col. Sir George Sydenham Clarke, *Russia's Sea-power Past and Present, or the Rise of the Russian Navy* (London: John Murray, 1898), xiv, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006538704.

331. Roger W. Barnett, "Soviet Maritime Strategy," in *Seapower and Strategy*, ed. Colin S. Gray and Roger W. Barnett (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 299-300.

as if aware they were only a lower link in the chain of national power."[332] "It is impossible for Russia to be considered a major naval power, but there is no predictable need or advantage in this status": so concluded in 1802 the chair of what the government had called the Committee to Improve the Condition of the Navy.[333]

This chapter is about Imperial Russia's navy in the period 1801-1917. Naval historian Andrew Lambert observes that the story of Russian naval development represents what could be "the only truly circular pattern in world history": generation, zenith, destruction, generation, ad infinitum.[334] This is a story of failed hybridization, not as a repetition of the Germany chapter, but as the antithesis of the France chapter: an absence of investment persistence that itself contributed to an inability for threat diffusion. While Russian efforts in the early nineteenth century were too brief to be considered as persistent investment—directed as they were at resolving discrete political crises—the late 1800s saw a concerted effort by the government to build a naval force that could contend with the Great Powers. This effort ended with catastrophic defeat in the Far East against a fleet that was not necessarily better in matériel, but that was superior in discipline, education, and training, factors overlooked in a Russian naval investment that focused on the ships themselves.

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332. *A Voyage to St. Petersburg in 1814, with Remarks on the Imperial Russian Navy* (London: Sir Richard Phillips, 1822), 8, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t4wh2kb69.

333. Quoted in L. G. Beskrovny, *The Russian Army and Fleet in the Nineteenth Century: Handbook of Armaments, Personnel, and Policy*, The Russian Series 40 (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1996), 295.

334. Andrew Lambert, *Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict that Made the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 11.

This chapter shows in high relief the power of persistence in investment. French and German investment persistence meant that each country was able to play a role in naval affairs without repeatedly having to start over from scratch. This ability to maintain a navy meant that Paris and Berlin could exercise a presence at sea, a presence that could (but did not necessarily) translate to real geopolitical weight. France diffused its navy to build an empire, largely without antagonizing Britain. Germany, had it contented itself with a second-rate empire and diffused (instead of concentrated) its navy, could have also been on more cordial terms with the United Kingdom. Berlin could have taken a less threatening path; it chose not to.

But such options were limited for St. Petersburg: by having to rebuild a fleet every so often, Russia found itself constantly having to start from scratch, while other naval powers continued their development relatively uninterrupted. By the time Russia could cobble a navy together, geopolitical conflicts that had festered in the meantime all but ordained that Russian improvement in arms would be viewed with extreme alarm, especially by the dominant naval power, Britain. Slow Russian hybridization meant that St. Petersburg often lacked a powerful maritime tool of state policy, which inhibited various geostrategic desires—and by the time a navy could be built, other hybrid and naval powers had already advanced their interests more successfully, closing off geographic spaces in which Russian hybridization might have appeared less threatening. The idea of a strong Russian navy being dispatched around the globe in the 1800s to

places or for purposes not antagonistic to the dominant naval power became less and less realistic as the century wore on.

I organize the discussion into three time periods: 1801-56, 1856-1905, and 1905-17. Together, the first two sections illustrate Lambert's condemnation of Russia's efforts at sea: generation, zenith (such as it was), and destruction. This cycle first ran in the former half of the 1800s, culminating in the Crimean War: while naval investment in the 1820s-1830s was too short-lived to constitute investment persistence, its dynamics nonetheless merit discussion. The cycle started again in the 1850s, culminating in the Russo-Japanese War, which destroyed a persistent, two-decade-long investment in naval power. The dozen years after Tsushima bring the story to the empire's collapse in 1917. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the cyclical nature of investment persistence doomed Russian naval development to failure, and also considers two counterarguments particularly salient to Imperial Russia: the hypersensitive threat environment facing the world's largest country, and the country's industrial backwardness.

1801-56: To Crimea

The Russian Empire began the new century with regicide, when Emperor Paul was killed in his bedroom by a number of disaffected elites. Paul's son, Alexander I, succeeded to the throne. Under Alexander I, what had been a relatively large navy bequeathed by Empress Catherine II (the Great) declined: the geographic breadth and political seriousness of the Napoleonic Wars then ongoing meant that the navy "simply

did not receive significant funding because of the great demands of the land struggle."[335] The naval infantry (i.e., marine corps) was also reduced.[336] Ambitions by the Russian navy to take Malta and the Ionian Islands during the war ultimately failed; it was British naval might that finally ejected France from those islands.[337] Otherwise, Russia's concerns were largely landward and preoccupied with fending off the existential threat that was the French invasion of 1812, prompted by St. Petersburg's formal break from Paris' Continental System (in practice, Russia had not adhered to the System for years).

An exception was a series of Pacific expeditions in the first quarter-century that resulted in Alaska being made Russian territory and, in the same year that Napoléon I marched on Russia from the west, the establishment of Russia's southernmost North America post at Ft. Ross, sixty-five miles north of San Francisco.[338] But Alexander I abruptly halted Pacific operations just before his death in 1825, having reached the conclusion that Russia could not risk antagonizing other great powers, for fear of

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335. Jacob W. Kipp, "The Imperial Russian Navy,1696-1900: The Ambiguous Legacy of Peter's 'Second Arm,'" in *The Military History of Tsarist Russia*, ed. Frederick W. Kagan and Robin Higham (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 162. The navy that served Catherine (r. 1762-96) was a sizeable force: she inherited a navy that had already displaced Spain's as the world's third strongest and that, from 1781 through 1800, grew from 8 percent of global sea power strength to 18 percent, third only to Great Britain and France. The Russian navy fought Sweden (which enjoyed local naval superiority) to a draw and handily beat numerically superior Ottoman forces a number of times, taking Sevastopol. Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860*, vol. 2, Stockholm Studies in History 48 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1993), 2:421; George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Seapower in Global Politics, 1494-1993* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 119-21; and "Navies, Great Powers," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History*, ed. John B. Hattendorf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195130751.001.0001/acref-9780195130751-e-0580.

336. Clark G. Reynolds, *Command of the Sea: The History and Strategy of Maritime Empires* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), 303.

337. F. R. Bridge and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System, 1814-1914*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), 52-53, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1596583.

338. Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801-1917*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 178.

retaliation anywhere else along the long Russian frontier.[339] "Always, the Russian Crown was pondering the possible reactions of the courts of Spain, England, or both to bolder moves in the Pacific. For this and other reasons, which included an awareness that Britain in particular might well retaliate in Europe, . . . Pacific matters took a low priority. When danger grew in Europe, resources were withdrawn from the Pacific."[340]

The tyranny of distance, coupled with Russia's naval weakness, meant that St. Petersburg did not even want to test the waters of Pacific colonization: "The point is that the Russian *apprehension* of a counter-move . . . had significant effects on Russian policy for the Pacific. Russia's lack of military and economic strength on the Pacific made a policy of circumspection prudent, even necessary."[341] "It was not that Britain *had* reacted badly to intermittent news of Russian progress in the far North-East and East. It was the prospect that she might that had then counted in St. Petersburg."[342]

In essence, Alexander I drew down Russian activity in the Pacific because of a fear that threat diffusion would either not work or was not practically feasible. The expeditions did not cease in reaction to actual pushback from the dominant naval power, but out of the fear of an *anticipated* British reaction. This is despite the fact that, had Russia been bolder earlier, when other major powers were distracted by Continental intrigues, St. Petersburg probably could have taken much more of the Pacific coastline than it did: "Had decisive steps been taken to assert the Russian presence on the [Pacific]

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339. Glynn Barratt, *The Russian Navy and Australia to 1825: The Days before Suspicion* (Melbourne: Hawthorne Press, 1979), 228.

340. Ibid., 234.

341. Ibid., 235.

342. Ibid., 210.

Coast even as late as 1810, Russia would in fact have had no cause to fear a counter-move by England or Spain. Nor, for that matter, was Madrid in a position to do much to harm the Russian national interest in Europe."[343] But the fear of an attack somewhere along the continental frontier was simply too great a risk. France and Germany may have done a better job of balancing continental and naval commitments and threats, but neither had to deal with the intercontinental geostrategic problems of Russia. Although Alexander I's successor would resume naval investment for a very short period of time afterwards, these efforts were of neither the scale nor the sustainability to count as investment persistence. The threat environment was already too risky to justify the risk of threat diffusion backfiring at sea.

On the whole, the state of Russia's navy after the Napoleonic Wars did not improve: ship construction declined, as did fleet cruises.[344] In 1820, Minister of the Navy the Marquis de Traversay (a Frenchman), complained to the emperor's advisory body, "In the nine years that I have had the responsibilities of Minister of Marine, not once was the budget approved at a value corresponding to its needs. . . . Today, I consider it my sacred duty to state here that the annual and prolonged economies is an erroneous calculation that leads to a very dangerous situation."[345] That "dangerous situation" is best summed up by the experienced Vice Adm. Vasily Golovnin in 1825: "If the rotten, badly, and poorly equipped vessels; aged, ailing, ignorant, and confused-at-sea admirals of the

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343. Ibid., 235.

344. Kipp, "The Imperial Russian Navy," 162.

345. Quoted in Madeleine du Chatenet, *L'Amiral Jean-Baptiste de Traversay, un Français, ministre de la Marine des tsars* (Paris: Tallandier, 1996), 388-89.

fleet; inexperienced captains and officers; and farmers, under the name of sailors, enrolled for ship's crews could make a navy, then we have it."[346]

But in the very year of Golovnin's sad pronouncement, an apparent salvation appeared in the form of Nicholas I, who ascended the throne. As with the cases of both France and Germany, it would take a figure of authority to provide institutional and political support to the naval service in a continental state—and in Imperial Russia, that was the emperor himself or some fellow Romanov. Nicholas I saw naval power as a means to enhance his influence, a weight in the balance of power that could provide St. Petersburg with leverage in great-power politics.[347] But he was also someone who did not forget continental intrigues, and his naval enthusiasm, however genuine, did not overcome or outlast his landward bias. Investment in Russian naval development would prove both short-lived and incomplete; it was not persistent. Enthusiastic for his navy upon accession to the throne, Nicholas I's commitment declined after the 1830s:

> Though over a 30-year period he was responsible for the construction of 69 battleships, 47 frigates, ten steam frigates, 43 steamers, and some 600 small and very small craft, expenditures which had been high during the 1830s thereafter declined sharply. This reflects a naval building program which for a time increased the fleet by as much as seven to ten battleships a year, but later provided for only two battleships, a frigate, and three lesser vessels annually. The sharp reduction in expenditure after 1840 was also a reflection of the fact that Nicholas was a good deal more land-minded than sea-minded. English observers reported that after reviewing naval personnel he would frequently draft the most promising sailors for service in the army.[348]

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346. Quoted in Donald W. Mitchell, *A History of Russian and Soviet Sea Power* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 136.

347. Glete, 2:429; and Kipp, "The Imperial Russian Navy," 163.

348. Donald W. Mitchell, 137.

Indeed, the period of peak construction (1826-30) was linked to a war with the Ottoman Empire.[349] Ship construction was itself emblematic of a larger problem in the Imperial Navy: the low quality of warships meant that Russia had to continually replace vessels that quickly proved unseaworthy. Russia built 120,000 tons worth of warships in 1826-30, but the net increase in the fleet as a whole was only 20,000 tons, the remaining 100,000 tons simply being replacements for rapidly decaying vessels.[350]

Multiple scholars agree that the root cause was the poor quality of the timber used, exacerbated by the ice in which ships were laid up during winter.[351] The result was vessels that were only serviceable for about eight years, even though the Russians sometimes tried to keep them in commission for two decades or more.[352] For imperial inspections of Kronstadt, the major naval base guarding St. Petersburg, rotting warships would be hastily painted and "prettified" on the one side that the emperor would be shown during the tour.[353]

But there was a bigger problem for the Russian fleet, one that features prominently in the earlier discussion on French asymmetric naval technology: steam propulsion. From 1840 onwards, the Russian navy, however large it appeared in numbers,

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349. Glete, 2:424.

350. Ibid.

351. Hans Busk, *The Navies of the World; Their Present State, and Future Capabilities* (London: Routledge, Warnes, and Routledge, 1859), 101; Fred. T. Jane, *The Imperial Russian Navy: Its Past, Present, and Future* (London: W. Thacker, 1899), 133; and David Woodward, *The Russians at Sea* (London: William Kimber, 1965), 79. Busk and Jane state that the wood primarily used was fir, which splintered easily; Woodward asserts that the wood used was larch.

352. Jane, 101.

353. Barratt, 178.

began to fall behind technologically.[354] "The problem was that the definition of naval power began to change with the advent of steam propulsion in the 1840s."[355] Nicholas I thought that the new technologies being developed—not simply steam propulsion, but also the technologies following on from that, such as the screw propeller—were simply fads, and later forbade construction of warships using such new technologies.[356] Whether the Russian national economy was advanced or flexible enough to adapt to the Industrial Revolution at this early juncture is an open question, but the emperor precluded any possibility of discovering the answer through his Luddite and arbitrary fiat.

By 1850, Britain had 127 steam-powered warships and France 105. Russia, still nominally the third naval power, possessed just nineteen.[357] With the benefit of one-half century's hindsight, student of naval affairs Fred. T. Jane noted with typical British understatement: "The adoption of steam left the Russians somewhat behind."[358] This growing technological backwardness, coupled with the re-emergence of Anglo-French naval rivalry, saw Russia retreat from the foreground in British threat perceptions.[359] This is one perhaps unintended consequence of French investment persistence taking the form

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354. Glete, 2:429.

355. Kipp, "The Imperial Russian Navy," 163.

356. Jacob W. Kipp, "Imperial Russia: The Archaic Bureaucratic Framework, 1850-1863," in *Naval Technology and Social Modernization in the Nineteenth Century* (Manhattan, KS: *Military Affairs*, 1976), 33.

357. Glete, 2:422-25.

358. Jane, 134.

359. This is exemplified by London asking St. Petersburg for naval assistance in case the 1840 Oriental Crisis led to actual war and in the 1844 verbal agreement for Anglo-Russian cooperation in the midst of a French-induced naval scare. Vernon John Puryear, *England, Russia, and the Straits Question, 1844-1856*, University of California Publications in History 20 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1931), 35, 53-54.

of technological asymmetry: rather than permanently even the odds with the world's dominant naval power, the second naval power merely rendered the third obsolete.

On the surface, however, the Imperial Navy of Nicholas I looked formidable. For much of the emperor's thirty-year reign, his navy was the world's third largest. Naval investment was enough to alarm the United Kingdom beginning in the 1830s, exacerbated by both ongoing Russian naval activity in southeastern Europe and the fear that Russia would resume the Pacific expansion it had earlier abandoned. Renewed ship construction meant that, by the end of the 1820s, the Imperial Navy had grown by about 25 percent and, by the end of the 1830s, an additional ten percent—though this merely brought the navy back up to the size it had been under Catherine.[360]

Nicholas I dispatched his growing navy to assist the Greeks in their war for independence from the Ottoman Empire in the late 1820s.[361] In 1833, facing the threat of overthrow from Egypt's rebellious Muhammad Ali Pasha, Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II desperately sought Russia's help in defending Constantinople (his own fleet having been destroyed in the Greek war), to which Nicholas I obliged by dispatching the Black Sea Fleet.[362] Russia took advantage of Ottoman supplication to negotiate the Treaty of Unkiar Iskelesi: Mahmud II agreed to close the Turkish Straits at Russia's request to any warship

360. Glete, 2:424.
361. Ibid., 2:429.
362. Puryear, 19. This is the same Muhammad Ali whose shenanigans contributed to the 1840 Oriental Crisis discussed in chapter 2.

of any country for any reason, to great disapproval from France and the United Kingdom.[363]

Coupled with relative quiet in Anglo-French relations, a seemingly reinvigorated Russia appeared to the British as a growing menace in the 1830s and the Russian navy was assumed to exist for the purpose of menacing Britain's Royal Navy.[364] Russian intervention in both the eastern Mediterranean and the north Pacific alarmed the United Kingdom, which saw in St. Petersburg an absolutist, aggressive, and expansionist great power.[365] Russia's constant attempts to undermine or influence the Ottoman Empire led Britain to fear an Ottoman collapse, which would have repercussions for Russian expansion in the Middle East and British access to India.[366] And, although Russian naval expeditions throughout the Pacific had stopped, Russia did not disappear from the Pacific coasts (St. Petersburg still owned both sides of the Bering Strait), and its continued presence caused London much concern, especially in context of the search for the Northern Passage, which was then in vogue. Britain's House of Commons was persuaded to hold a prize competition for the British discovery of such a passage.[367]

It would take the Crimean War to show that the Imperial Russian Navy was not a serious threat, thanks to declining investment from the 1840s onward. A Russian attempt to defend Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire (in response to a Catholic French

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363. Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia, 1855-1914* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 94.
364. Glete, 2:429; and Jane, 328.
365. Bridge and Bullen, 96; and Reynolds, 303.
366. Reynolds, 339.
367. Barratt, 200-201.

assertion of extraterritorial protection) led to Paris and St. Petersburg disputing who had the right to interfere in Constantinople's internal affairs. Alarmed at the prospect of Russia destabilizing the Ottoman Empire, seizing control of the Turkish Straits, expanding its power through Central Asia, and potentially threatening India, the United Kingdom joined the dispute to prop up the Ottomans.[368]

Despite local superiority over and early successes against the inferior Ottoman navy, Russia's Black Sea Fleet was no match against its British and French counterparts. Facing an assault by both land and sea upon the fleet's headquarters at Sevastopol, St. Petersburg ordered the Black Sea Fleet scuttled to choke the harbor and make it more difficult for the adversaries to land troops. The sailors and marines were sent to man the city's land defenses.[369] Unlike the other instances of scuttling discussed in chapters 2 and 3—which were done to prevent adversaries from acquiring advanced, modern fleets—the Russians could so easily part with their Black Sea Fleet because it was still primarily comprised of sailing vessels: backward, out of date, and with no hope against more advanced navies.[370]

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368. Puryear, 356. For the argument that concern over Russian naval power was *the* cause of the Crimean War, see A. J. P. *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 66, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39076006668946. It should be noted that the expansive aims that London constantly attributed to St. Petersburg did not properly reflect actual Russian policy. Russia had concluded in the early 1800s that the Ottoman Empire's destruction, even if it resulted in Russian control of the Turkish Straits, would most likely result in a partition of the Ottoman state by the great powers, thus presenting Russia with an even more undesirable situation on its flank: multiple strong powers instead of one weak power. Frederick W. Kagan, "Russia's Geopolitical Dilemma and the Questions of Backwardness," in Kagan and Higham, 251.

369. Reynolds, 350.

370. Kipp, "The Imperial Russian Navy," 163.

Outside the Black Sea, the Russian naval war effort fared no better. The Baltic Fleet, equally obsolete, was a cardboard force and in no condition to fight.[371] No cruiser warfare was undertaken against Britain's and France's large merchant fleets because the Russian navy had not thought of how to do so in its doctrine.[372] A harebrained scheme involving private American citizens working with Mexico's consul at San Francisco, California, to organize a privateer's squadron to prey on British and French commercial shipping fell through when the consul was duly arrested.[373] Summarizing the Russian navy's contributions in the Crimean War, Jane wrote, "The naval history of the Crimean War is not lengthy or important. In all cases—in the Baltic, Euxine [Black Sea], White Sea, and Pacific waters, Russian ships wisely kept inside their ports."[374]

The (self-)destruction of the Black Sea Fleet and the impotence of all the others brought the circle of naval development—such as it was—to a close in 1856, when the belligerents, for different reasons, had all been exhausted by the Crimean War and sought a peace. The resulting Treaty of Paris forbade both Constantinople and St. Petersburg from having fleets in the Black Sea, a small price to pay for the Ottoman Empire, since it still controlled the Straits, but a heavy price for the Russian Empire, whose Black Sea Fleet had been an important tool for intervention in its sphere of influence, and which was now left with no naval presence closer to the Mediterranean than its Baltic Fleet.[375]

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371. Kipp, "Imperial Russia," 33.
372. Glete, 2:430.
373. S. B. Okun, *The Russian-American Company*, ed. B. D. Grikov, trans. Carl Ginsburg, Russian Translation Project Series 9 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 239.
374. Jane, 142.
375. Glete, 2:429; and Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia*, 96.

Nicholas I's dalliance with naval investment in the 1820s-1830s was as close as Imperial Russia got to anything resembling investment persistence in the nineteenth century's first half. The investment was simply too short-lived, ending when the ad hoc political conditions that had driven it had themselves changed. This therefore appears to have simply been a discrete response to temporally limited geostrategic conflicts. The lack of naval investment persistence would contribute to Nicholas I's poor hand in Crimea and, when he died, it was left to his son, Emperor Alexander II, to conclude the peace—one whose terms regarding the abolition of a Black Sea Fleet the new ruler came to bitterly resent.[376] This festering insult to Russia's great-power status would, in part, be the germ for a second cycle of naval development in the second half of the 1800s.

376. Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia*, 96.

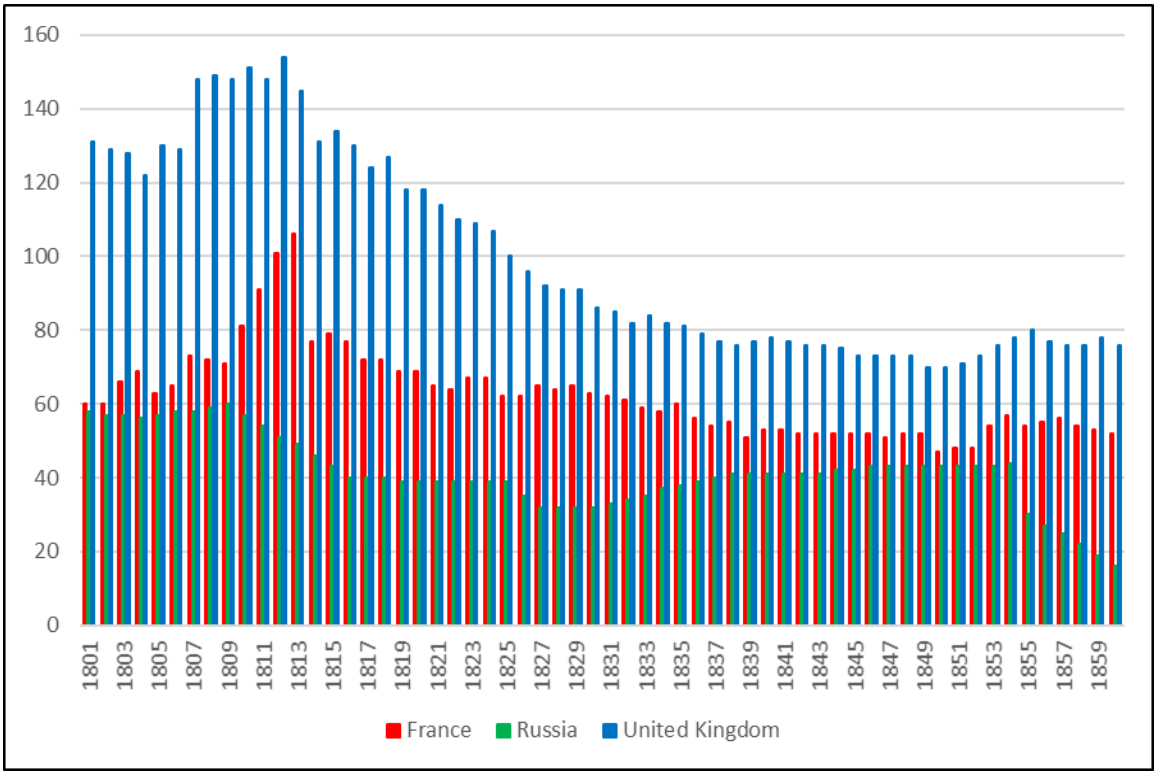

Figure 4.2. French, Russian, and British warship numbers, 1801-60. Data from Modelski and Thompson, 226-29, 264-65, 291-92.

1856-1905: To Tsushima

The half-century from the end of the Crimean War to the end of the Russo-Japanese War saw another cycle in Russian naval development. Defeated and humiliated by the Anglo-French alliance and handcuffed by a peace treaty that prevented its sunken fleet's resurrection, Russia stood humbled. The shock to the navy was no less severe, and Gen.-Adm. Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolayevich, Alexander II's brother and the navy minister, took it in hand to reform the Imperial Navy.[377] An extensive study sought to answer the fundamental question, "What in general is the goal and the purpose of the

377. General-admiral was the highest rank in the Imperial Navy (equivalent to the army's field marshal) and typically reserved for the service's professional head.

fleet in Russia, and what as a result ought to be its size and composition?"[378] Konstantin concluded that "our fleet ought to be such that we will always be stronger than our weak neighbors, and such that the first-time [sic] naval powers, in the event of a war between them, will prize our alliance or neutrality, and such that our shores will be secure from sudden attacks by several ships."[379]

This was a modest strategy of calculated inferiority. The navy was to play two roles: first, it would maintain superiority over weaker neighbors. Second, it would counter the two superior naval powers (the United Kingdom and France) by engaging in commerce-raiding and, in the case of an amphibious invasion, holding out long enough for the army to mobilize and move to the coast. Since planning and logistics rendered a full-blown enemy invasion impossible in the form of a surprise attack, Russia would have ample time both to sortie its cruisers before they got blockaded in port and to move the army to the appropriate theater.[380]

This strategy naturally engendered opposition from more traditional officers who demanded a battlefleet and who saw this "voluntary repudiation of a seagoing fleet" as placing Russia in a disadvantageous position and undermining its great-power status.[381] Konstantin had, for example, only planned for enough battleships to defend Kronstadt (which guarded St. Petersburg).[382] Jacob W. Kipp argues that the divide was reflective of

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378. Quoted in William C. Fuller Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 286.
379. Quoted in ibid., 287.
380. Ibid., 286-88; and Glete, 2:430.
381. Beskrovny, 305.
382. Kipp, "Imperial Russia," 44.

a larger division within the Russian mindset: the Slavophiles who wanted a navy simply for coastal defense and the Westernizers who wanted a true blue-water navy.[383] "The navy proved to be one of the most controversial institutions because it had no roots in Muscovite Russia, but was closely tied to the Petrine transformation. It was the ultimate product of Westernization. Slavophiles regarded it as an artificial imposition of an alien state."[384]

The dispute came to a head in 1860, when Alexander II approved Konstantin's vision of a navy, fully aware of its inadequacy and its inability to compete in the top flight of naval powers. Kipp argues that this was, in fact, the most sensible solution post-Crimea: "In shifting to a strategy of commerce raiding as a contingency plan for war against the maritime powers, especially England, naval reformers had followed logically the path recommended by Russia's position after the Crimean War, considering her modest resources."[385] Konstantin, however, was shortly afterwards appointed viceroy of Poland, and his naval opponents sought to reimpose their ideas upon the naval service. In addition to a greater emphasis on armored warships, the post-Konstantin navy reversed many of the grand duke's reforms, reinstating promotion based purely on seniority and time in service, cutting back on cruises for training, and failing to develop a naval staff. The end result was a navy leadership that "cultivated appearances at the expense of

383. Kipp, "The Imperial Russian Navy," 170.
384. Ibid., 154.
385. Kipp, "Imperial Russia," 46.

accomplishments and saw initiative and experience as grave dangers to institutional stability."[386]

A naval program was eventually settled upon, but its ambitious timeline of ten years had to be doubled to twenty, due to lack of funds—hardly a signal of persistent investment. The shipbuilding program itself remained technologically out of date: rather than take advantage of the fleet's destruction to start afresh with a modern ironclad fleet, the Navy Ministry decided to continue building wooden warships, powered by screw propellers (figure 4.3 illustrates Russia's slow technological start).[387] This left the Russian navy nearly two decades behind its British and French rivals. The resulting Russian navy remained outdated and outgunned, even if its warships were nominally new. "In military terms Russia was simply unable to keep up with her western neighbours; and even the cost of such efforts as she made to keep pace in the military field obliged her to abandon altogether her role as a major maritime power until the later 1880s."[388]

Resources were modest indeed: "The country's finances were in a desperate state as a result of the [Crimean] war, causing the government to find its way out of its difficult situation by making major cuts in the naval budget. It became impossible to give serious

386. Kipp, "The Imperial Russian Navy," 154.

387. Beskrovny, 302. The importance of the ironclad is noted in chapter 2 (France). Both Kipp and Anthony J. Watts offer a rosier picture of Konstantin's navy, arguing that his ultimate ambition was to have a new steamship navy with an offensive battlefleet—this may be true, but such an ambition had no hope of being converted to reality until the end of the century. See Kipp, "Imperial Russia," 42; and Anthony J. Watts, *The Imperial Russian Navy* (London: Arms and Armour, 1990), 14.

388. Bridge and Bullen, 129-30.

consideration to an extensive shipbuilding program."[389] Furthermore, the War Ministry was pursuing its own reforms for the army and fought the Navy Ministry for money that was being disbursed from a shrinking government budget. From the 1860s to the 1890s, the naval budget was never more than 20 percent of the army's and was as low as 12 percent of the army's in the 1860s.[390] Any investment in the navy, let alone persistent investment, was simply too pitiful for the gargantuan tasks at hand.

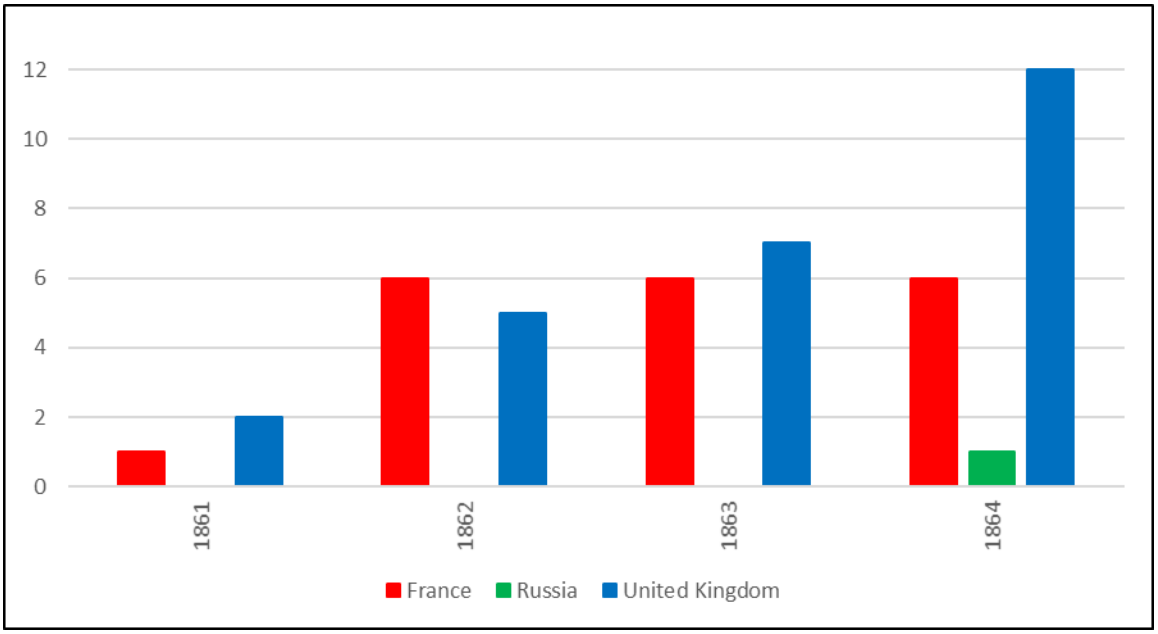

Figure 4.3. French, Russian, and British ironclad battleship numbers, 1861-64. Data from Modelski and Thompson, 230, 266, 293.

To aid his commerce-raiding strategy, Konstantin had tried to promote Russian acquisition of overseas coaling stations and naval bases.[391] Here, Konstantin faced the

389. Beskrovny, 302.
390. Walter M. Pintner, "The Burden of Defense in Imperial Russia, 1725-1914," *The Russian Review* 43, no. 3 (July 1984): 243.
391. Fuller, 287-88.

opposition of the Foreign Ministry, which feared that overseas bases would be unnecessarily provocative to the United Kingdom and would incentivize Britain to retaliate by interfering with Russia's continental interests.[392] Russia was already overstretched, with no naval capacity to defend Alaska. Anxious that the British should not acquire it, Russia sold Alaska to the United States in 1867 at a steep discount of US$7 million.[393]

In any event, Russia failed to acquire overseas possessions. A base established at Villafranca in the Kingdom of Sardinia (present-day Villefranche-sur-Mer, France) proved short-lived, on account of its being in the Risorgimento tinderbox that was the Italian states, Austria, and France.[394] An attempt to seize the main islands in the Strait of Tsushima (which separates the Japanese main islands from continental Asia) resulted in a storm of British diplomatic protest. Alexander II was unwilling to risk a war over this base, so withdrew Russian forces.[395] The Russian navy was thus left with the alternative of relying on neutral powers whenever great-power tensions arose. For example, in 1863, Russia feared a war with Britain might break out due to London's concern over St.

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392. Kipp, "Imperial Russia," 46.

393. This was less than one-half the value of Alaska's annual production of canned salmon. Mairin Mitchell, *The Maritime History of Russia, 848-1948* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1949), 244, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b72056. "It will be recalled that it was the same fear of British seapower that caused Napoléon to sell Louisiana to the United States in 1803. A certain amount of irony may be derived from the fact that two of the greatest territorial gains by the United States derived from fear of British seapower." Woodward, 109.

394. Jacob W. Kipp, "Russian Naval Reformers and Imperial Expansion, 1856-1863," *Soviet Armed Forces Review Annual* 1 (1977): 119-21.

395. Ibid., 125-26.

Petersburg's harsh oppression of a Polish insurrection, so Russian vessels were dispatched to the United States to await further instructions.[396]

Russia's use of its navy was largely limited to nearby waters anyway. Taking advantage of the great powers' preoccupation with the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War, St. Petersburg unilaterally abrogated the Treaty of Paris' Black Sea Fleet ban, which was still regarded as a humiliation and an affront to Russian great-power status.[397] In the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War, Russia supported rebellions against the Ottoman Empire by, among other things, attacking the weak Ottoman navy and helping Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia each gain independence.[398] But this triumph was more a condemnation of the even worse state of the Ottoman navy than a celebration of Russian naval strength. Compared to France and the United Kingdom, Russia was still putting to sea a large yet largely outdated and underfunded navy: "By 1877, Russia possessed 223 ships in its six fleets. Many of them, however, were small vessels, or antiquated wooden ones. The navy was not, in fact, even up to the task of defending the Russian coast."[399]

This state of affairs would obtain through the end of the decade, when a new modus operandi would take hold. Responding to circumstances, the Russian Empire felt that it was time to invest again in a more muscular and active navy: the political consolidation of Germany, the growing rivalry with Austria-Hungary in southeastern

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396. The nominal reasons given for these Russian visits to New York, NY, and San Francisco, CA, were to enhance Russo-American friendship and lend a friendly hand to US interdiction of smugglers aiding Confederate rebels. See F. A. Golder, "The Russian Fleet and the Civil War," *The American Historical Review* 20, no. 4 (July 1915): 801-12; Mairin Mitchell, 245; Okun, 260; and Woodward, 108.

397. Bridge and Bullen, 124.

398. Reynolds, 406.

399. Fuller, 325.

Europe, the increased importance of industry and trade along the Black Sea, the ever-present concern over Ottoman control of the Turkish Straits, and the growing importance of the Far East all caused St. Petersburg to re-evaluate its grand strategy and the military tools at its disposal. In an 1880 report, Capt. Leopold V. Swaine, military attaché at the British Embassy in Constantinople, opined conspiratorially that the Russians were seeking a route to the Mediterranean through Asia Minor and that his Russian colleagues were busy building friendships and smoothing over obstacles in preparation for a move across Anatolia to present a naval fait accompli somewhere on the coast.[400]

It is in the quarter-century to 1905 that one sees arguably the only instance of what could be called investment persistence in the 1801-1917 Imperial Navy. The decade began with Alexander II's assassination in 1881, but not before the emperor had approved a new, ambitious shipbuilding program as part of a wider effort to strengthen his military. His son, Emperor Alexander III, carried through with the program, despite the Finance Ministry's objections over the cost.[401] The new investment plan was for a balanced force, providing for coastal defense, commerce-raiding, and traditional fleet-on-

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400. UK Cabinet Office, Photographic Copies of Cabinet Papers, 1880-1916, CAB 37/1/4 (1880), http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017.12/1326176. Subsequent citations from this collection will be cited simply as "CAB 37/Vol./No. (Year)." Swaine surmised that the Russians might be aiming to reach the "Bay of Ajaz," which other geographic references in the same passage suggest is somewhere on the Levantine Sea's Turkish coast. I have been unable to ascertain the bay's precise location.

