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From the Nineteenth Century to the Rise of China

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There is perhaps no more momentous great-power strategic decision, short of launching a war, than to develop a power-projection, war-winning maritime capability—thereby challenging, and risking heightened conflict with, an established maritime power. The likely costs of such a decision should caution the rising power against pursuing expansive naval ambitions. Such costs include the long-term costs of building the requisite number of surface ships that possess the advanced engineering and military capabilities necessary to enable maritime security; of diverting resources from other pressing territorial-defense and domestic demands; of suffering the predictable societal, economic, and security impacts of heightened and protracted great-power conflict; of preparing for the possibility of great-power war; and ultimately, perhaps, of losing a great-power war.

Despite these generalized risks entailed in pursuing destabilizing maritime capabilities, and frequently despite particular risks inherent to their insecure geopolitical circumstances and interior borders, many great powers have pursued extensive great-power maritime capabilities. In the past two hundred years, France twice challenged British maritime hegemony. The United States initiated its effort to develop global maritime capabilities in the early twentieth century. Germany challenged British maritime security in the early twentieth century. Russia frequently sought great-maritime-power capabilities, including in the 1850s, in the 1890s and the early twenty-first century, and in the late 1970s and ’80s. Japan simultaneously sought maritime hegemony in the western Pacific Ocean and continental hegemony on the East Asian mainland in the 1930s. In the twenty-first century, China has launched an extensive buildup of its navy to

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secure great-power maritime capabilities and to challenge U.S. maritime dominance in East Asia.

Great-power development of destabilizing maritime capabilities frequently has reflected the nationalist aspirations for great-power status associated with the possession of large capital ships and a reputation for maritime dominance. Great-power nationalist aspirations may reflect the personal ambitions of autocratic leaders, the pressures on unstable autocratic regimes to use nationalism to enhance domestic legitimacy, the popular aspirations of voters in a democratic state for international prestige, or a combination thereof. But whatever its particular sources, naval nationalism can have the effect of encouraging expansionist maritime policies, which can force acquisitions that are not informed by strategic interests and that ultimately undermine security and contribute to unnecessary and costly great-power conflict, including war.

This article examines three case studies of nationalist-driven great-power maritime aspirations from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It addresses the role of nationalism in driving French maritime ambitions in the 1850s and 1860s, under the leadership of Louis-Napoléon; German maritime ambitions in the early 1900s, under the leadership of Kaiser Wilhelm II; and U.S. maritime ambitions in the late 1890s and especially at the beginning of the following decade, during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. In each case, the article examines the high cost of the revisionist power's naval expansionism, the relative importance of its strategic and economic maritime interests to its naval buildup, and the nonmaterial nationalist sources of its expanding maritime ambitions and quest for great-power status. It places these countries' naval nationalism within the context of their distinct geopolitical circumstances and the challenges to their continental security interests, explaining both the failures of French and German naval expansionism and the success of American naval expansionism.

The article's fourth case study examines China's recent ambition to acquire great-power maritime capabilities. Like the other case studies, this one considers the material and nationalist sources of China's naval ambitions. It also analyzes China's recent naval expansionism in the context of China's post–Cold War geopolitical circumstances, considers the prospects for China's success, and explores the implications for great-power politics and U.S.-Chinese relations.

NATIONALISM, FRENCH NAVAL AMBITIONS IN THE 1850s AND '60s, AND THE ANGLO-FRENCH NAVAL ARMS RACE

In 1858, following the attempted assassination of Louis-Napoléon by Italian nationalists based in England and led by Felice Orsini, France began a major expansion of its maritime defense budget and its naval shipbuilding program.[1] The catalyst for the French buildup was British naval power and popular French

hostility toward the apparent inadequacy of British opposition to anti-French terrorists in the aftermath of the failed assassination attempt.

The era began with France's completion in 1858 of the large, modern port facilities at Cherbourg on the English Channel—directly across from English shores.[2] France also deployed more ships in the English Channel, and with construction of the Suez Canal it expanded its presence in the Mediterranean Sea, thus posing a growing challenge to British maritime security. France also significantly increased its defense spending through the early 1860s to support its naval buildup; in six years the French naval budget grew by over 30 percent. Louis-Napoléon also increased French naval personnel, so that the number of French sailors and marines was nearly twice the British total.[3]

Along with increased naval spending and naval expansion, France launched a new stage of naval competition when it preceded Great Britain in the construction of the first ironclad capital ship. In 1858, it ordered construction of six ironclads; it began constructing the first that year and another in 1859; and it commissioned the first, *Gloire,* in 1860. France thus began a rapid ship-construction program, and by the end of the decade it had constructed twenty-six ironclads, representing a challenge to Great Britain in the form of potential maritime supremacy in British coastal waters.[4]

As French naval power grew, the regime explicitly challenged British security. In 1860, the French ambassador in London warned that if Great Britain did not accept French ambitions in Europe, France would destroy the foundations of British naval power. Napoléon III publicly aspired to turn the Mediterranean Sea into a "French lake."[5]

Louis-Napoléon, Nationalism, and French Naval Ambition

France's ambitious maritime policy was financially costly and strategically risky. While the country increased its naval budget, its army budget stagnated and its continental defense capability languished. At the outset of the naval buildup, France's naval ambitions also risked heightened conflict with Great Britain. The combination of belligerent French diplomacy and the naval buildup created the 1859–60 French "invasion scare" in England. French naval ambitions alarmed Queen Victoria and Prince Consort Albert. Queen Victoria argued that Great Britain's "very existence may be said to depend" on the country's resolve to maintain its maritime supremacy. The prime minister, Henry J. Temple, Lord Palmerston, was especially alarmed by the French buildup and successfully argued for funding the rapid fortification of British harbors and dockyards.[6]

France's challenge to British maritime supremacy was intrinsically risky, yet French naval ambitions were not fueled by either relative expanded financial resources or increased security or economic concerns. Trends in relative British

and French economic development in the 1850s did not suggest a financial opportunity for France to outspend Great Britain in a naval arms race. On the contrary, during the 1850s trends in British and French economic growth significantly reduced French financial competitive ability vis-à-vis Great Britain, and by 1860 British gross domestic product (GDP) was approximately 40 percent greater than French GDP, so Great Britain was in a much better position to fund an arms race.[7] Moreover, unlike France, because of its territorial security Great Britain could prioritize funding for the navy within its overall defense budget.

France's growing naval budget burden also did not represent a strategic response to increased British maritime capabilities. From the end of the Crimean War through 1859, London maintained a moderate maritime budget and shipbuilding program and the strength of its fleet declined, even as France modernized and expanded the size of its fleet. London showed minimal interest in developing ironclad ships. Moreover, the bulk of British ships remained in distant waters rather than in the vicinity of French coastal waters.[8] Thus, heightened threat perception did not drive France's revisionist maritime acquisitions.

Louis-Napoléon's preoccupation with great-power status to the detriment of security contributed to a devastating French military defeat, the demise of his nationalist regime, and his exile from France.

Similarly, concern for economic security did not drive France's heightened maritime ambitions. Despite France's colonial presence in northern Africa and its recent acquisition of colonies in Indochina, France remained dependent on its continental economic relationships. In 1858, approximately two-thirds of French total trade was conducted with four of its immediate neighbors: Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Spain. During the decade prior to the onset of the American Civil War in 1860, the United States was France's leading single trade partner, but the U.S. portion of total French trade declined over the course of the 1850s.[9] Thus, growing global economic interests and the increased importance of protecting sea-lanes and overseas trade relationships did not drive France's heightened interest in maritime power and its challenge to British security.

