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# Sovereignty, Self-Determination, and State Collapse: Reassessing Yugoslavia

ANGELA KACHUYEVSKI

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REVIEW OF ANA S. TRBOVICH

***A Legal Geography of Yugoslavia's Disintegration***  
(New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 436 pages, \$75.00 hardcover

and

LEONARD J. COHEN AND JASNA DRAGOVIC-SOSO, EDS.

***State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe:  
New Perspectives on Yugoslavia's Disintegration***  
(West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007) 396 pages, \$49.95 paperback

The disintegration of Yugoslavia and its subsequent collapse into violent conflict have been studied widely and from numerous perspectives. A vast literature, ranging from journalistic accounts to detailed scholarly studies, has emerged over the past decade as analysts struggle to explain this complex tragedy. While the reasons for Yugoslavia's demise have been explored from a multitude of angles, there are few comprehensive studies that take a holistic, interdisciplinary approach. Fewer still attempt to place the former communist

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country's dissolution within the broader conceptual frameworks of sovereignty and self-determination, as well as state weakness and state collapse.

The publication of two new books has begun to fill this gap. The first, *A Legal Geography of Yugoslavia's Disintegration*, by Ana S. Trbovich, Director of the Center for European Integration and Management of Public Administration at the University of Singidunum in Belgrade, Serbia, examines the competing forces of state sovereignty and the right to

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self-determination. Drawing upon history and international law and politics, the author explains how state collapse in Yugoslavia led to violent confrontation. The second, *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia's Disintegration*, is edited by Leonard J. Cohen of the School for International Studies at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Jasna Dragovic-Soso of Goldsmiths College, University of London. This book offers a broad, interdisciplinary investigation of the causes of Yugoslavia's collapse, together with a brief comparative analysis that seeks to place the violent outcome within the context of the disintegration of multiethnic socialist states.

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#### INTERNATIONAL LAW: MAKING PEACE OR FUELING CONFLICT?

Trbovich sees the disintegration of Yugoslavia as the consequence of competing claims to the right of national self-determination. She assesses

the importance of numerous factors that contributed to the violence surrounding Yugoslavia's collapse, including the role of external actors such as the European Union. Her conceptual framework centers on international legal principles and draws upon detailed historical evidence to support her analysis.

The author begins with the basic premise that, in the vast majority of cases where the principles of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination clash, the international community has chosen to uphold the former because territorial integrity is seen as the bedrock principle upon which world order is based. In the case of Yugoslavia, however, self-determination for some of the constituent republics was deemed by a few Western states to trump the territorial integrity of the federal state. Further, she argues, the international community applied a flawed interpretation of the right to self-determination, viewing that right as applying to a specific geographic territory, as opposed to a given people. This interpretation contradicts the legal principle embodied in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, which refers to the principle of the "self-determination of peoples." Trbovich argues that the subsequent conflicting interpretations of the right to self-determination held by the Serbs and the Croats led to war and the violent collapse of the state.

International law, as embodied both in state practice and in the UN Charter, relies to a large extent upon the basis of the principle of the sovereign equality of states. Although globalization, economic interdependence, and the rising importance of non-state actors increasingly challenge the international community's grasp of the proper limitations of state sovereignty, it continues to be the most basic and fundamental principle of international law and, more generally, world politics. The two corollary principles that are traditionally related to sovereignty are territorial integrity and non-intervention in domestic affairs. Both of these principles are clearly articulated in the UN Charter, and respect for them has dominated state practice in the post-World War II period. Yet, respect for human rights and the right to self-determination are also prominent principles in the UN Charter. What should be done when these principles clash?

Since the end of the Cold War, the international community has struggled to resolve the tension in the UN Charter between the rights of states and the rights of individuals, most notably in intra-state conflicts that have inflicted enormous suffering on civilians. Efforts to reach consensus on the possible limits of state sovereignty have, most publicly, resulted in the debate over the "responsibility to protect" innocent civilians who, either through the criminality or incompetence of their state,

face grave threats to their security. The assumption underlying this debate is that respect for state sovereignty is not always compatible with respect for human rights.