401. Sources refer to this shipbuilding plan as either the 1880 or the 1882 plan. This is because, while the plan was initially approved in 1880 by Alexander II, it was not implemented until 1882 under Alexander III, due to initial lack of funds. See V. Krestianinov, *Imperial Russian Navy in Photographs from the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries* (London: Uniform Press, 2013), 1; Nicholas Papastratigakis, *Russian Imperialism and Naval Power: Military Strategy and the Build-Up to the Russo-Japanese War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 67; Watts, 16; and Woodward, 117.

fleet engagements.[402] A rather pathetic fleet whose capital ships comprised only two battleships and nineteen cruisers was to receive investment in the form of twenty-four new battleships and fifteen new cruisers, along with other smaller craft, such as gunboats, over the course of twenty years.[403] This substantially improved battlefleet, one clearly capable of operations beyond coastal waters, would help raise Russia's prestige on the world stage and give St. Petersburg greater weight in deciding international matters.[404]

The plan did not envisage this new Russian force going head-to-head against Britain's Royal Navy: "What was planned was a fleet which, in alliance with that of France or some other ally sufficiently strong, might topple the British."[405] Such an alliance with another naval power was finally realized in 1894, when Russia formed an alliance with France, its ideological enemy for much of the past century.[406] "Fear of British intentions had, as we have seen, played a part in the making of the alliance."[407] In

402. Krestianinov, 1.

403. Beskrovny, 312.

404. Krestianinov, 1. For comparison's sake, as of 1882, battleships among naval powers totaled eight in the United Kingdom and four in France. By 1902, Britain possessed twenty-nine and France ten, with Germany and the United States each possessing nine, and Japan possessing six. Russia managed to have seven, so if it had built the full program, it would have vaulted to second place. Modelski and Thompson, 230, 238, 266, 293, 309, 314.

405. Watts, 16; and Woodward, 117.

406. This was not simply due to lingering ill-feeling from the 1812 invasion, but also due to the threat that French republicans supposedly posed to the Russian absolutist monarchy, which habitually viewed a French role behind various attempts to assassinate emperors or otherwise destabilize Russia. Furthermore, the Romanovs still viewed the Bonapartists as illegitimate monarchs, and were alone among Europe's ruling houses in refusing to call Emperor Napoléon III *mon frère* ("my brother"), the customary term monarchs employed when addressing their male counterparts. The rest of the world was given notice of the new Franco-Russian bond when Alexander III greeted a visiting French flotilla at Kronstadt by respectfully removing his cap at the playing of "La Marseillaise," whose lyrics are exuberantly anti-monarchical.

407. Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia*, 183.

1900-1901, the French and Russians discussed how to cooperate in case of war, agreeing to each side's navy helping the other side's army, and vice versa.[408]

But even before the alliance was made official, the United Kingdom was already concerned about the implications of the new Russian plan and any potential alliance St. Petersburg could form with anyone else. London realized that, in the event of Franco-Russian joint action in the vital Mediterranean, the Royal Navy would have to commit its entire Mediterranean fleet just to have a fair chance of defeating the combined adversaries. It was implications such as these, in addition to technological advances (discussed in chapter 2), that led Britain to devise the two-power standard in 1889, which required the Royal Navy to possess a capital-ship strength equal to the next two largest fleets combined.[409]

The 1880/1882 plan was quickly modified and investment increased: changing circumstances caused revised shipbuilding numbers in 1885 (tensions with the United Kingdom over Afghanistan), the middle 1890s (the growing German fleet), and the late 1890s (the growing Japanese fleet). Changes usually took the form of what numbers of what types of vessels to build and where to put the ships: for example, in 1885, two battleships intended for the Black Sea Fleet were assigned to the Baltic in case of a

408. Ibid.

409. Papastratigakis, 91. Technically speaking, at the time of the two-power standard's adoption, the second and third navies belonged to France and Italy, but Russia replaced Italy so quickly and stayed in third for so long that it has often been assumed—both then and now—that the two-power standard was created for France and Russia. See CAB 37/59/118 (1901).

British attack there, due to a crisis in relations involving Afghanistan; in 1890, after the crisis had receded, those two battleships were restored to the Black Sea.[410]

Persistence in Russian naval investment was buoyed by two other developments. First, the navalism inspired by US Navy Capt. A. T. Mahan did not neglect to sweep through Russia. Second and crucially, navalism crept into the new emperor, Nicholas II, who had assumed the throne upon Alexander III's death in 1894. Like cousin Emperor Wilhelm II in Germany, Nicholas II was "a naval enthusiast": "Not only did he enjoy his ceremonial role as commander-in-chief, he was also of pivotal importance to the expansion of the fleet. . . . Characteristically, following a conference in the decade prior to 1904 that set in motion a new shipbuilding programme, Nicholas II wrote: 'I feel unprecedented joy that I can clearly demonstrate my long standing love for the fleet.'"[411]

This imperial love of the navy would bloom in the 1890s, as Russia began to focus more on the growing contestation over China among the great powers, especially with Japan. Russia had moved into Chinese Manchuria and was exercising influence over Korea, much to Japan's chagrin. Japan's 1894 invasion of Korea was driven partly out of fear that Russia might wish to take a warm-water port there, which would make exclusive Japanese control more difficult.[412] For Russia, "the vast distance and tenuous

410. Beskrovny, 312-15.

411. Papastratigakis, 45.

412. Bridge and Bullen, 253. While Russian desire for more warm-water ports was a real geostrategic ambition, it risks being overstated. Indeed, my own examination of Russian sources suggests that the concern was not so much warm-water ports per se, but either control or avoidance of chokepoints, the latter being accomplished largely through ports that would not freeze. The common trope of Russia's warm-water port search driving its foreign policy may be due to nineteenth-century Britain and its sensitivity to Russian pressure at various points on London's empire. Michael MccGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1987), 186.

communication links separating the European powerbase from the underdeveloped Far Eastern possessions . . . meant that it was impossible to deploy substantial ground forces in these territories. Therefore, naval power was the only pragmatic alternative for underwriting Russia's political and military interests in this distant theatre."[413]

In 1898, Nicholas II approved a new shipbuilding program that would bulk up the Pacific Fleet, which had received the least support in the prior two decades' various construction programs. The naval budget, as a proportion of the army budget, doubled in a decade, rising from 15 percent in 1895 to 30 percent at the outbreak of war with Japan in 1904.[414] While there were real advances in the Imperial Navy of this time, progress was nonetheless slower than what the increased investment would suggest, as it did not necessarily lead to more or better output. Writing contemporaneously, Jane pointed out that "a good deal of the naval expenditure money in Russia never reaches the navy. Foreign residents in Russia are full of stories of moneys thus intercepted and misappropriated. . . . Hence any ship laid down or building in Russia is to be regarded with suspicion, unless very clear evidence of her existence is to be procured."[415]

The money that did reach the navy was not always well spent either. Just as in the decades before Crimea, the Russian navy produced too many obsolete warships. In the early 1890s, rumors circulated that the Imperial Navy was building a cruiser that was faster and more powerful than any other afloat. Such was the alarm that, based purely on

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413. Papastratigakis, 61. The Trans-Siberian Railway was under construction, but would not be completed until the middle of World War I.

414. Krestianinov, 1; Papastratigakis, 157-58; and Pintner, 243.

415. Jane, 438-39.

this new vessel's unconfirmed qualities, the United Kingdom immediately responded with two new cruisers even larger than the reported Russian one. In 1893, Russia unveiled this dreaded cruiser, the *Rurik*: it was a three-masted ship, still with sails—decades out of date.[416] The British had worried themselves over nothing. "Ever since that date, Russian naval architecture and its products have been looked at suspiciously by foreigners," reflects David Woodward.[417]

These issues reflected the general inferiority of Russian shipyards, evidenced by the fact that the navy was still contracting advanced warships out to foreign builders.[418] The Naval Technical Committee did not standardize vessel types, only issuing general guidelines for what was expected. This resulted in ships of the same class having different technical features.[419] Routine maintenance and repair work, as well as follow-on modernization, were infrequent and sporadic. Whatever the ship, the ammunition loaded was of very low quality: shells typically contained too little explosive when compared to foreign shells of equivalent caliber; fuses proved unreliable for ignition. Overall, facilities

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416. Woodward, 119-20.

417. Ibid., 120.

418. Philadelphia's own William Cramp & Sons Ship and Engine Building Co. was one such contractor, building or converting at least five Russian naval vessels in the latter 1800s. The crews that St. Petersburg dispatched to live in Philadelphia during their ships' construction contributed to a vibrant ethnic Russian community, and their legacy lives on in the city's St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Cathedral, which has an exhibit tracing its intimate relationship with the Russian navy. See Gail M. Farr and Brett F. Bostwick, *Shipbuilding at Cramp & Sons: A History and Guide to Collections of the William Cramp & Sons Ship and Engine Building Company (1830-1927) and the Cramp Shipbuilding Company (1941-46) of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Maritime Museum, 1991), http://www.phillyseaport.org/images/Cramp_Ship_Building_Company_Collection-PhillySeaport.pdf; and St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Cathedral, "Our Cathedral," http://www.saintandrewscathedral.org/sobor_en.html.

419. Papastratigakis, 57.

were inadequate, production methods archaic, and workers poorly skilled.[420] In an 1888 comparison of various countries' naval programs, British First Lord of the Admiralty Lord George Hamilton, while cautioning against British overconfidence, nonetheless admitted the "bad workmanship and miscalculations of Russian shipbuilding."[421]

Such problems were really symptoms of the deeper issue that was late-nineteenth-century Russia's slow industrialization and insistence on top-down absolutism.[422] The stubborn refusal to adopt any reforms that even hinted at democracy had negative implications on naval personnel. Not only were the Romanovs absolutist to begin with, but the spate of assassinations and threat of social turmoil in the late 1800s caused by anarchists, communists, and other terrorists only further heightened the imperial house's conservatism and fear of giving its military personnel too much say. "The prime causes of the navy's inadequacy were tsarism's stubborn refusal to permit democratization of the navy's officer corps and determination to insulate the navy from revolutionary influences."[423]

The French naval attaché at St. Petersburg offered a disappointing account of his ally's navy in 1896:

> The attaché described Russia's shipbuilding infrastructure as weak, slow and dependent on foreign deliveries of armour plate and auxiliary mechanisms, and he viewed Russian warships as technically inadequate and slow. He thought that both officers and other personnel were not real sailors as they did not spend much time

420. Krestianinov, 70.
421. CAB 37/22/40 (1888).
422. Krestianinov, 102; and Papastratigakis, 57.
423. Beskrovny, 345. The Romanovs' fear was hardly unique, as chapter 3 notes how the German military aristocracy also worried that greater democratization of the armed forces would risk undermining the monarchy's and nobility's staunchest defender.

> at sea, and he highlighted a culture of widespread intoxication and loose discipline within the ranks of the Russian navy. He believed that officers were ignorant of even rudimentary rules of tactics and that the Russian navy did not have a strategic doctrine.[424]

These issues would all reveal themselves most powerfully in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, but in the meantime, the Russian navy of the 1880s-1890s seemed a growing menace to a worried dominant naval power, the United Kingdom.

Britain's geostrategic rivalry with Russia dated back to the early part of the nineteenth century, but Russian naval development could exacerbate British concern over its empire whenever St. Petersburg's sporadic naval investments increased. The Crimean War and Russia's obsession with breaking out of the Black Sea were a perennial worry; in addition, Russia's belated industrialization of the late 1800s meant that trade routes grew in importance—imports of raw materials and exports of grain flowed through Russia's southern provinces, which also saw increased railroad construction.[425] According to the 1896 account of a senior British Foreign Office official detailing his conversation with Nicholas II, the Russian emperor had stated that the Turkish Straits were "the door to the room in which he lived, and he insisted he must have the key of that door. . . . Russia did not want Constantinople, or any of the Turkish territory on either side. She only wanted the door, and the power of fortifying it."[426]

Coupled with the two-power standard, the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894 meant that a British fleet equal to the next two largest navies would likely have to fight both

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424. Papastratigakis, 135-36.
425. Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia*, 90.
426. CAB 37/42/[?] 1896. Document item numbers were not provided for this volume.

those navies simultaneously in any conflict. As the British Foreign Office soberly reported in 1901: "It would not be safe for our Mediterranean fleet to endeavour to prevent this junction [i.e., the French Mediterranean and Russian Black Sea Fleets joining up] before it had been reinforced by additional ships from England; otherwise, it would run the risk of finding itself, in greatly inferior numbers, caught between the Russian and the French fleets."[427] Historian Keith Neilson goes so far as to argue that, by the end of the nineteenth century, it was the Russian component of the Franco-Russian alliance that became the "drive wheel" of British shipbuilding programs.[428]

But it was not simply the age-old problem of the Turkish Straits that bedeviled Anglo-Russian relations. For the first time since the 1830s, Russia's increasing focus on the Far East further complicated Anglo-Russian understanding.[429] This was exacerbated by British worries over Russian incursions into Central Asia and potentially India, also part of St. Petersburg's broader strategic turn. In the Far East, Russia was just one of a number of great powers exercising influence in China: like Germany, Russia sought a port; like Japan, Russia sought to dominate the northeast, including Korea. In the 1880s, an attempt to establish a Russian naval presence had resulted in a standoff with British naval forces; the incident ended when both sides withdrew.[430] St. Petersburg finally secured a warm-water port for itself in the late 1890s, when it obtained from China

427. CAB 37/56/8 (1901).

428. Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia, 1894-1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 117. I take Neilson's point with a pinch of salt, as I think chapter 2 shows rather clearly just how important France remained in British naval calculations. Neilson's book overall is revisionist history.

429. See, for example, Reynolds, 424; CAB 37/59/137 (1901); and CAB 37/65/49 (1903).

430. Reynolds, 424.

Dalian and Lüshun (renamed Port Arthur), as well as a railroad concession linking Dalian to Harbin.[431] This caused tremendous alarm in London, which responded by leasing Weihaiwei, directly across from Port Arthur, and linking the lease terms directly to Russia's presence: the United Kingdom was to have Weihaiwei for twenty-five years or until Russia left Port Arthur.[432]

In 1898, Nicholas II approved a new shipbuilding program focused on making the Pacific Fleet alone equal to the entire Japanese navy.[433] In the same year, St. Petersburg and Tokyo signed an agreement whereby Russia recognized Japanese control of Korea and Japan reciprocated by recognizing Russian control of Manchuria.[434] When the Japanese sought to renew the deal in 1901, the Russians refused, as they now sought to expand their influence in Korea as well. The United Kingdom, meanwhile, had viewed the 1898 Pacific-focused construction plan as a menace to itself, not knowing that Russia's aim was to unseat Japanese naval power.[435] To maintain the two-power standard, the Royal Navy responded with a supplemental budget request for £2 million to build four more battleships and four more first-class cruisers.[436]

In 1901, First Lord of the Admiralty the Earl of Selborne wrote that Russia "frames her naval policy with a view to a war with us."[437] Thanks in part to a common concern over Russian expansion, London and Tokyo soon entered negotiations on an

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431. Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia*, 206.
432. Neilson, 117.
433. Papastratigakis, 157; and Woodward, 121.
434. Bridge and Bullen, 271.
435. Papastratigakis, 158; and CAB 37/47/39 (1898).
436. Neilson, 117-18.
437. CAB 37/59/118 (1901).

alliance: Britain's four Far East battleships and Japan's six battleships combined would clearly outweigh Russia's five, thus giving Japan much-needed defensive security in its home region, while giving London more flexibility in its rebalancing efforts against Germany.[438] The Anglo-Japanese accord was concluded in 1902: "When Russia and Japan went to war, it was known to all that, if any country went to Russia's assistance, that country would be attacked by Britain."[439]

Financial concerns also came to the fore in Russia, as naval investment became an increasing irritation to the War Ministry:

> Far Eastern imperialism almost inevitably resulted in an expansion in the size of Russia's blue-water navy. That could be paid for only by increasing the share of the navy in Russia's overall defense outlays. . . . Whereas the navy's budget had been less than 13 percent that of the army's in 1883, by 1903 it amounted to over 35 percent. In 1898, in order more readily to satisfy eastern security requirements, Nicholas II had commanded a *total halt* in the growth of Russia's armed forces in the western theaters.[440]

In 1903, when the War Ministry heard that another shipbuilding plan was being considered, it went on the offensive, commissioning a report to denounce naval investment. "The report stressed that Russia was a continental and not a maritime power. . . . It was beyond Russia's financial means to compete with first-class naval powers. . . . Having established the subordinate role of the navy in Russian national security requirements, the report drew attention to the fact that in the past 25 years the naval budget had nevertheless increased exponentially and out of proportion." The report proceeded to call for a reduction in naval expenditure to a level that would correspond

438. Bridge and Bullen, 271; and Woodward, 121.
439. Woodward, 121.
440. Fuller, 380.

with the navy's "secondary significance" to Russia's imperial defense. The report seems to have persuaded Nicholas II somewhat: instead of another generous increase for the navy, the emperor approved a budget that simply met the navy's own stated minimum financial requirements.[441]

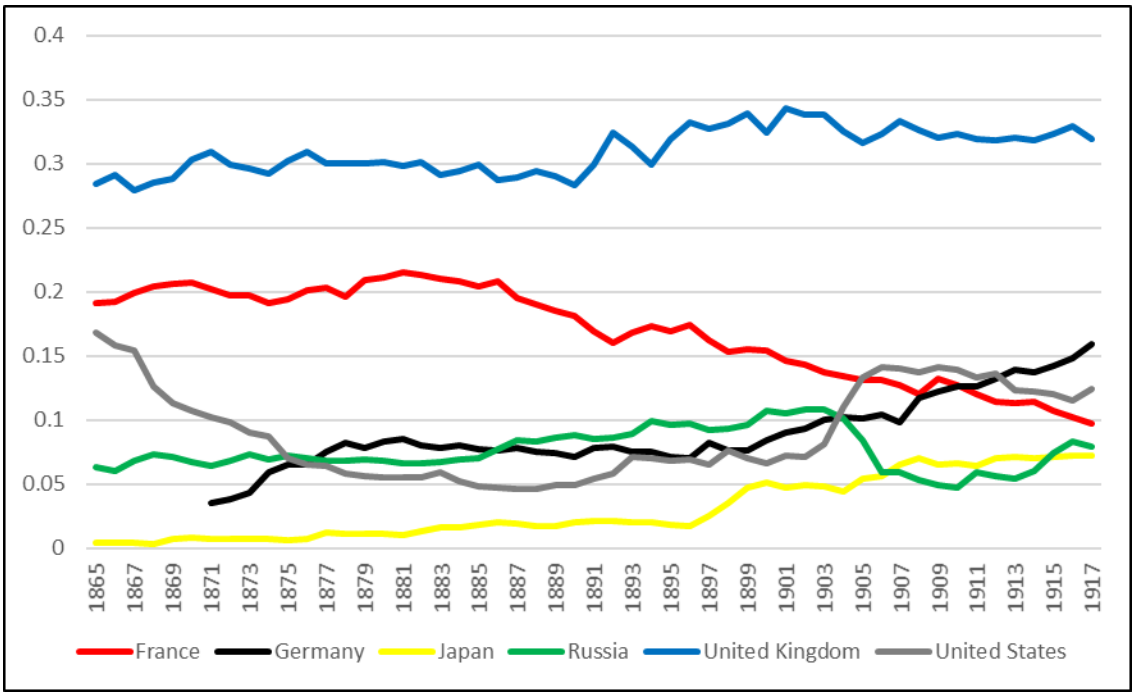

Figure 4.4. Russian and other naval powers' proportions of global primary warship tonnage, 1865-1917. Data from Brian Benjamin Crisher and Mark Souva, "Power at Sea: A Naval Power Dataset, 1865-2011," *International Interactions* 40, no. 4 (August 2014): 602-29.

Even with the objections raised by the army, it would appear that the Russian navy was on a trajectory to become, if not the most powerful navy in the world, at least one of some consequence. As figure 4.4 shows, the fleet was not only growing relative to the two superior naval powers, but also keeping pace with the upstarts: Germany, Japan,

441. Papastratigakis, 229-31.

and the United States. That pace did not slacken until the Russo-Japanese War, and it was this conflict that brought to a close another cycle of Russian naval investment.

As noted earlier, tensions between St. Petersburg and Tokyo had been simmering for some years past, due to both powers coveting control of and influence in the same places. Negotiations failed to produce an amenable outcome and, in an act that the United States would later find familiar, Japan attacked the Russian fleet at Port Arthur in 1904 before St. Petersburg had received Tokyo's formal declaration of war. The Pacific Fleet was defeated, and the United Kingdom made it plain that it would not permit the Black Sea Fleet to sail out for the purpose of war-making. This meant that Russia had to dispatch the Baltic Fleet around Europe and Africa, through the Indian Ocean, and up past the Asian continental landmass to fight Japan.

The voyage's beginning highlighted the Russian navy's utter lack of training and professionalism. Erroneously warned that Japanese torpedo boats were waiting in European waters, the Baltic Fleet one evening mistook a group of British fishing trawlers in the North Sea for Japanese naval vessels, and nervous Russian sailors opened fire. In the confusion, some Russian vessels actually shot at each other; the shelling did not stop for nearly twenty minutes, with casualties on both sides.[442]

The British were not pleased and, as part of their retaliation, pressured countries all along the Russian sailing route to deny the Baltic Fleet much-needed coal. Discipline broke down, with two unsuccessful mutinies while the ships were docked in French

442. It was remarked that the death toll would have been even higher had Russian sailors had better gunnery training.

Madagascar for a break. The fleet arrived in theater after a trying seven-month journey, only to be destroyed in a day. "'We know Russia is not a sea power,' said one of the Czar's captains before setting out in 1904. 'There will be no victory, but we shall know how to die and we shall never surrender.' He was right about the dying. More than 10,000 Russians went down with their ships after steaming 18,000 miles to meet the Japanese fleet."[443] The Japanese sank or captured all 10 battleships, 7 cruisers, 5 destroyers, 3 coastal ironclads, and 2 torpedo boats.[444]

"Japan thus sent 146,900 tons of Russian naval shipping to the bottom and captured some 40,000 tons more. Of the surviving four Russian cruisers, three escaped to Manila, only to be interned by the Americans, and the other managed to reach Vladivostok."[445] Such a lopsided result was not merely the result of anything as fickle as luck: the Russian fleet was manned by poorly trained and insubordinate crews, led by officers who wholly underestimated (as did much of the world) their adversary's capabilities and will, all steaming towards an enemy possessing the local geographic advantage and the momentum of victory. Unbalanced investment persistence that focused on ships at the expense of the crews charged with using them resulted in both ships and crews paying back the state with defeat.

The Japanese defeat of Russia was momentous for a number of reasons; it also marks the end of a second cycle of naval development in this chapter's time period. For

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443. David Fairhall, *Russia Looks to the Sea: A Study of the Expansion of Soviet Maritime Power* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), 22.

444. Reynolds, 430-31.

445. Ibid., 431. Neutral countries had the right to intern the warships of any country in a state of war until that country was no longer in a state of war.

all the apparent gains that the Imperial Navy had made in the preceding quarter-century, it was sunk by its persistent shortcomings in organization and training. The Russian navy was a paper tiger, "its fleets lacking homogeneity in speed and size, and its sailors, confined much of the year to land, lacking the necessary gunnery practice and even the elementary navigational skills to take on their British counterparts; its pathetic performance in the war against Japan in 1904-05 showed how overrated it had been."[446]

The period between Crimea and Tsushima represents a second cycle of Russian naval development. For the first quarter-century after the Crimean War, the Russian navy fought internal battles over its purpose and its composition; even the modest goal of coastal defense proved too challenging, and St. Petersburg had to content itself with thumping an even more feeble force in the Ottoman navy. Much like Peter I's original attempt to inculcate an appreciation for naval power, Konstantin's well-meaning reforms did not survive their creator's departure from the scene.

It is only in the quarter-century leading up to the Russo-Japanese War that one sees substantive investment resume in the Russian navy. While deeper issues such as late industrialization and technological backwardness could hardly be blamed on the navy, the effect they had on naval development was nonetheless unavoidable and palpable. The navy may have grown in size and may have made some progress in the game of technological catch-up, but it still lagged in matters such as experience, professionalism,

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446. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 179.

and training—shortcomings that revealed themselves with disastrous consequences in the Sea of Japan.

Of course, as the France chapter showed, war need not necessarily disrupt investment persistence for very long. But in the case of early twentieth-century Russia, the Russo-Japanese War did result in a clear step-change. The navy's destruction represented more than just a foreseeable result of battle at sea: it represented a national humiliation of Russia that profoundly shook confidence in the government, which had to face down a revolution that, while ultimately crushed, nevertheless resulted in a new constitution, curtailment of some of the emperor's absolute powers, and the creation of a bicameral national legislature populated by competing political parties. This new dynamic would result in profoundly negative consequences for Russian hybridization in the Empire's twilight years.

1905-17: To the End

The last dozen years of the Russian Empire would see fundamental changes to the international system and, indeed, in the states shaping it. The years leading up to Imperial Russia's collapse would not see the naval investment that so roiled the waters of great-power politics in the 1880s-1890s, nor would 1905-17 match even the brief, half-hearted naval development of the 1830s. Viewing the Empire's last years in retrospect, one may describe the Russo-Japanese War as the end of Imperial Russia's hybridization attempts. Increasing internal dysfunction was counterbalanced by a concord with the dominant naval power, all eventually to be overshadowed by the cataclysm that was the Great War.

The Russo-Japanese War destroyed Russian naval power. Yet partly because of this crippling of the Russian naval threat, the United Kingdom found it easier to come to some sort of understanding with its century-long geopolitical rival. "Before the war, Russia had repeatedly rejected British overtures for a general agreement between the two countries. After the war, as a result of military defeat and internal unrest, Russia attempted to accommodate the Great Powers."[447] For the British, two of Russia's three fleets were essentially non-existent, while the third (the Black Sea Fleet) was no longer as menacing as it had been. A confidential memorandum from the British Foreign Office in 1892 sums up what had been the long-standing British view:

> The protection of Constantinople from Russian conquest has been the turning point of the policy of this country for at least forty years, and to a certain extent for forty years before that. It has been constantly assumed, both in England and abroad, that this protection of Constantinople was the special interest of Great Britain. It is our principal, if not our only, interest in the Mediterranean Sea; for if Russia were mistress of Constantinople, and of the influence which Constantinople possesses in the Levant, the route to India through the Suez Canal would be so much exposed as not to be available except in times of the profoundest peace. . . . I cannot see, if Constantinople were no longer defensible, that any other interest in the Mediterranean is left to defend.[448]

However, by 1903 (that is, before the Russo-Japanese War), British evaluation of the geopolitical situation in the eastern Mediterranean had changed profoundly. That year, the Committee of Imperial Defence concluded, "While Russia would gain the tactical advantage of no longer having to force the Straits and would have moved her forward naval base some 400 miles closer to the Mediterranean, 'these advantages, though not to be ignored, do not constitute, so far as we are concerned, any fundamental, or even very

447. Neilson, 238.
448. CAB 37/31/10 (1892).

important, change in the naval problem.'"[449] In 1907, London and St. Petersburg signed an agreement delineating spheres of influence from the Middle East, through Central Asia to Tibet.[450] As the Entente Cordiale had done for Anglo-French relations in 1904, so this 1907 convention would do for Anglo-Russian relations. "After 1907, Russia ceased to be discussed as a potential enemy in British war planning."[451]

Perhaps the Russian navy's more immediate foe was the Duma, the lower house of the legislature dominated by reformers who were tired of the navy's incompetence. The Duma refused to invest in the navy until the service's administration had been reformed.[452] Donald W. Mitchell writes that "the years from 1907 to 1911—when other powers were building dreadnoughts—were lean years for the Russian navy. Financial difficulties, poor administration of navy yards, and well-grounded suspicions on the part of the Duma all held back the construction of new ships."[453] A 1908 legislative debate over the naval budget is indicative of the opposition the navy faced. As recorded by a British Embassy secretary whose job it was to report on the Duma's proceedings, the Duma committee in charge of naval appropriations demanded reforms first be made regarding bureaucratic organization, service length, and an organized program of construction:

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449. Neilson, 114-15. Aside from the realization that the Turkish Straits were no longer defensible, the British began to care less about who controlled the straits because, in the context of a Franco-Russian alliance, Russian control of the straits would hardly be the most pressing naval issue in the Mediterranean theater.

450. Bridge and Bullen, 284-85; and Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia*, 325, 328-29.

451. Neilson, 136.

452. Donald W. Mitchell, 272.

453. Ibid., 277.

> The Committee Reporter observed that [sic] Ministry of Marine, in spite of having been reorganised in the years 1860, 1867, and 1884, had steadily deteriorated. The Department was, at the present day, absolutely inefficient, had very little idea of what its duties were, and none whatever of how to perform them. Owing to the bad conditions of service in the Russian navy there was a great dearth of officers. Turning to the question of naval construction, the Reporter observed that in Russia ships were not built on any fixed model. Russia had never elaborated any designs of ships herself, but had borrowed them haphazard from other countries.[454]

The prime minister then addressed the chamber and argued that, while everyone agreed that Russia needed a rebuilt navy, the question was whether organizational reform had to precede shipbuilding: while the Duma seemed to think that it did, he thought the two could occur simultaneously. In the end, the government's request was rejected.[455] The government tried to pass a naval budget again three months later, only to be denied again. In the words of a British Russia scholar observing the proceedings: "The refusal, which was voted by the Duma, was based on these grounds: We should like to give you much more than 11,000,000 [the naval budget request] if we had any guarantee that the navy would really be reformed."[456] It was not until the 1910s that the Duma approved funding. In the three short years before the outbreak of World War I, naval expenditures actually approached 30 percent of the army budget again.[457]

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454. CAB 37/93/86 (1908). This is not entirely fair, as Russia had famously built two circular warships in the 1870s: "Their hulls were completely round—and 121 feet in diameter. The theory of this was that the curvature of their hulls and armour would cause shells to glance off the sides of the ship, which was theoretically true, but what proved not to be just theoretical but terribly practical was the fact that, caught in a current, they spun round and round like a saucer floating in a sink." This left the entire crew disoriented and ill from vertigo. Woodward, 110; see also Modelski and Thompson, 285.

455. CAB 37/93/86 (1908). Nor did the words of the minister of foreign affairs sway the Duma: "Russia needs a battle fleet outside any worry about protecting our coasts. . . . We need it to participate in deciding outstanding world questions, which Russia can't afford to ignore." Quoted in Krestianinov, 3.

456. CAB 37/94/115 (1908).

457. Pintner, 243-44.

Based partly on past experience with the quality of Russian shipbuilding, foreign observers were skeptical that this new round of naval investment would lead to much. Commander H. G. Grenfell, British naval attaché at the embassy in St. Petersburg, opined that Russian shipbuilding still suffered from widespread bribery and that Russian shipyards still took too long to build ships when compared with their foreign counterparts, thus rendering Russian vessels technologically out of date. Furthermore, naval administration was still too poorly organized to efficiently execute large projects, while the personnel were viewed as lazy.[458]

The British naval attaché's opinions would not improve in the months leading up to the war. Writing in March 1914, Grenfell excoriated the Russian navy for its myopic focus on matériel:

> The fundamental mistake of the Russian Admiralty [is] devoting its energy and money principally to increase of purely material strength rather than to the far more urgent problem of building up a system of honest administration and the creation of a well-trained, capable, well-paid and contented personnel. Germany's older-type battleships will amply suffice to mask any strength by sea that this country [Russia] is likely to possess before the year 1918. The shattering revelations of the Japanese War discovered, not only to us, but to the whole world, the feet of clay of this lumbering colossus.[459]

Grenfell's prescient observations would prove true. Russian industry was too backward to cope with such massive demands for the latest technology. Machinery, steel, and specialized items had to be purchased from abroad (including from Germany), and the delays that resulted from the Duma's demands for reform meant that, by July 1914, new warships were not ready yet, and the Russian navy had to call on naval vessels dating to

458. Neilson, 139.
459. Quoted in Woodward, 164.

before the Russo-Japanese War a decade prior. Furthermore, Russian strategic planning turned in the years 1912-14, reversing course and focusing again on its continental commitments, while de-emphasizing naval development.[460] In a February 1914 memorandum to the emperor, Minister of the Interior P. N. Durnovo wrote that Russia was "essentially the most continental of the great powers, has no interests whatever [at sea]. We have no overseas colonies, and shall probably never have them, and communication between the various parts of our empire is easier overland than by water."[461]

In the new war begun in 1914, Russia found itself opposing an old nemesis, the Ottoman Empire. In the years leading up to the conflict, the Ottomans had also been trying to boost their navy, contracting two warships to be built in the United Kingdom. St. Petersburg, for its part, successfully pressured London to slow construction: by the outbreak of war, the ships were still in Britain and were subsequently sequestered by the Royal Navy.[462] The war at sea from Russia's perspective proved rather uneventful. The Pacific was not a great concern, especially as Japan was a nominal ally. The weak Baltic squadron was finally supplemented by four completed dreadnoughts in 1916, all backed up by British force sent to help defend Petrograd (St. Petersburg's new name). In the

460. Watts, 25.

461. Quoted in Frank Alfred Golder, *Documents of Russian History, 1914-1917* (New York: Century, 1921), 12

462. Donald W. Mitchell, 289.

Black Sea, neither the weak Russian fleet nor the weak Ottoman navy had any advantage over the other: "the result was a standoff."[463]

Perhaps the last significant event touching upon the Russian navy was the series of intra-alliance negotiations over what to do with the Ottoman Empire once it was defeated.[464] Russia and the United Kingdom finally reached an understanding that Petrograd would take possession of both Constantinople and the Turkish Straits after Ottoman defeat.[465] Alas, the acquisition that Imperial Russia had coveted for so long would not occur, for the Russian empire would collapse before the Ottoman one, and Petrograd's successor regime would negotiate a separate peace with the Central Powers and leave the Allies to themselves.

Doomed from the Start? The Roles of Industrialization and the Threat Environment

The cycles of investment and non-investment could not create the sustained financial support and political will that is my definition of investment persistence. "Periods of intense naval development followed by periods of disregard and decline" often resulted in the belated realization that "a navy could not be created overnight nor on the eve of war."[466] Unlike in the France and Germany cases, there was never a constituency with any lasting political power to advocate for the navy or for Russia's place overseas in general. The caution shown by various emperors in not asserting

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463. Sergei Pushkarev, *The Emergence of Modern Russia, 1801-1917*, trans. Robert H. McNeal and Tova Yedlin (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), 388.

464. This is the same series of negotiations that eventually produced the (in)famous Sykes-Picot Agreement.

465. Donald W. Mitchell, 291-92.

466. Kipp, "The Imperial Russian Navy," 158.

Russian naval might for fear of the mere prospect of British intervention is a stark, if extreme, example of just how uncommitted the Russian state was to hybridization.[467]

But a second, more fundamental, problem existed as well. Again, unlike in the French and German examples, Imperial Russia would have begun its naval development in a disadvantageous geostrategic situation—and this is partly a result of the cyclical nature of Russian investment persistence.[468] And while the threat environment necessarily plays a role in explaining Russian reticence on the high seas under Alexander I and, to a lesser extent, Nicholas I, it does not explain Nicholas II's persistence in naval development at the end of the nineteenth century (nor were France and Germany necessarily enjoying better threat environments when they tried to hybridize). Despite the odds, France was able to maintain a presence at sea and maintain, if not expand, its influence in discrete parts of the geopolitical world. Germany, even though a latecomer to the imperialist game, still had some places it could call its own (after ejecting or subjugating the native inhabitants, of course), thanks to a United Kingdom willing to yield some parts of the map in an attempt to encourage bilateral concord. And with German investment persistence, it could have maintained itself wherever it had established itself—it chose another path in the end, but that does not mean other options did not exist.