Thus, in general, material interests cannot explain France's costly pursuit of maritime ambitions and its challenge to British maritime security. Rather, France's naval ambitions reflected a combination of Louis-Napoléon's personal commitment to developing French naval power and his use of French naval power to sustain his domestic political legitimacy, and thereby the stability of his autocratic regime. The French fleet under Louis-Napoléon was a "prestige fleet." In its support for Louis-Napoléon, the French populace sought glory over all else, and the navy was the "principal instrument of glory."[10]

Louis-Napoléon's overwhelming election as president in 1848 and his continuing popularity reflected his populist legitimacy among the rural masses as the French leader. They believed he represented the interests of the people rather than the aristocracy and would restore the glory of the French empire. He was the "Napoléon of the people." His antiaristocratic coup d'état in 1851 and the restoration of the empire were well received as promasses, populist measures.[11] Nonetheless, potential opposition to his regime was a constant concern, and he depended on the army to maintain domestic stability and suppress potential opposition movements. In this political context, an essential aspect of Napoléon's domestic legitimacy derived from his stature as a military leader. On his election to the presidency in 1848, he put on a military uniform and posed as an imperial leader, and frequently reviewed the troops with great fanfare. Moreover, popular support in the 1850s for military adventurism contributed to France's military policies and its participation in the Crimean War, its war in Italy, and its Mexican expedition.[12] Napoléon's "forward foreign policy," including his support for war against Russia, reflected his effort to retain his "precarious hold upon the French people."[13]

In the aftermath of Louis-Napoléon's succession of military successes in the 1850s, French naval nationalism assumed heightened importance as a source of the regime's legitimacy. Moreover, following the Orsini bomb plot, French public opinion turned against London. Orsini's bomb had been made in England, and the French public was dissatisfied with British efforts to curtail subsequent anti-French activities in England.[14] In this domestic and international context, despite Louis-Napoléon's commitment to Anglo-French cooperation, his domestic political interests encouraged him to pursue French international prestige through the construction of world-class maritime capabilities.

In addition to his domestic political interest in developing expansive naval power, Louis-Napoléon also possessed a strong personal nationalist interest in military affairs, and particularly in maritime power and French shipbuilding. He played an active role in developing day-to-day French naval policy, and he personally decided that France should commence construction of the world's first ironclad ship. Following the French bombardment of Sevastopol during the Crimean War in 1854 and the substantial damage that return fire inflicted on French wooden ships, Louis-Napoléon proposed the development of ironclads. He then actively promoted research into ironclad technologies and ordered and oversaw the early experiments of the armor-plated ships, leading to the completion of *Gloire*. He also made detailed recommendations for the dimensions of particular ships for particular missions. He was thus an active "lobbyist" on behalf of the French navy and the "prime catalyst" of French maritime innovation. The ironclads were the "Emperor's own creation," and he had "inaugurated

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a great revolution in naval architecture."[15] His intrinsic fascination with naval matters made possible the allocation of scarce financial resources away from the French army for the construction and deployment of ironclads, which fed France's ambition to become a major maritime power and challenge British maritime security.

Geopolitics and the Failure of French Nationalism

Not only did Louis-Napoléon's leadership of French populist nationalism and his personal naval ambitions fail to promote greater French maritime security and French great-power status, but rather they contributed to a major weakening of French security. In 1858, in response to France's completion of its naval base at Cherbourg and the continuance of its ambitious shipbuilding program, Great Britain fortified its coastal regions and began deployment of a Channel Fleet—an unusual policy in peacetime. Thousands of British volunteer riflemen went to the shore to defend Great Britain's coast from the French navy.[16]

Then, when French construction of the first ironclads threatened to make British Royal Navy ships obsolete, Great Britain in 1859 began construction of its own ironclads, launching HMS *Warrior* in December. Between October 1860 and August 1861, Great Britain increased its planned construction of ironclads from four to fifteen ships. In response to France's numerical superiority in ironclads, Britain abandoned its ongoing construction of wooden, screw-propulsion liners in favor of an all-ironclad fleet. Moreover, Great Britain's ironclads were superior to France's ironclads, in that they had iron hulls, in contrast to the wooden hulls of the French ironclads. In addition, British ironclads were over 50 percent larger than French ironclads. Trends in numerical superiority also favored Great Britain.[17]

By the early 1860s, England's superior financial resources and industrial strength had dashed any French hope that France might take a permanent lead over Great Britain in warship construction. By the mid-1860s, France had no choice but to acquiesce to enduring British maritime superiority, and both sides returned to their pre–arms race levels of defense spending, in keeping with a status quo ante maritime balance of power.[18]

But the greatest impact of Louis-Napoléon's personal preoccupation with maritime affairs and France's popular nationalist naval aspirations was the effect on French continental security. Despite Louis-Napoléon's dependence on the army for his political base, domestic prestige, and maintenance of domestic stability, the army was the weakest of the French armed services. The service was poorly administered and Napoléon neglected to use his authority to modernize the ground forces and impose needed reforms on recruitment and training.[19] Thus, in the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian War, the French army performed poorly, failing to provide even modest resistance to the Prussian invasion.

Meanwhile, during the war the navy was mostly irrelevant, as the decisive battles were fought on land, not at sea. But equally revealing was the French navy's poor wartime performance, despite its numerical superiority over the Prussian navy. By the time the navy mobilized for war, the decisive land battles were over and the outcome of the war had been decided. Napoléon's focus on the development of a large maritime fleet to enhance French great-power prestige did not include development of the intelligence and training required to deploy the fleet quickly and effectively.[20]

French resources and Louis-Napoléon's military interests would have served France better if they had focused on continental security rather than French maritime grandeur, and if France had maintained a low-cost yet effective *guerre de course* capability that could protect French trading interests. France pursued this strategy in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War when it developed its "asymmetric" Jeune École maritime policy.[21] Ultimately, however, Louis-Napoléon's preoccupation with great-power status to the detriment of security contributed to a devastating French military defeat, the demise of his nationalist regime, and his exile from France.

NATIONALISM, GERMAN NAVAL AMBITIONS, AND THE PRE–WORLD WAR I ANGLO-GERMAN NAVAL ARMS RACE

Beginning in 1898, Germany launched a major naval shipbuilding effort that imposed a significant financial burden on the country's finances and provoked a dangerous arms race with Great Britain. In 1898, Germany's First Naval Law funded the construction over six years of nineteen battleships and an additional fifty ships. Two years later, the Second Naval Law nearly doubled the scope of this plan, providing unlimited funding for construction of thirty-eight battleships and a total of ninety-six ships. Between 1900 and 1905, Germany laid down twelve battleships.

When Great Britain responded to Germany's naval buildup with the construction of the first *Dreadnought*-class battleship in 1905, thus neutralizing Germany's superior matériel, Germany countered with its own dreadnought program, determined to outrace Britain and challenge its maritime dominance. The 1906 German Novelle (supplemental bill) allocated funding for two dreadnoughts and increased naval spending by 35 percent.