Is this a fair assumption? Is there an inherent incompatibility between the right of states to enjoy sovereignty, as reflected in the UN Charter's emphasis on the principles of territorial integrity, the right to non-interference in a state's domestic affairs, and the right of individuals to enjoy basic human rights, including the collective right to self-determination? Trbovich argues no. Analyzing the evolution of the human rights and minority rights regimes in Europe, she argues that these regimes have shown at least the potential capacity to protect minorities, making more extreme measures such as secession unnecessary.

Trbovich divides her analysis into several sections: an analysis of Yugoslavia's administrative boundaries; the right to self-determination of the constituent nations of Yugoslavia; the international recognition of the fulfillment of this right; and the resort to force to change borders. In outlining the history of Yugoslavia's administrative boundaries, she seeks to address whether or not those boundaries properly serve as a legal basis for secession. She notes the unique nature of Yugoslavia, asserting that it was the only country where, outside of either the colonial context or a negotiated settlement, the international community recognized international borders that beforehand had only been administrative. Her analysis of the right to self-determination and the aspirations of Yugoslavia's constituent nations

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points out that only the Serbs, as the most populous and geographically dispersed ethno-national group, were best served by preserving the unified state. As it became increasingly clear that a unified Yugoslavia was unlikely, the choice became one of "internal" versus "external" self-determination. While external self-determination would entail the secession of Serb-majority populated areas, which would likely spark a bloody conflict, internal self-determination could rely on the protection of

minority rights as an alternative. Unfortunately, she argues, the precipitous recognition, led by Germany, of Slovenia and Croatia made internal self-determination an unrealistic option.

It is clear that Western policy toward self-determination claims in the former Yugoslavia has been uneven at best, and appears at times to be driven by the consequences of intervention rather than by a uniform commitment to principles. Most recently, the support for Kosovo's declared independence seems driven more by the international community's desire to end its direct role in Kosovo's governance than by a commitment to self-determination, given that Kosovo is the only case where the European Union has recognized a right to external, rather than internal, self-determination. Such a lack of uniformity, as Trbovich argues, undermines the very real potential that the process of European integration possesses to manage conflicting claims of self-determination. Recent events in Kosovo do not bode well for the legitimacy and credibility of the international legal order in this regard.

The strength of Trbovich's book lies in her novel and interdisciplinary analysis of Yugoslavia's disintegration, and in the book's well-researched and extensive evidentiary foundation. Further, she makes a valuable contribution by placing the dissolution of Yugoslavia within the wider conceptual framework of competing rights to sovereignty and self-determination. In addition, the book provides an important balance in the historiography of the conflict, in contrast to the many studies that fail to offer an accurate background and that yield conclusions that both lack context and lead to policy prescriptions that are inherently flawed.

While the book has few weaknesses, two areas warrant further attention. First, many of the arguments presented about internal borders, competing nationalities, and external actors also apply to other countries, most notably the former Soviet Union. While it would not be appropriate or feasible to include a comprehensive comparative study, the concluding chapter would be even more compelling if some consideration were offered of these cases that, while quite similar in terms of the factors Trbovich examines, still managed to avoid the widespread violence seen in Yugoslavia.

Second, while the historical background is extensive and does offer an important balance to the literature, it may not provide non-expert readers with sufficient material upon which to reach their own assessments of the relative importance of nationalism and expansionist ideologies. Those familiar with the region will be able to follow the book's argument and may well welcome a different perspective. Others, however, may not find sufficient material to counter competing claims found in the mainstream literature that generally point to inherent Serb expansionist nationalism as the main cause for the war.

## HISTORY, THE FAILURE OF SOCIALISM, AND STATE COLLAPSE

Cohen and Dragovic-Soso have compiled a robust interdisciplinary volume containing contributions from respected scholars and experts on southeastern Europe. Drawing upon the existing literature as well as upon newly available evidence, the contributions span disciplines and together offer a broad overview of the reasons behind the collapse of the central Yugoslav state and the escalation of violence that followed.

Dragovic-Soso's introductory essay examines the varied approaches that attempt to explain Yugoslavia's violent demise. She identifies five distinct categories of explanation and outlines the continuing debates within and between camps. The first category emphasizes the "ancient hatreds" between the different South Slav ethnic groups, or the "clash of civilizations" that exists between their diverse religious traditions, and more scholarly approaches that stem from what she calls the *longue durée* and that examine the legacy of historical geography and imperial rule.