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467. This fear may have trickled all the way down to the sailors themselves: "Ivan [the archetypal Russian sailor] realises that he exists to *be shot at*; Jack [the archetypal British sailor], that he exists *to shoot at others*, and this psychological difference is as heavy a one as can well be:—it is all the difference in the world." Jane, 519.

468. I thank Nathaniel Shils for an enlightening conversation about this chapter that helped me make this connection.

For Russia, however, its repeated cycle of naval boom-and-bust meant that there was no stability to either the navy or its deployment. So, as Western European rivals kept their fleets and kept sailing around the world, the Russian navy of Catherine's day, which was a formidable and successful force, atrophied under her successors. Naval investment—and naval activity—was not persistent or sustained, neither frequent nor regular. Because investment persistence did not exist, Russian naval deployments, whether overseas or otherwise, could never operate with any constancy or endurance. And because Russian naval activity was irregular, other great powers could expand on, over, and beyond the seas without worrying about St. Petersburg's reaction. The next time, then, that Russia decided to invest in its navy, there would be stronger or more durable navies to counter, and in more places that could trigger geopolitical tensions.

A lack of investment persistence (sustained financial support and political will for naval development) helped create a temporal lag in Russian hybridization relative to other naval powers, which managed to establish interests around the world while the Russian navy sat idly by. By the time a Russian naval force of any consequence could be built and deployed, those other naval powers' expanded interests meant fewer places where a Russian navy could go and not seem threatening. The Russian bear was a large fellow, and there was simply no room left.

The absence of persistent investment can itself be blamed in part on general Russian technological laggardness. But it would be overly deterministic to assume that Russia's industrial decrepitude preordained failed hybridization on Russia's part. While it

is certainly true that naval power has historically been more technologically intensive and good sailoring has traditionally required greater expertise than good soldiering, the Russian efforts of the 1820s-1830s and of the 1890s-1904 show that a path to Russian hybridization existed. Before the naval revolutions of the 1840s-1850s (discussed in the France chapter), catching up to the naval pacesetter would not have been as difficult as it would later become. Russian hybridization stopped in the 1830s for reasons less to do with insurmountable technological barriers and more to do with monarchical idiosyncrasies and policy changes.

Furthermore, the later fleet of Nicholas II was hampered just as much, if not more so, by poor education and training than by any inherent inability to build steel warships: the ill-fated Baltic Fleet did not fail during its around-the-world journey because the ships started leaking; it failed after the journey, when its thoroughly outclassed crews were outmaneuvered and outfought by the adversary. Industrial backwardness and technological primitiveness obviously played their part in the demise of Russian military hybridization, but only a part.

Conclusion

Kipp observes that Russian naval advocates often have to begin their argument with the basic question, Does Russia need a navy? The fact that this question even needs asking suggests that decision-makers have generally viewed the navy as an afterthought. “It can be concluded that Russia’s leaders undervalued the navy and as a consequence often placed the country in difficult situations. Shipbuilding programs were in response to

international crises. The Ministry of War regarded the fleet as an adjunct to the army with the role of providing support for land operations. . . . Russia possessed everything needed to build both a defensive and an offensive high-seas fleet but failed to use resources effectively."[469]

This chapter has shown the Russian Empire's failed hybridization in the period 1801-1917, particularly in the 1880s-1904: for much of the century, a lack of investment persistence kept the Russian fleet a large but brittle force, and when investment finally became persistent in the late nineteenth century, it was not enough to defeat another rising naval power. The relative dearth of investment persistence across this chapter's period under examination meant that, while other naval investors built fleets, expanded empires and spheres of interest, and projected power around the world, the Russian navy stayed largely at home. By the time St. Petersburg began to seek ventures farther afield, there were far fewer places for it to go without encountering stiff opposition from a growing number of other hybrid and naval powers. "Compounded by the country's industrial backwardness and financial constraints," the navy of Imperial Russia spent its last 117 years having to "play second fiddle"—and not a very good one at that.[470]

469. Beskrovny, 326.
470. Kagan, 252.

Chapter 5

"Luxuries Should Not be Permitted": Post-Imperial Russia's Hybridization as a Great Power

It is easier to create an army than a fleet.
—Joseph Stalin

Life under the House of Romanov may have been nasty, brutish, and short for a great many of its subjects, but the Russian experience in the century-plus since the monarchy's collapse could hardly be described as one brimming with undiluted pleasure. Imperial Russia's disintegration led to a four-year civil war, which ended with the Russian Communist Party's victory and the country's unification with three other entities to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). From its capital at Moscow, the world's first communist state groped its way through poverty and purges, before repulsing the Axis war machine at a cost of nearly thirty million dead. While the Soviet Union survived this four-year hot war, the superpower had not the endurance to win the four-decade cold one that followed. Divorced from the fourteen other Union Republics, the new Russian Federation entered the 2000s much as it began the 1900s: poor and weak.

As the enlarged USSR, the Russian nation continued to face some underlying geostrategic realities, with but slight modifications (see figure 5.1). The Arctic north was as frozen as ever. Despite acquiring Kaliningrad and the Baltic states, Moscow still faced the Kattegat and Skagerrak chokepoints. Despite taking the Kuril Islands and Sakhalin,

Moscow still faced the Sea of Okhotsk and its chokepoints, with US ally Japan on the doorstep. To the south, the Turkish Straits remained Turkish; and, while the USSR's advance into southeastern Europe in the form of the Eastern Bloc brought the Soviet Union to the Turkish border, it could not wrest control of the chokepoints from Ankara. "No major Soviet ports or naval bases front on the open ocean. Whether from Murmansk or Vladivostok, the Black Sea or the Baltic, Soviet warships must come through straits or narrow water to engage an enemy."[471]

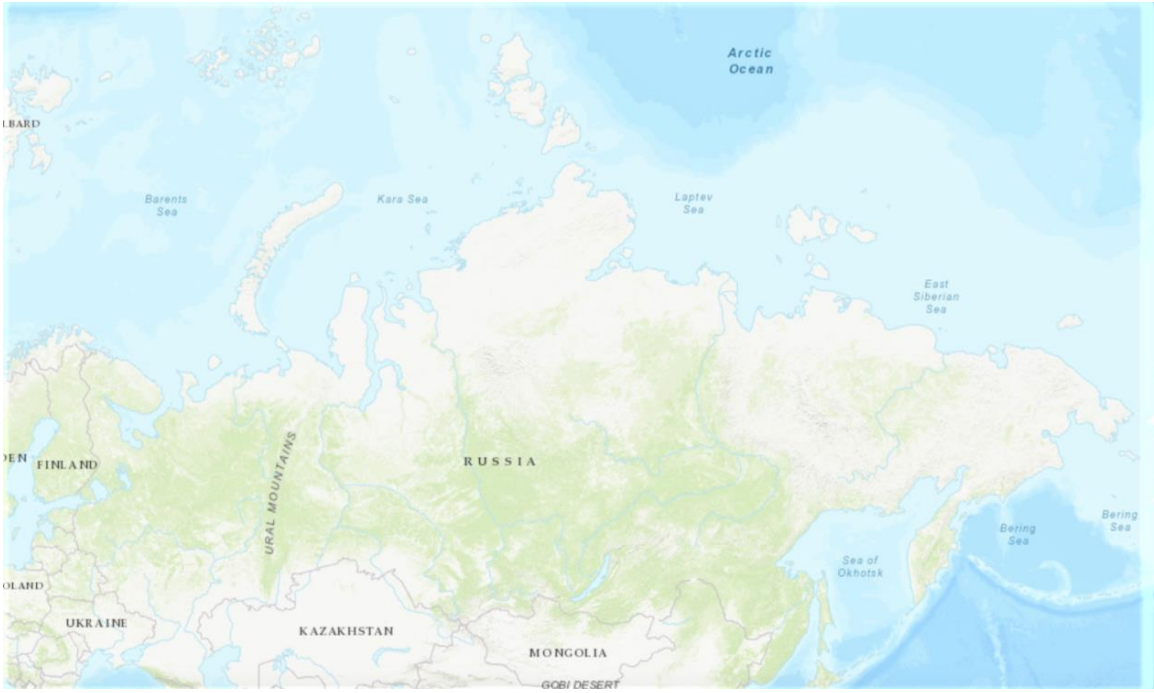

Figure 5.1. Present-day Russia in its geostrategic context

Nor did the navy's secondary role to the army change. *Pravda*, the Communist Party's official newspaper, patronizingly praised the navy as the army's faithful

471. Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. USN (Ret.), *On Watch: A Memoir* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book, 1976), 62.

assistant.[472] In 1955, Navy Commander-in-Chief Adm. of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Nikolai Kuznetsov was so exasperated at his service's treatment that he accosted First Secretary Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev in the hallway after a meeting and demanded to know how much longer he had to "tolerate such an attitude" toward his navy.[473] It was Kuznetsov's successor, Adm. of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Sergei Gorshkov, who would transform the Soviet Navy into a formidable force, arousing US anxiety and causing that dominant naval power to respond with a massive shipbuilding program and a highly escalatory war plan in the Cold War's last decade.

This chapter tells the story of the post-Imperial navy up to today's Russian Federation, with the bulk of the chapter concentrating on the Soviet Navy of the 1950s-1991. But this hybridization tale from the latter half of the USSR's existence is not as straightforward as that of nineteenth-century France, Imperial Russia, or even Imperial Germany. The Soviet Union's hybridization as a continental great power should be classified as an *incomplete* success. *Ambiguous*, *partial*—a variety of other adjectives could be found, but my basic contention is that Soviet hybridization lies in the middle of the success-failure spectrum, and the combination of investment persistence and threat diffusion explains such a placement.

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472. Donald W. Mitchell, *A History of Russian and Soviet Sea Power* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 470.

473. Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 25-26. Without a hint of irony, Khrushchev wrote that he was offended by Kuznetsov's "dictatorial" attitude. They had just come out of a meeting at which Khrushchev postponed discussion of Kuznetsov's surface ship-focused shipbuilding proposal. Khrushchev rejected the proposal the following week.

Soviet goals for the navy were limited at first to protecting defensive zones and the sea-based nuclear deterrent hiding in them. But the USSR soon decided to use its navy to gain and support post-colonial allies and to check the United States, not to overcome it (at least, not in direct naval terms). This is reminiscent of nineteenth-century France's strategy: not to dominate, but to prevent domination. These goals met with mixed success, gaining some victories while suffering some defeats, and they are due in great measure to the navy, its capabilities, and its reach. Investment persistence was uneven and, constrained eventually by national economic malaise, led to a fleet that was paradoxically powerful and flawed—a blue-water navy that was clearly the No. 2 in the world, yet somehow could not carry fixed-wing aircraft until the middle 1970s. Soviet investment persistence resulted in what might be considered an imbalanced blue-water force: a navy that had the numbers and the technology to sail around the world, but that was also constrained in what it could do once it got wherever it was going.

This incomplete blue-water force was tasked with touring the Third World with gusto, establishing friendly relationships with various post-colonial governments, embodying Soviet prestige and status, and standing up for Soviet interests and partners against the United States. At the same time, however, the Soviets sought to avoid actual war with America and keep tensions to a manageable level. Contradictory goals thus combined with imbalanced capabilities. The Soviets scored a number of foreign-policy successes, but the navy's inadequate capabilities at sea meant that it could not go anywhere for very long and, at the end of the day, could not overturn US interests and

policies. Investment that was persistent but incomprehensive resulted in naval forces whose deployment was limited in effectiveness, with the result that even alarmist, pessimistic US threat assessments readily acknowledged Soviet naval inferiority.

After spending its first half-century with no naval strength to speak of, the Soviet Union began to hybridize, but Moscow constructed a fleet that, relative to its US competitor, was constrained in firepower and operational capability; a fleet that was deployed in a manner far less robust or permanent than the United States did with its naval force; a fleet manned by crews with too little training and, in a few cases (albeit isolated ones), with insufficient loyalty to the party. Investment persistence in the form of an imbalanced fleet, coupled with its deployment around the world for contradictory objectives, explain why the Soviet Union's hybridization attempt was an incomplete success.

1917-56: New State, Old Status

Until the 1950s, hybridization by Russia and the Soviet Union resembled the cycle it took under the monarchy: half-hearted attempts at naval investment, punctuated by long periods of minimal attention or outright neglect. Joseph Stalin did make two efforts to build a powerful navy, but was rudely interrupted by Germany's invasion in 1941 and by death in 1953. During both Soviet Russia's brief term as an independent state (1917-22) and the USSR's first years (1920s), what was left of the navy played the role of a "fortress fleet," sitting in port.[474] Once Soviet industry had advanced enough in

474. Eric Morris, *The Russian Navy: Myth and Reality* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977), 20.

the 1930s to be able to build larger warships, Stalin ordered the construction of major surface combatants.[475]

But Stalin overestimated his country's industrial progress; severe obstacles remained. "There were no Russian slipways capable of constructing battleships over 30,000 tons, the steel works had no experience in producing high-grade armoured plate, and the service industries, when confronted with the need to provide fire control systems, communications networks, and modern gunnery, found the level of technology beyond their experience."[476] Exacerbating all these hardware issues was Stalin's purges of the military brass: the navy lost over three thousand officers to execution, labor camps, or mere dismissal.[477] When the Soviet Union found itself at war with Germany in 1941, the naval construction program was nowhere near completion and the navy had to make do with what leadership expertise it had.

The navy's performance in World War II was forgettable. The Baltic Fleet found itself trapped by German mines; crews were transferred to army command and brought ashore to defend Leningrad (formerly Petrograd). The Black Sea Fleet engaged a small German naval presence sporadically, but was largely a sideshow to the massive fighting

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475. Norman Polmar, Thomas A. Brooks, and George Fedoroff, *Admiral Gorshkov: The Man Who Challenged the U.S. Navy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2019), 27. The reasons for Stalin's battlefleet enthusiasm are a matter of speculation. They include failure to intervene effectively in the Spanish Civil War (since shown to be sequentially impossible), national prestige, the rise of fascist Germany and Italy, sheer megalomania, and the Soviet Union's increased coastline. See Milan L. Hauner, "Stalin's Big-Fleet Program," *Naval War College Review* 57, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 103-4; Robert Waring Herrick, *Soviet Naval Strategy: Fifty Years of Theory and Practice* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1968), 42-44; and Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 89. A debunking of the Spanish Civil War hypothesis is found in Jürgen Rohwer and Mikhail S. Monakov, *Stalin's Ocean-Going Fleet: Soviet Naval Strategy and Shipbuilding Programmes, 1935-1953*, Cass Series: Naval Policy and History 11 (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 64-65.

476. Morris, 22.

477. Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 32.

on land. The Northern Fleet was supposed to convoy merchant shipping, but the Allies found Soviet assistance wanting.[478] As for the Pacific Fleet, it helpfully moved in on Japan in the war's last week to exploit Tokyo's collapse and capture the Kuril Islands and all of Sakhalin.[479] Throughout the war, the navy could only play batman to the army's officer.[480]

While the post-war geopolitical situation had certainly changed in major respects, Stalin's enthusiasm for a large navy did not wane, and he sought to pick up where he had had to leave off. In 1950, Stalin launched an ambitious ten-year construction program calling for, among other things, 2 aircraft carriers, 2 battleships, 34 cruisers, 188 destroyers, 25 ocean-going submarines, and 75 large amphibious ships.[481] The geostrategic disadvantages that arose from a lack of naval power were apparent: fuming over his inability to intervene effectively in the Greek communist uprising, the general secretary declared, "What do you think, that Great Britain and the United States—the United States, the most powerful state in the world—will permit you to break their line of communication in the Mediterranean Sea! [sic] Nonsense. And we have no navy. The uprising in Greece must be stopped, and as quickly as possible."[482]

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478. David Fairhall, *Russia Looks to the Sea: A Study of the Expansion of Soviet Maritime Power* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), 181.

479. Ibid., 182.

480. In days gone by, a batman was the personal assistant to a (usually aristocratic) army officer. The system was maintained by the Soviet Union, albeit under a different guise.

481. Roger W. Barnett, "Soviet Maritime Strategy," in *Seapower and Strategy*, ed. Colin S. Gray and Roger W. Barnett (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 313; and Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 79-80.

482. Quoted in Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, trans. Michael B. Petrovich (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), 182. I will leave aside the counterfactual of what the USSR's role in Greece would have been if the navy Stalin wanted had actually existed.

After Stalin's death, Khrushchev gave the appearance that he cared only for nuclear weapons, viewing large surface combatants as good only for photographic backdrops on foreign port calls.[483] Not one to praise Stalin, Khrushchev bluntly stated in his memoirs, "As I see it, one of his biggest errors was his decision to concentrate our resources on the development of the navy, particularly our surface fleet, rather than on our air force."[484] Naval construction under Khrushchev was to focus on submarines that could deliver ballistic and cruise missiles.[485] In 1955, Khrushchev appointed Gorshkov to be the navy's new commander. Gorshkov would preside over the Soviet Navy of the next three decades.

1956-91: A Mixed Record

The years 1956-91 represent a startling break from national habit, for it may be said that the Soviet Navy in those thirty-five years achieved as much as, if not more than, what it and its predecessors had in the preceding century and a-half. For the first time, the navy appeared as a presence in all the oceans and seas of the globe, rather than just occasionally sailing through them. For the first time, the navy not only excited concern from the dominant naval power, it also invited a robust response. But the USSR's presence was often exaggerated more than it was overpowering, and the US concern and response were tempered by the reality of Soviet limits. This was an incomplete

483. Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 118.

484. Khrushchev, 19-20. The army was apparently no better: "We should keep in mind that it's the size of our nuclear missile arsenal, and not the size of our army, that counts. The infantry has become, so to speak, not the muscle but the fat of the armed forces." Ibid., 536.

485. Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 114.

hybridization: a navy that was large in quantity, but light in heft; that could be aggressive operationally, but in fact was on the defensive strategically; and that showed up when there was trouble, but lacked the strength to end things on Soviet terms.

Investment: Persistent, Imbalanced

When Gorshkov became the naval service's commander, "Russia had little tradition of being a high-seas naval power and no political support to build a major, ocean-going fleet. Accordingly, there was no reason to believe that Gorshkov would attempt to build such a navy and far less reason to believe that he could succeed in doing so under an Army and strategic missile-oriented political-military leadership."[486] This was especially the case with Khrushchev, who told the British prime minister in 1963 that the Soviet Union would no longer build surface combatants at all, missiles having supposedly rendered such vessels defenseless.[487] It seemed as if Stalin's dream of a large battlefleet died with him.

But much of Khrushchev's rhetoric was bluster and exaggeration. James M. McConnell pointed out in 1979 that nearly every class of major Soviet surface warship existing—cruisers, destroyers, frigates, helicopter carriers—had its origins under Khrushchev or Stalin.[488] The savvy Gorshkov advocated for surface vessels on the

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486. Ibid., 1.

487. James M. McConnell, "Doctrine and Capabilities," in *Soviet Naval Diplomacy*, ed. Bradford Dismukes and James M. McConnell, Pergamon Policy Studies on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), 13.

488. Ibid.

grounds that they were necessary to defend Khrushchev's precious submarines.[489] While the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis is often pointed to as the motivation for Soviet naval development, the long lead times in ship construction suggest that the impetus began in the previous decade; if there was a real-life crisis that jolted the Soviet leadership into action, it was the 1956 Suez Crisis, which suggested the presence of post-colonial regimes ripe for Soviet support, but also revealed the navy's inability to have done anything in that crisis due to a lack of power projection capabilities.[490]

Gorshkov spearheaded the navy's development and provided continuity of leadership for three decades, though the navy whose construction he oversaw was a paradoxical one: it was meant to be a strategically defensive fleet, but built to operate on the offensive at the operational level, as exemplified by an across-the-board focus on cruise missiles.[491] The Soviet Union realized quickly that things needed to be done differently: as nuclear strategy evolved, the USSR decided that its ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) needed bastions, but these bastions in turn required surface ships for

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489. Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 119.

490. Barry M. Blechman, *The Changing Soviet Navy*, Studies in Defense Policy (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1973), 3; John J. Herzog, "Perspectives on Soviet Naval Development: A Navy to Match National Purposes," in *Naval Power in Soviet Policy*, ed. Paul J. Murphy, Studies in Communist Affairs 2 (Washington, DC: United States Air Force, 1978), 39, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015008265848; and Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 153-54.

491. Ola Tunander, *Cold War Politics: The Maritime Strategy and Geopolitics of the Northern Frontier* (London: Sage Publications, 1989), 82. The paradox is perhaps exemplified most startlingly by the fact that the USSR did not commission its first fixed-wing aircraft carrier, the *Kiev*, until 1975, over one-half century after the world's first commissioning of a purpose-built fixed-wing aircraft carrier (the *Hosho* in Japan). The Soviet Union had explained away its carrier-less fleet by arguing that such offensive weapons were only useful for imperialist aggressors bent on attacking other countries. The real reasons were financial and technological constraints. Herrick, 70-71.

defense.[492] Faced with offensive Western naval systems, Moscow saw an expansion of its naval presence as a way to expand the national defense buffer, to include the Arctic Ocean, the eastern Mediterranean Sea, the northern Indian Ocean, and the Sea of Japan.[493]

The goal became one of pushing the Soviet defensive range as far out as possible. To this end, the USSR needed to build an ocean-going fleet. With Khrushchev gone and a largely supportive Leonid Brezhnev consolidating control, the Soviet Navy embarked on a modernization program that encompassed more than just the submarine service and the nuclear deterrent it provided. The modernizing Soviet Navy began constructing cruisers, destroyers, frigates, and attack submarines to defend against robust US capabilities, which manifested as carrier strike groups and the submarine service. Thomas S. Burns put it bluntly: "Those who insist that Russian fleet building programs must, of necessity, represent an overall challenge to American control of the seas are simply not looking beyond the obvious. The Russians are building a defensive navy. Period!"[494]

But the strategic mission of remaining on the defensive meant that the resulting fleet, however offensive individual vessels or flotillas might have appeared, was incomplete in that it lacked various capabilities that greatly blunted its power. Until the

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492. Michael MccGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1987), 101.

493. Paul Dibb, *The Soviet Union: The Incomplete Superpower*, Studies in International Security (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1986), 167; and John G. Hibbits, "Admiral Gorshkov's Writings: Twenty Years of Naval Thought," in Murphy, 5.

494. Thomas S. Burns, *The Secret War for the Ocean Depths: Soviet-American Rivalry for Mastery of the Seas* (New York: Rawson Associates, 1978), 294. See also Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *Soviet Military Capabilities and Policies, 1962-1967*, National Intelligence Estimate 11-4-63, CIA Analysis of the Soviet Navy, March 22, 1963, 52, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000267775.pdf.

first fixed-wing aircraft carrier came along (the *Kiev* in 1975), the Soviet Navy had to rely on shore-based aircraft for air support; its rotary-wing aircraft carriers were used for anti-submarine operations.[495] The naval infantry was a small force, and the navy's amphibious transport vessels were unimpressive in both size and capability.[496] Support vessels were woefully neglected and caused the navy to rely heavily on civilian and foreign ports for resupply.[497] As will be discussed later, these limitations would become a problem when Moscow subsequently gave its navy additional missions.

If the Soviets were to try to actually fight at sea, they would be severely disadvantaged, as the US Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) was at pains to point out: "The Soviet Navy has been criticized as being a 'one-shot' Navy: optimized for strong initial striking power with relatively limited weapon reloads."[498] Additional deficiencies were not difficult to note: "The Soviets must contend with a paucity of all-weather ports, a lack of air cover when the surface fleet operates far from the Soviet homeland, and insufficient open-ocean replenishment. Consequently, Soviet surface units and some submarines have significantly less combat and sustaining capability when operating far from the Soviet homeland. Further, the surface units are dispersed among four widely separated Soviet fleets."[499]

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495. Blechman, 25; and Herrick, xxxiii.

496. Blechman, 25.

497. Ibid., 29-30.

498. Office of the CNO, *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments*, 5th ed. (April 1985), 19, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nnc1.cu13718258. See also CIA, *Soviet Fleet Logistics: Capabilities and Limitations*, CIA Analysis of the Soviet Navy (August 1976), 24, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005532898.pdf.

499. US Department of Defense (DoD), *Statement of Secretary of Defense Elliot L. Richardson before the House Armed Services Committee on the FY 1974 Defense Budget and the FY 1974-1978*

The navy effectively cannibalized itself, and improvement in quality was not matched by increase in quantity: "Many of the improvements in Soviet fleet capabilities have come at the expense of the navy itself. A sharp reduction in the total number of major surface and submarine combatants since 1960 has paid for much of the modernization that has taken place since that time."[500] Furthermore, as admitted by a report meant to raise US alarm at the Soviet naval threat, what quantitative comparisons could be made were often misleading, as they did not account for the fact that US warships still outmatched their Soviet peers in endurance, survivability, and tonnage.[501] Clark G. Reynolds, while appreciating some Soviet advances in its modern warships, nonetheless found the Soviet Navy "untried in battle and unrisked even in limited wars," with Soviet diplomacy "too clumsy" to make the navy very effective.[502]

It was certainly possible, given the West's knowledge of Soviet economic limits, that the naval arms race undertaken by Moscow was something the USSR could not win and that, however concerned some Americans may have seemed, was a blessing in disguise.[503] In addition to the naval vessels themselves, the Soviet Navy was beset by problems not unique to naval development, but endemic in Soviet economy and society:

Program, by Elliot L. Richardson, 93rd Cong., 1st sess. (April 1973), https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/annual_reports/1974_DoD_AR.pdf?ver=2014-06-24-150640-357, 36.

500. Charles Stockell, "Soviet Military Strategy: The Army View," in *Soviet Naval Developments: Capability and Context*, ed. Michael MccGwire, Praeger Special Studies in International Politics and Government (New York: Praeger, 1973), 92.

501. Paul H. Nitze, Leonard Sullivan Jr., and Atlantic Council Working Group on Securing the Seas, *Securing the Seas: The Soviet Naval Challenge and Western Alliance Options* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 221.

502. Clark G. Reynolds, *Command of the Sea: The History and Strategy of Maritime Empires* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), 592.

503. Burns, 61.

"The Soviet Navy does suffer from the general maintenance and support problems that plague all aspects of Soviet society. Throughout the society there are too often examples of poor workmanship, insufficient quality control, shortages of parts, and lack of competent personnel or incentives to do the job properly."[504] The shortage of competent personnel extended beyond maintenance staff. The professional assessment of the Soviet sailor by a US naval officer writing in 1978 is worth quoting in full:

> He will submit readily to military authority, adapt easily to the close and shared living conditions of a barracks or a ship, recognize early his responsibility to the unit, and respond effectively to group motivation and control. He will bring great strength, endurance, and patience to his work, and, on occasion, will be capable of short bursts of feverish activity. On the other hand, the Navy finds that he needs constant motivation, direction, and supervision to overcome his tendency to idleness, his apathy, his plodding approach to work, his reluctance to exercise initiative, and his unwillingness to discipline himself, or to depend on himself. He seems to lack the ability to organize his fellows and his work spontaneously and effectively. For a modern sailor he is technically underdeveloped, crude, and haphazard in his work. Given authority, he is likely to be bureaucratic and to exercise his power arbitrarily and harshly.[505]

Soviet advances on the whole were not uniform, either in terms of hardware or "software." While individual naval vessels might be superior to US counterparts in particular aspects, the whole was less than the sum of the parts.

All these issues show that Soviet naval development suffered from a variety of problems, some of which could not be resolved internally, in the sense that they were broader socioeconomic troubles. Investment persistence, then, had an upper bound set by

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504. Norman Polmar, *Guide to the Soviet Navy*, 3d ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1983), 80; see also Sergei Chernyavskii, "The Era of Gorshkov: Triumph and Contradictions," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 2 (April 2005): 306.

505. Capt. W. H. J. Manthorpe Jr. USN, "The Influence of Being Russian on the Officers and Men of the Soviet Navy," *Proceedings*, May 1978, 133, https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1978/may/lnfluence-being-russian-officers-and-men-soviet-navy. The article also discusses the persistent industrial and technical shortcomings of the Soviet Navy.

national characteristics. But there is also no denying that the sum of the parts was still a weighty amount—the Soviet Navy had made real improvements. Against the above sober appraisals of Soviet naval deficiencies, one must account for the real and sustained alarm raised in the United States, starting in the 1960s and reaching a crescendo with the Reagan Administration's Maritime Strategy of the 1980s. "In 1950 the Soviet Navy was a poor joke; in 1960 it was quite small, and not of any great capability; in 1970, it is large, let us say it is the second largest and the most modern navy in the world. The trend is quite clear. If I were a Soviet defense specialist, I would be quite proud of the strides that have been made," observed the sometime-defense technology analyst C. M. Herzfeld.[506]

Herzfeld may have had the *Okean* exercise in mind when he made this 1971 assessment. *Okean* in 1970 and its 1975 successor were the most visible demonstrations of Soviet investment persistence and remain the largest naval exercises ever conducted in peacetime. The first exercise saw 84 surface warships, 80 submarines, 45 auxiliary vessels, and several hundred aircraft exercise simultaneously in the Atlantic and Pacific; indeed, some specific exercise components in those two oceans were coordinated to within minutes of each other.[507] The second and no less impressive iteration in 1975 saw over two hundred naval vessels participate.[508]

David Fairhall pointed out the Soviets' perhaps too-obvious advantage in its vigorous shipbuilding program: the Soviets were not only building more and better

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506. C. M. Herzfeld, *The Navy Problem of the '70s*, Documents of the National Security Council, 8th supp., January 2, 1971, 7, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=000076-007-0875&accountid=14707.

507. Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 169.

508. Charles C. Petersen, "Showing the Flag," in Dismukes and McConnell, 103.

warships, they had newer ones. “One of the main things that worries the American admirals trying to evoke more response from their Government to the Russian naval build-up is that so many US warships are really elderly. The average age of ships in the US Navy in 1969 was 17½. Nearly 60 per cent of the combat units were 20 or over, whereas less than 1 per cent of Soviet warships was that old.”[509]

One frequently voiced concern among US analysts was that the increased Soviet fleet was designed to interdict Western sea lines of communication (SLOCs). CNO Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. told President Richard Milhous Nixon that cutting US SLOCs was all the Soviets needed to do as a land power, whereas the Americans, as a naval power, needed to project force, for which SLOCs were essential.[510] In other words, there was a mismatch in mission: the Soviet Navy’s improving capabilities might still lag that of the US Navy, but the Soviets also had a different and relatively easier task. As late as the 1980s, one analyst writing for the US Library of Congress asserted that the Soviet Navy had been designed specifically for sea denial and that the US Navy was facing “the most serious challenge in its existence.”[511]

This view of SLOC interdiction did not go unchallenged at the time, particularly from well-informed civilian analysts. Michael MccGwire, arguably the most prominent civilian scholar of Soviet naval affairs, excoriated the views coming out of the Pentagon,

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509. Fairhall, 250.

510. Zumwalt, 304.

511. Herman T. Franssen, “A Comparison of the Strengths and Weaknesses of the United States and Soviet Union in Ocean Capabilities,” in *Soviet Oceans Development*, by US Library of Congress Congressional Research Service (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1976), 621, https://ia800201.us.archive.org/27/items/sovietoceansdeve00unit/sovietoceansdeve00unit.pdf.

noting that the overwhelming majority of Soviet submarines being built were tasked with the defensive mission of defending SSBN bastions. "The belief in Soviet aggression was, however, too firmly ingrained for the defense explanation to even cross the Western mind."[512] Whatever the merits of MccGwire's point, the perceived Soviet threat to US power projection's Achilles heel was treated very seriously. As the following sub-section will show, the addition of further policy goals would be a complication, as a fleet built for one task was soon assigned to others. But Soviet naval development produced a fleet of cruisers, destroyers, frigates, and submarines that would have been ideal for bastion defense, which makes it all the more ironic that US analysts missed this actual improvement in Soviet defense capabilities because they were more focused on what MccGwire and others would have called a misguided assumption about SLOCs.

By the 1980s, naval investment persistence had begun to stand out in Soviet fiscal expenditure when the country as a whole was finding itself in increasingly dire economic straits. After Brezhnev's death in 1982, Gorshkov hastily arranged for a 40-vessel naval exercise in the hope that, like the *Okeans* in the previous decade, the new party leadership would be sufficiently impressed to maintain funding.[513] After two geriatric leaders passed in quick succession, the positively youthful 54-year-old Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary in March 1985. Gorshkov abruptly retired at the end of the calendar year.[514]

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512. MccGwire, *Military*, 361.

513. Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 178-79.

514. It is believed that Gorbachev, concerned about the navy's disproportionately large budget, encouraged Gorshkov to retire so as to more easily enact cuts. Ibid., 183.

As the next sub-section will show, operational deployments arguably worried US policymakers more than naval investment per se, but those global operations necessarily had to rest on a foundation of investment persistence. And the crucial role that Soviet naval investment played in the USSR's ultimate collapse can be appreciated retrospectively and in the wider context of the United States' muscular response in the 1980s. Vladimir Kuzin and Sergei Chernyavskii's assessment is worth considering at length:

> In the naval arms race, the Soviet leadership allowed itself to make two principal, major mistakes. First, our country was effectively drawn into an arms race in general, and a naval arms race in particular, that was beyond the strength of its economy and which extended over the course of several decades of peacetime. . . . The US leadership consciously imposed an arms race on the USSR, with the assumption that the latter's economy would not sustain such a lengthy and expensive competition. And it was not mistaken. Second, in building the armed forces, including the navy, a disproportion was allowed to occur in the development of combatant and auxiliary forces. The political and military leadership became carried away with one side of the problem—the quantitative growth of combatant forces—while ignoring or undervaluing the development of support forces.[515]

By the time investment persistence came to an end, it was, like all the economic reforms Gorbachev implemented, too little, too late. From 1989 to 1991, Gorbachev ordered one hundred naval vessels scrapped; the US Department of Defense (DoD) estimated that, had the USSR lasted beyond 1991, at least one hundred fifty more vessels would have

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515. Vladimir Kuzin and Sergei Chernyavskii, "Russian Reactions to Reagan's 'Maritime Strategy,'" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 2 (April 2005): 438. See also Lawrence Sondhaus, *Navies in Modern World History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 264.

been junked.[516] Yet the sheer number of naval vessels available for dumping shows what investment persistence accomplished in the prior three decades.

Persistent investment turned what was essentially a coastal, defensive force into a more muscular fleet that, despite its strategically defensive posture, gained formidable offensive weapon systems. This strategically defensive/operationally offensive force posture serves as an exemplar of the ambiguous nature of the Soviet navy, which caused so much intra-Western debate on Soviet intentions vis-à-vis capabilities, especially with regard to US SLOCs. Even as some authors argued that the USSR was acting defensively, the United States perceived an offensive threat to its vital SLOCs and America's ability to prosecute expeditionary operations—yet another example of politico-military signaling gone wrong.

Investment persistence can be considered a success in the fact that the Soviets, desirous to push their defensive barriers ever farther out to sea and secure bastions for their SSBNs, actually succeeded in doing so. Investment persistence created a fleet heavily tilted towards cruisers, destroyers, frigates, and submarines, at the expense (at least initially) of truly expeditionary capabilities, such as aircraft carriers, a robust marine corps, and logistical endurance overseas. These very deficiencies, however, also mean that investment persistence can be considered a failure, for it birthed a fleet that would quickly prove incapable of fulfilling its new tasks. In the end, Soviet investment persistence was a partial success, in that the navy could prosecute its original vital

516. Office of the CNO, *Understanding Soviet Naval Operations*, 6th ed., July 1991, 50, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112105062951.

mission well, but would prove less adept (though not completely incompetent) in new missions assigned to it by the party. Such a fleet was what Moscow sent out into the world.