But British efforts to sustain the naval arms race led to ever-further expansion of Germany's shipbuilding plans and to greater German naval expenditures. Between 1905 and 1914, the German naval budget increased by 102 percent and absorbed an ever-larger share of the total defense budget. Between 1901 and 1909, the German naval budget nearly equaled the entire German budget deficit, and it continued to grow.[22]

Kaiser Wilhelm, Nationalism, and German Naval Ambition

Germany's naval ambitions were strategically risky. They provoked a naval arms race with Britain and risked a British preventive attack on the nascent German fleet, a "Copenhagen." British leaders, including Admiral of the Fleet Sir John A. Fisher and Civil Lord of the Admiralty Arthur Lee, advocated such an attack, and German leaders, including State Secretary of the Imperial Naval Office Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, were acutely aware of the risk of a British preventive attack before Germany could achieve a deterrent capability, during the "danger zone" of its naval buildup.[23] Equally important, Germany's naval ambitions threatened the German ground force's capability and German continental security. As tension mounted on the continent and the likelihood of war increased, budget competition from the navy increasingly constrained the German army's access to resources. From 1904 to 1912, while the naval budget climbed 137 percent, the army budget grew 47 percent. Despite Germany's precarious two-front territorial defense dilemma, from 1889 to 1911 the relative size of the naval budget grew from 20 percent to nearly 55 percent of the army budget, so Germany essentially was allocating equal financing to the navy and each of the land fronts.[24]

Neither expanded relative financial resources nor increased security or economic interests can explain Germany's ambitious and risky naval ambitions. Unlike France in the 1850s and '60s, Germany experienced considerable industrial development in the 1880s and '90s. From 1880 to 1900, the German GDP grew a remarkable 44 percent; during this same period, the British GDP grew less than 30 percent. But because of Great Britain's prior significant economic lead over Germany, Germany's more rapid economic development did not enable it to diminish significantly Britain's financial advantage; in 1900, the British economy remained nearly one-third larger than the German economy. Overall, British global industrial domination diminished in the last decades of the nineteenth century, but Germany's industrial development had not yet yielded it the financial parity with Great Britain that could foster the confidence necessary to challenge British maritime dominance. On the contrary, rather than benefiting from German economic growth, Germany's increased naval budget was a major source of Germany's budget deficit.[25] Moreover, Germany should have been cautioned further by the British ability to prioritize its naval budget over its army budget, unlike Germany.

Germany's ready dismissal of its economic constraints did not reflect a heightened British maritime threat to German security. During the 1880s and early '90s, the British navy became increasingly overextended as its colonial commitments came under challenge, not only in distant waters of the Western Hemisphere and East Asia, but also in European waters, with the rise of the French and Russian

navies and the prospect of Franco-Russian cooperation. The latter development challenged British maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea and compelled Great Britain to budget so as to maintain its two-power standard. Moreover, worldwide interest in maritime power had stimulated ship production among all the great powers. Whereas in 1893 British battleships nearly equaled in number the combined total of all the other great powers' battleships, in 1897 its advantage had disappeared; it now possessed approximately two-thirds of the total of the other great powers' battleships. In this transformed strategic environment, Great Britain reduced its strategic commitments in the Caribbean Sea and in Northeast Asia and redeployed much of its fleet to the Mediterranean.[26] Thus, in the 1890s, British maritime capabilities and deployments did not pose a growing threat to German maritime security that might explain Germany's insistence on incurring the financial and strategic burdens of unrestrained naval expansion and an Anglo-German arms race.

Kaiser Wilhelm's pursuit of his personal naval ambitions and his political manipulation of popular German naval nationalism not only failed to promote German maritime security . . . but contributed to a major weakening of German continental security.

Germany's global colonial and economic interests expanded in the 1890s and the early twentieth century, but they were not a compelling driver of naval expansion either. Granted, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's interest in colonial expansion and Germany's acquisitions in Africa and the Pacific Ocean in the 1880s and '90s created a German motivation to protect its colonial possessions and its trade with its new colonies; moreover, from 1899 to 1910, as Germany required ever-greater exports to support its growing industrial sector, total German foreign trade increased by nearly 80 percent, creating in parallel a greater German interest in maritime security.[27] Nonetheless, German colonies made only a secondary contribution to German economic prosperity. As late as 1895, over 60 percent of Germany's trade was with its European neighbors. The overwhelming share of Germany's remaining trade, and its most important overseas trade, was conducted with the United States. German trade with its colonies was insignificant.[28] Thus, for Germany, economic security priorities lay in continental security.

Thus, in the mid-1890s Chancellor Leo von Caprivi argued that Germany should not seek maritime security through development of a major oceangoing fleet. In particular, he argued that Germany lacked the maritime potential to guarantee its transatlantic trade with the United States. Because Germany's continental neighbors were its most important trading partners and its colonies were inconsequential to German economic security, Caprivi believed that Germany

should concentrate its defense resources on its ground forces to enable it to dominate the continent, and that it should develop only a limited counterblockade capability to ensure continued access to overseas trade.[29] But Caprivi's prudent foreign policy preferences failed to gain the kaiser's support, and advocates of naval expansion soon dominated the development of German maritime policy.

As in the discussion of the sources of French maritime policy from 1858 through the 1860s under Louis-Napoléon, German material interests cannot explain Germany's costly maritime ambitions in the 1890s and early twentieth century and its challenge to British maritime security. Rather, similarly to France's ambitions under Louis-Napoléon, Germany's revisionist naval ambitions and its maritime policies reflected the destructive combination of Kaiser Wilhelm's personal nationalist commitment to developing a global naval capability that would challenge British maritime dominance and the growing dependence of the regime on nationalism for domestic legitimacy.

Kaiser Wilhelm's commitment to building a world-class German navy, regardless of the strategic and financial impediments, reflected his personal obsession with naval power and his association of naval power with great-power status and Germany's destiny. He considered the head of state to be the "officer of the watch of the ship of state" and identified his historic mission as the development of a German navy with stature and capabilities similar to those of the German army. He personally telegraphed shipbuilding orders to the naval yards. He bestowed on himself the title of grand admiral of the Imperial German Navy, and he enjoyed his status as admiral of the Russian navy; admiral of the royal navies of Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark; and honorary admiral of the Greek navy. He possessed a personal flotilla of naval ships that he used for his summer voyages. From the earliest days of his regime he wore his naval uniform and saw to it that he was the only member of the German aristocracy to wear an executive naval officer's uniform. He also dressed his sons in naval uniforms. As Admiral Tirpitz later reported, Wilhelm regarded the German navy as his "mechanical toy."[30]

Wilhelm associated his personal attachment to naval power with the necessary emergence of Germany as the preeminent world power. When he spoke of Germany achieving its "place in the sun" he meant that Germany must possess the world's most powerful navy. In August 1911, when Germany's arms race with Great Britain was at its height, he declared that Germany must strengthen its navy "so that we can be sure that nobody will dispute with us our place in the sun which belongs to us!" He insisted that in distant oceans of the globe "no important decision should be taken without Germany and the German Kaiser." He believed that "without being a world power one was nothing but a poor appearance." When he encountered among his advisers opposition to his plans to increase the naval budget, he exclaimed, "I will not allow England to tell me what to do."[31]

But Germany's revisionist naval ambitions, its challenge to British maritime security, and its initiation of the arms race reflected more than Kaiser Wilhelm's personal preoccupation with maritime power and his commitment to German great-power status and nationalist aspirations. Germany under Wilhelm was experiencing intensifying societal pressures for political reform of its autocratic monarchy. In these circumstances, rather than yield to popular demands for liberalization, Wilhelm and his conservative advisers developed domestic and foreign policies that would unify the German people behind Wilhelm and his autocratic leadership and consolidate his monarchy.[32] For the German autocracy, the navy was the most powerful source of German nationalist unity, so appeals to German naval power served the interests of the German regime as well as Wilhelm's personal ambitions, just as naval expansionism had served Louis-Napoléon's interest in bolstering regime legitimacy.