The second category focuses on the historical legacy of state-building, especially the growth and persistence of national ideologies and the failure of "Yugoslavism" to take root. She identifies two irreconcilable perspectives that assume the inherent impossibility of a unified Yugoslav state: the first perspective argues that the Serb national ideology was essentially hegemonic and, therefore, incompatible with those of the Croats and Slovenes; in contrast, the second perspective argues that the Serb national ideology was integrative and essentially pro-Yugoslav. In this view, the "separatist" and destructive Croat national ideology led to the dissolution of the state. Other perspectives that do not single out or "blame" one group over another still perceive the inherent incompatibility of a Yugoslav identity with national identities.

The third category focuses on the legacy of socialism in Yugoslavia, as well as its failures and loss of legitimacy. According to this perspective, the viability of the state essentially rested upon its ability to fulfill two promises: a unique, nationally derived path to socialism and a resolution of the "national question" through federalism based upon the equality of constituent nations.

While the above explanations outline the underlying causes of conflict and offer an assessment of the possibility of Yugoslavia's disintegration, they cannot explain its timing or intensity. In order to gain a clearer understanding of the violent and precipitous nature of Yugoslavia's disintegration, Dragovic-Soso argues that one must also examine a fourth category,

which suggests that there was nothing inevitable about the dissolution. Rather, according to this view, the blame lies with belligerent leaders, especially Slobodan Milosevic.

The fifth and final category examines the impact of external forces. While most studies of Yugoslavia's disintegration focus on internal factors, increasing attention has been paid to the important role played by the international community. Two prominent explanations examine the influence of Western economic policies on Yugoslavia's collapse, and the support of some Western countries for Croat and Slovene independence.

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This overview sets up the remainder of the book, which is divided into three sections. The first examines Yugoslavia's historical legacy by assessing how the inter-war period and the experience of the two world wars complicated, perhaps fatally, future efforts to consolidate statehood based upon a Yugoslav identity. Since many non-Serbs perceived the inter-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia as being dominated by Serbs, few accepted "Yugoslavism" as a legitimate idea. The traumatic events of the two world wars, in turn, created powerful images of victimization and left many unhealed wounds. History's impact, according to these two chapters, was to delegitimize Yugoslav identity and leave open wounds that were vulnerable to manipulation, ultimately leading to mass violence.

The second part of the book analyzes the legacy of socialism from a range of perspectives, including conflicting rights to self-determination expressed in the Constitution of Socialist Yugoslavia, increasing economic grievances that were often regional in nature, the rise of nationalism driven by intellectuals, and the suppression of popular reform in Croatia. Taken together, these chapters outline the underlying causes of Yugoslavia's disintegration. Conflicting interpretations of the right to self-determination, covered in Trbovich's book, were essential in mobilizing populations to push for their respective rights. The lack of clarity in Yugoslavia's constitution effectively removed all credible institutional avenues for resolving these competing claims, increasing the likelihood of violent confrontation. Increasing economic tension further exacerbated the situation because the competition for centrally controlled resources fed into group dissatisfaction and led to further calls for increased autonomy.

The third part of the book examines the breakdown of the state that began in the 1980s. While the previous sections assess the underlying factors allowing conflict to fester, this section focuses more upon the immediate factors that sparked the violent collapse of the Yugoslav state. These chapters analyze the failure to create a Yugoslav identity, as evidenced by the failed effort to create a common educational policy in the early 1980s, and they examine how this failure manifested itself in increasing economic grievances and inter-group competition, as well as competing proposals for a weaker confederacy rather than a more centralized federal authority. This push for decentralization ultimately contributed to the increasing insecurity of the Serbian political leadership and the increasing dependence of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) on those leaders. These factors, combined with Western disengagement with Yugoslavia throughout the 1980s and the lack of strategic interest that would have compelled more concerted intervention in the early 1990s, led to the outbreak of violence as the Yugoslav state disintegrated.