Paradox: An Imbalanced Navy and Threat Diffusion

Just as investment persistence proved a mixture of success and failure, so too did threat diffusion. The Soviet Union pursued a contradictory policy of enhancing its prestige and influence, while simultaneously seeking to reduce tensions with the United States and avoid war. Bryan Ranft and Geoffrey Till argue that the USSR tried to make its influence felt around the world, but also tried to do so without triggering conflict with the United States.[517] Franklyn Griffiths agrees, observing that Moscow's navy-based global policy was driven by two contradictory forces: reluctant expansionism and limited expansionism. The former represented the drive of an insecure superpower that needed to prove itself the equal of the other one; the latter represented the tempered realization that the Soviet Union did not have any territorial designs outside its near-abroad and that its navy was not up to par.[518] The Soviet Navy was not built for globetrotting and, in practice, the effect was a force that excited both anxiety and condescension, appearing both threatening and constrained at the same time. The inherent practical contradiction of reluctant and limited expansionism meant that threat diffusion could not be pursued with any consistency.

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517. Bryan Ranft and Geoffrey Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 233-34.

518. Franklyn Griffiths, "Forward Deployment and Foreign Policy," in MccGwire, 13.

On the one hand, the USSR wanted to use its navy to assert its status in the world generally and its power in specific places. On the other hand, the USSR had limits: it did not actually desire a war against the United States and, even if it sought more hostile relations, it lacked the capability to challenge America outright on the latter's core interests, thanks in part to the imbalanced investment discussed above. The result was a Soviet Union that, using its navy as a primary tool of foreign diplomacy and overseas influence, spanned the globe, but inconsistently so; showed up during crises and in vital regions, but only to stand by and not do very much; and was effective at establishing relationships that eventually withered away—the seaborne tip of the inexpertly wielded spear that was Soviet diplomacy.

In the year of the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic Vice Adm. R. M. Smeeton (later Sir R. M. Smeeton), noted in a speech that the Soviets "have ventured upon the high seas, something unusual in Russian history. The Communists are moving into the arena of sea power. They are no longer entirely 'land animals.'"[519] *Time* magazine agreed: it featured Gorshkov on the cover of a 1968 issue (see figure 5.2), with an article titled, "Power Play on the Oceans." *Time* informed its readers that "in a remarkable turnaround since World War II, Moscow has transformed a relatively insignificant coastal-defense force that seldom ventured far from land into a real blue-water fleet."[520]

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519. Quoted in David Woodward, *The Russians at Sea* (London: William Kimber, 1965), 234.
520. "Russia: Power Play on the Oceans," *Time*, February 23, 1968, 23, EBSCO-host.

In 1973, Barry M. Blechman asked why it was that the United States had suddenly taken an interest in the Soviet Navy: "Two factors seem to be of foremost importance: (a) striking improvements in the capabilities of individual units and (b) a sharp change in the Soviet Navy's peacetime deployment patterns."[521] He went on to state, "The United States' recently heightened awareness of the Soviet Navy should also be traced to the expanded geographic scope of Soviet naval operations and to the establishment of a continuous Soviet naval presence in several regions of the globe."[522]

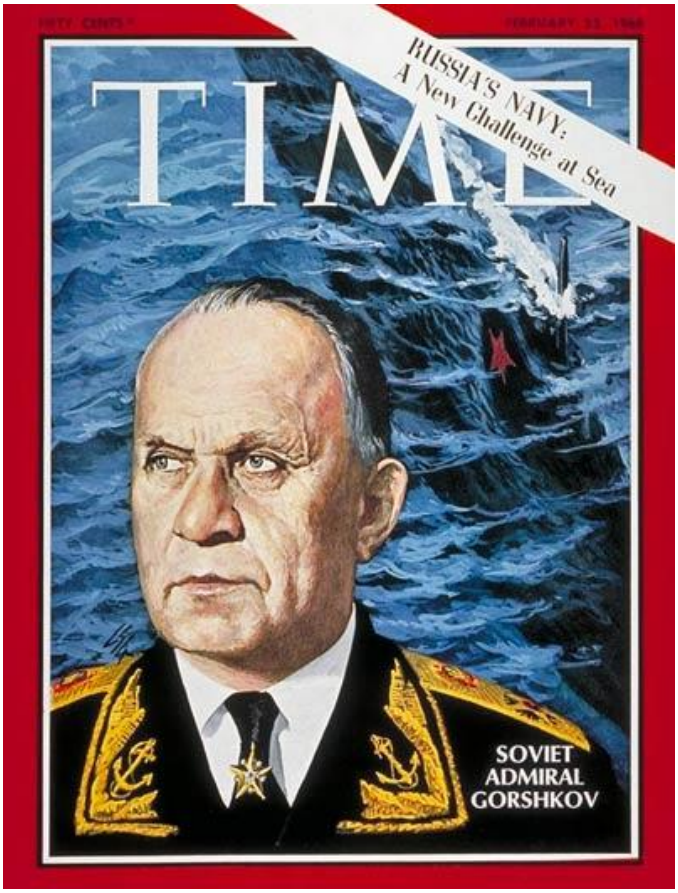

Figure 5.2. *Time*, February 23, 1968

521. Blechman, 10-11.
522. Ibid., 12.

Initially, the Soviet Navy deployed to protect the sea-based nuclear deterrent. Since the SSBNs needed bastions in which to operate safely, the conventional naval force was tasked with securing adjacent seas.[523] But Soviet elites soon broadened their naval horizons beyond bastion protection, their minds coalescing around the idea that the Soviet Navy could be a tool for furthering state interests in peace, as well as war, and in both contiguous and distant waters.[524] The Americans suspected some sort of change in Soviet thinking: "It is clear that the growth in its [the Soviet navy's] out-of-area operations is not due to a sudden availability of naval resources. Rather, this trend must reflect a conscious decision by Soviet leaders to expand their peacetime naval presence in foreign waters. Accordingly, it seems likely that either the Soviet Union's perception of requirements for satisfactory performance of its navy's traditional missions has changed or new missions have been assigned to the fleet."[525]

Moscow had a number of new objectives for which its navy seemed a useful tool. The first was to increase the state's prestige, as exemplified by the age-old naval tradition of "flying the flag," tied closely with the need to not be seen as second rate to the United States in the maritime arena.[526] A second concern was constraining the United States, particularly in the Third World.[527] In the Indian Ocean, the navy was to outflank NATO

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523. MccGwire, *Military*, 102.

524. Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 153.

525. Blechman, 15.

526. Ibid., 24. The utility of "flying the flag" should not be underestimated: "Simply showing the flag in a trouble spot with even a relatively weak naval force can go a long way toward neutralizing a strong naval force that is trying to avoid combat. Any fleet presence is impressive, particularly in developing countries; ships with modern weapons systems present a dramatic appearance when supported by a clever Russian propaganda program." Burns, 238.

527. Blechman, 22-23.

and, later, combat China's influence in Southeast Asia.[528] A third mission was to protect the USSR's client states from threats (regardless of whether the United States was involved).[529] A fourth mission was to protect Soviet commercial and fishing activities.[530]

A final objective may have been to use the Soviet Navy as a political chip: "It can be reasonably argued that one objective of the forward deployment of the Soviet Navy was to improve the Soviet bargaining position *vis-à-vis* the West in achieving a Western stand-down in areas close to the Soviet homeland."[531] This would explain Moscow's unfruitful attempts to neutralize the Mediterranean Sea and the robust US presence there: "Between the late 1950s and 1967, a common theme of Soviet statements on the Mediterranean was the call for its denuclearization and establishment as a 'zone of peace.'"[532] If the Soviets could move out and threaten the Americans in more places, so the thinking went, then perhaps the United States would back off from some of the areas acutely sensitive to the Soviet Union. The new missions, therefore, did not replace the original one of bastion protection; they merely supplemented or were grafted onto the original mission.[533]

The Soviet fleet was originally intended for the strategic defensive, operating primarily to protect the bastions in which the SSBNs were located. But the mission to go

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528. Albert E. Graham, "Soviet Strategy and Policy in the Indian Ocean," in Murphy, 281-82; and Morris, 104. Soviet entry into the Indian Ocean was made easier by the United Kingdom's withdrawal from "east of Suez."

529. Blechman, 23; and Dibb, 203.

530. Blechman, 24, 123; and Morris, 107.

531. Anne Kelly Calhoun and Charles Petersen, "Changes in Soviet Naval Policy: Prospects for Arms Limitations in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean," in Murphy, 243.

532. Ibid., 237-38.

533. Graham, 276.

out around the world, to make friends and intimidate enemies, necessarily called for a fleet that was more balanced and whose development was more comprehensive. The relatively late arrival of the Soviet Navy's first fixed-wing aircraft carrier suggests a belated recognition by Moscow that a more vigorous navy necessarily required one with more heft in its capabilities. "The task that Soviet planners assigned to military force in crafting their Third World policy was essentially demonstrative, 'as a means of communicating Soviet interests, building prestige, and reassuring friends.' The various Third World engagements into which the Soviet Union was drawn under Brezhnev revealed an ambition to assert global power status, but also the limited means and inherent constraints that made that ambition so difficult to realize."[534]

The incongruence between fleet design, the original objective, and the additional objectives meant that the navy that the Soviet Union deployed for global operations spanning the spectrum of naval force was not well-suited to the tasks assigned it.[535] A navy built for bastion defense was being tasked to, among other things, "fly the flag"—rather awkward for a submarine-heavy fleet to do, literally.[536] Surface ships did not fare much better: optimized for defense near home waters, they were generally smaller and

534. R. Craig Nation, *Naval Power in Soviet Policy*, Studies in Communist Affairs 2 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 274. See also McConnell, 29.

535. Edward Wegener, *The Soviet Naval Offensive: An Examination of the Strategic Role of Soviet Naval Forces in the East-West Conflict*, trans. Henning Wegener (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 125.

536. Fairhall, 259.

less seaworthy than comparable US vessels.[537] Vessels capable of carrying aircraft, whether fixed-wing or rotary-wing, were also in short supply.[538]

The navy's repeated use as a coercive diplomatic tool offers illustrations of the Soviet Navy's capabilities and limits, both operationally and politically. "The navy was the preeminent instrument of Soviet coercive military diplomacy when the Kremlin looked beyond nations contiguous to the USSR and Central Europe. Naval vessels participated in two-thirds of these incidents."[539] Moscow used its navy as a force that could appear on the horizon if it felt that the United States might take actions contrary to the interest of the Soviet Union or its allies.

In the United States Ship *Pueblo* crisis in 1968, when North Korea commandeered the US vessel and held its crew, the United States deployed the 25-ship Task Force 77 to the Sea of Japan. In response, the USSR deployed its own ships to stand in the way of US forces and the North Korean coast.[540] Moscow disapproved of Pyongyang's seizure of the US vessel, but felt compelled to publicly stand by its ally and remind Washington that the Soviet Union had important interests in East Asia that had to be considered. Unenthusiastic about another war in Asia, the United States agreed to the Soviet request to draw forces back from the Korean peninsula.[541]

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537. Blechman, 29-30.

538. Ibid., 25.

539. Stephen S. Kaplan et al., *Diplomacy of Power: Soviet Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1981), 49-50. See also Brian Larson, "Soviet Naval Responses to Crises," in *The Soviet Navy: Strengths and Liabilities*, ed. Bruce W. Watson and Susan M. Watson, Westview Special Studies on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 266.

540. Kaplan et al., 360.

541. As so often in Cold War politics, the Americans and the Soviets interpreted the same thing differently: the Soviets saw their ship withdrawal demand as an ultimatum; the Americans considered it to

In the next decade, when the Angolan civil war erupted, the Soviet Navy deployed to the south Atlantic as a warning against US and regional actors' interference. The navy protected the air bridge established by transport aircraft ferrying Cuban troops over to support Moscow's (and Havana's) preferred rebel group, as well as protecting seaborne shipments of arms.[542] There was even speculation that Soviet naval personnel intervened directly in the war.[543] The success of the Soviet-backed group, which won and has ruled Angola without interruption since, contrasted sharply with US support of losing groups and general lack of US involvement in the conflict.[544]

These seeming successes, though, must be weighed against the failures, and it is in such cases where one can see most clearly Griffiths's paradoxes of reluctant expansionism and limited expansionism at work. For example, the Soviet role in the Mediterranean has been much discussed in the context of the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War. It is true that, in response to a major US presence in the Mediterranean, the Soviets deployed large flotillas to the sea during those conflicts, the latter of which saw US forces raised to Defense Readiness Condition 3, an alert level that would not be reached again until September 11, 2001.

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be just another routine diplomatic protest. Sergey S. Radchenko, *The Soviet Union and the North Korean Seizure of the USS* Pueblo*: Evidence from Russian Archives*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper 47 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, n.d.), 18-19, https://web.archive.org/web/20160307074400if_/https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHP_WP_47.pdf.

542. Louis J. Andolino and Louis R. Eltscher, *Soviet Naval, Military, and Air Power in the Third World* (Newport, RI: Center for Naval Warfare Studies, Naval War College, 1983), 20-21; and Kaplan et al., 589. There were three groups that fought each other and enjoyed the (sometimes rotating) support of China, the Soviet Union, the United States, and interested regional actors.

543. Andolino and Eltscher, 20.

544. Herzog, 41-42.

But closer examination reveals that the Soviets were very deliberate in their activity. The flotilla dispatched in the Six-Day War sat northwest of Crete, five hundred miles from Israel and behind the US fleet. Furthermore, the balance of forces was still wholly lopsided: against two entire US carrier strike groups—as well as a British Royal Navy presence—the Soviet Navy had only one cruiser, nine destroyers, and three submarines. "Thus, by its deployment and quality of reinforcement, the Soviet Union clearly signaled that it did not wish to challenge the US Navy or be seen as trying to directly affect the course of events in the Arab-Israeli area with its fleet."[545] In the Yom Kippur War, the Soviets were equally anxious to not unduly antagonize the United States. Moscow did not increase its presence in the Mediterranean until after the crisis had peaked.[546]

The Soviets may have given the impression that they were somehow involved and had made their presence felt, but their ultimately futile displays were what caused Egypt to reconsider its great-power alignment and embark on rapprochement with the United States in the 1970s.[547] Stephen S. Kaplan and his co-authors point out that, although the Soviet Navy's deployments may have made the US Navy more cautious, they did not seem to have actually inhibited US policy and operations. "Moscow's timing of deployments, their location, and the activities of Soviet naval vessels generally reflected

545. Kaplan et al., 426-27.
546. Ibid., 458.
547. Ibid., 466.

the Kremlin's caution and efforts to ensure that naval demonstrations constituted only a joint appearance and not preparation for superpower conflict."[548]

Soviet naval activity in more relaxed times also met with mixed success. The Soviet Union built relationships largely on the back of persistent naval diplomacy.[549] In the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, where Soviet naval deployments were most visible, Moscow appeared as if it had a permanent presence. From fewer than one hundred ship-days in 1965, Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean increased to nearly nine thousand by 1972.[550] In the Mediterranean, ship-days rose from approximately four thousand to roughly eighteen thousand in the same time period.[551] In 1968, a top-secret US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) memorandum warned, "The size and capabilities of the [Soviet Mediterranean] force have increased to the point that it has become a credible threat to the US Sixth Fleet."[552]

Recalling Soviet activity around the Indian Ocean, US Adm. James Stavridis USN (Ret.) writes:

> The Soviet adventures in southern Africa, both in Angola and Mozambique, were initially successful (especially with Cuban troops fighting alongside the Soviets in Angola) and two new client states emerged. And when Somalia and Ethiopia went to war in 1977, the Soviets shifted sides and pocketed a strong relationship with Ethiopia (more than 30 million people) at the cost of betraying the smaller nation

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548. Ibid., 680. Concurring opinions can be found in Larson, 261; and Stephen S. Roberts, "Naval Confrontations during Crises," in Dismukes and McConnell, 212.

549. Andolino and Eltscher, 18.

550. A ship-day is a day spent at sea by one ship, e.g., two ships that each spend four days at sea would amount to eight ship-days. On Soviet port calls in general, see ibid., 19; Kaplan et al., 176-77; and Jürgen Rohwer, *Superpower Confrontation on the Seas: Naval Development and Strategy since 1945*, The Washington Papers 3, No. 26 (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975), 75.

551. Blechman, 13.

552. CIA, *The Soviet Mediterranean Squadron*, CIA Analysis of the Soviet Navy, December 1968, 1, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0002775031.pdf.

> of Somalia. Yemen also became a Marxist state. Suddenly, the only major client of the United States was Saudi Arabia, and the Soviets were picking up relationships, bases, and political support around the rest of the Indian Ocean littoral. As a theater of political cold war, the Indian Ocean looked very much like a Soviet win.[553]

However, the objective of developing facilities for the USSR's navy in the Third World often succumbed to the reality that many of these impoverished countries' authoritarian rulers were unreliable. Abrupt changes in domestic politics explain how the Soviet Union lost its facilities in Guinea and Somalia. Gorshkov spent a decade personally cultivating relations with the Egyptian leadership in order to establish naval facilities at Alexandria, but these all turned to naught when President Muhammad Anwar el-Sadat moved closer to the United States.

Gorshkov was trying to address a serious deficiency: the dearth of overseas naval facilities to support vessels far from home. Writing in 1986, the year after Gorshkov retired, Paul Dibb pointed out, "The only major overseas bases now available to the USSR are in Cuba, Vietnam, Ethiopia, and South Yemen. All are extremely vulnerable to US forces in a war."[554] Most Soviet naval facilities were not actual naval bases, but simply extant local facilities that the Soviets had to pay to use.[555] Access to facilities in relatively unimportant parts of the world was not inconsistent with threat diffusion, but it was also nowhere near as successful as the frenetic pace of Soviet diplomacy would have

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553. Adm. James Stavridis USN (Ret.), *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of the World's Oceans* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 115.

554. Dibb, 175; and Charles C. Petersen, "Trends in Soviet Naval Operations," in Dismukes and McConnell, 67, 71.

555. Richard B. Remnek, "Access to Overseas Naval Support Facilities," in *The Sources of Soviet Naval Conduct*, ed. Philip S. Gillette and Willard C. Frank Jr. (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990), 252; and Petersen, "Trends in Soviet Naval Operations," 72.

implied. "Since the late 1960s, the [Soviet] navy has been a moderately successful instrument in a largely unsuccessful foreign policy."[556]

Access to foreign support was vital, especially as the sputtering Soviet economy was of no help. For example, when transiting to the Indian Ocean, the theater farthest from the Soviet homeland, submarines would often be towed on the surface to the area of operations in order to save on fuel and extend engine life.[557] Once on station, Soviet warships did not spend a lot of time cruising and usually sat at anchor to, again, conserve fuel and, as the CIA suspected, to minimize the need for at-sea maintenance.[558] Since Soviet naval vessels were not built to the same globe-trotting standards of endurance and reliability as US vessels, Soviet naval deployments were also usually not of the persistent, rigorous nature seen in their US counterparts.[559] Charles C. Petersen writes, "The Soviets have not sought to emulate the American practice of continuous, steady-state deployments. The Soviet practice appears instead to reflect a 'flexible deployment' policy, whose objective is to maintain an ability to concentrate forces for a period of time, where and when necessary. This policy enables the Soviets to husband resources."[560]

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556. Ken Booth, "Military Power, Military Force, and Soviet Foreign Policy," in MccGwire, 50.

557. Dibb, 175; and Office of the CNO, *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments*, 5th ed., 24.

558. National Security Council, *Non-Strategic Naval Limitations in the Indian Ocean*, Documents of the National Security Council, 8th supp., February 15, 1972, 20, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=000076-011-0236&accountid=14707. See also CIA, *Soviet Fleet Logistics*, 8.

559. Dibb, 196.

560. Petersen, "Trends in Soviet Naval Operations," 47; see also William H. J. Manthorpe Jr., "A Background for Understanding Soviet Strategy," in Gillette and Frank, 3.

Unfortunately, this "flexible deployment" policy meant that Soviet surges in naval force probably exacerbated Western threat perceptions of Soviet aggression, seen most glaringly both in peacetime exercises, such as *Okean*, and in crisis situations, such as the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War—all those carefully crafted and timed maneuvers in the Mediterranean were drowned out by rapid and sudden buildups of Soviet presence.[561] Furthermore, while Moscow was more than capable of maintaining a presence in discrete places for particular periods of time, it lacked the staying power that is the hallmark of naval power. R. Craig Nation observes that even the DoD's own publications, while alarmist on some pages, would in the very same publication trumpet the Soviet Navy's serious shortcomings in power projection.[562] This was exacerbated by the fact that the Soviet Navy still had to fulfill its bastion zone protection mission, which necessarily kept some naval vessels at or close to home waters.[563]

The Soviet Navy thus possessed real deficiencies that clearly rendered it second class in many respects to its US counterpart. Nonetheless, its real achievements in serving Soviet diplomacy, enhancing Soviet standing, and asserting Soviet interests (even if it sometimes backed down to avoid war) were genuine accomplishments that help account for Washington's growing concern. In a way, the Soviet Navy's presence and operations achieved political impact out of all proportion to its operational effectiveness.[564] In September 1970, Zumwalt confided to Nixon that his original July 1970 estimation of the

561. Petersen, "Trends in Soviet Naval Operations," 47.
562. Nation, 274.
563. Fairhall, 259.
564. Put another way: "The Soviet Navy has proved to be a cost-effective instrument of policy." Booth, 50.

United States having a "slightly better than" 50 percent chance of defeating its Soviet counterpart in a conventional naval war had declined further.[565] NATO ministers in 1971 drew attention to the Soviets' global naval capability and called for "appropriate Allied measures" to counter this new threat.[566]

With the Yom Kippur War fresh in everyone's minds, US Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger asked the Congress in 1974 for an additional $29 million to expand US naval facilities on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.[567] He went on to warn that, "With the launching of one 40,000-ton carrier [the *Kiev*] (comparable in size but not in mission to our *Essex* class), and the construction of another underway, with continuing efforts to establish overseas bases on the coasts of Africa, in the Indian Ocean, and in Cuba, and with a gradual growth in open-ocean operations, the Soviet leaders are clearly intent on making their naval presence felt on a worldwide basis."[568] The *Kiev*'s commissioning in 1975 was seen by concerned Americans as symbolic of the fact that the Soviets had finally come of age.[569]

In the year the *Kiev* was launched, the Office of the CNO published the first edition of *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments*. It wrote, "An analysis of the Soviet

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565. Zumwalt, 303-4. This is an extraordinary statement from the CNO to his commander-in-chief: it was based on the assumption that US naval forces would fight Soviet naval forces near land, not out at sea, and with US SLOCs threatened.

566. Robert Spencer, "Alliance Perceptions of the Soviet Threat, 1950-1988," in *The Changing Western Analysis of the Soviet Threat*, ed. Carl-Christoph Schweitzer (New York: St. Martin Press, 1990), 39.

567. DoD, *Report of the Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger to the Congress on the FY 1975 Defense Budget, FY 1975-1979 Defense Program*, by James R. Schlesinger, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., March 1974, 14, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/annual_reports/1975_DoD_AR.pdf?ver=2014-06-24-150705-323.

568. Ibid., 94.

569. Morris, 125.

Navy during the past decade reveals (1) a significant increase in warship capability, (2) a similar increase in at-sea operations, and (3) an increase in the use of naval forces to support political goals."[570] Three years later, the third edition went beyond pointing out simple increases to pointing out strategic implications: "Over the last two decades the Soviet Navy has been transformed from a basically coastal defense force into an ocean-going force designed to extend the defenses of the USSR well to sea, and to perform most of the functions of a naval power in waters distant from the Soviet Union."[571]

The 1981 fourth edition presented an even more alarming picture, arguing that the new decade heralded "the beginning of a new naval age, both for the Soviet Union and the United States, as the two navies grow more evenly matched in an open-ocean competition that alters the course of history."[572] Living up to its name, the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD)—a number of whose members served in the Reagan Administration—concluded dramatically in 1984, "The Soviet navy has developed into a major threat to vital sea-lanes and as an important diplomatic instrument to expand and consolidate Soviet power."[573]

Under President Ronald Wilson Reagan, US defense policy (influenced as it was by, among others, the CPD) began to react to the Soviet Navy's global reach. The

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570. Office of the CNO, *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments*, April 1975, 15, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015019126831.

571. Office of the CNO, *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments*, 3d ed., January 1978, 6, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015074796007.

572. Office of the CNO, *Understanding Soviet Naval Operations*, 4th ed., January 1981, 81, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31210023607656.

573. Committee on the Present Danger, "Is America Becoming Number 2? Current Trends in the US-Soviet Military Balance," in *Alerting America: The Papers of the Committee on the Present Danger*, ed. Charles Tyroler II (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1984), 91.

inaugural edition of the DoD's *Soviet Military Power* argued in 1981, "Having achieved rough parity in general war capabilities, the Soviets can be expected to increase their emphasis on making general purpose naval forces more capable in distant waters, of performing a variety of missions and of challenging the West's traditional dominance of open oceans. We believe that Soviet naval policies also intend gradually to achieve greatly improved capabilities for sustained, long-range naval operations, even against substantial opposition."[574]

The US response was the Maritime Strategy, which had as its attention-grabbing centerpiece the commitment to a 600-ship navy that would prosecute a strategy known as "horizontal escalation."[575] This was, in essence, a "strategy of worldwide war."[576] With this strategy, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger affirmed, "'no area of the world is beyond the scope of American interest . . . [we must have] sufficient military standing to cope with any level of violence' around the globe."[577] Washington was to have the ability to punish Moscow anywhere.[578]

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574. DoD, *Soviet Military Power*, September 1981, 51, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.49015000339425.

575. Leaving aside SSBNs, a comparison of the US fleet in 1985 and the 600-ship plan's stated targets show that the Reagan Administration was calling for an increase in principal combatants from 305 to approximately 343: one more aircraft carrier (to fifteen), two more battleships (to four), nine more cruisers (to thirty-eight), eight more destroyers (to seventy-six), up to nine more frigates (to a maximum of 110), and nine more nuclear-powered attack submarines (to one hundred). International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1985-1986* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1985), 6, 9; and US House Committee on Armed Services Seapower and Strategic and Critical Materials Subcommittee, *600-Ship Navy*, 1985, 6-7, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31822019325737.

576. Quoted in Thomas Bodenheimer and Robert Gould, *Rollback! Right-wing Power in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 109.

577. Quoted in ibid., 110. Bracketed text appears in Bodenheimer and Gould.

578. When asked what parts of the world Reagan would prioritize for reasserting US power, Weinberger replied, "All of them." Quoted in ibid.

This naval buildup was a massive and robust undertaking; it was a US reply not only to Soviet naval investment, but also to expanding Soviet naval power projection. The horizontal escalation strategy was meant to serve as a counterpunch against the Soviet Union's push out from the continental homeland. The Navy was to be prepared to take the offensive and strike globally, operating in three phases.[579] In phase I (the run-up to war), the United States would rapidly forward-deploy naval forces to bolster those already at sea: "This is where the Soviet fleet will be, and this is where we must be prepared to fight." Phase II, called "Seizing the Initiative," would see the US Navy "destroy Soviet forces in the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, and other forward areas . . . and fight our way toward Soviet home waters." Phase III was "Carrying the Fight to the Enemy": the United States would "complete the destruction of all the Soviet fleets which was begun in Phase II."[580]

US naval construction efforts never quite matched the vaunted 600-ship goal, but its major role within the broader US response to the Soviet Union in the 1980s helped further weaken an already geriatric Soviet economy, thus serving to not only counter the USSR's geographic expansion, but its naval investment as well. This affected the ability

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579. Hugh Faringdon, *Strategic Geography: NATO, the Warsaw Pact, and the Superpowers*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1989), 144.

580. Quoted in Roger W. Barnett and Jeffrey G. Barlow, "The Maritime Strategy of the U.S. Navy: Reading Excerpts," in Gray and Barnett, 346. Of course, this highly escalatory military strategy was a controversial one, especially when put in political context. Critiques from the time include Bodenheimer and Gould, 110; John J. Mearsheimer, "A Strategic Misstep: The Maritime Strategy and Deterrence in Europe," *International Security* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 3-57; and Barry R. Posen and Stephen W. Van Evera, "Reagan Administration Defense Policy: Departure from Containment," in *Eagle Defiant: United States Foreign Policy in the 1980s*, ed. Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber, and Donald Rothchild (Boston: Little, Brown, 1983), 67-104. A defense was offered by Linton F. Brooks, "Naval Power and National Strategy: The Case for the Maritime Strategy," *International Security* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 58-88.

to deploy globally, and the navy began cutting back on its activities. One month before the Berlin Wall's demise, the DoD's annual report on Soviet military power noted, "The most significant trend in Soviet naval operating patterns over the past four years has been the reduction in naval activity beyond Soviet home waters. The presence of such deployed forces, and their capability to respond quickly to developing crises, has dropped approximately 15 percent from the high levels of the 1980-85 timeframe."[581]

This US reaction suggests that, however ineffective individual Soviet naval actions may have seemed (e.g., in the eastern Mediterranean), their political impact was substantive and substantial; Soviet naval forces did go some way in fulfilling their political masters' objectives.[582] In this light, the United States' response in the form of the Maritime Strategy is not the massive overreaction it could be caricatured as being. While the Reagan Administration may have inflated the Soviets' capabilities at sea, it would be equally inappropriate to take the opposite view and reduce the Soviet leviathan to a minnow, for one would be dismissing a navy that, for three decades, had worldwide reach and consistently played a prominent role in the prosecution of a superpower's foreign policy. Soviet naval activity around the world was sufficient enough to alarm the United States and complicate the conduct of geopolitics.

Soviet naval actions usually did not result in changes to US policy in specific regions, though the Reagan Administration's Maritime Strategy is ample evidence of a

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581. DoD, *Soviet Military Power: Prospects for Change*, September 1989, 78, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31822004883559.

582. Office of the CNO, *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments*, 19; Roberts, 211; and Wegener, 95.

sea change in US defense policy and warfighting strategy. But thwarting US ambitions was not the only goal that Moscow envisioned for its navy: the USSR also wanted to establish relationships with developing countries, raise its prestige generally, and at least show Washington that the Soviets were not going to simply acquiesce at sea to the Americans without expressing their policy preferences. Genuine operational and diplomatic achievements, even if they did not outlive the Soviet state, cannot be dismissed either as trivial, particularly since America felt such developments to be important. Ultimately, the paradoxical combination of reluctant expansionism and limited expansionism operationalized threat diffusion in a confused and inconsistent manner.

In this chapter's period of study, it may be only because of the context of the worldwide bipolar, zero-sum Cold War, as well as the seemingly sudden global reach of the Soviet Navy, that Moscow could even appear to be as big of a threat as it did to Washington. Threat diffusion was easier in the previous chapters because France, Germany, and Imperial Russia were not engaging with adversaries that viewed the entire international system as an all-or-nothing competition. Any superficial similarity between nineteenth-century France and the USSR must take this basic difference into account: the Soviet Union was far more constrained than France ever was, as evidenced by the fact that, while Paris could work with London on common objectives multiple times and eventually become allies, the idea of Moscow and Washington ever having such a relationship would have been farcical.

Had a different international climate obtained in the 1950s-1991, it is possible that Soviet hybridization (and, indeed, the USSR itself) would not have manifested itself as the danger many thought it to be, even without any active attempt at threat diffusion by Moscow. One is then left to wonder if a post-war system not dominated by a winner-take-all mentality had come into existence, whether the Soviet Union would have been able to pursue a clear and explicit policy of threat diffusion and achieve a great-power navy for arguably the first time in the Russian nation's long and proud history.

Summary

From humble beginnings, the Soviet naval force rose over the course of one-half century to assume among the world's naval powers a station that provoked a curious mixture of alarm, condescension, exaggeration, fear, and rearmament. Under the political longevity of Gorshkov—and out of Khrushchev's shadow—the Soviet Navy became the recipient of an astonishingly persistent investment in capabilities, one that then quickly morphed into headline-grabbing global exercises, deployments, and operations. In the span of a decade, what had been derisively dismissed as a coastal defense force suddenly became a blue-water leviathan that was either threatening to or had already succeeded in overthrowing US naval hegemony (see figure 5.3).

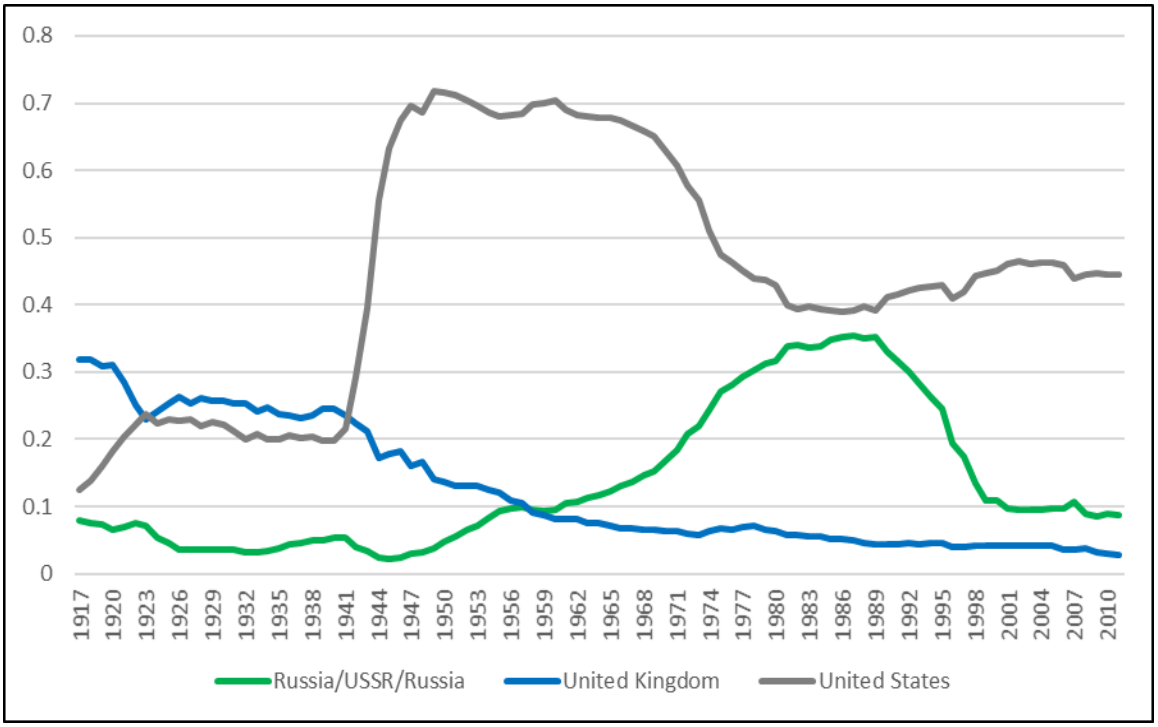

Figure 5.3. Russian, British, and US proportions of global primary warship tonnage, 1917-2011. Data from Brian Benjamin Crisher and Mark Souva, "Power at Sea: A Naval Power Dataset, 1865-2011," *International Interactions* 40, no. 4 (August 2014): 602-29.

The Soviet Navy was clearly not the failure that its imperial predecessor so reliably was, nor was it the catastrophic failure that the Imperial German Navy represented, for, however brief and limited the Soviet Navy's accomplishments were, it did manage some modest successes, particularly in the Third World. But it is also clear that the Soviet Navy never had the longevity, the technological acumen, or the global sustainability that the French navy had throughout the Pax Britannica. Not only was Soviet investment uneven, resulting in a fleet with impressive hardware that was crucially deficient in the expeditionary capabilities and support infrastructure required of a globe-spanning navy, as well as naval personnel not actually equipped to operate increasingly

sophisticated technologies, but deployment out of its bastions to effect state policy proved unable to permanently secure Soviet foreign-policy objectives or to substantively change US policies and operations. By the Soviet Union's twilight years, its navy was a sizeable force, but one so constrained in capabilities as to present a whole far less than the sum of the parts. The Soviet Navy thus occupies an ambiguous position on the success-failure spectrum: an incomplete, partial success.