In the aftermath of German unification, many of Germany's institutions, including the army, railways, and postal service, were not national institutions but institutions of the German component states. Because a *German* navy did not exist prior to unification in 1871, it was created by the new German imperial government under the direct authority of the kaiser. It was the foremost German "national institution." In addition, the navy embodied German middle-class concepts of German culture and international economic superiority. And unlike the German army, the German navy was not the exclusive realm of the aristocracy; members of the German bourgeoisie could enlist in the navy and rise through the ranks to become senior officers. This created widespread popular support for the German navy.[33]

Within German society, the Navy League occupied a prominent place. It was the most popular of all Germany's various nationalist groups, including the Pan-German League and the Colonial Society, and it established branches throughout the country. Despite its later start, in 1898, within its first eighteen months, the Navy League surpassed in total membership all the other nationalist groups combined. The 1900 Second Naval Law stimulated a major increase in Navy League membership, and by 1907 it had over a million members and associates, making its membership over eight times larger than that of the Colonial Society.[34]

Thus, on the one hand, for German naval leaders seeking support for naval spending, appeals to popular nationalism were effective. Wilhelm understood this and planned budget politics accordingly, to realize his personal nationalist ambitions.[35] On the other hand, for the German elite seeking to promote its nationalist credentials and foster national unity under the monarchy, the navy was the perfect nationalist instrument. Thus, as in France under Louis-Napoléon, a mutually reinforcing relationship existed between Kaiser Wilhelm's use of popular naval nationalism to serve his personal ambition for Germany's naval buildup

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and its great-power status and the monarchy's use of naval expansionism to enhance popular support for the regime. Admiral Tirpitz well understood this dual value of naval nationalism.[36]

Geopolitics and the Failure of German Nationalism

Kaiser Wilhelm's pursuit of his personal naval ambitions and his political manipulation of popular German naval nationalism not only failed to promote German maritime security and Germany's "place in the sun" as a maritime power but contributed to a major weakening of German continental security.[37] Despite Germany's extensive effort to compete with British naval power, throughout World War I the German fleet of dreadnoughts was unable to challenge British maritime supremacy. In the decade prior to World War I, whereas Berlin allocated between 19 and 26 percent of its defense budget to the navy, London allocated 60 percent of its defense budget to the navy. Ultimately, Wilhelm and Tirpitz had to give up the naval race to focus Germany's limited resources on its army and continental security.[38]

Great Britain's victory in the naval race enabled it to impose a close-in blockade of German maritime trade for the duration of the war. The German fleet ventured into the North Sea to engage the British fleet just once during the war. Although Germany fared better than Britain in the 1916 battle of Jutland and could claim a tactical victory, its greater losses relative to the sizes of the respective fleets deterred Germany from seeking a second engagement. Its fleet remained in harbor for the remainder of the war, essentially irrelevant to its outcome.[39]

But the greatest impact of Germany's nationalist naval ambition was its diversion of scarce economic resources from more strategically important priorities, and thus its contribution to German military defeat in World War I. In the maritime theater, Wilhelm's preoccupation with battleships led him to neglect German development of a cost-effective counterblockade submarine fleet that could have posed a more secure and effective threat against the British fleet.[40]

In contrast, Adolf Hitler later would understand the value of a less expensive submarine capability to a continental power's blockade and counterblockade capabilities. In September 1939, after the early successes of his U-boats against British shipping, Hitler switched to construction of a massive U-boat fleet. His *guerre de course* strategy drastically reduced British imports, while posing a minimal constraint on Germany's continental capabilities.[41]

In the continental theater of World War I, the effect of Wilhelm's failure to place sufficient priority on German ground forces was all too clear on the western front. Diversion of funds equivalent to the cost of even one dreadnought to create an additional German division might well have enabled an early German victory against France and altered the campaign on the eastern front against Russia.

Ultimately, Kaiser Wilhelm's intense military interests would have served Germany better if he had focused on developing a more robust continental security force so as to dominate continental Europe, while procuring only a limited maritime capability, rather than on securing Germany's "place in the sun" as a global maritime great power. Wilhelm's nationalist preoccupation with German naval preeminence on the high seas contributed to a devastating German military defeat in World War I and the demise of his monarchy.

NATIONALISM, AMERICAN NAVAL AMBITIONS, AND AMERICA'S RISE TO WORLD POWER

As was true of the sources of France's and Germany's expansive naval ambitions, the development of expansive U.S. naval ambitions during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency in the first decade of the twentieth century did not reflect pressing security or international economic concerns. Rather, similarly to the French and German experiences, the U.S. maritime buildup reflected a combination of a personal nationalist leadership commitment to developing great-power maritime capabilities and the domestic politics of mass nationalism.

From the end of the Civil War until the passage in 1890 of the so-called Battleship Act, the United States neglected its navy; minimal funding and poor conditions allowed the deterioration of the country's naval capabilities. The 1890 act funded construction of three second-class battleships to provide a coastal, *guerre de course* naval capability. Then in 1895 Congress authorized funding for the construction of the first two first-class American battleships and the development of an oceangoing power-projection capability. In the ten years between 1900 and 1910, the U.S. Navy commissioned twenty-five first-class battleships, including world-class dreadnought-type battleships, as well as many smaller ships. During the Roosevelt presidency, the Navy commissioned twenty-one battleships. After fifteen years of funding, in 1910 the U.S. Navy possessed the second-largest number of capital ships in the world.[42]

This naval buildup was the result of a fundamental reorientation of U.S. military priorities. The 1890 naval act doubled in one year U.S. spending on the Navy. During the Roosevelt presidency, the naval budget increased from fifty-five million dollars to $140 million, a peacetime record for U.S. naval appropriations, and the tonnage of U.S. capital ships doubled. The Roosevelt administration also tripled the number of active-duty naval personnel. During this same period, the U.S. Army budget stagnated and the number of army personnel decreased by 20 percent. Whereas in 1900 the number of naval personnel was less than 20 percent that of army personnel, in 1910 that proportion was nearly 60 percent. Increased naval spending during the Roosevelt presidency also changed federal

budget priorities. Between 1900 and 1910, the defense budget share of the overall federal budget increased from 36.6 percent to 45.1 percent.[43] Under Roosevelt's leadership, the United States began its transition from being a land power to a naval power.

Theodore Roosevelt, Nationalism, and American Naval Ambition

Neither increased U.S. security concerns nor greater U.S. international economic interests can explain the costly transformation in U.S. defense policy. In international security affairs, the rapid buildup of U.S. naval forces coincided with the most secure era in U.S. history. Whereas since 1776 the United States had been plagued with concerns about European military presence in the Western Hemisphere and the implications for U.S. territorial security, by the time of the Roosevelt administration all the European powers had retreated from the Western Hemisphere, withdrawing their naval presences to home waters to deal with pressing European security concerns. The turning point in U.S. domination of the western Atlantic was the outcome of the 1895 Anglo-Venezuelan boundary dispute. Amid a context of German involvement in the Boer conflict in South Africa, Russian challenges to the British presence in South Asia, and the rise of the French and Russian navies, the growing threat of war with the United States compelled Great Britain to concede the merits of the Monroe Doctrine and to acknowledge the U.S. right to intervene in disputes between Latin American and European countries. By 1902, Great Britain began a strategic withdrawal from the Western Hemisphere, conceding U.S. maritime superiority, and it soon welcomed American expansion, both in its colonial presence in the western Pacific and in the form of the construction of the Panama Canal.[44]

Germany posed an equally remote threat to U.S. security. It had no naval bases in the Western Hemisphere and faced multiple strategic challenges in continental Europe and a costly maritime competition with Great Britain. By the beginning of the Roosevelt administration, the combination of military and political conditions had eliminated a German challenge to U.S. preeminence in the Western Hemisphere. Both Kaiser Wilhelm and Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow understood the importance of not antagonizing the United States.[45] Thus, during the 1901 German-Venezuelan dispute, Germany imposed a blockade on Venezuela but shortly thereafter accepted U.S. mediation of the dispute, thus concurring with Britain's earlier acknowledgment of a U.S. right to intervene in Latin America. The end of the German blockade signaled the demise of German ambitions in Latin America.[46]