The book concludes with a comparative essay by Leonard J. Cohen that contextualizes the Yugoslav experience vis-à-vis the collapse of other federal socialist states. He argues that "disintegrative synergies" between the political and institutional structures, increasing salience of ethno-politics and nationalist mobilization, the impact of international political and economic factors, and the consequences of reform explain the dissolution of the three federal socialist states in Eastern Europe: Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union. In his assessment, Yugoslavia alone experienced widespread violence, due to four factors. First, Serbs identified closely with the national state and regarded themselves as recent victims of persecution by other Yugoslav nations. Second, the Serbian political leadership was not moderate or accommodating. Third, the military was closely tied to the Serb leadership, and the creation of paramilitary forces exacerbated the lack of responsible civilian control over the instruments of state coercion. Finally, the liberalization process in Yugoslavia was much slower and more protracted, allowing nationalist elites to weaken the legitimacy of the central state.

The strengths of this book lie in its interdisciplinary treatment of the disintegration of Yugoslavia that spans diverse perspectives and timeframes of analysis. Its overview of the state of the literature and its comparative conclusion are both valuable contributions, as are the numerous analyses that draw upon newly available evidence or balance out an otherwise biased historical record.



It would have been even more valuable, however, to have more integration of the various chapters. An analysis synthesizing the diverse perspectives presented in the book would have been a welcome addition. Second, it would have been valuable to see more lessons drawn from the Yugoslav experience for other multi-ethnic states that are plagued with the same lack of legitimacy and state capacity, even if they are not emerging from the collapse of communism.

#### **BEYOND YUGOSLAVIA:**

#### **LESSONS FOR U.S. AND EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY**

Both of these books provide lessons that are applicable to a wide range of current challenges facing U.S. and European policymakers. Trbovich's arguments for more universal application of international legal principles have importance beyond the demand for consistency. It is clear that, in order to be effective, U.S. and European policy needs to be perceived as legitimate. Legitimacy requires statesmen and policymakers to ground policy in principles, not expediency. Just as domestic law enshrines rights for the accused as a bulwark against possible injustices, international law requires that its principles be applied equally and universally to all peoples, whether or not their governments are equally favored.

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By analyzing the failure of the Yugoslav idea, Cohen and Dragovic-Soso shed light on the wider challenge of creating a unified multi-national state. In these countries, competing political and economic interests combine with historic grievances and cultural and religious diversity to create a "push-pull" effect, where some groups push for greater autonomy while others hope to pull the country together into more centralized governance. Given the lessons of Yugoslavia, those trying to create a unified multi-national state must establish internal legitimacy. Such legitimacy will be derived from an effective economic and political system that is perceived to be fair in its distribution of power and resources and from a national defense infrastructure that is not dependent on, nor predisposed to favor, any specific group. U.S. policymakers in particular would do well to heed this lesson given current commitments to political transformation in the Middle East and Central Asia. ■



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# Casting Off the Maritime Straitjacket

SEA THOMAS

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REVIEW OF JAMES R. HOLMES AND TOSHI YOSHIHARA

*Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century:  
The Turn to Mahan*

(New York: Routledge, 2008) 167 pages, \$150 hardcover

China's meteoric rise as an economic powerhouse is old news. Less discussed are the maritime underpinnings of its ascent. As a result of tremendous state investment in seaport infrastructure, China now boasts five of the seven busiest ports in the world by volume, with construction efforts rapidly increasing capacity. The port of Hong Kong alone processes more shipping containers in one year than the combined total of the four busiest American seaports. And China is building ships: analysts indicate that it is on track to become the world's largest shipbuilder by 2015, surpassing South Korea and Japan.

For a nation historically preoccupied with its continental hinterland, these maritime achievements bespeak a significant shift in orientation. As the Chinese economy swells, it becomes increasingly reliant on the vast oceanic network of shipping lanes, ships, and ports to deliver its manufactures overseas. More importantly, this network facilitates the huge energy imports that fuel China's economic engines. At the same time, threats from traditional competitors along China's territorial periphery have vanished. The collapse

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of the Soviet Union removed the principal military threat previously facing Beijing, and aggressive diplomacy has resulted in the settling of border disputes with seven neighbors since 1991: Russia, Vietnam, Laos, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. With land borders secure, resources formerly allocated for frontier defense have been freed up for contingencies Beijing deems more likely, namely conflicts along its oceanic periphery.

This seaward shift has forced Beijing to reexamine its strategy vis-à-vis its oceanic environs. In *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan*, James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara contend that Chinese thinkers, when sizing up the strategic challenges and opportunities ahead, are increasingly influenced by the writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), the great American sea-power theorist. Through an extensive survey of primary source material, often involving personal firsthand translation, Holmes and Yoshihara show how the burgeoning public discourse on Mahanian naval theory—among enthusiasts in military circles, government think tanks, and academia—is affecting Chinese policy.