A final, albeit indirect, support for my conclusion is the sharp and persistent divisiveness among Western analysts on how threatening the Soviet Navy was. As noted throughout this chapter, different analysts drew different inferences from the same construction processes; they offered contrasting diagnoses of Soviet naval effectiveness by emphasizing different aspects of deployments. Knowledgeable writers examined the same navy and reached opposing conclusions. In a sense, both groups—those arguing that the Soviet naval threat was real and those arguing it was exaggerated—were correct.[583]

The Soviet Navy clearly had become something it had never been before: it was large and relatively advanced. The Soviet Navy had clearly gone to places it had never gone before: it did win some friends and influence many people. But the Soviet Navy also never became the US Navy's equal: it lacked (fire)power and technological sophistication. And just because the Soviet Navy could go many places did not mean it was as effective a tool as its political master hoped it would be: diplomatic relationships

583. Michael MccGwire, "Prologue: The Level of Analysis and Its Effect on Assessment," in MccGwire, 1.

forged through naval diplomacy proved brittle; the navy was good at putting in an appearance during crises, but not at actually challenging US naval forces in theater; and, as the domestic economy sputtered pathetically towards its doom, the navy was often lucky enough to make it to its theater of operations at all. Contemporary research reflects this historiographical divide in that it generally offers an extremely nuanced appreciation of the Soviet Navy: a force that could sometimes challenge the United States, but not much more than that.[584]

Finally, it is worth considering the role of nuclear weapons in Soviet military hybridization. It could be argued that, in a nuclear age, the power of conventionally armed forces has been greatly circumscribed or reduced. Such was essentially Khrushchev's belief. However, as the expansion of roles beyond bastion defense shows, there were clearly policy objectives for which nuclear weapons would have been ineffective at prosecuting, and this held not simply for the Soviet Navy of the 1950s-1991.[585] Nuclear weapons are meant to ensure a state's survival, and to argue that nuclear weapons have diminished the importance of a conventional force would require one to assume that most, if not all, foreign military ventures involve existential security. This is not the case.

584. See, for example, Levi W. Beaird, "Soviet Naval Strategy and Contemporary Russian Naval Strategy: Implications for U.S. Naval Strategy" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2019); Chernyavskii; and Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff.

585. See Blechman, 21.

1991-Present: Recession, Resurgence?

The Soviet Union's collapse brought with it severe shocks, and drastic reductions in the armed forces were swift and heavy. In addition to the jettisoning of hardware begun under Gorbachev, operational capacity was reduced by the various Soviet republics' independence and, for the navy, the departure of many experienced sailors from the Baltic states.[586] Economic insolvency severely lowered productivity, exacerbating the problem: "Within the shipyards, beyond the loss of skilled workers (who sought other employment that actually *paid* them, even part-time), component suppliers ceased providing material, because they, too, were not being paid; periodically shipyards 'went dark,' the government being in arrears in its electric bills."[587] On shore and at sea, in both hardware and software, whether operational command or support/logistics, the Russian Navy was simply in no position to deploy in any effective capacity.[588]

It appear that, under Vladimir Putin's presidencies and premiership, re-investment in the naval service began in the early 2010s, with the highly ambitious objective of becoming the world's second best navy by 2030.[589] The Russian Navy now accounts for a full quarter of the military's acquisition budget and stands second only to the nuclear forces in terms of overall budget allocation.[590] The focus appears to be on submarines for the simple reason that, given geographic chokepoints, surface ships are more vulnerable

586. Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 210.
587. Ibid., 212.
588. Eric J. Grove, "Russia and the Soviet Union, 1700 to the Present," s.v. "Navies, Great Powers," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History*, ed. John B. Hattendorf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017/45213.
589. Beaird, 25.
590. Polmar, Brooks, and Fedoroff, 214-15.

to attack.[591] The high-profile 2015 seizure of Crimea gave Moscow full control over the area surrounding the Sevastopol naval base, which had been leased from and shared with independent Ukraine after the USSR's collapse. This seizure also resulted in the capture of twenty-five Ukrainian naval vessels in the process, thus further bolstering Russia's fleet.[592]

Whether these new acquisitions will result in a Russian naval renaissance is very much an open question.[593] Indeed, construction is already severely behind schedule for a return to second place by 2030.[594] The familiar woes of poor shipbuilding and technological laggardness that have plagued Russia for much of its history have reared their ugly heads again: no shipyard has successfully built anything larger than a frigate in a decade.[595] The fleet's outdated, temperamental, and sole aircraft carrier, the Soviet-era *Admiral Kuznetsov*, is in maintenance: in 2018, the drydock in which it sat—the only one in the country large enough to hold the carrier—sank and, in the process, caused a 70-ton crane to collapse onto and damage the ship.[596] In 2019, the carrier caught fire during

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591. Office of Naval Intelligence, *The Russian Navy: A Historic Transition*, December 2015, 17, https://www.oni.navy.mil/Portals/12/Intel%20agencies/russia/Russia%202015print.pdf?ver=2015-12-14-082038-923.

592. Beaird, 32.

593. In 2011, I attended a conference on naval power, at which a well-published presenter argued that the Russian Navy was resurgent, pointing to all the proposed construction in the works. In the ensuing question time, a wizened old naval analyst reminded the presenter of Russia's economic problems and said of the speaker's presentation, "Nearly all of that was bullshit."

594. Beaird, 34-35.

595. The latest scrapped plans include massive destroyers and frigates. Joseph Trevithick, "Russia Has Abandoned Its Massive Nuclear Destroyer and Supersized Frigate Programs," The War Zone, April 21, 2020, https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/33099/russia-has-abandoned-its-massive-nuclear-destroyer-and-supersized-frigate-programs.

596. Paul Goble, "Russia Will Not Have a New Aircraft Carrier for at Least 15 Years—and Maybe Never," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 16, no. 88 (June 18, 2019), https://jamestown.org/program/russia-will-not-have-a-new-aircraft-carrier-for-at-least-15-years-and-maybe-never/; and Richard Moss and Ryan

welding work, with at least one fatality.[597] Whether this is an apt symbol for Russia's naval aspirations this century, only the coming years can show. The saga of the Soviet Navy may not be repeated exactly, but we may recognize the rhyme.

Conclusion

Writing at the height of US concern over Soviet hybridization, Burns pointed out a theme that has run through both this and the previous chapter: "In a dramatic move for a country considered landbound, Russia has often turned to the sea. And always turned back."[598] Expressing in different words a similar observation, Fairhall had written in the same decade as Burns, "In historical perspective, therefore, Russian sea power on a world scale is so sudden a phenomenon that one is bound to wonder how substantial and durable it really is."[599] Soviet hybridization in the form of naval development has largely been the story of Burns's and Fairhall's prescience. Investment was persistent for a couple decades, but imbalanced and uneven. This directly impinged on the manner in which the Soviet naval threat presented itself: as a force whose presence belied its incapability to transform proximity into effective national power.

As noted in the introduction in both this and the previous chapter, Russia has historically been blocked by ice and chokepoints, over neither of which it has had much

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Vest, "Meet Russia's Only (and Old) Aircraft Carrier. It Has Some Pretty Major Problems: A Reflection of Moscow's Larger Naval Issues?" *The National Interest*, December 5, 2018, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/meet-russias-only-and-old-aircraft-carrier-it-has-some-pretty-major-problems-37927.

597. Megan Eckstein, "Russia's Only Aircraft Carrier Burning after Welding Mishap, At Least 1 Dead," USNI News, December 12, 2019, https://news.usni.org/2019/12/12/russias-only-aircraft-carrier-burning-after-welding-mishap-at-least-1-dead.

598. Burns, 59.

599. Fairhall, 22.

control. It is a maritime situation arguably even worse than what Germany faced. Did the Soviet Union and any Russian predecessor really stand a chance at hybridization, or did geography all but ensure failure? It is tempting to resort to geographic determinism here, but, as this chapter has shown, the real limits to Soviet naval development lay in the investment stage (i.e., the construction of an imbalanced fleet not fit for new missions), and the shortcomings of Soviet industry had more to do with economic inefficiency and educational backwardness than with anything intrinsic to the characteristics of Soviet shorelines. Even with a Marxist economy, the USSR was able to summon vast industrial and technological resources to deploy a navy that, for all its faults, was big and global. Geography was not the problem. Had the Soviet Union built itself on intelligent economic principles, it is likely that the state's navy would have been far better than what it turned out to be, perhaps even commensurate to the US Navy.

The Soviet Navy was an incomplete success. It could not combine investment persistence and threat diffusion in the manner that France did in chapter 2; it did not fail in so calamitous a manner as did Germany in chapter 3 or Imperial Russia in chapter 4. It lies in the middle, a murky combination of success and failure. It is an admittedly messy picture. Imbalanced but persistent investment, presentation of a fearsome threat that was seriously constrained: these dualities operating in parallel explain why the Soviet Navy took the form it did and how the dominant naval power came to view it in the way it did. However the post-Soviet navy develops and operates, its form and perception in US eyes will no doubt be shaped by the factors of investment persistence and threat diffusion in a

post-Cold War world that may no longer be zero-sum, but is still ripe for great-power competition.

Chapter 6

A New, Historic Mission: China's Hybridization as a Great Power

> Xi Jinping pointed out that China was both a land power and a sea power, with broad maritime strategic interests.
>
> —PRC State Council, 2013

Along the eastern edge of Eurasia sits the country of China. Bounded on its east by the world's largest ocean, on its southwest by the world's highest mountain range, and on its northwest by a desert that ends simply where another one begins, the world's oldest extant civilization matured in a relatively isolated heartland, shielded—or so it thought—by some of Nature's most formidable bulwarks.[600] Over the millennia, the cradle of Chinese civilization has been rocked, sometimes gently and sometimes forcefully, by foreigners and their influences. Buddhism patiently trekked over the Himalayas into China. With rather less grace and magnanimity, nomads from the north and west (exemplified by the Xiongnu) crossed the Gobi to impose their presence with varying degrees of permanence. Indeed, it seemed that only the East (China) Sea offered any form of real protection: aside from some piratical activities off the coast, the major threats to a Chinese political entity came over land.

It is not a coincidence that the Great Wall became such a thing alongside China's own creation in 221 BC, as the walls of various feuding states were united to defend one unified empire. The Great Wall's multitudinous routes and repeated reconstruction over

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600. This geographic isolation supposedly accounts for the "especially virulent" Chinese strain of great-state autism, defined as "a pronounced insensitivity to foreign sensitivities." Edward N. Luttwak, *The Rise of China vs. The Logic of Strategy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012), 12, 24.

the centuries stand as testament to China's historical wariness of armed outsiders who arrived on foot or horseback, for such uninvited guests often overturned the status quo and established themselves as the new masters, exemplified most famously by the Mongol Yuan and the Manchu Qing Dynasties. The Chinese state has expanded, contracted, fractured, and reunited with great frequency, but the government of the day—whatever its origin—has generally viewed policy issues through a terrestrial lens and conducted foreign policy with a watchful eye on landward security threats. This is not to discount major Chinese naval innovations or the bustling overseas trade conducted by private individuals, but maritime China was, in the words of John King Fairbank, a "minor tradition" of Chinese national life.[601]

To the extent that the imperial courts paid any attention to the sea, it was usually for their own power projection and for specific, ad hoc purposes, not as a matter of general policy: the repeated thirteenth-century attempts to invade Japan, Zheng He's fifteenth-century voyages all the way to Africa, and the seventeenth-century crushing of Ming loyalist holdouts in Taiwan are the most notable examples. Even after repeated imperialist depredations from seaward in the 1800s, early twentieth-century Chinese revolutionaries still managed to reserve especial hatred for the Manchu rulers who had conquered China on horseback.

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601. See John King Fairbank, "Maritime and Continental in China's History," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, vol. 12, *Republican China 1912-1949, Part 1*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 14-16, https://doi-org.proxy.library.upenn.edu/10.1017/CHOL9780521235419.002. For a taste of the cosmopolitan world with which many Chinese overseas traders engaged, see John E. Wills Jr., "Maritime Europe and the Ming," in *China and Maritime Europe, 1500-1800: Trade, Settlement, Diplomacy, and Missions*, ed. John E. Wills Jr. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Figure 6.1. China in its geostrategic context

The Chinese navy appears sporadically in history—the oft-cited Zheng is the exception that proves the rule, for there are no other Chinese state oceanic forces of which the historian would bother to record. "Oceanic experience was not part of the formative rhythms of the many early centuries that cut the templates of Chinese civilization. . . . China's focus was riverine, like that of ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia."[602] Certainly, operationally large and politically significant battles have been fought on China's great rivers, but standing fleets as we know navies today have not

602. John Curtis Perry, "Imperial China and the Sea," in *Asia Looks Seaward: Power and Maritime Strategy*, 2nd ed., ed. Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 22. See also Philip Ball, *The Water Kingdom: A Secret History of China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 133.

traditionally been the military priority of Chinese statesmen and strategists. "China is a continental country. To the ancient Chinese, their land was the world."[603]

Today's China is different. For the past quarter-century, the Chinese navy has embarked on a program of development and modernization, one so successful that this People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy now ranks among the world's more capable naval forces; coupled with less-than-robust growth by the world's traditional naval powers, the PLA Navy has risen from a modest stature to excite growing attention and, in some circles, concern over what implications a Chinese leviathan would hold for international politics. Will China succeed at developing naval power alongside its extant and longstanding land power? What might a hybrid China use its navy for, and where? What are the implications for not only the United States, but for other great powers (hybrid or otherwise) and the Asia-Pacific region as a whole? This chapter grapples with these issues.

The story begins with a brief overview of the Chinese navy from 1801 to 1995, a period in which China experienced much change, chaos, and tumult—with no state naval armed force on hand to witness much of any of it. The second section on 1995 to the

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603. Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Free Press, 1948), 16. See also Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 91. Among my case studies, China is the only country to lack a section in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History*'s article on great-power navies. See "Navies, Great Powers," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History*, ed. John B. Hattendorf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195130751.001.0001/acref-9780195130751-e-0580. Writing in 1976, Michael Howard went so far as to call China the only country that was refusing to accept the maritime order and its ground rules. Michael Howard, "Order and Conflict at Sea in the 1980s," in *Power at Sea, Part III: Competition and Conflict Papers from the IISS* [International Institute for Strategic Studies] *17th Annual Conference*, Adelphi Paper 124 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1976), 2-3.

present (2020) examines the Chinese state's growing focus on the sea and argues that Beijing has engaged in persistent investment, but—so far as one can tell—inconsistent threat diffusion. While financial and political support for the PLA Navy has been robust and looks set to continue, Chinese naval activities in waters both near and abroad have failed to dissipate a growing threat perception in the United States and other countries.

1801-1995: Not Much to Sea

Up until the nineteenth century, the Chinese state's attention to its seaward flank was generally fleeting and fitful, and an attempt to develop naval power beyond a brown-water (i.e., coastal and riverine) force did not occur until the late 1800s, by which time Japan, Russia, and not a few Western powers had already begun to undermine the Chinese government's domestic sovereignty and external policy preferences.[604] Before the arrival of powerful modern navies, China had only to contend with small regional naval forces; it did not require a particularly large or ocean-going fleet.[605] The First Opium War (1839-42) showed the decisive superiority of British naval might, and calls for constructing a robust Chinese navy (such as by the otherwise influential Lin Zexu) went unheeded, partly because of the imperial court's belief that a country as terrestrially blessed as China could not possibly be defeated by naval power alone.[606]

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604. See chapters 2-4 on French intervention in the Opium and Sino-French Wars, the German desire to acquire a foothold on the Chinese mainland in the form of a naval base, and the Russian hunger for the same.

605. Bruce A. Elleman, "The Neglect and Nadir of Chinese Maritime Policy under the Qing," in *China Goes to Sea: Maritime Transformation in Comparative Historical Perspective*, ed. Andrew S. Erickson, Lyle J. Goldstein, and Carnes Lord, Studies in Chinese Maritime Development (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 294.

606. Ibid., 298-99.

While emperors gradually changed, their court's policy of eschewing indigenous naval development persisted; by the time of the Second Opium War (1856-60), what could be called a Chinese navy was as feeble and outdated as ever, though Beijing did attempt to buy itself a British-built fleet, the purchase ultimately failing over who would exercise control of it.[607] It was only in the last third of the nineteenth century, at the persistent urging of longtime diplomat Viceroy Li Hongzhang (posthumously the Marquis Suyi), that China decided to build a navy. The effort was not an efficient one: corruption was endemic. Most famously, the navy budget was diverted in the 1880s to build a boat-shaped pavilion for Empress Dowager Cixi at the Summer Palace.[608] Embezzlement notwithstanding, the lack of strategic planning with regard to force composition, the lack of agreement on appropriate fleet tactics to employ, and the lack of adequate education and training all conspired to create a paper navy, scorched first in the Sino-French War of 1884-85, then utterly destroyed in the Sino-Japanese War a decade later.[609]

The period between the Qing Dynasty's collapse in 1911-12 and the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 saw no major naval developments: "No significant efforts were made to build up the navy; in any case they probably could not

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607. The British had insisted on appointing the fleet's commanding officer. Ibid., 303.

608. John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), 220-21.

609. Elleman, 308-12. This was exacerbated by the fact that Li, who kept the best vessels for the fleet under his command in the north, refused to send reinforcements to the southern fleet actually fighting the French. His northern fleet (what was left of the navy afterwards) was what the Japanese destroyed in 1894. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 220-22. A more charitable interpretation is that Li was simply preserving ships to prevent the navy's wholesale annihilation. Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy in the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 4.

have been justified amid China's political and economic disarray."[610] Summing up Chinese history to 1949, Bernard D. Cole writes, "China's record as a naval power during the long period of empire and republic shows an understandable focus on the continental rather than the maritime arena. Navies were built and employed almost entirely for defensive purposes. Maritime strength was regarded as only a secondary element of national power."[611]

But, while the PRC may be credited with today's ongoing naval development, the first half of PRC history shows continued emphasis on land forces. The PLA Navy was not formally established until 1950 and consisted mostly of Republic of China (ROC) Navy elements that had defected en masse.[612] Early commanders were transferred from the ground forces, partly to ensure political reliability.[613] The Korean War and resulting US recommitment to the ROC ensconced in Taiwan, the Sino-Soviet split and Beijing's concentration on the common land border, and even the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution's upheaval all contributed to a continental emphasis.[614]

Like many changes in post-Mao Zedong China, the PLA Navy's gradual development began under Deng Xiaoping's rule. Liu Huaqing was appointed PLA Navy commander from August 1982 to January 1988, during which he was charged with the naval component of a new military strategy and reorganization: the Chinese navy was to move from coastal defense to near-seas (or offshore) defense, a maritime equivalent of a

610. Cole, *The Great Wall*, 5.
611. Ibid., 6.
612. Ibid., 7.
613. Ibid., 7-8.
614. Ibid., 11-13.

traditionally terrestrial forward defensive posture.[615] Liu reorganized the bureaucracy, modernized naval facilities, and restructured the education system.[616] The navy began combining indigenous construction, foreign purchases, and reverse-engineering of those foreign purchases to develop weapon systems that were clearly more advanced and seaworthy than what it had long possessed; for the first time, the navy began to venture out from coastal waters, conducting its first foreign port call in 1985.[617]

Liu also unveiled long-term development targets for the navy: the ability to defend Chinese interests out to the first island chain by 2000 (see figure 6.2), to defend Chinese interests out to the second island chain by 2020, and to possess aircraft carriers and operate globally by 2050.[618] On the whole, however, PLA Navy modernization was still cautious and limited.[619] It was not until the 1990s that the Chinese military would begin to undergo major reforms and development. This meant that China did not meet Liu's first goal of being able to project power out to the first island chain by 2000. Whether China is meeting the second 2020 goal is the subject of the next section.

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615. M. Taylor Fravel, *Active Defense: China's Military Strategy since 1949*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 162-63. Some sources list Liu with a rank of (navy) admiral, but he was only ever a (ground forces) general. During his time as PLA Navy commander, the Chinese military had no rank structure. I thank Kenneth W. Allen for this clarification.

616. Cole, *The Great Wall*, 16.

617. Ibid., 16-17.

618. Bernard D. Cole, *Asian Maritime Strategies: Navigating Troubled Waters* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 97. In his memoirs, Liu defines the first island chain as being a border that encompasses from north to south the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea. He also notes that, in the 1980s, Chinese economic constraints precluded construction of a carrier, though he oddly proposes such a power-projection weapon platform for use in "near seas" Taiwan and South China Sea contingencies. Liu Huaqing [刘华清], *Liu Huaqing huiyilu* [刘华清回忆录] (Beijing: People's Liberation Army Press [解放军出版社], 2004), 437, 478-79.

619. Cole, *The Great Wall*, 16-17.

Figure 6.2. China's first and second island chains. US Department of Defense (DoD) Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2012*, May 2012, 40, https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2012_CMPR_Final.pdf.

1995-Present: A Sea Change

With a buoyant domestic economy and the US military's overwhelming operational success in the Persian Gulf War, China of the 1990s began planning military modernization, with President Jiang Zemin launching a new military strategy in 1993 that focused on reform.[620] However, the plan was brought forward and given new impetus by geopolitical events in the middle of the decade; most pertinently for the navy, the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995-96 revealed China's embarrassing inability to prevent the United States from steaming a carrier strike group to each end of the Taiwan Strait after Beijing fired missiles into the waters.[621] This realization on China's part was arguably the single most important impetus for the PLA Navy's development and modernization in the past quarter-century.

China's naval transformation since the middle 1990s has been impressive and persistent, primarily in the form of the navy's metamorphosis from a poorly armed, out-of-date fleet into a potent force that is now comparable in capabilities and technological sophistication to some of the world's other advanced navies. "The PLAN has invested steadily in a military modernization program that is transforming a country with a historically continentalist orientation into a maritime power."[622] Somewhat less

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620. C. Fred Bergsten et al., *China's Rise: Challenges and Opportunities* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics and Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2008), 193.

621. Cole, *Asian Maritime Strategies*, 99; and David Lai, "The Agony of Learning: The PLA's Transformation in Military Affairs," in *Learning by Doing: The PLA Trains at Home and Abroad*, ed. Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Travis Tanner (Carlisle, PA: US Army Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 343, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12017.12.

622. Dr. Patrick M. Cronin et al., *Beyond the* San Hai*: The Challenge of China's Blue-Water Navy* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2017), 5,

comprehensive in scope but still eye-opening is the PLA Navy's deployment beyond coastal waters, traced back to President Hu Jintao's 2004 call for the Chinese military to embrace a "new historic mission," which emphasized a greater role for China in the world and that implied a growing role for a power-projecting navy.[623]

The PLA Navy has since boosted the amount of training, exercises, and operations it conducts in seas and open ocean: foreign port calls have increased considerably in number and expanded geographically, anti-piracy patrols off Somalia have been conducted without interruption since 2008, and willingness to challenge other actors over territorial disputes has been displayed repeatedly. Chinese naval investment persistence is, thus, robust, but Chinese naval threat diffusion has been deployed inconsistently, with mixed results. This section examines in greater detail the roles of investment persistence and threat diffusion in Chinese hybridization over the past twenty-five years.

Abandoning the "Traditional Mentality": Investing in the Navy

For the past quarter-century, China has easily maintained its place among the world's continental powers, a status it has arguably held for millennia. However, for what is perhaps only the second time in the civilization's four-thousand-year history, the state

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https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNASReport-BlueWaterNavy-Finalb.pdf?mtime=20170512142318. See also Thomas G. Mahnken, testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission on "A World-Class' Military: Assessing China's Global Military Ambitions," Washington, DC, June 20, 2019, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Mahnken_USCC%20Testimony_FINAL.pdf.

623. *New historic missions*, while the common English-language term, is actually a mistranslation: there is, in fact, only one *mission* (使命) and the four things mistakenly called *missions* in their own right are actually the sole mission's subsidiary *tasks* (任务). Fravel, 228-29.

has also engaged in the pursuit of naval power, constructing a navy that is progressively modern and increasingly capable. Chinese naval investment persistence is something that is now simply taken for granted: "The modernization of PLA hardware over the past 20 years or so is well documented. This is particularly so for the PLA navy (PLAN), which is quickly becoming China's leading force for projecting power."[624] As the national economy has enjoyed roaring growth for the better part of four decades, the Chinese military began receiving more funds to modernize, and the naval service in particular has been the recipient of a growing proportion of state largesse.

The Chinese government itself has not been shy to advertise its reorientation from a geostrategy focused primarily on the land to a geostrategy more balanced between land and sea. The most explicit statement of such intent appears in Beijing's 2015 military strategy: "The seas and oceans bear on the enduring peace, lasting stability and sustainable development of China. *The traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned* [emphasis added], and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests."[625] This military strategy was issued during Xi Jinping's presidency, and he has reinforced the maritime turn his country has taken.[626] In Xi's first full year in power (2013), he reminded the Communist

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624. James Char and Richard A. Bitzinger, "A New Direction in the People's Liberation Army's Emergent Strategic Thinking, Roles and Missions," *The China Quarterly* 232 (December 2017): 849.

625. PRC Ministry of National Defense, *China's Military Strategy* (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2015), 16, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2014.htm.

626. US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2019 Report to Congress of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission* (Washington, DC: US Government Publishing Office, 2019), 292, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/2019%20Annual%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf.

Party of China (CPC) Central Committee's Political Bureau that turning China into a maritime great power would help, among other things, achieve the "rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."[627] "China is both a land and a maritime power. . . . To develop, use, and protect the sea, to build up a maritime power is an important strategy of national development."[628] Xi was simply reinforcing a growing naval emphasis that can be traced as far back as 2001.[629]

Investment persistence has been, indeed, persistent.[630] The DoD estimated China's defense budget in 2002 to be approximately US$65 billion, based on the officially reported figure of US$20 billion.[631] In 2019, the DoD estimated China's 2019 defense budget to be over US$200 billion, based on the officially reported figure of US$170.4 billion.[632] In a separate 2019 report, the US Defense Intelligence Agency

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627. Xinhua News Agency [新华社], "Xi Jinping: Yao jinyibu guanxin haiyang, renshi haiyang, jinlüe haiyang" ["习近平: 要进一步关心海洋、认识海洋、经略海洋"], PRC Central People's Government [中华人民共和国中央人民政府], July 31, 2013, http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2013-07/31/content_2459009.htm.

628. PRC State Council Information Office (SCIO), *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces*, April 2013, 27, http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/China-Defense-White-Paper_2013_English-Chinese_Annotated.pdf. The version cited is the personal translation of longtime China military analyst Dennis J. Blasko.

629. Andrew S. Erickson, "Doctrinal Sea Change, Making Real Waves: Examining the Maritime Dimension of Strategy," in *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, ed. Joe McReynolds (Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2016), 107.

630. Andrew S. Erickson, "Can China Become a Maritime Power?" in Yoshihara and Holmes, eds., 75; see also DoD, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), *China Military Power: Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win*, January 2019, 20, https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf.

631. DoD, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), *Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China*, 2002, 2, http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DoD_China-Report_2002.pdf. Subsequent citations will appear as "DoD, OSD, 2002, [Page number]"; this format will be used after the first citation of the other years' reports as well.

632. DoD, OSD, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2019*, May 2019, 93, 95,

(DIA) opined, "China's approach to funding security requirements has been deliberate and substantial. China's military spending increased by an average of 10 percent (inflation adjusted) per year from 2000 to 2016 and has gradually slowed to 5- to 7-percent growth during the past 2 years."[633] The latest figures from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) show that, whatever China's actual defense expenditure is, it is now clearly the world's second largest, even if it trails the US defense budget by a long way.[634] The DoD concluded in its 2019 assessment, "China has the political will and fiscal strength to sustain a steady increase in defense spending during the next decade."[635]

The Chinese military budget is notoriously opaque and uninformative: precise figures are not stated in unclassified documents, so one cannot compare service budgets, for example; furthermore, what is included and what is not has often confounded foreign observers.[636] It is not even certain that the aircraft carrier program is included in the official defense budget![637] But whatever the figures actually are, authors seem to agree that the navy has been receiving a greater proportion of resources than it had in the past,

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https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019_CHINA_MILITARY_POWER_REPORT.pdf.

633. DoD, DIA, 20.

634. The IISS estimates 2020 defense expenditures to be $684.6 billion for the United States and US$181.1 billion for China; third-place Saudi Arabia is estimated to spend US$78.4 billion. IISS, *The Military Balance, 2020* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2020), 21. Subsequent references will be cited as "IISS, 2020, [Page number]."

635. DoD, OSD, 2019, 93.

636. Ibid., 95.

637. Meia Nouwens and Dr. Lucie Béraud-Sudreau, *Assessing Chinese Defence Spending: Proposals for New Methodologies,* IISS research paper, March 2020, 11, https://www.iiss.org/-/media/files/research-papers/assessing-chinese-defence-spending---iiss-research-paper.pdf.

as part of an overall PLA effort to balance away from the ground forces.[638] Chinese public pronouncements seem to suggest as much. The *PLA Daily* openly admitted in 2006 that the ground forces were bearing the brunt of waves of reductions in manpower, so that, by the end of 2005, the ground forces' proportion of all uniformed personnel was the lowest in the PLA's history. The beneficiaries of redirected investment would be the navy, as well as the air force and missile force.[639] Such a rebalancing between the services within the PLA has continued: it was announced in 2017 that the PLA would continue to downsize the ground forces to under one million personnel as part of a drive to "evenly proportion" the ground forces with the other services.[640]

A continuous stream of new vessels (and classes of vessels) is perhaps the most obvious evidence of persistent investment in the navy. Writing in 2014, Yves-Heng Lim summarized the previous two decades of naval investment: "China has launched no fewer than five new classes of destroyers, four new classes of frigates, three new classes of

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638. See Dennis J. Blasko, "The Biggest Loser in Chinese Military Reforms: The PLA Army," in *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*, ed. Phillip C. Saunders et al. (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 345-47, https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/Books/Chairman-Xi/Chairman-Xi.pdf; John Chen, "Choosing the 'Least Bad' Option: Organizational Interests and Change in the PLA Ground Forces," in Saunders et al., *Chairman Xi*, 87-88; Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015), 33; Cole, *Asian Maritime Strategies*, 104-5; Yves-Heng Lim, *China's Naval Power: An Offensive Realist Approach*, Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 1-2; Mahnken, 2; Ian Burns McCaslin and Andrew S. Erickson, "The Impact of Xi-era Reforms on the Chinese Navy," in Saunders et al., *Chairman Xi*, 128; Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China's Search for Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 88-89; and Robert S. Ross, "The Rise of the Chinese Navy: From Regional Naval Power to Global Naval Power?" in *China's Global Engagement: Cooperation, Competition, and Influence in the 21st Century*, ed. Jacques deLisle and Avery Goldstein (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2017), 215.

639. Niu Junfeng, "Chinese Army Speeds up Tempo in Transformation," *PLA Daily*, January 27, 2006, East View World News Connection.

640. "Reform to Downsize PLA Army, Boost Navy Numbers," *People's Daily*, July 12, 2017, Dow Jones Factiva.

diesel submarines, a new class of nuclear attack submarines—with another class expected to be launched in 2015, a new class of ballistic missile submarines, as well as dozens of amphibious ships and coastal defence craft."[641] Picking up temporally where Lim's book leaves off, Nick Childs and Tom Waldwyn examine Chinese shipbuilding in 2014-18 and conclude that China "launched more submarines, warships, principal amphibious vessels and auxiliaries than the total number of ships currently serving in the navies of Germany, India, Spain, Taiwan and the United Kingdom."[642] Switching to an alternative measure—tonnage instead of number of vessels—Childs and Waldwyn still find an astounding increase: from 2014 to 2018, China "launched naval vessels with a total tonnage greater than the tonnages of the entire French, German, Indian, Italian, South Korean, Spanish or Taiwanese navies."[643]

The result is a PLA Navy that is scarcely recognizable from what it was in 1995. Even in 2010, the transformation was obvious, when the DoD pointed out that the Chinese principal-combatant fleet had become the largest in Asia.[644] As Cole observed in the same year: "The Chinese Navy in 2000 was a modernizing force, but one still severely limited in several warfare areas. . . . But that situation has now changed. In fact, the PLAN in 2010 is developing into a maritime force of twenty-first-century credibility

641. Lim, 1-2.

642. Nick Childs and Tom Waldwyn, "China's Naval Shipbuilding: Delivering on Its Ambition in a Big Way," Military Balance *Blog*, IISS, May 1, 2018, https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2018/05/china-naval-shipbuilding.

643. Ibid.

644. DoD, OSD, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2010*, 2010, 2, http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DoD_China-Report_2010.pdf.

in all warfare areas."[645] In concluding his book, Cole wrote, "Despite these doubts, the current modernization path will result by 2020 in a Chinese Navy that is capable across the spectrum of warfare areas from coastal defense to nuclear deterrence."[646] The commissioning of two aircraft carriers—one a refitted Soviet-era carrier and the other indigenously built—as well as the construction of more, is the most obvious symbol of the PLA Navy's transformation over the past few decades.[647]

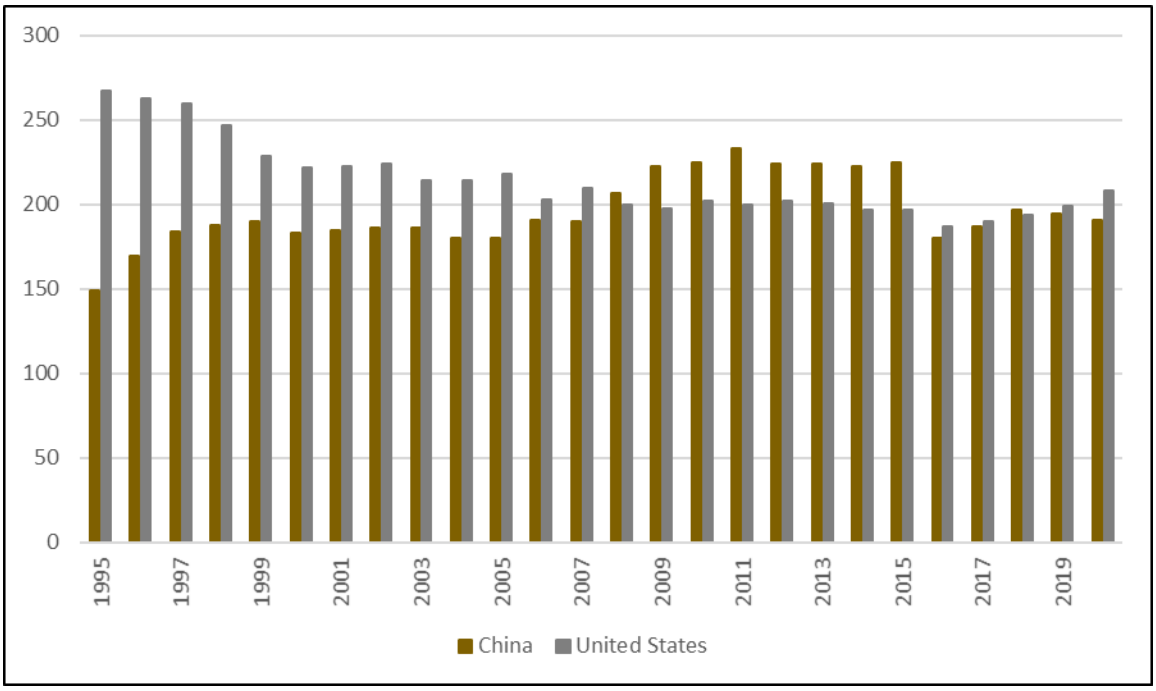

Figure 6.3. Chinese and US principal combatant numbers (excluding ballistic missile submarines), 1995-2020. Data are taken from the relevant pages of the IISS' annual *Military Balance* publications: for the sake of space, their citations appear in the bibliography.

645. Cole, *The Great Wall*, 113.
646. Ibid., 202.
647. Minnie Chan, "First Made-in-China Aircraft Carrier, the *Shandong*, Officially Enters Service," *South China Morning Post*, December 17, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3042469/chinas-second-aircraft-shandong-carrier-officially-enters.

China's more recent naval development indicates ambitions far greater than mere conquest of Taiwan. China's 2008 defense white paper stated that the PLA Navy was gradually developing "capabilities of conducting cooperation in distant waters and countering non-traditional security threats, so as to push forward the overall transformation of the service."[648] The 2013 military strategy singled out the navy's far-seas training efforts, while the 2019 defense white paper also explicitly noted the blue-water component of the navy's development: "To address deficiencies in overseas operations and support, it [the navy] builds far seas forces, develops overseas logistical facilities, and enhances capabilities in accomplishing diversified military tasks."[649]

This development has not gone unnoticed, and one sees the beginning of the security dilemma bugbear that habitually bedevils relations when naval powers see continental powers building navies they supposedly should not need. The US response over the past couple decades has been to voice increasing concern over Chinese naval developments and puzzlement over why Beijing is doing this in the first place. As early as 2005, Avery Goldstein pointed out that the development of power projection capabilities, among other things, gave the impression that China was not simply content with defending national sovereignty; rather, "Beijing's investment in forces of greater range and lethality suggested to some an interest in the sorts of capabilities that would

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648. PRC SCIO, *China's National Defense in 2008*, 2009, 31-32, http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/China-Defense-White-Paper_2008_English-Chinese.pdf. The version cited is Blasko's personal translation.