Nor could Japan threaten the United States. In 1890, the Japanese navy was weaker than the U.S. Navy, and the Pacific Ocean was a formidable barrier to Japanese power projection into the Western Hemisphere.[47]

Thus, in 1890 the Naval Board recognized that the United States did not face a threat from any advanced power, including Great Britain. By the early twentieth century, the United States enjoyed "remarkable security," and Theodore Roosevelt understood this. He believed that Great Britain dared not provoke war with the United States and that it had conceded leadership to the United States in the Western Hemisphere.[48] Any alleged threat from Germany was premised on that country's reputed long-term intentions, rather than on its immediate capabilities, and Roosevelt understood the limits to the German challenge. Given current trends in European great-power politics, a potential German naval threat did not require a rapid and expensive buildup of the U.S. Navy. After the U.S. naval buildup was well under way in 1906, Roosevelt raised the Japanese navy as a potential threat to U.S. security, but he also understood that if this threat developed it would do so in the distant future. Throughout the Roosevelt presidency, the absence of a threat to U.S. security frustrated the Navy's effort to articulate a naval policy and to justify a naval buildup.[49]

The United States also did not require a strong oceangoing navy to protect its interests in foreign trade and international investments. In 1900, less than 10 percent of U.S. GDP came from foreign trade; exports constituted less than 5 percent of GDP.[50] During the rise of U.S. naval power, the United States was not a trading nation. Moreover, during this period the United States possessed only a small commercial fleet; most U.S. trade was carried on foreign-flagged ships. The United States gained colonial interests in the western Pacific Ocean following the war of 1898, but the economic significance of the Philippines, of other U.S. Pacific possessions, and of overall U.S. trade with East Asia did not require development of a large navy to protect U.S. economic interests in the western Pacific. President Roosevelt understood this and did not attempt to justify U.S. maritime expansion on the basis of American economic interests.[51]

Similarly to the sources of French maritime policy from 1858 through the 1860s under Louis-Napoléon and of German maritime policy prior to World War I, national material interests cannot explain expansive U.S. maritime ambitions in the early twentieth century. Rather, American revisionist naval ambitions reflected dynamics similar to those that gave rise to French and German naval ambitions. U.S. naval policies reflected President Roosevelt's personal interest in naval ships and his nationalist commitment to maritime power, combined with the impact of American popular nationalism on the development of U.S. defense policy.

According to Howard K. Beale, Theodore Roosevelt shared with Kaiser Wilhelm a "boyish" fascination with naval ships. As a young boy, Roosevelt greatly admired his two uncles who had served in the Confederate navy and he

maintained a long-term relationship with them. In his senior year at Harvard he began writing a scholarly volume on the naval history of the War of 1812. In his introduction to the volume, Roosevelt expressed his personal outrage at the poor condition of the U.S. Navy during the war and the importance of naval power for national dignity. He wrote that it was "folly" for "the great English-speaking Republic to possess such an old and inadequate fleet"; America deserved better. Equally important for explaining his lifelong commitment to U.S. naval power was the intrinsic excitement Roosevelt associated, from boyhood forward, with naval warfare, along with the youthful pleasure, natural fun, and lifelong exhilaration he derived from having and directing a large navy.[52]

America pursued its naval ambitions wearing the same strategic blinders as had France and Germany. The United States succeeded where other great powers had failed because of the fortuitous combination of domestic circumstances with a strategic opportunity in great-power politics.

Roosevelt's early interest in and enthusiasm for naval matters contributed to his strong personal attention to naval policy during his presidency. Throughout his presidency he possessed a nearly "fanatical desire" and persistent determination to develop a large navy. In contrast to his predecessors, he personally participated with Congress in developing naval appropriations legislation, and he used his considerable political popularity and political drive to compel congressional support for his policies. In his first message to Congress, in December 1901—within three months of his inauguration—Roosevelt made a rousing appeal for a large navy, and soon thereafter he presented specific funding legislation. Throughout his presidency he was personally involved in such detailed issues as the height of smokestacks and the proper deployment of ships in battle groups.[53]

Roosevelt combined his personal interest in ships and navies with a nationalist impulse to promote American great-power status in world affairs. In this respect, the rise of the United States as a global naval power depended on the leader's nationalist impulse, similarly to the dependence on the leaders' nationalist impulses of the development of the French navy under Louis-Napoléon and the German navy under Kaiser Wilhelm.

Roosevelt and his associates, including Alfred Thayer Mahan and Henry Cabot Lodge, were strong nationalists who were impelled by an overwhelming pride in the United States. Roosevelt believed that American honor should be placed above the honor of all other nations. Thus, he considered it "impertinence" for any country to be angry at U.S. actions, was intent on defending U.S. honor and establishing U.S. resolve, and was determined to resist challenges to U.S. achievement and maintenance of world-power status. Thus he argued that

the United States required warships in numbers commensurate with "the greatness of our people" and that a large navy would serve U.S. prestige. When Britain launched its first dreadnought, Roosevelt was determined that the United States should possess the world's largest battleships. He pushed through Congress funding for construction of U.S. dreadnoughts that were larger than those of both Britain and Germany.[54]

Roosevelt's nationalism, including his sense of American greatness, superiority, and infallibility and his inability to conceive of any reason for another nation to oppose U.S. diplomacy and military policies, was rooted in his conviction of the superiority of the Anglo-American race and its destiny to lead the world. The United States stood for peace and civilization, and U.S. expansionism and imperialism, including the development of U.S. maritime power, reflected a national obligation to crusade for international moral improvement and the spread of civilization to "backward" peoples. In 1893, Roosevelt wrote that it would be "a crime against white civilization" for the United States not to annex Hawaii. The U.S. victory in the war against Spain and its territorial acquisitions in the Far East should make Americans proud that the United States now could take its place among the world's great powers.[55]

Roosevelt's nationalist aspirations for U.S. honor and international prestige were important for the rise of the U.S. Navy. But equally important was the popular American nationalism that reinforced Roosevelt's personal aspirations and established the national democratic political conditions for U.S. naval expansionism. In the context of a significant economic recession in the 1890s and the final fulfillment of Manifest Destiny from coast to coast and the end of the American "frontier," Americans were susceptible to emotional sources of renewed national pride, including the superiority of American values and the legitimacy of U.S. global power. American churches joined in the expansionist movement, promoting the "imperialism of righteousness" that would spread to the world American religious values, thus complementing Roosevelt's personal "crusade" to spread Anglo-American civilization.[56]

These popular societal trends established the underlying foundation for jingoism, America's particular style of nationalism, and for its effect on both U.S. domestic politics and foreign policy. In this context, forceful U.S. resistance in 1895 to British policy toward Venezuela and Great Britain's subsequent acceptance of U.S. intervention in Latin America reflected widespread American nationalism and support for an expansionist foreign policy and the corresponding political pressures on U.S. foreign policy making. The outcome of the 1895 Venezuela crisis also encouraged Americans to press for further military-backed nationalist successes. These trends continued through the end of the decade, when popular nationalism was a powerful force leading in 1898 to the annexation of Hawaii

and the U.S. war against Spain. President William McKinley's effort to negotiate with Spain a resolution to the conflict in Cuba increasingly isolated him from Congress and the American people. Quite apart from peripheral U.S. material interests in opposing Spain's Cuba policy, Congress and the voters clamored for war, and ultimately they pushed the president into a war he did not support.[57]