In his day, Mahan had a worldwide readership, and his ideas (though sometimes misinterpreted) greatly influenced the foreign policy of the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and Japan. He argued that the fundamental connection between a nation's naval might and its maritime commercial prosperity required states to maintain strong naval forces. Strong navies protected commercial vessels and shipping routes and guaranteed access to overseas markets. To his primary audience in the United States, Mahan urged turn-of-the-century leaders to establish naval control over the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico. Control of this sea space was necessary in order to safeguard the maritime approaches to the prospective Panama Canal and thus assure communications between America's eastern seaboard, the Pacific, and markets in Asia. Mahan recognized the superiority of Great Britain's Royal Navy and, rather than recommend a direct challenge to its hegemony, advocated seeking local superiority and building a fleet with the capacity to "fight, with reasonable chances of success, the largest force likely to be brought against it."

For Chinese strategists, argue Holmes and Yoshihara, the parallels are too rich to ignore. Like Mahan's America, which depended economically on secure trade routes on both sides of an isthmian canal, China depends on secure shipping lanes on either end of the Strait of Malacca. Middle Eastern and African energy resources, plus access to European markets, are vital to the economic health of the nation, and so Indian Ocean access has become a national security imperative. To Chinese eyes, assert Holmes and Yoshihara, the South China Sea is "China's Caribbean," and safeguarding

the approaches to the strait means controlling this maritime “commons.” As the guarantor of Asian maritime security and leading actor in the global saltwater commons, the United States Navy will find such an arrangement unacceptable. Like Mahan’s America, Beijing cannot hope to compete internationally with the naval hegemon of the day. At the same time, its leaders are hesitant to entrust their national interests to the uncertain benevolence of the United States.

The first key figure to recognize the utility of Mahan’s lessons for a rising China was Admiral Liu Hauqing. Appointed by Mao Zedong’s successor, Deng Xiaoping, Liu commanded the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy from 1982 to 1988 and is widely regarded as the father of the modern force. His charge was to undo the damage caused by the Cultural Revolution and reform the navy for the future. Drawing on a firsthand translation of Liu’s 2004 memoir, Holmes and Yoshihara explain how he sought to overcome China’s traditional ambivalence toward nautical issues. During Mao’s reign, official dogma disparaged Mahan, who was detested for rationalizing the “imperialist colonialism” that carved up East Asia. Mao himself was never concerned with maritime affairs; his strategic conceptual framework was landlocked.

Breaking with this traditional land-centric doctrine, Liu elucidated a bold maritime strategy with significant Mahanian dimensions. At a time when Beijing was beginning to reap the economic rewards of commercial intercourse with the West, Liu recognized the importance of seaborne commerce and its connection with naval power. He called on the PLA Navy to cast aside its traditional coastal defense mission and begin planning for more ambitious maritime operations. He proposed extending China’s oceanic frontier (restricted to immediate coastal waters under Mao) in two phases, creating strategic saltwater space in which the PLA Navy would be dominant. The initial phase would extend a maritime defensive line to the “first island chain”—between China’s coastline and the blue-water environment (roughly a north-south line from South Korea through the Ryukyu Islands, past Taiwan, and into the South China Sea). As the navy and nation grew in strength, Liu envisioned an extension of China’s maritime frontier to the “second island chain”—from the Kurile Islands in the north through and beyond Japan, the Bonins, Marianas, and the Caroline Islands.

Liu advocated for the inclusion of nautical aims into Beijing’s national security strategy, and called for a PLA Navy independent to develop its own doctrine and capabilities as a distinct strategic service. He incorporated concepts from Mao’s land warfare doctrine (such as “active defense”) into his maritime strategy, thereby creating consonance between Mahanian

concepts and the politically acceptable rubric of revolutionary guerilla war. Thus Liu's maritime defensive lines, particularly the first island chain, created sea space for "strategic defense" in which naval operations would be decidedly offensive in character (Mao's "offensive defense"). In other words, Liu's strategy called for a navy capable of controlling its adjacent seas—Yellow, East, and South China—through offensive naval operations.