649. PRC SCIO, *China's National Defense in the New Era* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2019), 23 (the version cited is the personal translation of defense analyst and former *China Brief* editor Peter Wood); and PRC SCIO, *The Diversified Employment*, 20.

better enable it to play the role of a great power whose military could support a more activist posture and influence events well beyond its borders."[650]

The DoD's assessment of China in the same year is an example of the concern Goldstein described: "China does not now face a direct threat from another nation. Yet, it continues to invest heavily in its military, particularly in programs designed to improve power projection. The pace and scope of China's military build-up are, already, such as to put regional military balances at risk."[651] By 2010, the DoD was sufficiently alarmed to conclude, "By the latter half of the current decade, China will likely be able to project and sustain a modest-sized force, perhaps several battalions of ground forces or a naval flotilla of up to a dozen ships, in low-intensity operations far from China. This evolution will lay the foundation for a force able to accomplish a broader set of regional and global objectives."[652]

In 2013, Larry M. Wortzel warned, "In a relatively short time, perhaps a decade, the PLA Navy has made a transition from operating only around China's coast, to one that can conduct blue-water operations."[653] By the mid-2010s, retired US Navy Rear

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650. Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security*, Studies in Asian Security (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 72. See also Avery Goldstein, "Parsing China's Rise: International Circumstances and National Attributes," in *China's Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics*, ed. Robert S. Ross and Zhu Feng (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

651. DoD, OSD, *Annual Report to Congress: The Military Power of the People's Republic of China, 2005*, 2005, 13, http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DoD_China-Report_2005.pdf. The fact that the US Congress passed a law in 1999 ordering the DoD to begin producing a report on current and future Chinese military strategy was itself a sign of US concern.

652. DoD, OSD, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2011*, May 2011, 27, http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DoD_China-Report_2011.pdf.

653. Larry M. Wortzel, *The Dragon Extends Its Reach: Chinese Military Power Goes Global* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2013), 166.

Adm. Michael McDevitt could opine, "China's far seas navy is assembling power projection components—carrier air, land attack cruise missiles, and amphibious forces—that are very credible. In fact, it is not a stretch to argue that by 2020, China will have the second most capable far seas navy in the world. Certainly, in terms of numbers of relevant ship classes, it will be in that position."[654]

The alarm in US circles has continued up to the present. In its 2018 report, the US Office of Naval Intelligence noted with some worry that "every major PLA(N) surface combatant currently under construction is capable of embarking a helicopter, an addition that supports over-the-horizon (OTH) targeting, antisubmarine warfare (ASW), and search and rescue."[655] The *Yuzhao*-class landing platform, dock, is seen as a true harbinger of Chinese naval expeditionary capability: four have been commissioned, with more expected.[656] In a February 2020 briefing justifying the Trump Administration's $207.1 billion budget request for the Department of the Navy, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Budget Rear Adm. Randy B. Crites noted China's expanding reach as a critical challenge.[657]

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654. Michael McDevitt, "Medium Scenario: World's Second 'Far Seas' Navy by 2020," in *Chinese Naval Shipbuilding: An Ambitious and Uncertain Course*, ed. Andrew S. Erickson, Studies in Chinese Maritime Development (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 290. See also DoD, Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), *The PLA Navy: New Capabilities and Missions for the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: ONI, 2015), 28; and DoD, OSD, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2015*, April 2015, 9, http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DoD_China-Report_2015.pdf.

655. DoD, ONI, 14; see also US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 293.

656. Christopher D. Yung, "Building a World Class Expeditionary Force," testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission on "A 'World-Class' Military: Assessing China's Global Military Ambitions," Washington, DC, June 20, 2019, 7, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Yung_USCC%20Testimony_FINAL.pdf.

657. Rear Adm. Randy B. Crites, DoD press briefing on the President's Fiscal Year 2021 defense budget for the Navy, February 10, 2020,

Other analysts emphasize the fact that, on the whole, the PLA Navy has not made the wholesale transition to a blue-water fleet—at least, not yet. Andrew S. Erickson put it bluntly in 2015: "China is simply not moving to develop a blue-water power-projection navy at the same rate that it is deploying shorter-range platforms and weapons systems such as missiles."[658] It appears, then, that China is taking steps to improve expeditionary capabilities; what is unclear (or disputed) is to what extent China is prioritizing far-seas operations vis-à-vis near-seas contingencies and whether the relative balance between a near-seas focus and a far-seas focus will continue to hold in future.

Whatever the intentions of China's developing navy, there is no question that what is being built—for the near seas, the far seas, or both—is of appreciably higher quality than what existed at the start of the millennium. The Chinese navy has seen tremendous improvement in its technical capabilities and construction.[659] While China still imports some necessary weapon systems and their component parts, it has also invested in domestic research and development (R&D).[660] By combining this indigenous R&D with foreign technology acquisition, China has been able to "produce technologies that, while perhaps not cutting-edge, were considerably more advanced than what they

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https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2081571/department-of-defense-press-briefing-on-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2021-defense/.

658. Andrew S. Erickson, "China's Military Modernization: Many Improvements, Three Challenges, and One Opportunity," in *China's Challenges*, ed. Jacques deLisle and Avery Goldstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 193. See also Cortez A. Cooper, *The PLA Navy's "New Historic Missions": Expanding Capabilities for a Re-emergent Maritime Power*, RAND Corp. Testimony Series (Santa Monica: RAND Corp., 2009), 9, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2009/RAND_CT332.pdf; and Andrew Scobell, Michael McMahon, and Cortez A. Cooper III, "China's Aircraft Carrier Program: Drivers, Developments, Implications," *Naval War College Review* 68, no. 4 (Autumn 2015): 73-74.

659. DoD, ONI, 15.

660. Mark Metcalf, "PLAN Warship Construction and Standardization," in Erickson, 173-74.

could have produced just a few years earlier. . . . And while they're not better than Russian or US alternatives, they are often good enough."[661]

Further and indirect evidence of the PLA Navy's maturation can be seen from how it compares itself to other navies. The PLA Navy has always consulted other militaries' technical standards, but the manner in which the Chinese have engaged with foreign technical standards has evolved. Before 2000, China often consulted US military standards for their technical content; from approximately 2000 to 2010, China used US standards as points of comparison with its own. From 2010, however, China has begun comparing US and other countries' standards as foundations on which to build new technical approaches.[662]

Chinese defense-related science-and-technology innovation has been propelled by consistent support from the highest levels of the central leadership, increased civil-military integration and capital-market investment to leverage outside expertise, and the targeting of particular technological capabilities for indigenous production.[663] Beijing has been progressing rapidly in such fields as anti-air warfare, ASW, and anti-surface warfare. Naval propulsion and other design techniques have improved, and the number of ship classes now in serial production has grown.[664]

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661. Quoted in McDevitt, "Medium Scenario," 280. See also DoD, OSD, 2019, 98.

662. Metcalf, 173.

663. Tai Ming Cheung, Eric Anderson, and Fan Yang, "The 'Cinderella' Transformation: The Chinese Defense Industry's Move from Laggard to Leader and the Implications for US-China Military Technological Competition," in *The Gathering Pacific Storm: Emerging US-China Strategic Competition in Defense Technological and Industrial Development*, ed. Tai Ming Cheung and Thomas Mahnken, Rapid Communications in Conflict and Security Series (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2018), 64-74.

664. Bryan Clark and Jordan Wilson, "Strategic Competition between the United States and China in the Maritime Realm," in Cheung and Mahnken, 161.

There are still challenges, some technical, some bureaucratic. Kevin Pollpeter and Mark Stokes highlight major deficiencies: some shipyards remain outdated and face a shortage of qualified workers; investment in basic research is low, with domestically produced ship components still inferior to foreign-produced parts; advanced design software is still underutilized, and there is a general lack of product standardization; and the bureaucracy is burdened by micromanagement and the inadequate integration of design, production, and management processes.[665] Michael S. Chase et al. note the endemic problem of corruption, as well as a contract award process and system beset by monopolies, lack of transparent pricing, and vague agreements with no specificity on contractual obligations or quality of work.[666]

When deployed, the PLA Navy has discovered and sought to rectify, with varying success, some of its deficiencies. One crucial lesson learned from the anti-piracy patrols has been the deficit of replenishment ships.[667] This is being addressed, with the PLA Navy building high-capability logistical replenishment vessels for blue-water operations: ten were operational as of 2019, with more in the pipeline.[668] The vessels represent more than overcoming an at-sea resupply deficiency; their dearth was also an example of the PLA's traditional "combat-first" mindset that had relegated support services (e.g.,

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665. Kevin Pollpeter and Mark Stokes, "China's Military Shipbuilding Research, Development, and Acquisition System," in Erickson, 184.

666. Michael S. Chase et al., *China's Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2015), 97-100.

667. Ibid., 69-73; and Michael McDevitt, *Becoming a Great "Maritime Power": A Chinese Dream* (Arlington, VA: CNA, 2016), 43, https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/IRM-2016-U-013646.pdf.

668. DoD, DIA, 71; and DoD, OSD, 2019, 59.

logistics, maintenance and repair, transportation) to secondary status.[669] Considering the anti-piracy patrols from the vantage point of 2019, Christopher D. Yung observed a well-executed Chinese expeditionary process when it came to managing logistical, maintenance, and rotational difficulties.[670]

This sub-section has demonstrated the robust investment persistence in the PLA Navy from 1995 onwards. The trend is both clear and pronounced, and shows no sign of abating as we conclude this century's second decade. China has embarked on a comprehensive modernization program that has turned its navy from a backwater coastal-defense force to a sizeable fleet with increasingly modern, advanced weapon systems that have helped propel it to the top flight of the world's naval powers, with a growing ability to project that naval force farther from home waters. At the expense of the PLA's ground forces, the navy has benefited from increased financial support and the political will undergirding those fiscal appropriations.

Moving Up, Moving Out? The Question of Threat Diffusion

If investment persistence has manifested itself in consistently obvious and tangible ways since 1995, threat diffusion's presence in Chinese naval hybridization has been relatively minor and inconsistent. There is no shortage of scholarship that addresses the geographic expansion of the Chinese navy, yet even work published as recently as the late 2010s still usually referred to PLA Navy deployments in the hypothetical or the future tense. This is due in part to the real dearth of major Chinese naval operations over

669. Chase et al., 43.
670. Yung, 9. See also DoD, OSD, 2015, 10.

the preceding decades; it may also be due to the fact that Beijing's fleet is a force in the middle of its transformation, so scholars may simply be focusing on a probable future navy whose activities are anticipated to be far more interesting and whose geopolitical impact could be far more significant. This sub-section on threat diffusion up to 2020 is, in part, theoretical: it will first address the conceptual impetus and justification for a greater PLA Navy role outside home waters. Afterwards, I turn my attention to the relatively few examples we have in the 1995-2020 period of major Chinese naval deployments. I argue that Beijing's actions to date do not suggest any clarity on whether threat diffusion is being or will be pursued, due to the combination of a sparse operational record and actions that send mixed signals to the dominant naval power.

The initial waves of post-1995 Chinese naval investment came as a response to the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis, a geographically limited scenario in terms of both the specificity of the dispute and the disputed places' short distance from the PRC itself. China's presence at and ability to deploy to sea was still relatively impotent and intermittent. In the years 1995-2003, the PLA Navy sailed abroad only seventeen times, and just five of those deployments took it out of the Asia-Pacific region.[671] US assessments of the time confirm Beijing's relative inactivity in naval affairs and show Washington's rather relaxed attitude to Chinese naval power projection. The DoD's first China military power report in 2002 noted that China ironically "retains the world's largest military, yet it lacks the technology and logistical support to project and sustain

671. Each year saw two deployments, save 1998 (one), 1999 (none), and 2001 (four). Michael McDevitt, "PLA Naval Exercises with International Partners," in Kamphausen, Lai, and Tanner, 89-90, 93-94.

conventional forces much beyond its borders."[672] The US-China Security Review Commission's first annual report on China, also published in 2002, contained no discussion of the PLA in its section on China's global influence.[673]

In 2004, the focus of Chinese naval investment began to change. Three months after assuming the chairmanship of the CPC Central Military Commission and, therefore, gaining all three top leadership posts in the country, Hu gave a speech (never published) in which he outlined the PLA's "new historic mission" for the "new era of the new century," namely, the geographic expansion of the PLA to domains other than land (such as the sea and space) and the functional expansion of PLA duties to include things beyond maintaining the CPC's power and national sovereignty, such as contributing to world peace.[674] This new mission necessitated not only improvement in the Chinese military's capabilities, but also implied increased deployments of that military.[675]

Hu's 2004 exhortation of the New Historic Mission has been followed up by consistent emphasis on China's geographically expanding interests, as well as the military necessity of keeping pace with those interests. The 2013 edition of the PLA's authoritative *Science of Military Strategy*, the first published after Xi took power, seemed to expand on the military component of the New Historic Mission, arguing for the idea of "forward edge defense": moving any potential conflict's culminating point as far away

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672. DoD, OSD, 2002, 15.

673. US-China Security Review Commission, *Report to Congress of the US-China Security Review Commission: The National Security Implications of the Economic Relationship between the United States and China* (Washington, DC: US-China Security Review Commission, 2002), 24-25, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/annual_reports/2002%20Annual%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf.

674. Fravel, 228-29.

675. Christensen, 34.

from the Chinese homeland as possible. This all but requires pushing the Chinese military's geographic reach farther out.[676] In addition, the *Science of Military Strategy* puts greater emphasis on the PLA Navy as a fleet for "international service," such as anti-piracy patrols and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR).[677]

Wortzel points out the New Historic Mission's impact on the PLA Navy's responsibilities going forward:

> Hu's speech made clear to the Navy that its responsibilities were broader than just protecting China's coast and the near seas. By tasking the PLA to safeguard 'China's expanding national interests,' Hu required the PLA to develop the capacity to operate and have a presence away from continental China and its littoral areas. The Navy has accepted this mission, and sees itself as a major component today of China's comprehensive national power and a component part of China's armed strength. The Historic Missions speech is particularly noteworthy because it established a formal framework and ideological justification inside the Communist Party for using the military in a regional and global context."[678]

If the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis is what spurred investment persistence, then the New Historic Mission speech has been the impetus for naval operations abroad—whether incorporating threat diffusion or not.

It appears that the Chinese navy has taken Hu's exhortation to heart. In an analysis of PLA Navy deployments from 2004 onwards, Christopher H. Sharman argues that their evolution reveals a gradual integration of far-seas lessons learned, augmenting

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676. Erickson, "Doctrinal Sea Change," 110-12.

677. Ibid., 132.

678. Wortzel, *The Dragon*, 50. See also Christopher H. Sharman, *China Moves Out: Stepping Stones toward a New Maritime Strategy*, China Strategic Perspectives 9 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2015), 3.

current naval strategy.[679] Other China-watchers have drawn the same conclusion: "Chinese naval developments in the years since the New Historic Missions speech have laid the foundation for an increasing range of 'expeditionary' roles that have taken the PLAN farther abroad more frequently and on lengthier deployments."[680] Roy Kamphausen and Travis Tanner note in the introduction to their 2012 edited volume on PLA Navy training that their first key finding was that "recent PLAN exercises and operations point to an increasing interest in developing expeditionary naval capabilities and a presence in distant seas, suggesting that a move beyond the current 'near seas' focus is both possible and an extension of existing efforts."[681]

The New Historic Mission has emphasized both combat and non-combat capabilities, the former a requirement of the Mission's expansion beyond land warfare and the latter a requirement of the Mission's expansion to include greater global engagement.[682] Relative to both other navies and to China's own fleet size, there have been relatively few PLA Navy deployments to clearly signal how Beijing intends to use its naval force. Furthermore, whatever non-combat operations Beijing is having its navy do that may appear congruent with the dominant naval power's interests (e.g., anti-piracy patrols) is more than balanced by the PLA Navy's growing combat capabilities and

679. Sharman, 3.

680. Kristen Gunness and Samuel K. Berkowitz, "PLA Navy Planning for Out of Area Deployments," in *The People's Liberation Army and Contingency Planning in China*, ed. Andrew C. Scobell, Arthur S. Ding, Phillip C. Saunders, and Scott W. Harold (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2015), 321.

681. Roy Kamphausen and Travis Tanner, "Introduction: PLA Lessons Learned from Increasingly Realistic Exercises," in Kamphausen, Lai, and Tanner, 3.

682. Fravel, 229-30.

China's stated intentions, which suggest a longer-term effort to influence geopolitics in areas of extant US naval power and interests.

The morally and politically flexible aims to which a military weapon can be applied are rendered all the more ambiguous by the relative poverty of evidence by which the actor wielding the weapon can be judged. The PRC's naval record, such as it is, consists largely of the Gulf of Aden anti-piracy patrols, exercises, incidents in the China Seas that involve disputes over territorial sovereignty and maritime rights claims, and port calls. Exercises and port calls have served the obvious function of enhancing diplomatic relations and goodwill with the countries visited, as well as giving officers and crews rest and recreation. Some individual officers have even become minor celebrities, thanks to features back home in the Chinese press.[683]

While some exercises involve US allies and partners in displays of multilateral cooperation, others appear quite incendiary: in 2019, China exercised with Russia in April and with Iran and Russia in December.[684] In 2018, China was disinvited from the biannual US-led Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercises as punishment for its actions in the South China Sea. Beijing dispatched an intelligence-gathering vessel to the vicinity during RIMPAC anyway; China had done the same thing in 2012 and in 2014 (it

683. McDevitt, "PLA Naval Exercises," 111.

684. Franz-Stefan Gady, "China, Russia Kick off Bilateral Naval Exercise 'Joint Sea,'" *The Diplomat*, April 29, 2019, https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/china-russia-kick-off-bilateral-naval-exercise-joint-sea/; and "Russia, China, Iran Start Joint Naval Drills in Indian Ocean," Reuters, December 27, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-military-russia-china/russia-china-iran-start-joint-naval-drills-in-indian-ocean-idUSKBN1YV0IB.

participated in the latter).[685] This tit-for-tat spat that has played out over RIMPAC participation symbolizes in miniature the "one step forward, two steps back" that sometimes seems to symbolize US-PRC military-to-military relations, and contributes to the perception that China does not behave like a gentleman, as it were.[686]

Disputes in and over the East and South China Seas further affirm China's failure to diffuse its growing naval threat, even though the driver in these seas is usually the China Coast Guard (CCG). There is certainly a limit as to how much threat diffusion China could do with regard to the China Seas: these are vital waters to China that border the cultural, demographic, and economic heartland of Chinese civilization. They are obviously of great import, and to expect China to exert no naval power whatsoever in these waters would be an extraordinarily silly proposition. However, it is not simply Chinese presence in regional waters that raises threat perceptions; it is Chinese behavior that has raised eyebrows in foreign capitals.

While much of the behavior in the South China Sea is actually perpetrated by the CCG and civilian paramilitary vessels, the PLA Navy stands as a silent reserve, a backup force in what has been called Beijing's South China Sea "cabbage strategy" of first deploying civilian and constabulary forces to overwhelm foreign opposition to China's

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685. William Cole, "Chinese Spy Ship Eyes RIMPAC," *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, July 12, 2018, https://www.staradvertiser.com/2018/07/12/breaking-news/china-sends-spy-ship-to-rimpac/. US officials occasionally take pains to argue that the United States does not object to such behavior in US exclusive economic zones (EEZs), but that this is the very sort of thing to which China objects when foreign naval vessels operate in its EEZs.

686. The bilateral military-to-military relationship overall has been sustained for the past decade: no longer does China summarily halt for an extended period of time functional and working-level exchanges to protest particular US actions. For a yearly listing of such exchanges, see the DoD's annual China military power reports, some of which are cited in the bibliography. I thank Avery Goldstein for pointing out this trend.

claimed land formations and waters.[687] In the East China Sea, China takes a direct approach to challenging Japanese sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands by repeatedly sending vessels into the disputed waters, but here again, the primary driver is the Coast Guard.[688] The PLA Navy, then, has so far actually played a reserve role in the China Seas disputes that have garnered so much attention, and has done so partly due to a desire not to overly escalate tensions and partly to send a signal that law enforcement, not the military, is the appropriate arm of the state for enforcement of sovereignty over places viewed as "indisputably" China's.[689]

It is against this broader backdrop of a sometimes prickly navy being used as an unspoken threat that one can see why something like anti-piracy patrols—a collective good wholly within the dominant naval power's interests—are still not quite enough to overcome US suspicion of Chinese naval development. Beijing dispatched its first task force to the Gulf of Aden in December 2008—the PLA Navy's first-ever major

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687. Harry Kazianis, "China's Expanding Cabbage Strategy," *The Diplomat*, October 29, 2013, https://thediplomat.com/2013/10/chinas-expanding-cabbage-strategy/; and Sarah Raine and Christian Le Mière, *Regional Disorder: The South China Sea Disputes*, Adelphi Series 436-37 (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013), 68.

688. See Bloomberg and Kyodo, "Chinese Incursions Near Japan-held Islands Top 1,000 to Hit Record, Up 80% on Last Year," *The Japan Times*, December 6, 2019, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/12/06/national/politics-diplomacy/china-incursions-japan-held-islands-hit-record/. The distinction between navies and coast guards is more than semantic. I focus strictly on *naval power*; I do not consider coast guards and constabulary forces or, for that matter, civilian fishing and commercial shipping fleets, culture and identity, or any of the other components that, alongside naval power, form the broader concept of *maritime power* or *sea power*/*seapower*. Naval power, by which is meant navies, has played a unique historical role and, by virtue of its kinetic abilities and legal status, is fundamentally different from the factors listed above. Coast guards and maritime constabulary forces are no doubt of increasing importance to Asia-Pacific geopolitics, but their authority, justifications, missions, and resulting interactive dynamics are fundamentally distinct and worthy of treatment in a work other than this dissertation. In April 2019, the United States did inform China that it would henceforth react to provocations from China's non-PLA Navy maritime state forces *as if they came from* the PLA Navy. Should such a deliberate conflation someday become politically significant, it will no doubt be addressed by another author and/or another work. See US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 103.

689. Raine and Le Mière, 68-69.

deployment outside of regional waters; there have since been an additional thirty-four such task forces deployed as of June 2020, with no sign of abating.[690] China's participation was widely welcomed, including by the United States, as a constructive contribution to a problem that was menacing the world collectively.[691] This was China being a "responsible stakeholder," a China that could provide public goods to the international community.[692]

Of course, the anti-piracy patrols have also provided the PLA Navy an opportunity to gain critical experience with long-distance operations, developing "the operational skills necessary to deploy and sustain surface combatants, amphibious ships, and support ships on distant stations for long periods of time." Beijing was "learning the sorts of lessons that are absolutely essential to the effective operation of an expeditionary navy."[693] As of 2016, Erickson and Austin M. Strange estimated that fifteen thousand PLA Navy personnel had gained first-hand experience with overseas deployments.[694]

China has used the task groups beyond the Gulf of Aden to conduct port calls in the long tradition of naval diplomacy. In addition to countries in East Africa and the

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690. Snehesh Alex Philip, "Navy is Tracking China & Pakistan's Activities amid Pandemic, Covid Has No Impact on Ops," *The Print*, May 4, 2020, https://theprint.in/defence/navy-is-tracking-china-pakistans-activities-amid-pandemic-covid-has-no-impact-on-ops/413822/.

691. See Mark McDonald, "China Sends Naval Task Force on Anti-Piracy Mission," *The New York Times*, December 26, 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/26/world/asia/26iht-beijing.1.18936740.html.

692. Andrew S. Erickson and Austin M. Strange, *Six Years at Sea . . . and Counting: Gulf of Aden Anti-Piracy and China's Maritime Commons Presence* (Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2015), 37-38.

693. McDevitt, "PLA Naval Exercises," 81. This is not to say that China decided to participate in these patrols to gain experience with overseas deployments; the reason for participating seems to have been solely driven—at least initially—by the desire to protect Chinese commercial shipping. Erickson and Strange, 45.

694. Erickson and Strange, 13, 115-17.

Middle East, as well as countries bordering the Indian Ocean, anti-piracy task forces have sailed to Europe.[695] In 2011, one vessel from the seventh task force, the *Xuzhou*, was ordered to Libya to monitor the evacuation of Chinese civilians from the imploding country.[696] While maritime evacuation was the main way out of Libya, the PLA Navy's actual role was limited to the *Xuzhou*'s service as a deterrent and comforter.[697] In 2017, China established a naval base in Djibouti, relieving some of the logistical headaches that have plagued a PLA Navy devoid of overseas naval bases.[698]

The Chinese turn to the sea has caused no small amount of alarm in Washington.[699] "Whereas the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was long focused on the Asian continent, in recent decades it has increasingly adopted a maritime orientation. It is thus the build-up of the PLA Navy (PLAN) and PLA Air Force (PLAAF) . . . , *and not Chinese military spending in the abstract* [emphasis mine], which has stimulated a US

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695. Ibid., 121, 123-34.

696. Ibid., 72; and Jonas Parello-Plesner and Mathieu Duchâtel, *China's Strong Arm: Protecting Citizens and Assets Abroad*, Adelphi Series 451 (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015), 113-14.

697. The *Xuzhou*'s captain greeted Chinese evacuees on a civilian vessel passing alongside: "The strong and prosperous motherland is together with you when you are in hardship." Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel, 113-14.

698. Antoine Bondaz, "Une modernisation militaire au service du Parti et du pays," in *La Chine dans le monde*, ed. Alice Ekman, Dans le monde (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018), 209. One should perhaps not read too much into Djibouti, as the establishment of a Chinese base there is due to unique mission-support reasons. Isaac B. Kardon, "Bases, Places, and a 'Security Guarantee' for the Belt and Road Initiative," testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission on "A 'World-Class' Military: Assessing China's Global Military Ambitions," Washington, DC, June 20, 2019, 4-5, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Kardon_USCC%20Testimony_FINAL.pdf.

699. In the United States, it would be tempting to ascribe this change to the Trump Administration specifically, but there has been a growing level of bipartisan support for a tough-on-China approach. See Zoe Leung and Michael Depp, "An American Consensus: Time to Confront China," *The Diplomat*, January 17, 2019, https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/an-american-consensus-time-to-confront-china/; and Fareed Zakaria, "The New China Scare: Why America Shouldn't Panic about Its Latest Challenger," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-12-06/new-china-scare.

and allied response."[700] DoD assessments of China's contribution to anti-piracy missions have gone from mildly positive to neutral: whereas the 2010 China military power report emphasized that the United States viewed China's participation as a positive foundation on which to further build US-PRC relations, more recent iterations simply couch the deployments within the context of China's expanding geographic reach.[701] The DIA's assessment is perhaps more indicative of the lens through which the United States now views anti-piracy and other Chinese "military missions other than war": "The growth of China's diversified 'nonwar' missions, including HADR, SLOC [sea line of communication] protection, and PKOs [peacekeeping operations], has been a major driver of—and justification for—China's expanded naval strategy and operations in the far seas."[702]

Over the past twenty-five years, the PLA Navy has expanded its geographic reach exponentially, though from a baseline of near zero. By November 2019, US Indo-Pacific Command Commander Adm. Philip S. Davidson could report that China had conducted more global naval deployments in the previous thirty months (i.e., from May 2017) than in the thirty *years* before that.[703] Many of the deployments have involved anti-piracy patrols alongside a multi-national mission in the Gulf of Aden; Chinese contributions

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700. Mahnken, 2.

701. DoD, OSD, 2010, 54; and DoD, OSD, 2019, 26, 60. See also DoD, OSD, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2016*, April 2016, 6, 21-22, 54, 57, 69, http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/DoD_China-Report_2016.pdf.

702. DoD, DIA, 65.

703. David Vergun, "Freedom of Navigation in South China Sea Critical to Prosperity, Says Indo-Pacific Commander," DOD News, November 23, 2019, https://www.defense.gov/explore/story/Article/2025105/freedom-of-navigation-in-south-china-sea-critical-to-prosperity-says-indo-pacif/.

there seem to be appreciated and the PLA Navy's (growing) competence and professionalism respected.

Set against this achievement, however, are periodic interactions that remind the United States of a latent threat that the Chinese navy seems to be posing—whether it be the PLA Navy lurking in the background of China Seas disputes or unfriendly behavior seen at RIMPAC—all coupled with the fact that there are not many other naval operations since 1995 available to provide more clarity. If there has been an attempt by China to diffuse the threat over the past quarter-century (most likely through the anti-piracy patrols), it has been off-set by other Chinese naval activities and compounded by persistent investment.

Because the actions available for analysis are so few, evaluations of the PLA Navy to date have necessarily fallen back on inferences drawn from current and developing capabilities. In the concluding chapter, I will analyze the various scenarios posited for what Chinese naval development could result in; here, it is enough to lay out some of the markers that the observer should look for in forming their own judgment as to what the results of Chinese naval development will be.

Military capabilities can be notoriously ambiguous when it comes to their utility as offensive weapons or defensive weapons—hence one major factor contributing to the security dilemma's recurrence throughout the history of international politics.[704] Looking ahead to whether China will pursue threat diffusion or not, the use of capabilities as

704. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 199-201.

benchmarks for supposed intentions, however understandable from the perspective of prudence, may not be the best method, and can even be a self-fulfilling prophecy. To be sure, there are some indicators that are more clearly suggestive of threat diffusion than others: the absence or presence (and number of) aircraft carriers and the function and number of overseas bases are but some examples. But, as shown by the France chapter and, to a lesser extent, the post-Imperial Russia chapter, seemingly offensive capabilities can still be deployed for either defensive or non-threatening purposes (non-threatening, that is, to the dominant naval power's interests). And, as Michael C. Horowitz points out, even capabilities designed for more threatening purposes would not mean much if they are not used optimally.[705] It is future Chinese actions that will serve as better indicators of threat diffusion's existence in Chinese military hybridization.

A first sign of possible Chinese threat diffusion would be the deployment of naval vessels in a manner neither frequent nor routine. Such an act would suggest, among other things, that Beijing has policy priorities that do not include flying the flag with any consistency approaching that of Washington. It would suggest that China, whatever its capabilities, is not intent on replacing the United States in any particular place. Should China deploy its navy consistently, then a sign of threat diffusion would be in such deployments remaining relatively small and going to places not considered of great strategic interest to the United States. A large Chinese flotilla or carrier strike group would send a signal that a few destroyers or a hospital ship would not send. Furthermore,

705. Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=539794.

dispatching Chinese vessels to, say, enter the Persian Gulf would be a far more alarming development to US (and other) policymakers than dispatching a small flotilla to make a port call in Mozambique. If the PLA Navy could adopt an overseas presence that was fleeting, constrained in power projection, or limited to areas of relatively lower geopolitical importance, then China could be going out of its way to tamp down US threat perceptions. That China would do so by choice could make a big difference in US perceptions and reactions.

Beyond what China would send out and to where, there is the issue of what a Chinese navy would do once it got there, wherever "there" is. Threat diffusion could operate if Chinese naval vessels undertook tasks not contrary to US interests. There is wide room for maneuver here, as markers of Chinese threat diffusion could include anti-piracy patrols, citizen evacuation, HA/DR, and even military operations that the United States either approves of or does not actively oppose. Some of these signposts would fulfill China's own New Historic Mission. And continued military-to-military engagement between China and the United States at all levels would help to increase understanding among naval officers, and such engagement ought to be one component of a broad, sustained US-PRC communications infrastructure. As the Anglo-German case showed, frequent communication is no guarantor of understanding, but it is far preferable to an absence of communication altogether.

However, what is arguably just as important as what China does is what China does not do. China's persistent contribution to anti-piracy patrols is overshadowed by its

equally tenacious efforts to press its claims in the East and South China Seas. Harassment of vessels by civilian paramilitary or coast guard vessels, even if they do not involve the PLA Navy or extra-regional power projection, still help form an image of the PRC as a law-evading bully. And if China sees fit to bully small neighbors, with whom it ought to share closer relations and more mutual interests, then what might it do to other countries of lesser value farther away? Signposts suggesting the absence of threat diffusion, if absent themselves, may also suggest a Chinese desire to not antagonize the United States.

These signposts are not exhaustive, of course, nor are they mutually exclusive—they could help reinforce each other. And it would be naïve to expect that a Chinese pursuit of threat diffusion would automatically result in a close relationship with the United States. There will still be divergent preferences and policies; barring some truly inexplicable change in international geopolitics, Chinese and US national interests will not become one and the same. The actions discussed above are landmarks of threat diffusion that observers will do well to look for in reaching their own conclusions on Chinese military hybridization, its ultimate purpose (which may not have been determined yet and which may change), and the US response.

Summary

Chinese naval hybridization up to 2020 has presented a picture of investment persistence that is clear and robust, but a picture of threat diffusion that is natal and, based on what can be observed, inconsistent. Since 1995, China has consistently displayed the political will and financial support for constructing a navy that is not only

numerically significant and technologically advanced, but that is also transitioning from a coastal force with no power projection capability to a blue-water fleet capable of overseas expeditionary operations. But that transition is not complete and, while the PLA Navy is certainly more capable and advanced than it was at the turn of the millennium, its forays into deep ocean remain relatively limited in both scope and number, even if deployments are increasing.

The PLA Navy's record in terms of threat diffusion is decidedly mixed: some activities would seem to suggest a coalescing of interests with the dominant naval power, while other behaviors raise concerns over *future* intentions and actions. Should China continue to pursue policies that send mixed signals, it may well follow the Soviet Union's path from the last century, in which substantive policy achievements in some parts of the world and a real growth in status are balanced by failures in other parts of the world and by tensions with America. The United States' hopeful language of China as a "responsible stakeholder" is now gone, replaced by the more sober "strategic competitor"; PRC activities that work against successful threat diffusion are no doubt some of the same factors that has led to Washington's change in perception of and hopes for Beijing.

A note should be made of the Taiwan scenario: its disappearance as a source of friction from US-PRC relations would not change my conclusions. Both Beijing and Washington clearly recognize that each country has important interests far beyond

Taiwan that the other side can affect.[706] If China should try but fail to conquer Taiwan, its naval development would be unlikely to stop, as a defeated and wounded China would likely pose a dangerous revanchist threat to US allies and interests in the region. But if China should conquer Taiwan, its naval development would still be unlikely to stop; it could, in fact, accelerate, as a PRC-controlled Taiwan would allow Beijing to more easily push into the Western Pacific. The issue of Chinese military hybridization, while incorporating Taiwan to a certain degree, encompasses much more than that island.

Conclusion

As the twenty-first century matures, China and the United States are still grappling with how to "read" and understand each other, how to deal and cooperate with each other, how to routinize interactions to an extent that minimizes the possibility of misperception and miscalculation. This applies both at the macro- and micro-levels.[707] The ratcheting up of tensions in the China Seas over the past decade suggests that incidents in or involving the maritime realm may have a significant and lasting impact on how Beijing and Washington perceive the other. The two great powers therefore risk viewing each other largely through the prism of China's naval hybridization, allowing the PLA Navy's development to play a disproportionate—even distorting—role in the bilateral relationship.

706. Christensen, 34.

707. See Avery Goldstein, "First Things First: The Pressing Danger of Crisis Escalation in US-China Relations," *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013): 62-66.

Up to now, Chinese naval development has grabbed headlines for both its investment persistence and its ambiguous threat diffusion. The Chinese state has shown its persistent investment in spades: one sees the results coming out of shipyards and, increasingly, operating at sea. Threat diffusion, however, has been largely absent, though not necessarily because China has actively pursued a strategy of undermining the dominant naval power; rather, it has engaged in activities both supportive of and contrary to US interests. Looking forward, China's turn to the sea looks set to continue, especially with Xi's emphasis and support. But whether his country's naval hybridization will result in a more pacific relationship with America and an upturn in great-power relations will not be determined until this century ages further.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."
—F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

In the second Greco-Persian War (480-479 BC), King Xerxes I of Persia sought to subdue by force the Greek city-states that had embarrassed his father Darius at Marathon in the first invasion a decade prior. Ignoring his uncle's counsel on the difficulties of waging war on both land and sea, Xerxes assembled a large army and a large navy to cow Greece into submission. But both Greek fleets and phalanxes—at Salamis, at Plataea—proved more than formidable opponents to Persian forces. Even the sea itself was unyielding, as preserved for posterity in Herodotus' famous account.[708] In the end, his ships sunk and his soldiers slain, Xerxes I accomplished as much as his father had.