The rapid American naval victory over Spain elicited widespread and enthusiastic nationalist pride in the U.S. Navy, and within a year of the war Congress passed widely popular legislation that funded construction of five battleships and multiple other ships. The Roosevelt administration's naval legislative agenda benefited from the larger American naval nationalism. The Navy League of the United States was founded in 1902, its membership grew quickly among retired naval officers and American corporate leaders, and it played a valuable role in mobilizing support to bring about Roosevelt's legislative successes.[58] Roosevelt himself frequently campaigned for his naval legislation with populist speeches laden with nationalist appeals harking to the importance of naval expansion for America's world stature. In his first State of the Union address, in December 1901, he declared that for the "honor" of the United States, the "work of upbuilding the navy must be steadily continued" and that Americans "must either build and maintain an adequate navy or else make up their minds definitely to accept a secondary position in international affairs."[59] During the 1904 presidential campaign, Roosevelt appealed to popular economic nationalism and benefits for the American worker to justify his naval policies and U.S. imperialism in East Asia. As he later acknowledged, his decision in 1907 to send the U.S. Atlantic fleet on an around-the-world cruise reflected more his ultimately successful effort to arouse popular nationalist support against congressional opposition to his battleship legislation than his effort to establish global—especially Japanese—respect for U.S. power.[60]

Geopolitics and the Rise of the American Navy

It is tempting to explain America's unique success by the superiority of U.S. political institutions, or the leadership thereof, or both. Neither factor, however, can explain American success. American democracy and foreign policy in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century experienced popular jingoistic and expansionist impulses that reflected minimal awareness of the relative resources or national interests of the United States. Similarly, there is minimal documentation that suggests that Theodore Roosevelt calculated that European great-power politics or advantageous U.S. economic resources had created a strategic opportunity for the United States to challenge the regional and global strategic orders and develop great-power maritime capabilities. America pursued its naval ambitions wearing the same strategic blinders as had France and Germany.

The United States succeeded where other great powers had failed because of the fortuitous combination of domestic circumstances with a strategic opportunity in great-power politics. American popular naval nationalism and the expansionist impulse emerged after the United States had defeated Mexico, completed its conquest of the American Indian, and settled the Pacific frontier. These developments and the intrinsic stability of the U.S.-Canadian border established the enduring territorial security that enabled the United States to fund safely its strategic transition from being a continental power dependent on its ground forces for security to being a maritime power seeking global influence. In contrast, similar efforts by France and Germany jeopardized their territorial security and contributed to devastating military defeats.

Moreover, Britain's preoccupation first with the emerging French and Russian navies and then with German naval ambitions compelled it to acquiesce to U.S. global naval ambitions and to acknowledge the Caribbean Sea as a U.S. sphere of influence.[61] These developments in British security enabled the United States to avoid engagement in a costly arms race and the prospect of a "Copenhagen"—the strategic challenges that plagued the security and naval aspirations of both France and Germany.

CHINA GOES TO SEA

A combination of nationalist leadership and popular nationalism drove French naval ambitions under Louis-Napoléon in the 1850s and 1860s, German naval ambitions under Kaiser Wilhelm in the early twentieth century, and U.S. naval ambitions during the Theodore Roosevelt presidency in the early twentieth century. In each case, a personal leadership commitment to building naval power coalesced with popular nationalism to fuel national ambitions for great-power status, reflected in large capital ships and substantial maritime power. Such nationalism contributed to strategic disaster for France and Germany. For the United States, however, these same conditions propelled the country to construct, by 1908, the world's second-largest navy while strengthening national security, and to establish the foundations for America's eventual emergence as the world's preeminent maritime power.

In the twenty-first century, China has become the latest land power to go to sea. After thirty-five years of double-digit annual growth in its GDP and defense spending and significant technological modernization, China is building a large and modern naval fleet whose capabilities soon may rival those of the U.S. Navy in East Asia. The recent pace of China's shipbuilding program has been impressive. Since 2000, China has replaced most of its prereform platforms with "modern" platforms. Whereas only 3 percent of Chinese attack submarines were

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"modern" in 1996, currently 70 percent are. China also has been developing large numbers of modern surface ships. Serial production of the Houbei and Jingdao classes has contributed to establishing and maintaining the Chinese maritime presence throughout the East and South China Seas. China's development of a next-generation frigate, the Jiangkai class, will enhance the war-fighting capability of the Chinese navy. Even at reduced rates of GDP growth, China's shipbuilding program will add significant numbers of modern naval platforms, including attack submarines, frigates, destroyers, and smaller fast-attack ships armed with antiship cruise missiles. According to one estimate, assuming that China's naval budget over the next fifteen years grows commensurately with its GDP growth, by then the Chinese navy will possess well over four hundred surface combat ships and nearly one hundred submarines. All these modern ships will make significant contributions to Chinese naval capabilities in the East and South China Seas and will contribute to improved Chinese capabilities in the western Pacific Ocean.[62] China's navy is not as technologically advanced as the U.S. Navy, but even merely in quantity China's naval ships constitute an effective war-fighting force and attest to China's long-term naval ambitions. The U.S. Navy's increased attention to "dispersed lethality" reflects its concern with the modernization, growing number, and improved quality of China's naval ships.[63]

China also is developing airpower to support its oceangoing navy. It is producing military aircraft with greater capabilities and ranges that will provide greater air support for Chinese surface ships. Its intermediate-range surface-to-surface ballistic missiles can degrade U.S. access to the naval facilities throughout East Asia that enable the U.S. Navy to project naval and air power. China also is modernizing its command and control capabilities with improved satellite communications and air-based and underwater reconnaissance and targeting.[64]

Xi Jinping, Nationalism, and Chinese Naval Ambition

As was the case with French, German, and American naval expansionism, nationalism is a driver of China's naval ambitions. Xi Jinping's "China dream" platform is a nationalist promise to bring modernization and advancement not only to the Chinese people but also to the Chinese nation in world affairs.[65] Members of the Chinese military, including Chinese naval officers, have argued that a "strong army dream" and a strong navy are central to achieving the "China dream."[66] Similarly, Xi's call for *da fuxing Zhongguo* (the great rejuvenation of China) is a direct call for China to restore its status as a great power. In 2017, Xi assured the People's Liberation Army (PLA) that "[t]oday, we are closer to the goal of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation than any other time in history, and we need to build a strong people's military now more than any other time in history." He promised the PLA that "[w]e will never allow any people,

organization, or political party to split any part of Chinese territory from the country at any time, in any form."[67]

Reinforcing Xi Jinping's ambitions has been the growth of Chinese mass nationalism. The combination of the spread of the Chinese people's access to the World Wide Web in China's major cities and widespread dissatisfaction with the alleged weakness of Chinese foreign policy, encouraged by the global financial crisis and the onset of the U.S. recession, has heightened mass nationalist demands for a more belligerent Chinese foreign policy. Despite China's authoritarian single-party political system, nationalism can influence Chinese foreign policy. Leaders who are not sufficiently nationalist/hard-line and responsive to mass nationalism can be vulnerable to political challenges from their political adversaries—and in China the cost of political defeat is, at best, lifetime isolation under house arrest. Equally important, the Chinese Communist Party leadership is acutely sensitive to the challenge that social instability, including urban nationalist demonstrations, can pose to regime stability and survival.[68]

In 2009, the number of Internet users in China increased by nearly 60 percent.[69] Use of the Internet spread most significantly among the urban population. Between 2007 and 2010, Internet usage in Beijing increased by 60 percent, penetrating nearly 70 percent of the population; the comparable figures for Shanghai were 67 percent and 65 percent.[70] The expansion of Internet usage has led to strident online nationalist criticism of Chinese foreign policy and has contributed to widespread nationalist demonstrations against Japan for its arrest of a Chinese fisherman in 2010 and its government's "nationalization" of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in 2012. Belligerent online mass nationalism also contributed to Chinese government opposition to U.S. naval exercises in the Yellow Sea following North Korea's 2010 sinking of a South Korean corvette.[71]

As Xi Jinping has promoted a nationalist vision of China's future and as mass nationalism has spread through Chinese cities, he has led China's naval activism. The impact of nationalism and the China dream is especially clear in China's costly commitment to developing aircraft carriers, just as nationalism drove French, German, and U.S. acquisition of large capital ships. Given the proximity of China's air and naval bases to its neighbor's defense facilities in the surrounding seas, including those in Japan, Taiwan, and the South China Sea countries, China does not require aircraft carriers to project power to contend with regional competitors, including the United States, to defend its maritime security.