The admiral delivered Beijing a badly-needed oceanic perspective, and his calls for an outward-looking offensive naval force continue to echo today. Holmes and Yoshihara methodically demonstrate Liu's influence by tracing the development of strategic literature over the past two decades. Their review is impressive in scope and depth. It encompasses primarily scholarly works published in mainland China (from military journals and think tanks) and papers presented by Chinese academics in international symposia. The authors reviewed are heavyweights—senior military officers, influential scholars, and policy analysts. Holmes and Yoshihara rely extensively on quotations, allowing Chinese strategists to speak for themselves.

Of concern, note the authors, is the fact that these strategists seem universally attracted to the more bellicose interpretations of Mahan's theory. For example, in the journal of the PLA Academy of Military Science and Chinese Military Science Association, author Wang Xingwang evokes Mahan when he suggests "one can only guarantee smooth sea traffic and eventually gain sea domination by annihilating the enemy" in large scale fleet engagements. In the influential China Military Science journal, senior PLA Navy Captain Xu Qi calls on his service to "cast the field of vision of its strategic defense to the open ocean [and to] develop attack capabilities for battle operations [on] exterior lines." Holmes and Yoshihara warn that if China's vocal Mahan advocates (representing one perspective in the strategic community) win the policy debate on Beijing's future strategy, the West should prepare for a decidedly more offensive Chinese naval posture.

Central to Beijing's oceanic aspirations are the constraints of geography. Holmes and Yoshihara dedicate a chapter ("China's Littoral Dilemma") to examining the physical conformation of maritime East and Southeast Asia. Even for someone familiar with East Asian geography, their analysis is refreshing and insightful (although it is regrettable that no maps are included). Holmes and Yoshihara demonstrate how the unbroken island chain enveloping China's coast—from Japan to Taiwan to the Philippines to Indonesia—acts as a "Great Wall in reverse," hemming in Beijing's potential as a blue-water naval power.

Taiwan holds the geographic pride of place as the key feature restricting Chinese sea-power. It sits astride major shipping lanes connecting

Shanghai and Beijing with the Strait of Malacca; it prevents the concentration of Chinese fleets based to its north and south (a cardinal sin for Mahan who warned against dividing the fleet); it is the most obvious geographic barrier to naval action beyond the first island chain (to its east is the open ocean—blue water). As Holmes and Yoshihara argue, Taiwan is the “decisive point that, when occupied, would allow China to cast off its maritime straitjacket.”

As the PLA prepares for a potential Taiwan conflict, its naval force structure and continuing acquisitions suggest that Beijing is thinking long term and planning for “the day after Taiwan.” China has made legion (and well-documented) improvements to its naval forces over the past decade. To an increasingly sophisticated array of indigenously produced aircraft, ships, and submarines, Beijing has added substantial numbers of first-rate Russian weapons, including the quiet diesel Kilo submarine, the Sovremenny guided missile destroyer, and the Su-27/30 Flanker fighter and attack aircraft. As a result, the quantity and quality of Chinese forces now surpasses that of Taiwan.

In its 2004 Defense White Paper, Beijing pronounced its intention to create a capability for winning “command of the sea and command of the air.” Its acquisitions and force structure suggest that Beijing plans to exercise this capability within adjacent waters. Just as Mahan envisioned the Caribbean as “pre-eminently the domain of sea power,” his modern adherents view the Yellow, East, and South China Seas as maritime zones to be controlled by naval force. Mahan’s strategic prescription for turn-of-the-century America—to control the sea through which its commerce sailed—therefore seems acutely germane to Chinese thinkers.

Holmes and Yoshihara’s excellent study provides the first comprehensive review of Mahan’s influence among Chinese strategists and therefore represents a significant contribution to the discourse on Chinese naval affairs. Among literature that often paints China’s strategic intentions as either malevolent or benign, Holmes and Yoshihara strike a distinctly objective tone. They do not suggest an inevitable cataclysmic naval fight in East Asia, but they also warn against blind Western faith in the pacifying effects of globalization. As China asserts greater influence in its littorals, it will naturally upset the East Asian maritime order, as rising sea powers do. The challenge for Washington is to craft naval policy that reinforces the existing maritime order—the nautical skeleton upon which the global economy is built—while recognizing China’s ascendancy, an endeavor of oceanic importance. ■



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