For millennia, great powers around the world have developed military forces to better pursue their objectives. The story I have told in the preceding pages is of how two factors, investment persistence and threat diffusion, play major roles in explaining why continental great powers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—France, Germany, Imperial Russia, and the Soviet Union—have achieved different outcomes on the success-failure spectrum when attempting the same task of military hybridization. I then examined China's current naval development, a story that, like the century in which it occurs, is still unfurling.

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708. Herodotus, *Histories* 7-9.

Investment persistence provides the financial support and political will to build a navy, traditionally the more technology-intensive and, thus, more expensive military service. Investment persistence allows the continental great power to have a strong navy in the first place. Threat diffusion then mitigates the menace that the built-up navy would otherwise pose to the dominant naval power, allowing the continental great power to actually use its navy as an instrument of state policy. With investment persistence and threat diffusion together, a continental great power is more likely to succeed at becoming a militarily hybrid power. Without investment persistence, there would be no threat dangerous enough to require diffusion; without threat diffusion, a navy fed on investment persistence would be viewed as a leviathan to be contained or destroyed.

In this conclusion, I begin by reviewing the main argument as it is revealed in the case studies of nineteenth-century France, Imperial Germany, Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China (PRC), noting some policy implications. I examine counter- and alternative arguments, before engaging in a discussion of potential futures for Chinese naval development, followed by a consideration of the theoretical implications this study holds for scholarship. I end with thoughts on additional research that ought to be pursued post-dissertation.

Silver in the Mine: Getting from Continental to Hybrid Great Power

Through analysis of the entire universe of cases of continental great powers that have tried to become hybrid great powers from the nineteenth century onwards, this dissertation shows that a continental great power is more likely to succeed in naval

hybridization if it can combine two essential factors: investment persistence and threat diffusion. The sustained financial support and political will to build a powerful navy, coupled with the deployment of that navy to places or for purposes that do not antagonize the dominant naval power, helps a continental great power become a hybrid great power, capable of using both its extant land power and the naval power it has strenuously labored to build. The combination of investment persistence and threat diffusion not only prevents landward security threats from diverting attention and resources from naval development, it also alleviates the inevitable concern and pushback from a dominant naval power that feels the status quo threatened.

On the spectrum with success and failure as its endpoints, France during the *Pax Britannica* sits at the success end. Throughout the turbulent 1800s, France managed to maintain relatively stable naval investment through different political regimes, domestic upheaval, and even catastrophic military defeat (on land). Relying primarily on technological prowess and quality over quantity, the French navy presented a powerful enough threat to ensure existential security by deterring British privation of French shores.[709] At the same time, the French navy pushed out into the world and built the world's second largest empire, managing to contain discrete disputes with the United Kingdom, if not avoid them altogether in some places. Just because the French navy was never superior to the Royal Navy does not mean that the French navy was some pathetic,

709. During a naval scare in the 1850s, Vice Adm. Charles Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, exclaimed in the House of Lords that the United Kingdom had to make clear that its southeast boundary was really the "low-water mark on the French shore." UK Parliament, *Hansard*, July 1, 1859, vol. 154, column 528, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1859/jul/01/question-1#column_528.

miserable also-ran. Its powerful legacy may be seen in the fact that, alongside English, French remains the only other truly global language today—an indirect reminder of what the French navy was able to do for a hundred years over a hundred years ago.

On the spectrum with success and failure as its endpoints, Imperial Germany and its contemporary, Imperial Russia, sit at the failure end, though for different reasons. In the last half of Imperial Germany's lifespan, Berlin embarked on an eye-watering level of naval development, which aroused the concern and suspicion of British policymakers, just as French naval development had in years prior. Unlike France, however, Germany deliberately chose not to diffuse the threat its new navy posed; rather, it chose to concentrate its naval forces. To compound the problem, the fleet that Germany built was clearly not one designed for imperial policing duties or defensive coastal protection, but rather, a battlefleet designed for a decisive battle between capital ships. The failure to combine investment persistence with threat diffusion and the choice to combine investment persistence with threat concentration instead proved fatal to any Anglo-German understanding and contributed to London's alliance politics in the run-up to the Great War. If the legacy of French success can be seen in how widespread their beautiful language is warmly received around the world, the legacy of German failure can be seen in what remains of the scuttled fleet huddled together on the cold, dark seabed of Scapa Flow.

If Imperial Germany had investment persistence without threat diffusion, Imperial Russia had neither. The Romanovs could not rouse themselves to the great task of

military hybridization with anything like the effort their Hohenzollern relations put in. St. Petersburg was chosen as the site of the empire's capital for symbolic reasons: to look towards and, in some respects, become the West, which was to include appreciating a maritime realm so foreign to the Muscovites. But the monarchs resident at St. Petersburg could never persistently invest in naval power; the number of beginnings of naval development seemed to be matched only by the number of halts that abruptly ended any Russian "naval moment."

While other powers surged forward with construction of advanced navies and deployed those navies to protect their own interests, Russia stood by; this meant that, each time Russia decided to try and build a navy, there were fewer and fewer places its navy could go without bumping up against the navies and interests of others. The attempt at naval investment under Emperor Nicholas II proved disastrous in many respects, with a humiliating defeat at the hands of a rising Imperial Japan. With the benefit of hindsight, one might see the Russo-Japanese War as the beginning of the end of Imperial Russia, for the shock defeat triggered a revolution that diluted the absolute monarchy, which another revolution a dozen years later would wash away entirely.

On the spectrum with success and failure as its endpoints, the Soviet Union sits in the middle. It was neither the unqualified success that was France, nor the unqualified failures that were its political predecessor and Germany, and this is because the Soviet Union's commitment to investment persistence and threat diffusion can be characterized as incomplete. While Moscow did provide the navy with financial and political support,

the investment was neither comprehensive nor particularly advanced, resulting in a fleet that looked most menacing on paper; even then, the naval force had glaring inadequacies that would have prevented it from doing some of the basic tasks that blue-water navies ought to be able to do. Nevertheless, and especially from an extremely low baseline, the Soviet Navy's astronomic growth in a mere decade was impressive and substantive.

Threat diffusion was a contradictory muddle. Trying to balance the need to grow Soviet prestige with the desire to avoid conflict with the United States as much as possible—and doing so with a fleet not suited to global, expeditionary operations—meant that Moscow did just enough to pose a threat to Washington and fulfill some of its goals, but not enough to substantively change US policy. The Soviet Union achieved some of its objectives, such as enhancing relationships with Third World countries and flying the flag of a global power, but it also failed to substantively counter US core interests, in part because its navy was still clearly inferior to its US counterpart in capabilities. Soviet military hybridization could only go so far: clearly more successful than Germany or Imperial Russia, but severely lagging behind France.

On the spectrum with success and failure as its endpoints, twenty-first-century China sits . . . at a position yet to be determined. For a quarter-century and counting, China has invested persistently in naval development—that much is clear—which contributes to the United States' concerns over renewed great-power competition, one that will perhaps be even more strenuous than the one last century. What remains unknown, however (perhaps even to Chinese leaders themselves), is whether Beijing will

engage in threat diffusion, the critical question that will do much to shape Washington's perceptions, policies, and actions in the years to come.

Investment persistence and threat diffusion are critical factors to continental great powers' military hybridization. Persistence itself may be grossly underappreciated. It may seem obvious and simple, but it is neither easy nor trifling for a continental great power contemplating naval development. One may think of the reverse situation: a naval great power constantly appropriating funds to build a powerful army would no doubt raise questions about the political utility and implications of such a force, especially if the power in question were an island country or had a small land area. Without investment persistence, something as large, complex, and technologically intensive as naval power simply cannot be constructed. The potential benefits that were persuasive enough to incentivize the idea of naval development in the first place would also have to be given up.

Once investment persistence is begun, it is critical that threat diffusion also occur. As the contrast between France and Imperial Germany highlights so well, the continental great power's ability to use its new, powerful navy for purposes that mitigate instead of exacerbate the dominant naval power's threat perception goes a long way in maintaining a workable peace between the two countries. In the international system that has existed for the past half-millennium, it is exceeding rare to find multiple global naval powers co-existing in even grudging acceptance of the other, to say nothing of blissful harmony. It seems there is room at the top for only one. Threat diffusion is a credible way for the

continental great power to show the dominant naval power that it is not seeking to overthrow the latter's position, that it is content to win silver.

Military hybridization is a costly and time-consuming process; it is not a decision taken lightly. For continental great powers, the odds may seem stacked against them and, with landward security concerns that will not go away and a dominant naval power waiting to oppose the attempt, it may seem at first illogical that a continental great power would dare venture out from solid ground and wade into deep and mysterious waters. This dissertation has analyzed the cases of continental great-power military hybridization from 1801 onwards and argues that this difficult task, while challenging for continental great powers, is not impossible, and the two factors that work in tandem to increase the odds of success are investment persistence and threat diffusion.

Counter- and Alternative Arguments

In this section, I consider in general some of the alternative explanations and counterarguments that can be made about my theory and its proof in the various case studies. Dealing with very different countries that, together, span the world's largest landmass and a time period of two and one-fifth centuries no doubt has led to some generalization and, perhaps, some omission of variables. Here, I will deal with concerns over investment persistence and threat diffusion, the role of culture, the role of nuclear weapons, and the extent of analogical utility.

Investment Persistence and Threat Diffusion: Alternate Pathways

A concern that could be raised over my discussion of the case studies is whether anything could have been done differently. For example, given Germany's objectives, did it have any other choice but to embark on the risk strategy? And, given the context of the Cold War, was there anything the Soviet Union could have done that would not have aroused America's ire? As discussed in the introduction, my concepts of investment persistence and threat diffusion are flexible, and do not mandate that either investment persistence or threat diffusion manifest in some specific, unalterable form. Germany chose to pursue a risk strategy, but it did not have to. It could have built an imperial fleet, one focused on cruisers and relatively smaller vessels suited to defending commerce and policing the empire, as Berlin claimed its navy was for to a skeptical London. Had Germany done this, such a fleet would have still qualified as investment persistence and such operations would have still qualified as threat diffusion. In the end, Germany chose not to go down this path; instead, it built a battlefleet that was always concentrated within striking distance of the dominant naval power.

The Soviet Union, likewise, did not have to go toe to toe against the United States in various crises; the very fact that Moscow pursued a policy that tried to accommodate two different motivations (limited expansionism and reluctant expansionism) shows that a range of choices was available. That the Soviet Union did not settle on a consistent preference for just limited expansionism and, in the fashion of nineteenth-century France, accumulate prestige and status while maintaining a more yielding disposition, cannot be

blamed entirely on zero-sum politics (though there is still a great deal that could be blamed on such a mindset). Indeed, when one considers the general Soviet desire after 1962 to "live and let live"—exemplified by Communist China's furious reaction and, later, by détente with the United States—it is manifest that Moscow (and Washington, for that matter) could have pursued policies different from the ones they actually did.

It is worth discussing here some facets of world politics that appear, but are not explicitly mentioned, to wit: realist concerns about polarity and the nature (positive-sum vs. zero-sum) of the game. Military hybridization does not necessarily mandate any particular view about polarity: as shown in the case studies, France, Imperial Germany, and Imperial Russia all occupied the same multipolar world (populated largely by the same great powers, including themselves), yet the results of military hybridization were all different: one success and two failures that failed in different ways. What may be more important than polarity is the perception of whether a bilateral relationship is positive-sum or zero-sum; the Soviet Union faced a greater hurdle in hybridizing because the United States viewed any Soviet improvement as threatening, no matter what that improvement's nature or purpose.

Investment persistence and threat diffusion can thus accommodate any number of specific policies. Successful investment persistence could take the form of a smaller fleet or a commerce-raiding fleet or a fly-the-flag/policing fleet. As already discussed in the China chapter and to be elaborated on below, threat diffusion can also manifest in different ways, since threats can present themselves differently in different places at

different times. Successful threat diffusion could take the form of military action in places unimportant to the dominant naval power, joint military action to prosecute common or collective goals, or a narrow focus on non-kinetic operations, such as humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR).

There are, of course, some limits to investment persistence and threat diffusion. Investment persistence is constrained by economic wealth, technological sophistication, and so forth. There is a ceiling to naval investment persistence, especially so in countries traditionally dominated by landward security threats and the armies tasked with fending them off, and especially since naval power is a very technologically intensive and expensive endeavor. Among my case studies, financial and technological limits came into play most obviously in the example of Imperial Russia. But, as I note in that chapter, even in that case, one must also recognize that St. Petersburg's defeat in the Strait of Tsushima was due not so much to poor investment per se, but to incompetence. It was not the ships themselves that failed, but the sailors.

A potential limit to threat diffusion is the argument that it is unnecessary, in the sense that a navy, however powerful it may be on paper, can simply be kept in port and not venture out to threaten anyone. This might be a valid argument in the case of late nineteenth-century Imperial Russia; however, as Imperial Germany shows with crystal clarity, this is a very simplistic assumption that cannot apply in all cases. Consider also France: if it had done in the 1800s what Germany later did in the 1900s, Paris would likely have ended up as an equal failure to Berlin. Furthermore, if one moves to the

present day, one sees the "stay at home" argument turned on its head: a great power is supposed to go out into the world and do things—China cannot be a "responsible stakeholder" in America's eyes if it does not act responsibly (as Washington sees it), and that means maintaining and furthering the US-led global order, which includes behaving in certain ways around the world.

Culture

As discussed in the introduction, I have explicitly set aside issues of culture, identity, and society in this dissertation. This is not because the context in which a state builds its military force is unimportant; quite the contrary. But I have put aside cultural considerations for the practical reason that they can and often do skew interpretations of history—witness the traditional historiographical treatment of France—and such histories as do rely on cultural explanations seem compelled to have to draw a sharp divide between continental powers and naval powers. In such historiography, not only have hybrid military powers never existed, but they cannot exist; even seemingly hybrid powers are said to be masking some "true" geostrategic character that is either continental or maritime.

I grant that culture, the geography and topography that help shape it, social memory, and all sorts of other intangible traits inform the state, its policy goals, its military character, and its view of itself vis-à-vis others, but they really form a distinct conversation. That literature sees "continental" and "maritime" as adjectives describing

what states think they are; I see "continental," "naval," and "hybrid" as adjectives describing what states have equipped themselves to do.

Nuclear Weapons

The role of technology is one that repeats itself throughout this dissertation. One particularly pertinent observation, however, is the introduction of nuclear weapons and its implications for military force and political decision-making. As discussed in the chapter on post-Imperial Russia, I find the argument that nuclear weapons have substantively and substantially changed geopolitics outside of fight-to-the-death scenarios to be overstated. Such an assertion would suggest that navies' role and utility have been circumscribed or reduced, but I believe this can hold true only in situations in which the extinction of a state is at stake. In fact, I would argue that the role of ballistic missile submarines, the hardest leg of the nuclear triad to target, makes naval power even more important in the nuclear age, for the mission of deterrence adds to, without replacing, the navy's traditional missions.

However, since the possession of nuclear weapons (preferably in the form of a secure second-strike capability) can guarantee a state's existence, would a nuclear-armed continental great power be more willing to engage in military hybridization *without* threat diffusion, confident that its fleet's destruction would reach uncomfortably close to the nuclear threshold? Alas, for this particular manifestation of the stability-instability paradox, only one historical case exists, but the Soviet Union example does not offer any clarity, as its naval development was hampered by domestic constraints and arguably did

not reach its full potential. Whether twenty-first-century China's hybridization will offer a definitive answer to this question is a possibility that requires sober appreciation and serious consideration.

The Past is Past

Finally, it is worth considering the utility of analogies. By definition, an analogy compares things that are not actually the same. It is unlikely that China this century will be a perfect copy of any of my four historical case studies, nor are those four historical case studies carbon copies of each other. Even Germany and Imperial Russia, both failures, failed differently. One may question whether the four historical case studies I have examined truly offer any lessons for contemporary China, and whether other cases might not be better. It is worth stressing that the countries I have examined represent the entire universe of cases of continental great-power military hybridization from 1801 onwards—one uses what History provides.

A major difference stressed between those four case studies and today's China is that the latter is facing a dominant naval power whose homeland is not relatively close by, while the four historical case studies were all continental great powers relatively close to the dominant naval power. This observation may be true, but what is equally true is that the United States has vital interests all around China, interests that the United States will only give up if and when it decides that the potential benefits exceed the definite and considerable costs to US interests, power, and standing should America leave. As of 2020, the United States has been a resident power in the Asia-Pacific for exactly one-half

of its lifespan (and for longer than in Europe); it would take a profound, seismic shift in either American or global politics for America to abandon its long-held course. Even under the Trump Administration, a deliberate withdrawal by the United States from a vital region of the world does not strike me as plausible.

Whither China?

"The emergence of China as a major maritime power in the 21st century is all but a given."[710] This assertion from the world's oldest defense/security think tank seems a lot closer to the truth, now that we are one-fifth of the way through this century, than it would have been if made back in 2001. But how well will the statement stand up as we progress through the decades ahead? The possibilities are not straightforward. This section speculates on what Chinese military hybridization could look like in the years to come, starting with the future of investment persistence, then moving on to the future of threat diffusion.

Mo' Money, Mo' Problems? The Future of Investment Persistence

Is China likely to continue its persistent investment in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy? The answer seems to be resoundingly in the affirmative, even as there may be sharp disagreements over the motivation for such investment persistence and the specific things that such investment persistence will fund and support—which

710. Sidharth Kaushal and Magdalena Markiewicz, *Crossing the River by Feeling the Stones: The Trajectory of China's Maritime Transformation* (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, 2019), 1, https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/20191014_crossing_the_river_by_feeling_the_stones_web.pdf.

impinges on the issue of threat diffusion. Andrew S. Erickson's 2015 assessment is a plain statement of what is easier to discern about Chinese naval plans and what is opaquer: "Regardless of exact budgetary figures, China is clearly developing and procuring the weapons and nurturing the manpower to modernize its military significantly. China's capabilities are clearly growing, but its naval intentions . . . remain somewhat unclear."[711]

It should be noted that China's perceived turn from land to sea has not been without controversy: "Conservatives believe that China is essentially a continental power, and therefore that it should refrain from maritime adventurism."[712] In a suitably pessimistic caution, Avery Goldstein warns that, while there may not be any immediate great-power threat to China at the moment, history reveals that acrimony has repeatedly roiled China's relations with countries along its fourteen-thousand-mile land frontier.[713]

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711. Andrew S. Erickson, "Can China Become a Maritime Power?" in *Asia Looks Seaward: Power and Maritime Strategy*, ed. Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 75.

712. Jonathan Holslag, *Trapped Giant: China's Military Rise*, Adelphi 416 (London: IISS, 2010), 61. See also Ye Zicheng [叶自成], *Luquan fazhan yu daguo xingshuai: Diyuan zhengzhi huanjing yu Zhongguo heping fazhan de diyuan zhanlüe xuanze* [*陆权发展与大国兴衰：地缘政治环境与中国和平发展的地缘战略选择*] (Beijing: New Star Press [新星出版社], 2007); and Yu Wanli, "The American Factor in China's Maritime Strategy," in *China, the United States, and 21st Century Sea Power: Defining a Maritime Security Partnership*, ed. Andrew S. Erickson, Lyle J. Goldstein, and Nan Li (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 471-87. For a 2010 epistolary discussion that amounted in part to a literature review of the debate as to whether and to what extent China was a naval power, see Michael A. Glosny, Phillip C. Saunders, and Robert S. Ross, "Correspondence: Debating China's Naval Nationalism," *International Security* 35, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 161-75, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40981246.

713. Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security*, Studies in Asian Security (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 29. For the role of domestic politics, see M. Taylor Fravel, "Economic Growth, Regime Insecurity, and Military Strategy," in *The Nexus of Economics, Security, and International Relations in East Asia*, ed. Avery Goldstein and Edward D. Mansfield (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 182, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/lib/upenn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1011060.

A major crisis or change in geopolitical circumstances could very easily lead China to do what any continental great power would "naturally" do: rebalance toward landward security challenges that are more likely to threaten the political and territorial heart of the country. Nevertheless, there has been a pronounced tilt in favor of naval development. Carnes Lord concludes that "it is fair to say that the overall climate of opinion in China today is more favorable to maritime transformation than at any time in its long history."[714]

Beijing's most recent defense white paper (2019) states that the PLA Navy is working to "address deficiencies in overseas operations and support" by building far-seas forces, developing overseas facilities, and enhancing its capabilities for "diversified military tasks."[715] This ambition to develop what appears to be a PLA Navy capable of greater operational range and more missions will not be easy or cheap. A navy with global capabilities will probably need to have a large number of vessels, but it is unclear

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714. Carnes Lord, "China and Maritime Transformations," in *China Goes to Sea: Maritime Transformation in Comparative Historical Perspective*, ed. Andrew S. Erickson, Lyle J. Goldstein, and Carnes Lord (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 444. See also Robert D. Kaplan, "China's Two-Ocean Strategy," in *China's Arrival: A Strategic Framework for a Global Relationship*, ed. Abraham Denmark and Nirav Patel (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2009), 48, https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/CNAS+China's+Arrival_Final+Report-3-min.pdf; Robert S. Ross, "The Rise of the Chinese Navy: From Regional Naval Power to Global Naval Power?" in *China's Global Engagement: Cooperation, Competition, and Influence in the 21st Century*, ed. Jacques deLisle and Avery Goldstein (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2017), 213; US Department of Defense (DoD), Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2019*, May 2019, 93, 95, https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019_CHINA_MILITARY_POWER_REPORT.pdf; and Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, *Red Star over the Pacific: China's Rise and the Challenge to U.S. Maritime Strategy*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 8.

715. PRC State Council Information Office (SCIO), *China's National Defense in the New Era* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2019), 23, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e356cfae72e4563b10cd310/5e357ebf0b0012481a9a57ee/5e357ec00b0012481a9a5977/1580564160585/Chinas-National-Defense-in-the-New-Era-2019.pdf?format=original. Subsequent citations will appear as "PRC SCIO, 2019, [Page number]."

what Chinese plans are regarding fleet size. It is possible that the Chinese leadership itself has not settled on (or, in the midst of the naval service's transformation, thinks it premature to settle on) a particular figure.[716]

Whatever the size of the fleet, the costs of maintaining a navy large and advanced enough to execute Chinese government taskings will be substantial. Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes point out that the PLA Navy's rapid deployment of new ship classes means that, in the next one to two decades, entire classes of ships will become out of date within a very short period. Beijing would need to either embark on serial production of new vessels to replace entire ship classes near-simultaneously or deal with the increasing costs of maintaining old, increasingly hapless vessels.[717]

As technology continues to evolve, there are also questions over whether China will be able to catch up to America's level of technological prowess, then effectively use whatever technologies are developed. Technology has certainly played a pivotal role in this dissertation's historical case studies. However, the difficulty of mastering technology today is orders of magnitude more difficult than it was in the past. In the twenty-first century, technological expertise requires one to simultaneously be more advanced (mastering a broader set of skills at a higher level), more specific (technology is precisely geared towards particular products or components), more complex (so much so that each individual is only an expert on one part of the whole), and more tacit (know-how is more

716. Michael McDevitt, "Findings and Conclusions," in *Becoming a Great "Maritime Power": A Chinese Dream* (Arlington, VA: CNA, 2016), 134.

717. Yoshihara and Holmes, 299.

reliant on intangible experience and institutional memory).[718] Investment persistence today manifests itself in far more complex and complicated ways than it did in the past; military hybridization today demands more of investment persistence.

Writing on China's much-discussed aircraft carrier development, Michael C. Horowitz offers a sobering caution: "The systems integration and organizational tasks are sufficiently difficult that it is possible the Chinese would not succeed. . . . Chinese carrier development efforts are likely to be a lot slower and more uncertain than many analysts have predicted."[719] China's technological concerns are compounded by more basic issues facing its military modernization. Combat management systems remain un-standardized, and the PLA's various services and geographic theater commands still face problems with information-sharing.[720] Issues concerning delegation of command authority and trust in officers' judgment remain, and recent bureaucratic reforms look set to only exacerbate the problem by further entrenching a centralized, top-down approach.[721]

All these concerns notwithstanding, the Chinese navy has not enjoyed such political or financial support since the heady days of Zheng He. In its thirteenth Five-Year Plan covering 2016-20, the Communist Party of China (CPC) singled out maritime power

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718. Andrea Gilli and Mauro Gilli, "Why China Has Not Caught Up Yet: Military-Technological Superiority and the Limits of Imitation, Reverse Engineering, and Cyber Espionage," *International Security* 43, no. 3 (Winter 2018/19): 155-70.

719. Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 89-90, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/reader.action?docID=539794.

720. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance, 2020* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2020), 11.

721. IISS, 2020, 12.

among geographically delineated force priorities.[722] Robert S. Ross notes that "Chinese nationalists dismiss the potential costs of a naval buildup."[723] Whether supporters of continued Chinese naval hybridization will continue to have their way remains to be seen. There is no question that the past twenty-five years have been very good to the Chinese state's naval armed force; such generosity, though, has arguably reduced goodwill from foreign actors, whose perceptions will be shaped not just by what Beijing's fleet is becoming, but what it is doing and where.

Oh, the Places You'll Go: Future Scenarios for Threat Diffusion

China has stated publicly for two leadership generations that it desires a fleet capable not only of defending the CPC's political monopoly and China's territorial sovereignty, but also of safeguarding and defending the state's interests abroad, wherever they might be. But this apparently clear expression of intent is not as straightforward as it looks and does not necessarily suggest a Chinese blue-water navy as geographically dispersed, operationally active, or politically impactful as the US Navy. What China does with regard to threat diffusion will be critical: it will show if China will go for gold or be content to "win silver."

Existing scholarship has seen a robust debate over what exactly China's navy will do and where; there is no consensus on what place China will aim for in this race. Broadly speaking, three scenarios are proposed. The first argues that China will continue

722. "Goals, Missions of China's New Five-Year Plan," *People's Daily*, March 5, 2016, Dow Jones Factiva.

723. Robert S. Ross, "China's Naval Nationalism: Sources, Prospects, and the US Response," *International Security* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 73.

to focus on near-seas security issues, while a second scenario sees China pushing out into the Indian and Pacific Oceans and asserting its interests, even in the face of US disapproval. A third scenario argues that China will continue to focus on the near seas, but will also build a far-seas force, not to ape US global power projection, but to just be strong enough to protect Beijing's interests.[724] I lay out each of these scenarios, then consider them together in the context of Chinese threat diffusion vis-à-vis the United States.

Close to Home: Prioritizing the Asia-Pacific and the Near Seas

One scenario for China's naval hybridization is that, for all the shipbuilding and rhetorical focus on expanding national interests and far-seas operations, the PLA Navy will remain focused on waters closer to home, particularly the East and South China Seas and the Yellow Sea. Taiwan and the various island disputes, as well as the continued presence of US military assets, should keep Beijing focused on core national interests and existential security, so the thinking goes. Bernard D. Cole is exemplary of such a perspective: "China is pursuing a maritime strategy consciously designed to achieve near-term national security objectives and longer-term regional maritime dominance through both combatant and merchant fleets. In the near term, Beijing is building a Navy capable of decisively influencing the operational aspects of the Taiwan and the East and South

724. The different assumptions, biases, and theories that cause people to espouse any one of these scenarios as more likely than the others are, of course, important issues, though a general discussion is not within this dissertation's purview. See Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/lib/upenn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1637701. Readers will find much grist throughout this dissertation for the mill that is Yarhi-Milo's book.

China sea situations, should diplomacy and other instruments of statecraft fail."[725] Erickson concurs, as do Andrew Scobell and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga.[726]

Other authors arrive at the same conclusion, but for different reasons. Yves-Heng Lim argues that China will seek to evict the United States in order to establish itself as the regional hegemon.[727] Ross argues that China will stay in the near seas in order to remain on the defensive against a robust US Asia-Pacific presence.[728] Andrew Lambert argues that Beijing only wants to neutralize the near seas, to make them irrelevant as a security concern: "the ultimate negative form of sea control."[729]

Whatever the motivation, the above authors agree that China's focus will remain regional, concentrated on the East China Sea, South China Sea, Yellow Sea, and connecting waterways. They see a PLA Navy that, whatever its latent capabilities, will focus on operating in waters closer to home. This will be a strategic choice on Beijing's part (except according to Ross), chosen to accomplish geostrategic goals that will ensure the security of the state and, presumably, the primacy of the party. While national interests will necessarily move beyond the region, their relative importance to the

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725. Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy in the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 187.

726. Andrew S. Erickson, "China's Military Modernization: Many Improvements, Three Challenges, and One Opportunity," in *China's Challenges*, ed. Jacques deLisle and Avery Goldstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 183-84; and Andrew Scobell and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, "The Flag Lags but Follows: The PLA and China's Great Leap Outward," in *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*, ed. Phillip C. Saunders, Arthur S. Ding, et al. (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 192, https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/Books/Chairman-Xi/Chairman-Xi.pdf.

727. Yves-Heng Lim, *China's Naval Power: An Offensive Realist Approach*, Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 139, 165.

728. Ross, "The Rise," 225.

729. Andrew Lambert, *Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict that Made the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 317.

Chinese state will be diluted with their distance; the navy will stay close to home, where core interests lie.

Leaving Home: Moving Out to the Far Seas

A second scenario sees China moving out into the far seas and presenting a challenge to the United States. China is clearly assembling the pieces of an expeditionary navy, so the argument goes, and has stated publicly for years that it has global interests that it needs to safeguard. Michael McDevitt states matter-of-factly why one should expect to see the Chinese naval ensign flying more often in more parts of the world: "China's interests are global and will remain so. The requirement for a navy that can operate globally in peacetime or in situations of limited conflict is central to the interest of the state."[730] Beijing's own defense white papers and military strategies over the past decade seem to support this interpretation.[731] Additional commentary in official media has only boosted the perception that China is on the cusp of becoming a global naval power.[732]

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730. Michael McDevitt, "PLA Naval Exercises with International Partners," in *Learning by Doing: The PLA Trains at Home and Abroad*, ed. Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Travis Tanner (Carlisle, PA: US Army Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 114, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12017.6.

731. PRC SCIO, *China's National Defense in 2010*, March 2011, 17, http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/China-Defense-White-Paper_2010_English-Chinese_Annotated.pdf; PRC SCIO, 2019, 30; and PRC SCIO, *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces*, April 2013, 20, http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/China-Defense-White-Paper_2013_English-Chinese_Annotated.pdf.

732. "Additional Overseas PLA Bases 'Possible,'" *People's Daily*, January 10, 2019, Dow Jones Factiva; "Chinese Navy to Become Leading Sea Power," *People's Daily*, March 29, 2018, Dow Jones Factiva; and Liu Xuanzun and Guo Yuandan, "China Commissions 2nd Aircraft Carrier," *Global Times*, December 17, 2019, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2019-12/17/content_4856960.htm.

The US Government has taken to heart the idea that China will become a global competitor in the coming years, not just at sea, but more generally, with Trump Administration documents making it plain that there has been a step-change in US perceptions.[733] In 2015, the US Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) noted, "China's growing global interest will place pressure on the military to respond to crises where Chinese interests are at risk."[734] The ONI observed that "every major PLA(N) surface combatant currently under construction is capable of embarking a helicopter, an addition that supports over-the-horizon (OTH) targeting, antisubmarine warfare (ASW), and search and rescue."[735] The US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) pointed out in 2019 that China's navy had also begun addressing its longstanding logistical Achilles heel: "At present, China has at least 10 fleet replenishment ships operational, with more under construction."[736] More explicit pronouncements from the US Government have emerged in the past two years from a variety of sources.[737]

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733. Zoe Leung and Michael Depp, "An American Consensus: Time to Confront China," *The Diplomat*, January 17, 2019, https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/an-american-consensus-time-to-confront-china/; and Fareed Zakaria, "The New China Scare: Why America Shouldn't Panic about Its Latest Challenger," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-12-06/new-china-scare.

734. DoD, ONI, *The PLA Navy: New Capabilities and Missions for the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Office of Naval Intelligence, 2015), 47.

735. DoD, ONI, 14.

736. DoD, DIA, *China Military Power: Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win*, January 2019, 71, https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf.

737. Mark T. Esper, remarks at the 56th Munich Security Conference, Munich, Germany, February 15, 2020, https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Speeches/Speech/Article/2085577/remarks-by-secretary-of-defense-mark-t-esper-at-the-munich-security-conference/; Jim Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge*, 2018, 2, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf; US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2019 Report to Congress of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission* (Washington, DC: US Government Publishing Office, 2019), 287-88, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2019-

The Center for a New American Security (CNAS) provides a strident public warning of China's naval hybridization. In a multi-author 2017 report, the CNAS made the case that China will possess a blue-water navy by 2030 and will reshape international politics as we know it.[738] Other authors note that China may not be planning simply for war-fighting, but also for taskings laid out by the New Historic Mission, such as HA/DR, non-combatant evacuation operations, and counter-piracy/sea line of communication (SLOC) protection.[739] This facet should not be ignored.

The rub lies, of course, in the fact that a navy capable of evacuating citizens anywhere is also likely to be capable of other operations—differentiating between offensive and defensive capabilities is unclear and becomes yet another path to the security dilemma.[740] "Optimists will argue that this incorporation of humanitarian norms into Chinese foreign policy is to be welcomed and supported. Pessimists will see nationalistic overtones and anticipate the overseas deployment of Chinese military forces

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11/2019%20Annual%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf; DoD, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region*, June 2019, 8, https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF; and *United States Strategic Approach to the People's Republic of China*, May 2020, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/U.S.-Strategic-Approach-to-The-Peoples-Republic-of-China-Report-5.20.20-1.pdf.

738. Dr. Patrick M. Cronin et al., *Beyond the* San Hai*: The Challenge of China's Blue-Water Navy* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2017), 2, 11, https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNASReport-BlueWaterNavy-Finalb.pdf?mtime=20170512142318.

739. Kristen Gunness and Samuel K. Berkowitz, "PLA Navy Planning for Out of Area Deployments," in *The People's Liberation Army and Contingency Planning in China*, ed. Andrew C. Scobell, Arthur S. Ding, Phillip C. Saunders, and Scott W. Harold (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2015), 326-27; and Jonas Parello-Plesner and Mathieu Duchâtel, *China's Strong Arm: Protecting Citizens and Assets Abroad*, Adelphi Series 451 (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015), 16.

740. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 199-201.

in coming decades for narrow national interests."[741] A commitment to the military defense of global interests necessarily suggests that "the PLA Navy should have an unlimited operational range."[742]

For advocates of the far-seas scenario, the assumption is that a global China would be an unmitigated challenge to US interests and dominance, values and power. The response, then, would need to be equally aggressive: "This [a globally active Chinese navy] could provide opportunities for the US Navy to complement its approach of denial and cost imposition by also implementing a strategy of directly attacking the PLAN maritime strategy by holding PLAN forces at risk in the far seas."[743] A far-seas PLA Navy thus offers a future that would be quite distinct from the near-seas scenarios.

A Fleet for All Seasons: Near Seas by Default, Far Seas when Desired

Between the scenario of China concentrating on the near seas and the scenario of China concentrating on the far seas is a moderate scenario that sees China, while still concentrating on the near seas, developing and deploying far-seas capabilities, not as a standing practice (à la the United States), but to specific places and for specific purposes. This would be a blue-water PLA Navy, but one whose expeditionary capabilities would not be on permanent display. Authors advocating this future point out that both China's

741. Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel, 16.

742. Daniel M. Hartnett and Frederic Vellucci, "Toward a Maritime Security Strategy: An Analysis of Chinese Views since the Early 1990s," in *The Chinese Navy: Expanding Capabilities, Evolving Roles*, ed. Phillip C. Saunders et al. (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011), 101.