China's economic growth increasingly relies on its domestic market. Since 2006, as Chinese domestic manufacturing has increased, there has been a steady and significant decline in Chinese trade dependence, including export dependence.[72] China also is only minimally dependent on imports of energy resources

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for its energy security; approximately 90 percent of Chinese energy resources are sourced domestically or via pipelines transiting countries on China's interior periphery. So the country does not require a power-projection navy to defend its economic interests.[73]

But aircraft carriers are a symbol of great-power status, so realization of the China dream required China to develop a fleet of them.[74] As Chinese leaders considered launching China's first carrier late in the first decade of the twenty-first century, popular demand for a carrier increased. At public presentations, Chinese military officers were pressed to explain when China would build a carrier. Many Chinese citizens offered their own funds to support construction of an aircraft carrier.[75] China's first Soviet-era aircraft carrier, the former *Minsk,* was a popular tourist attraction—33,000 visitors toured the ship in just seven days during the 2006 Chinese New Year holiday.[76]

[T]he United States did not face a serious great-power challenge to its maritime rise in the Western Hemisphere. China's rise as a maritime power faces very different great-power politics.

Talk shows on China Central Television (CCTV) focused on the merits of an aircraft carrier; the popularity of the subject led CCTV to air additional programs on the subject. Among the most popular CCTV television programs at that time was *The Rise of the Great Powers*. It stimulated widespread public discussion over the lessons of history for China's emergence as a great power. According to the documentary, all successful great powers have possessed a large blue-water navy, with large capital ships.[77] In 2009, a Chinese foreign affairs weekly reported on the widespread national conversation focused on "the long-held dream of so many people" that China would "build its own aircraft carrier."[78] Since then, Xi has expanded the pace of Chinese carrier production.

China's recent maritime impatience and boldness reflect Xi's personal ambition and impatience to resist any challenge to Chinese interests and to restore China's great-power status. In the brief span of the fifteen months from late 2012 to early 2013, shortly after he assumed authority over Chinese security policy, Xi led China to establish routine maritime presence within twelve miles of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, thus actively challenging Japanese sovereignty; announce an air-defense identification zone in the East China Sea; occupy the Philippine-claimed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea; explore for oil in disputed waters in the South China Sea for the first time since 1994; challenge Vietnamese maritime activities in the South China Sea, contributing to heightened tension and a crisis atmosphere in Sino-Vietnamese relations; challenge, more frequently and more assertively, U.S. air and naval surveillance activities in the South China Sea; and carry out extensive land-reclamation activities in

disputed areas of the South China Sea, and subsequently construct air and naval facilities on its artificial islands.

Accompanying these developments in East Asia is the determined expansion of the global presence of the PLA Navy (PLAN). Under Xi's leadership, in 2017 the PLAN carried out its first live-fire exercises in the Mediterranean Sea and its first joint exercise with the Russian navy, in the Baltic Sea. In 2017, China also reached agreement with Djibouti for the PLAN to establish its first overseas naval facility: a logistical support base in East Africa for its operations in the western Indian Ocean.[79]

Geopolitics and the Rise of the Chinese Navy

China's rapidly expanding naval capabilities and its maritime activism attest to its resolve to challenge U.S. maritime supremacy in East Asia and become a world-class naval power. As China goes to sea, will its fate resemble the failed nationalist ambitions of France under Louis-Napoléon and of Wilhelmine Germany, or the successes of the United States when it emerged as a naval power? The fate of China's naval ambitions, as was the case with the United States, France, and Germany, ultimately will depend on the country's geopolitical circumstances.

In important respects, China's contemporary geopolitical circumstances resemble U.S. geopolitical circumstances in the 1890s and the early twentieth century. In the decades since the end of the Cold War China has established overwhelming military superiority vis-à-vis its neighbors along its entire periphery. China is bordered by fourteen countries, but none can challenge Chinese territorial security. After decades of Chinese modernization of its ground-force capabilities, China's smaller neighbors, including Vietnam, cannot pose even a minor challenge to Chinese security. India is a great power in South Asia, but over the past thirty years the gap between India and rising China has increased significantly. In contrast to China, India in military affairs remains dependent on imported platforms for both its navy and its air force. Moreover, the Himalayas pose a formidable check on India's ability to threaten Chinese territory, and thus on the outbreak of a major war on the Sino-Indian border. In economics, recently India's annual GDP growth rate has surpassed China's GDP growth rate. But because China's GDP is five times the size of India's, even should China's annual growth in GDP maintain the relatively "slow" rate of 7 percent and India's maintain 8 percent growth through 2020, China still will add another "three Indias" to its GDP in that time.[80]

China's only neighbor that conceivably might pose a threat to Chinese security is Russia. But since the end of the Cold War, in Northeast Asia Russian military and economic capabilities have declined dramatically vis-à-vis China's. In 1991, there were fourteen million Russians living in the Far East, but in 2010

the Russian census found that fewer than 6.3 million Russians lived there.[81] Infrastructure in the Far East also has suffered since the end of the Cold War. Lack of Russian investment has contributed to a deterioration of electrical-power facilities and transportation networks. Russian ports in Northeast Asia have fallen behind global standards. Overall, the Far East economy is far poorer than the Russian economy west of the Urals, and at best has stagnated over the past twenty-five years. Russia has called for China to help with the development of the Far East economy, contributing to Russian dependence on China.[82]

Russian military power also has declined. Despite successful Russian ground-force actions in Georgia and Ukraine, much of the Russian military remains backward and poorly trained. For much of the post–Cold War period the Russian navy was in decline. Although in recent years it has received increased funding, its shipbuilding has focused on frigates and cruisers that lack adequate defenses and primarily are limited to coastal-defense operations.[83] But even this limited recent expansion of the Russian fleet has been hampered by the poor state of the Russian shipbuilding industry. Russian observers acknowledge that the navy's shipyards are in difficult shape and require significant funding, contributing to extended delays in delivering new ships. In 2017, of the Russian navy's twenty-four major surface ships, only three had been constructed since the end of the Cold War. Overall, the decline in Russia's defense industry is significant. Only 20 percent of its defense companies can be modernized in an economical way.[84] Yet the Russian defense budget has declined in recent years, reflecting the absence of reform of the Russian economy, the extended decline in GDP growth, and Western sanctions following Russia's annexation of Crimea and its intervention in Ukraine. Budget problems have compelled Russia to delay development of a next-generation destroyer and aircraft carrier. In 2018, the Russian military budget declined by 20 percent compared with 2017's.[85] According to Russian sources, in 2017 China's defense budget was three times that of Russia's.[86]

Russia's military decline has become especially apparent in the Far East. Its intervention in Ukraine and NATO's subsequent renewal of ground-force and naval exercises on Russia's periphery have compelled Russia to concentrate much of its limited force capabilities on the growing U.S./NATO challenge to Russian security, thus weakening further the Russian strategic presence in the Far East.[87] China, on the other hand, has developed advanced ground-force and naval technologies and platforms that contribute to the growth of its full-spectrum conventional superiority over the Russian military in Northeast Asia. Moreover, just south of the Sino-Russian border China enjoys the benefits of plentiful arable land and rapid industrial growth. In its northeast, China has developed a modern economy, an increasingly well-educated and capable population, advanced and well-trained ground-force capabilities, and a sophisticated high-technology

infrastructure. Moscow cannot patrol its borders, so the Sino-Russian border can be as porous to Chinese migration and trade as it was for most of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, when 80 percent of the civilians in Vladivostok were Chinese or Korean.[88] In the twenty-first century, China's stronger commercial presence in the Far East challenges the economic integration of the Far East with the rest of Russia.[89] China's domination of the Sino-Russian border has increased since the end of the Cold War.

Overall, the gap between Chinese and Russian underlying economic great-power capabilities has widened in the twenty-first century. The significant difference between Chinese and Russian GDP growth rates over the past twenty-five years has contributed to the widening of the Sino-Russian economic and technological gaps. Moreover, Russia has yet to reform its economy; it has been content to rely on oil revenues to sustain economic growth. The prospects for relative improvement in Russia's economic situation have not improved. More recently, the new international sources of gas and oil and the resulting drop in world energy prices, combined with NATO's economic retaliation against Russia for its intervention in Ukraine, contributed to the onset of a Russian recession. This recession, or stagnation, is likely to endure for many years, thus postponing further Russia's ability to develop sustained economic growth and to field a strong military in the Russian Far East.[90] Russian defense spending as a share of GDP is already more than double Chinese defense spending as a share of GDP.[91] Russia cannot contend with China in an arms competition.

The decline of Russian capabilities in Northeast Asia diminishes the necessity for Beijing to allocate significant resources to defend its northern border. Chinese analysts have minimal concern that Russia will reemerge as an East Asian great power that can challenge Chinese security.[92] Thus, in terms of the domestic security of the great power, the Sino-Russian border increasingly resembles the U.S.-Canadian border.

Therefore, along its entire mainland periphery China's strategic circumstances resemble U.S. strategic circumstances in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when American nationalism promoted the development of the United States as a global naval power, rather than the geopolitical circumstances that contributed to the demise of French and German nationalist naval ambitions. Consolidated Chinese border security has allowed China to allocate an increasing share of its growing defense budget to developing a large, modern naval force, thus enabling the development of great-power capabilities that can challenge U.S. maritime hegemony.[93] The PLA's 2015 defense white paper on China's military strategy reported that China's "traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests." Thus, China's navy

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"will gradually shift its focus from 'offshore waters defense' to the combination of 'offshore-waters defense' with 'open-seas protection.'"[94] Insofar as China's defense budget consumes a mere 2 percent of its GDP, China can expand its naval budget significantly with minimal repercussions for the Chinese economy.[95]

The Rise of the Chinese Navy and U.S.-Chinese Competition

Thus, in many respects, China's geopolitical circumstances resemble the American geopolitical circumstances that facilitated the U.S. effort to dominate the Caribbean Sea and ultimately the Western Hemisphere. China possesses the continental security and the growing economy that will enable it to fund a large and modern naval force without undermining Chinese continental border security.

But in one important respect China's geopolitical circumstances are different from those of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. The United States peacefully rose to be a great naval power and to exert hemispheric hegemony because the established global powers faced more-pressing issues in their home theater. Between 1895 and 1905, both Britain and Germany ceded the Caribbean Sea to U.S. naval hegemony because they faced threats to their territorial integrity from other European powers, so they could not afford conflict in distant regions. Britain, the established global power, withdrew its fleet to European waters, and Germany, the rising global power, never thought to challenge the United States in the Caribbean Sea. Thus, in effect, the United States did not face a serious great-power challenge to its maritime rise in the Western Hemisphere.

China's rise as a maritime power faces very different great-power politics. The United States, the established maritime power in East Asia, does not face a challenge in the Western Hemisphere to either its continental or maritime security. Similarly, European countries are not dependent on a major U.S. presence in Europe to contend with Russian military power. U.S. security interests outside East Asia thus do not require the United States to concede Chinese maritime hegemony in East Asia. On the contrary, China's maritime rise in East Asia already has encountered significant U.S. resistance. The U.S. "pivot to Asia" during the Barack Obama presidency, including the strengthening of the U.S. naval presence in East Asia, reflected U.S. concern about rising Chinese naval power and the American intention to balance the rise of China and strengthen U.S.–East Asian alliances. Similarly, during the Donald Trump administration, U.S. defense policy has focused on expanding the size of the U.S. Navy to contend with China's expanding fleet. U.S. development of advanced-technology weapons reflects the country's growing concern for the maritime balance of power in East Asia. U.S. researches on laser weapons, the rail gun, carrier-based attack and reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicles, underwater antisubmarine and antimine drones, long-range antiship cruise missiles, range extensions for U.S. carrier-based aircraft, and ship-based antiship cruise missiles all reflect the U.S. effort to

contend with the rise of China's navy. Similarly, heightened U.S. resistance since 2013 to China's legal claims and its land-reclamation activities in the South China Sea reflects U.S. efforts to bolster its regional strategic partnerships as China has developed greater naval power.

Thus, despite similar continental geopolitical circumstances, the great-power consequences of the rise of China in East Asia may be very different from the great-power consequences of the rise of the United States in the Western Hemisphere. America's peaceful rise reflected the strategic priorities that the established great powers, especially Great Britain, faced in distant regions. As China rises, it will not enjoy such fortunate geopolitical circumstances. Rather, America's strategic priority will be balancing the rise of China in East Asia. This suggests that the rise of China in the twenty-first century may elicit far greater instability and great-power competition and tension, including crises and arms races, than the instability and tension elicited by the rise of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.

This historical comparative analysis of case studies of great-power maritime expansionism suggests that naval nationalism, not realist strategic considerations or an unrelenting drive for security or immediate national security interests, drives costly revisionist impulses and strategically counterproductive naval acquisitions that distract from realist policy making and frequently contribute to significant strategic setbacks. Such nationalist dynamics explain not only the costly failures of the French and German maritime ambitions discussed in this article but also the failed ambitions of France in the early nineteenth century during the Napoleonic Wars, Russian maritime ambitions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Japan's maritime ambitions in the 1930s, and the Soviet Union's maritime ambitions in the 1970s and 1980s.[96]

In the twentieth century, the United States was the exception to this historical pattern. Nationalism drove its naval expansionism, but its successful rise as a global maritime power reflected the benefits neither of nationalism nor of realist, threat-based strategic planning. Instead, U.S. success as a rising naval power occurred *despite* the potentially detrimental effects of American nationalism. Given America's single-minded expansionist ambitions and its ambitious naval acquisition program during the Roosevelt administration, fortuitous strategic circumstances best explain America's early maritime successes.

In the twenty-first century, China is the rising power that is challenging the great-power status quo. To a significant degree, its naval ambitions and its revisionist strategic impatience are driven by the convergence of growing mass nationalism and nationalist leadership. Nonetheless, unlike France and Germany, China possesses the necessary geopolitical circumstances that allowed the United

States to become a maritime great power. It does not face a significant continental threat to its security. But unlike the United States, China likely will face resistance to a revised regional security order from the established maritime power, the United States. Thus, China's fortuitous geopolitical circumstances and the likelihood of continued economic growth, even at lower annual rates, probably will enable it to challenge U.S. maritime hegemony, but in doing so it will contribute to heightened great-power conflict, with implications for the global security order and the prospects of great-power war instead of peace.

NOTES

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