743. Bryan Clark and Jordan Wilson, "Strategic Competition between the United States and China in the Maritime Realm," in *The Gathering Pacific Storm: Emerging US-China Strategic Competition in Defense Technological and Industrial Development*, ed. Tai Ming Cheung and Thomas Mahnken, Rapid Communications in Conflict and Security Series (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2018), 152.

enduring security concerns in the near seas and its growing and strategically vital concerns in the far seas will necessitate attention to both.[744] They also point out how, after twenty-five years of intense modernization, the PLA Navy still lacks a number of crucial capabilities to be able to truly sustain blue-water operations.

Based on authoritative Chinese statements, the far-seas missions facing Beijing for the foreseeable future include HA/DR and non-combatant evacuations, limited security threats (e.g., piracy), peacekeeping operations, SLOC protection, and defense of China's status in the world.[745] Michael D. Swaine notes these tasks all require "a relatively sophisticated blue water navy that can operate for sustained periods and defend itself beyond any support directly provided from the Chinese mainland."[746] For such a navy to accomplish such objectives, however, China's force still requires serious improvements.

In 2019, Christopher D. Yung laid out the key impediments: a lack of a uniform force of platforms capable of satellite communications—the navy is currently too much of a hodgepodge of different vessels of varying capabilities; the low base from which the PLA Navy Marine Corps is expanding, meaning full strength will not be achieved for perhaps a decade; vulnerability to attack outside of home waters; poor ASW and mine-clearing capabilities; a lack of an overseas base network and its associated support

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744. Christopher H. Sharman, *China Moves Out: Stepping Stones toward a New Maritime Strategy*, China Strategic Perspectives 9 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2015), 5-6.

745. Michael D. Swaine, "The PLA Navy's Strategic Transformation to the 'Far Seas': How Far, How Threatening, and What's to be Done?" (paper presented at the US Naval War College China Maritime Studies Institute's "Going Global? The PLA Navy in a Time of Strategic Transformation" Conference, Newport, RI, May 7, 2019), 2, https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/05/07/pla-navy-s-strategic-transformation-to-far-seas-how-far-how-threatening-and-what-s-to-be-done-pub-80588.

746. Swaine, 2.

capabilities; and the absence of a doctrine for understanding how naval forces are to be deployed overseas operationally, strategically, and politically.[747] For China to go from near-seas capabilities to far-seas operations would require the transformation of the entire fleet from a submarine-heavy force (as the PLA Navy has been) to one emphasizing surface ships, including aircraft carriers.

This third scenario thus suggests a PLA Navy that is not gearing up to become something like the globally expeditionary US Navy. A 2019 report from the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies posited that, while China may indeed be devoting more attention to blue-water operations, the real purpose of China's naval development is not to operate in distant oceans as a matter of routine, but to *be able to do so* when necessary.[748] Sidharth Kaushal and Magdalena Markiewicz argue that what China is really after is the ability to control the near seas and the ability to contest the far seas.[749] It would explain the PLA Navy's rather odd force structure, which can seem like two different fleets: "a 'mosquito fleet' comprised of numerous cheap redundant vessels capable of ASuW [anti-surface warfare] and ASW roles in China's near seas in conjunction with land-based support; and a smaller fleet of more individually potent

747. Christopher D. Yung, "Building a World Class Expeditionary Force," testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission on "A 'World-Class' Military: Assessing China's Global Military Ambitions," Washington, DC, June 20, 2019, 11-13, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Yung_USCC%20Testimony_FINAL.pdf. On the problem of China's lack of overseas bases, see Morgan Clemens, "The Maritime Silk Road and the PLA" (paper presented at the CNA "China as a 'Maritime Power'" Conference, Arlington, VA, July 28-29, 2015), 12, https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/Maritime-Silk-Road.pdf; Abraham M. Denmark, "PLA Logistics, 2004-11: Lessons Learned in the Field," in Kamphausen, Lai, and Tanner, 298, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12017.11; Andrew Erickson and Lyle Goldstein, "Gunboats for China's New 'Grand Canals'? Probing the Intersection of Beijing's Naval and Oil Security Policies," *Naval War College Review* 62, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 62; and Swaine, 3.

748. Kaushal and Markiewicz, 10.

749. Kaushal and Markiewicz, 5-6.

DDGs [guided-missile destroyers] and FFGs [guided-missile frigates] that can perform escort and strike missions beyond the first island chain."[750]

Whither Threat Diffusion? Chinese Naval Deployments and Potential Futures

The three scenarios laid out above present different futures for the PLA Navy's presence and activities, implying different Chinese state ambitions and capabilities, which in turn suggest different US responses to Chinese naval development and to the wider bilateral relationship. The PLA Navy is already a sizeable force; as noted above, it is in terms of sheer numbers the largest in the region already and perhaps the largest in the world. Investment persistence, as always, plays an important enabling role in the consideration of threat diffusion. Here, I will consider the three scenarios' implications for threat diffusion.

The near-seas scenario sees the Chinese navy concentrating in the Yellow, East China, and South China Seas (from north to south). Within these waters lie a number of disputes over land formations, exclusive economic zones, and maritime rights. A formidable PLA Navy concentrated in regional waters might, at first glance, seem to assuage US fears about a global Chinese competitor. It would mean a PLA Navy not contesting freedom of the seas or US operations in such places as the Indian Ocean, the

750. Kaushal and Markiewicz, 51. It echoes an observation Thomas G. Mahnken made while serving as discussant for a co-authored conference paper of mine in 2012. For additional warnings not to take a simplistic either-or view of Chinese naval development (far seas vs. near seas), see James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*, Routledge Series: Naval Policy and History 40 (London: Routledge, 2008), 125; and Isaac B. Kardon, "Bases, Places, and a 'Security Guarantee' for the Belt and Road Initiative," testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission on "A 'World-Class' Military: Assessing China's Global Military Ambitions," Washington, DC, June 20, 2019, 1, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Kardon_USCC%20Testimony_FINAL.pdf.

Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East, or elsewhere. Furthermore, it would suggest a Chinese state that is much more modest about its role on the world stage, eschewing the opportunity to contest for primacy with the United States. Perhaps Beijing could pave the way for a great-power navy by doing the opposite of threat diffusion: concentrating force in home waters—a perfectly reasonable limitation of ambition—and assuaging a global superpower with global commitments. Not only would diffusion be unnecessary; it would, in fact, be counterproductive.

On the other hand, such optimism could be misplaced, for it is in the Asia-Pacific where China and the United States have their present and persistent disagreements—over the Taiwan issue and general freedom-of-navigation concerns, particularly in the South China Sea. A concentrated PLA Navy might only increase tensions and suggest to Washington that Beijing is preparing to add serious muscle to its rhetoric: this would then put the United States in the position of having to respond in kind or risk regional allies and partners losing confidence in America's ability to defend mutual interests in the Asia-Pacific.

By this logic, then, threat diffusion could be a productive act in mitigating tensions if China were to disperse its navy, especially for its own stated non-war objectives of collective anti-piracy measures, HA/DR, etc. As Ross has pointed out, however, China may not feel the existential security necessary to diffuse its naval power if it is facing a sizeable US military presence (naval and otherwise) so close to home waters and the country's cultural, demographic, economic, and political heartland. In

such conditions, threat diffusion would simply be an impractical option for Beijing in the face of a resident great power.

The far-seas scenario sees the Chinese navy deploying abroad in a manner and with a frequency approaching something like that of the US Navy. In this scenario, if the Chinese state were to use naval power for purposes not antithetical to the dominant naval power's interests, then far-seas deployments may actually help mold the perception of China as a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system. This would be threat diffusion at its finest. If, however, a globe-trotting PLA Navy were to come into conflict with US interests, then it could end up being a replay of the Cold War: whether a global PLA Navy would be more bark than bite, as the Soviet Navy was, would be the key question.

The analogy often used for US-PRC (naval) rivalry is that of Anglo-German relations in the early 1900s.[751] If China continues to give contradictory signals in overseas operations, a more accurate analogy might be Cold War-era US-Soviet relations; however, this is only slightly more comforting, as the Cold War was not without its fair share of crises (and, ominously for China, the Soviet Union's ultimate collapse). But

751. For examples, see Christopher Coker, *The Improbable War: China, the United States, and the Continuing Logic of Great Power Conflict* (London: Hurst, 2014); "Could Asia Really Go to War Over These?", *The Economist*, September 22-28, 2012, https://www.economist.com/leaders/2012/09/22/could-asia-really-go-to-war-over-these; Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Future of US-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 7-45; James R. Holmes, "An Ominous Centennial: The First World War," *The Diplomat*, April 12, 2013, https://thediplomat.com/2013/04/an-ominous-centennial-world-war-i/; Christopher Layne, "The Shadow of the Past: Why the Sino-American Relationship Resembles the Pre-1914 Anglo-German Antagonism," https://politicalscience.nd.edu/assets/209445/nobel_revision_final.pdf; and Margaret MacMillan, "The Great War's Ominous Echoes," *New York Times*, December 13, 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/14/opinion/macmillan-the-great-wars-ominous-echoes.html. I am guilty of such a comparison myself: Brian C. Chao, "East Asia's Lessons from World War I," *The Diplomat*, July 16, 2014, https://thediplomat.com/2014/07/east-asias-lessons-from-world-war-i/.

what if the better analogy were the Anglo-French relationship examined in chapter 2? What if China could strike a middle path in which it maintains a powerful-enough navy in home waters for deterrent purposes, while deploying enough naval power abroad (for common purposes not contrary to US interests, a true "win-win") to assuage US policymakers staring down the world's largest military from across a marginal sea?

This would look similar to the third scenario discussed above: a Chinese navy that will still focus on the near seas, but that will also send a substantive portion of its fleet to the far seas—to prosecute operations that are accepted or tolerated by the United States. The third scenario of a Chinese navy with a near-seas orientation and far-seas operations that are politically palatable to the dominant naval power, even if not relatively limited in geographic scope and temporal duration, seems the most likely scenario by which China could achieve military hybridity, and do so via the combination of investment persistence and threat diffusion.

Policy Implications

The implications explored in the discussion on China deserve expansion as more general considerations. For a continental great power seeking to win the prize that is successful military hybridization, there should be a more nuanced appreciation for the sacrifices that must be made to both build a navy and to actually get to use it. Continental great powers should already know the reasons why they should not develop naval power; such reasons may seem blatantly obvious. But after overcoming those reasons to embark on the hybridization journey, political will and financial support for naval development

must be sustained for a long period of time, since creating a navy in the top flight of world powers is far more difficult to begin with than doing the equivalent for an army, and pursuing naval development is that much harder in a country with a strong bias towards land power.

Simply being an autocracy is not necessarily helpful, for not only are autocrats arguably less stable than democrats, but autocrats may see no reason to spend financial and political capital on a military service that has traditionally not been physically close to the political power center.[752] What is needed is continuous political support—whatever the regime type—to maintain momentum long after the initiator of naval development has left the scene. Imperial Russia is instructive: after the death of Emperor Peter I (the Great), none of his equally absolutist successors supported the Russian navy like he did.

Investment persistence is necessary, but so is threat diffusion. A continental great power presumably spends all this effort, money, and time to build a navy so that it can do things with that navy. But the danger is that the continental great power's goals will clash with those of the dominant naval power, which is very likely to be alarmed at what it views as a frivolity on the part of the continental great power. Winning silver is not the same as losing gold: the continental great power must exercise the discipline and restraint to pursue its national interest without challenging the dominant naval power and inciting a hostile reaction, up to and including war. Careful thought must be given to where the navy is deployed and for what purposes, as well as ensuring that tactful diplomacy can

752. Edward N. Luttwak, *Coup d'État: A Practical Handbook*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 68.

assure the dominant naval power that the continental great power's new navy is not being used to undermine the former's interests and geographic spheres of influence. France serves as a model in this regard: not perfect in their attempts to evade British hostility, the French nevertheless were largely able to advance national objectives with a naval force strong enough to hold its own against Britain.

For the dominant naval power, the policy implications may appear unpalatable at first, but they may, in fact, augur a rosier long-term picture. The dominant naval power should not be blind to the basic fact that the continental great power may have perfectly legitimate interests that require naval force. Rather than behave harshly and self-fulfill a dire prophecy, the dominant naval power should act graciously towards the continental great-power hybridizer, and perhaps even encourage any of the hybridizer's naval activity that advances mutual interests. By showing that there is room in the international system for another navy, while making it clear that the top spot is occupied, the dominant naval power may be able to allow the continental great-power hybridizer to enjoy more of the fruits of its status, so that it is not so dissatisfied as to cause a scene at the dinner table.

It is important to reiterate what I noted in the introduction about the role of interests. It is conflicting interests in overlapping geographic spaces, not overlapping geographic spaces per se, that accounts for continental-naval tensions. Ross's continental-maritime argument on a US-PRC condominium in East Asia should be read as

commenting on geographically informed interests, not geography itself.[753] Both Beijing and Washington have vital interests in the region and, while America's are less consequential in a very relative sense, they are still extremely important to the United States. It is these still-unresolved conflicts of interest that heighten the negative and increasingly hostile threat perception that both China and the United States have of each other. Whether these overlapping interests can be sorted out peacefully and to each side's (grudging) satisfaction is not certain, but avoidance of yet another fulfillment of the "Thucydides trap" may require painful compromises for both sides in the years ahead.

Military Hybridization and Theoretical Implications

This dissertation holds implications for various schools of inquiry in the academic study of great powers, and not those simply limited to political science. From the traditional political science scholarship on great-power relations and domestic politics to geography and naval history, the issues of military hybridization and naval development touch upon many facets of the social sciences. If human civilization is a cake, naval history is a slice, not a layer, touching upon many aspects of social relations—commerce, culture, domestic politics, the environment, finance, foreign relations, law, migration, public health, technology, and yes, war—that are sometimes obscured by traditional

753. Robert S. Ross, "The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century," *International Security* 23, no. 4 (Spring 1999): 81-118, https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.library.upenn.edu/article/446965/pdf.

histories narrowly focused on battles, heroes, and ships.[754] This section, however, will restrict itself to the most pertinent disciplines in political science and naval history.

Great-power Politics and Hybridization

As discussed in the introduction, studies of great powers tend to either aggregate different types of military force into a simplistic measure of military power or rely (both explicitly and implicitly) on measures that capture only army strength. Furthermore, the understandable bias for big, impactful events means that wars tend to be studied at the expense of the pre-war peace, when extant military conditions are treated as exogenous, as Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro point out with some frustration.[755] Finally, while many studies acknowledge the interactive dynamic between various great powers, scholars tend to privilege the reactions of other powers as decisive vis-à-vis the actions of a protagonist—this is seen in the preventive war literature, in which Debs and Monteiro's aforementioned objections are couched.

This dissertation militates against such assumptions. First, the idea of military power simply needs to be disaggregated and approached in a more nuanced fashion. Different types of military force possess different qualities and deficiencies in prosecuting national policy; they are not interchangeable. Three large and powerful militaries can be quite different in capabilities and effectiveness depending on the

754. I heard this analogy given by a speaker on a panel at the United States Naval Academy's McMullen Naval History Symposium on September 19, 2019, in Annapolis, MD; I confess I forgot which specific panelist said it, and I apologize for thus being unable to give credit where it is due.

755. Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro, "Known Unknowns: Power Shifts, Uncertainty, and War," *International Organization* 68, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 1-31.

strategic objective and on how they are configured, e.g., one a land power, one a naval power, one a hybrid power. These differences have real-world implications for the conduct of world affairs and the shape of the international system.

Second, this dissertation shows the importance of serious analysis of peacetime military developments in scholarship that encompasses international security, naval and military science, security studies, strategic studies, and war and peace studies. With the exception of works focused on civil-military relations, military innovation, and technology, the general preference for studying militaries at war is perhaps too narrow, and there should be an appreciation for studying militaries before war, however dull such a topic may appear. There is no compelling reason to draw a dividing line between peaceful preparation and bellicose battling.

Related to this, assumptions of exogeneity between peacetime dynamics and wartime operations should be questioned: while naval development arguably did not trigger a war in any of the case studies examined herein, it very clearly shaped the contours of both the broader political game in which great-power actors jostled and the progress of the wars that did break out. This does not mean, however, that the outcome of a war can be taken prima facie as evidence of the success or failure of a belligerent's pre-war military hybridization—that would be an equally oversimplified assumption.

Third, this dissertation restores some agency to the hybridizing power by showing that it can exercise greater control over the dominant naval power's perception and reaction than might otherwise be thought. Investment persistence and threat diffusion are

both choices, and they must be actively made by the continental great power. It is not a given that a continental great power will fail to build naval power, nor is it to be assumed that any such failure will come in the form of the dominant naval power's putting a halt to hybridization, directly or indirectly. Contrary to some forms of power transition theory and other International Relations theories, there is no determinative process here: things do not have to be a certain way and, when the consequence is great-power war, the possibility of avoiding it ought to be appreciated.

Finally, the specific intellectual query that gave rise to this dissertation topic comes from Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson's 2010 *International Security* piece investigating whether states are more likely to balance against continental great powers or the dominant naval power. They explicitly do not consider hybrid powers, but introducing this third type of great power complicates their investigations. Levy and Thompson find, among other discoveries, that the stronger the dominant naval power is, the more likely it is to have great-power allies.[756] In the case of France, however, one sees a continental great-power hybridizer succeeding, necessarily decreasing the dominant naval power's relative power position (so, investment persistence), while simultaneously joining with that same dominant naval power to pursue common interests (so, threat diffusion). My theory on continental great-power military hybridization thus suggests a paradox: it is possible for the dominant naval power to both decline in relative power and gain a political partner to pursue common objectives, and this is made possible

756. Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea: Do States Ally against the Leading Global Power?" *International Security* 35, no. 1 (Summer 2010): 33-34.

if the continental great power pursues a combination of investment persistence and threat diffusion.

The dissertation also suggests that an answer to Levy and Thompson's speculative question on how likely hybrid powers are to face balancing by other powers may depend heavily on the dominant naval power's perception, thus making threat diffusion all the more critical.[757] If the hybrid power does not practice threat diffusion, then it will face balancing by the dominant naval power, which has historically colluded with other continental great powers to restrain a perceived naval challenger. If the hybrid power does practice threat diffusion, however, then the dominant naval power can be assuaged, so the hybrid power can at least escape the pincer movement of both land- and seaward adversaries; it would then remain for the hybrid to successfully keep landward threats at bay, so as not to allow to atrophy the naval arm that it has so studiously strengthened.

Putting the *Geo* Back in Politics

In the introduction, I bemoaned geography's fall from centrality in the American academic discipline of political science. Geography is simultaneously criticized as being deterministic in its causality and not being causal at all because it does not vary with an effect. Geography is tainted because of its perverse adoption by some gratuitously conceited and narcissistic Germans in the 1930s, even though its utility remains well appreciated by other academic disciplines. It is true that geography has appeared in various guises since the behavioral revolution in American political science one-half

757. Levy and Thompson, 26n58.

century ago, but, like the many scholars of yesteryear who dared to think big thoughts when pondering human civilization, geography seems unfashionable and outdated.

This dissertation re-reiterates the importance of geography on the practice of politics and the conduct of human affairs generally. Across space and time, countries that find themselves facing the same set of geographic circumstances also face the same set of geographic challenges. While culture, demography, extant capabilities, natural resources, political context, and so forth are necessarily different, these myriad distinctions should not blind us to the common geographic realities that political leaders face. It is perhaps time American political science stopped both ignoring and taking for granted the inescapable role of geography in shaping state perceptions and behavior, in bounding the realm of the possible and the probable, and in framing the canvas on which great powers treat with each other in hues and tones that mix, clash, or harmonize.

Domestic Politics, Naval History, and Military Hybridization

This dissertation has put great emphasis on domestic politics: investment persistence and threat diffusion are choices made by political actors and are usually not faits accomplis imposed on them by external forces. This is particularly true of continental great powers seeking to build strong navies: whatever the impetus is for even considering naval development, that motivation is usually one that can be rationalized away as being of less importance than whatever perennial landward security concerns happen to be vexing the state. In other words, just because a continental great power has

good reasons in the abstract to acquire naval power does not mean that doing so is in fact the best strategic choice to make or that it is the one ultimately chosen.

If naval development within an army-centric military can be considered an innovation (in the sense of an unfamiliar military technology bound to meet strong, bureaucratically entrenched opposition), then something like the civil-military model associated with Barry R. Posen appears throughout the chapters in which one sees investment persistence. French naval development was supported by King Louis-Philippe's son, a rising star in the navy who shielded and protected officers who, like him, were enthusiastic about technological creativity. Later, Emperor Napoléon III encouraged like-minded naval administrators, giving his imprimatur to continued French emphasis on technological development, so much so that the emperor would be criticized for it after the land defeat of 1870. The *Jeune École* (Young School), caught in the torrent of early Third Republic domestic politics, enjoyed support from the liberals (but was, therefore, attacked by the conservatives).

In Germany, Emperor Wilhelm II supported Grand Adm. Alfred von Tirpitz like a rock for nearly two decades as the latter transformed the navy and systematically sidelined critics. In the much different environment of mid-twentieth-century Moscow, Adm. of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Sergei Gorshkov cannily played politics to remain in the favor of his succession of civilian masters for thirty years. Today, it is believed that Chinese President Xi Jinping is personally supportive of his country's continued naval

modernization, whatever his admirals might think (though I suspect they have no objections).

The critical intervention of civilian leaders was more easily accomplished because, with the exception of certain time periods in the French case study, the regimes under study have been authoritarian. That thalassocracies tend to have more or less democratic regimes is an oft-cited (and self-congratulatory) reason Anglo-American naval historians use when explaining why authoritarian continental powers have historically failed at naval power. The supposed relationship between naval power, "maritime culture," and democratic forms of governance is a theme cherished by naval scholars, picking up on an observation from Aristotle.[758]

Authoritarian societies, so the argument runs, are not the most welcoming to things like open commerce and a wealthy, non-landed merchant class. Societies with open economies and a relatively comfortable non-aristocratic population are more likely to possess representative government, and an easy way for a society to have both an open economy and a relatively wealthy population base not reliant on a nobility is to be heavily engaged in seaborne commerce and the protection of said commerce. Such arguments tend to be bound up over issues of national culture and the dispositions, habits, and worldviews of entire peoples. As noted earlier, I ignore such variables in this dissertation for reasons of circular logic and ex post rationalization, but I simply note that

758. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1321a5-13. Lambert, 8-14, 323-29, offers a contemporary explication of this argument. It should be noted that Aristotle was not exactly an enthusiast for democracy (as the concept was understood and practiced in his time). Naval power's relationship to political regime type is a clear example of the cake analogy.

France's success in naval power for a century raises serious questions as to whether the thalassocratic argument also suffers from empirical uncertainty, even if one were to assume the idea to be logically sound. That China happens to be another authoritarian state pursuing military development in a maritime environment with which it has historically been unfamiliar does not mean it is doomed to fail.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that, while this dissertation is a work of political science, the France chapter in particular holds implications for naval historians. For too long, scholarship in the field has been dominated by Anglo-American writers with Anglo-American worldviews on what naval power is and what it is not. A problem that has run through this body of literature like a red thread has been the assumption that only the world's dominant naval power is a true naval power. Given how difficult it is for continental great powers to hybridize, naval historians tend to ignore the reality of hybrid powers in history. What the France chapter has done is to show that hybrid powers actually exist, that countries can be naval powers without having the world's best navy, and that continental-cum-hybrid military powers have earned a place in the glorious annals of naval history. One does not need to be the best; just being "good enough" can be good enough.

The France chapter also highlights the pressing necessity of Anglo-American-dominated (and English-language-dominated) scholarship to become more ecumenical and to wade into the bodies of scholarship produced in other languages and written from perspectives other than the very top. A more nuanced appreciation of military power is

necessary, not only in political science, but in history too, and the discipline of naval history specifically would be greatly enriched by an appreciation for how actors to whom naval power may not seem a natural vocation can nonetheless achieve significant and substantive goals in the maritime realm.

Forward, Further

Like all scholastic endeavors, this project is not really finished, since it causes one to wish to explore other issues that I have not had the space or time to address. The limitations imposed on this dissertation in the context of a Doctor of Philosophy degree program have meant, for example, that I have not fulfilled my initial desire to apply my theory to cases from before 1801, such as the (Eastern) Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and post-Reconquista Spain, as well as China in the 1400s, France in the 1600s-1700s, and Russia in the 1700s. A test of external validity in the temporal sense is a project worth pursuing, especially going back past circa 1500, when no truly international system existed. Within the context of a necessarily smaller regional political system, does it become easier for a continental great power to hybridize its military? What roles, exactly, would investment persistence and especially threat diffusion play in a more geopolitically limited environment? Would the motivation for naval development change altogether if there were no longer a need to make trans-oceanic voyages? Exploring how this dissertation's conclusions fit over a longer arc of history would be ideal.

A second pathway is to pursue the "twin" of this project and examine the critical factors and dynamics at play when naval great powers seek to build powerful armies, i.e.,

pursue their version of military hybridization. This would incorporate some of the great powers ignored in this dissertation, such as Imperial Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States in the 1801-present timeframe, as well as classical Athens, the Dutch Republic, Portugal, and Venice from before 1801. Do the factors of investment persistence and threat diffusion apply, and in the same way? What other factors unique to naval great powers could allow for an even more holistic appreciation of military transformation? Is it in fact easier for naval great powers to build strong armies than it is for continental great powers to build strong navies? Such a study would allow for a comprehensive theory of military hybridization, something that I believe has not been attempted.

A third pathway is for greater engagement with naval history and science. It is hoped that this dissertation will not only start a debate among naval scholars about history as it is understood, but also about how they uncover and reveal that history for everyone (the France chapter will be published in *Navies in Multipolar Worlds: From the Age of Sail to the Present*, an edited volume in Routledge's naval policy and history series). Naval history is inherently part of the trend of global history, and a society of scholars who are more representative of and who can better represent the full, long history of human activities at sea will only further enrich our understanding of ourselves.

Winning Silver

Planet Earth's last true frontier is its seas—there is something about the unceasing roar of the oceans that perpetually beckons humankind to the great unknown. Witness the

enduring appeal of works by authors as varied as Homer, Basho, and Melville, or consider the success in our own millennium of the British Broadcasting Corp.'s *Blue Planet* documentary and its sequel, *Blue Planet II*.[759] Continental great powers do not seem any less drawn to the sea, even if their fascination is decidedly less mythologized or romanticized. Indeed, as this dissertation has shown, continental great powers would very much like to go to sea—to satisfy political and strategic goals, no doubt, but perhaps also to satiate the sense of curiosity innate in human beings generally.

As China embarks on its own journey of military hybridization, its course and speed remain unclear, perhaps to China's leaders themselves. Many factors will influence Beijing's perceptions and actions in the coming years, as they will Washington's. It has never been my intention to argue that investment persistence and threat diffusion are the *only* factors one should consider; as the naval history cake analogy suggests, many complex, dynamic, endogenous issues shape human society and people's individual and collective behavior within it. But investment persistence and threat diffusion have been very important in recent history and will remain so in China's future.

This dissertation shows how continental great powers have succeeded or failed at military hybridization. This dissertation shows how the factors of investment persistence and threat diffusion, existing in tandem, can help a continental great power navigate the unfamiliar waters of naval development. This dissertation shows that hybrid great powers

759. For more down-to-earth celebrations, see The Lonely Island, "I'm on a Boat," featuring T-Pain, June 16, 2009, music video, https://youtu.be/avaSdC0QOUM; and my favorite song: Looking Glass, "Brandy (You're a Fine Girl)," track 2 on *Looking Glass*, Epic Records KE 31320, 1972, long play, https://elliotlurie.com/elliot-lurie.

can and do exist, and that their creation has as much to do with their own actions as with the reactions of others. This dissertation shows how hybrid great powers can live alongside each other in peace—not necessarily amity or concord—but at least the absence of war or even the absence of a general hostility.

This dissertation uses history to illuminate possible futures and, in so doing, holds up a mirror to them. Naval development and the benefits of military hybridity that it bestows seem an irresistible siren song, and many a continental great power has sought to acquire naval power, with some finding their reach exceeding their grasp. Nineteenth-century France, Imperial Germany, Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, contemporary China—in the centuries to come, there will surely be others launching out onto the cerulean waves. "The sea that calls all things unto her calls me, and I must embark."[760]

760. Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), 8, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/dul1.ark:/13960/t0vq85h0m.

Appendix
German Shipbuilding Plans and British Decision-making

That Germany's naval construction was enshrined in a series of public laws made it a little easier for the United Kingdom to calculate Berlin's shipbuilding goals, fleet composition, and construction pace and progress, as well as to compare amendments to original stipulations. In the dozen years up to the Great War, one sees an increasing obsession in London with minute comparisons of the two countries' shipbuilding progress and future plans, as well as heated debates within the British Cabinet over how threatening the German navy was. This appendix provides an illustration of the basic shipbuilding facts (as understood by British decision-makers) that informed the United Kingdom's perception of and response to German naval development. The below tables show the dry figures that confronted Whitehall, complementing more visceral reactions, such as that of King-Emperor Edward VII in 1904, when he was treated to an ostentatious display of Emperor Wilhelm II's new fleet in Germany.

1902

Presenting the 1903-4 naval budget for approval, First Lord of the Admiralty the Earl of Selborne opined that the new German navy could only be built against the United Kingdom. Selborne called for a new naval base to be established at Scapa Flow and provided the estimates of British and German ship construction in table A.1. Selborne further opined that the German vessels either under construction or approved would not

be ready until 1908.[761] This was one of the first instances of British attention to the growing German navy, and one that still took a rather casual view of Berlin's activities, relative to the French and Russian fleets.

Table A.1. British and German ship construction, 1902

	Battleships			Cruisers			Destroyers		
	B	BDG	A	B	BDG	A	B	BDG	A
UK	44	12	2	4	22	2	110	13	9
GMN	13	7	26	2	3	10	23	9	84

Note: *B* = built, *BDG* = building, and *A* = approved.

1904

The Russo-Japanese War's lopsided outcome at sea caused a re-evaluation of the global naval balance. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs the Marquess of Lansdowne argued against a drawdown in naval expenditure, pointing out that Russia's defeat meant simply that Germany had replaced it in calculations of Britain's two-power standard (possession of at least ten percent more battleships than the next two largest navies combined). Lansdowne's figures on British and German ship construction, while less thorough than the information given in table A.1, nonetheless provided an update on the state of fleet construction.

Table A.2. British and German battleship construction, 1904

	Battleships			Destroyers
	Built	Building	Approved	
UK	51	12	N/A	160
GMN	18	2	2	113

761. UK Cabinet Office, Photographic Copies of Cabinet Papers, 1880-1916, CAB 37/63/142 (1902), http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017.12/1326176. Subsequent citations to this collection will appear simply as "CAB 37/[Vol.]/[No.] ([Year])."

No systematically specific information was given as to the destroyers' construction status, though it was noted that Germany only possessed 70-80 at the moment, with a "considerable number" of the remainder not expected to be completed "for some years." Lansdowne also noted that Germany was slated to build eighteen more battleships after 1909.[762]

1906-7

By this time, German naval development had been recognized as a full-blown problem. In the middle of 1906, First Lord of the Admiralty the Lord Tweedmouth wrote in a "very secret" memorandum his opposition to a drawdown in naval expenditures, pointing out that not only were other navies making exertions to improve, but that the Royal Navy needed a particular superiority to fulfill its global obligations. Tweedmouth offered this update on British and German battleship plans (the figures for 1907 onwards were projections).

Table A.3. British and German battleship numbers, 1906-19

	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1919
UK	51	54	53	56	59	62	60
GMN	30	32	32	36	38	40	33

In 1907, Tweedmouth offered in a comprehensive report on the German navy more details on these projections: whereas Germany had 6 battleships, 9 cruisers, and 18 destroyers at the moment, it was expected to possess 33 battleships, 108 cruisers, and 44

762. CAB 37/69/32 (1904).

destroyers by 1919. Given Britain's emphasis on maintaining the two-power standard, Berlin's plans would have required a tremendous response on London's part.[763]

The situation was made worse when a memorandum from November 1907 brought the alarming news that Germany had decided to lower its battleship replacement rate from every twenty-five years to every twenty years, accelerating construction. By 1920, Germany would have 38 battleships; coupled with France's projected 30 battleships by the same year (for a total of 68), this meant that the United Kingdom would need to have 74 battleships by 1920 to maintain the two-power standard. As it was, Britain was projected to have only 27 battleships by 1920, meaning it would need to make up a 47-ship difference in the span of thirteen years.[764] All this was compounded by the fact that Britain had a global empire to police, but Germany's battleships were all concentrated at home.

1909-10

A sign of Germany's growing importance and annoyance to the United Kingdom's naval position was a memorandum prepared by new First Lord of the Admiralty Reginald McKenna, who devoted more time to discussing Germany than the four other foreign countries mentioned in the memorandum combined. Focusing on battleships, McKenna wrote that, by 1912, the United Kingdom was expected to have either 39 battleships (of which 16 would be dreadnoughts) or 43 battleships (of which 20 would be dreadnoughts), the figure dependent on final House of Commons approval of

763. CAB 37/89/87 (1907).
764. CAB 37/90/101 (1907).

four additional dreadnoughts. Germany, by contrast, would have 27 battleships, of which 17 would be dreadnoughts. Not only was Germany well within striking distance of the increasingly unrealistic two-power standard, but its modern fleet, pound for pound, was a very worrying threat within striking distance of the British Isles.[765] It was in 1909 that the two-power standard was quietly dropped for the 60 percent standard: the United Kingdom was to maintain 60 percent superiority *in its home waters* over the German fleet.[766]

This particular memorandum set off a debate that would last into 1910, with McKenna putting forth more alarming German figures and Secretary of State for the Home Department Winston S. Churchill putting forth counterarguments for why the Germans might not attain McKenna's alarming growth. McKenna argued that it was precisely the uncertainty causing his and Churchill's differing interpretations that ought to favor his own, more cautious stance: "We have no certainty at this moment that Germany will have nine or seventeen or any intermediate number of new large armoured ships completed in 1912. She has the power to accelerate or to retard her construction within these limits, and what she may actually do will depend upon her policy."[767]

1912

In hindsight, 1912 proved to be a pivotal year, for it was then that what turned out to be the last serious attempt at an Anglo-German rapprochement failed. In a

765. CAB 37/100/97 (1909).
766. CAB 37/118/6 (1914).
767. CAB 37/103/51 (1910).

"Memorandum on the General Naval Situation" prepared for the Canadian prime minister by the British Admiralty (which was trying to convince Ottawa to contribute to the mother country's naval defense), a table showing current German naval development from its beginning in the 1890s through the projections for 1920 showed the scale of Berlin's improvement:

Table A.4. German fleet size, 1898 and 1920

	Battleships	Large Cruisers	Small Cruisers	Torpedo Boats[a]	Submarines
1898	9	3	28	113	0
1920	41	20	40	144	72

Source: Data from CAB 37/112/100 (1912).
[a]The term *torpedo boat* was sometimes used interchangeably to refer to both torpedo boats and *torpedo boat destroyers* (known simply as *destroyers* today), which were meant to counter torpedo boats. The source document did not clarify which type (if not both) was being counted.

It was in response to improvements such as these that London had dropped the two-power standard for the 60 percent standard in 1909. In 1912, that 60 percent standard was adjusted: instead of 60 percent fleet superiority in home waters, the Admiralty adopted a policy of 50 percent capital-ship superiority in home waters and 60 percent fleet superiority.[768]

1913

The navy estimates presented for approval in 1913 provided what would turn out to be one of the final pre-war glimpses of British views of German naval development.

768. CAB 37/113/129 (1912).

Table A.5. Projected British and German fleet sizes, 1912-20

UK:GMN	Battleships	Battlecruisers	Cruisers	Destroyers	Submarines
April 1912	36:26	4:2	82:26	161:73	67:13
April 1914	46:36	9:5	79:29	217:106	80:41
April 1916	49:39	9:7	88:35	233:108	87:56
April 1918	49:39	9:9	96:49	264:108	101:56
April 1920	49:40	9:11	104:49	270:108	115:56

These projections would hit the reality of war the next year, but they show an attempt to persevere through the German naval challenge. By the time these estimates were presented, there was no discussion, however superficial or transitory, of other navies—the sole focus of British naval planning was the German navy.[769]

769. CAB 37/114/11 (1913).

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