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'Surest Guaranty of Peace': Rhetoric, Consumer Culture, and the Popularization of American Naval Power, 1883 - 1909

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‘Surest Guaranty of Peace’: Rhetoric, Consumer Culture,
and the Popularization of American Naval Power, 1883 - 1909

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree for
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History
College of Arts and Sciences
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Dedication

For Robin ... The love of my life.

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Abstract

This project a cultural history of the U.S. Navy during an era of a major institutional and technological transformation. In it, I trace the ways that Gilded Age and Progressive Era naval advocates successfully pitched the idea of modernizing the U.S. Navy to the American people. These military promoters justified technological advancement as societal progress, arguing for a more pronounced presence for the United States on the world stage. Marketing experts then seized on the people's increasing fascination with naval power to rekindle a sense of patriotism by sensationalizing militarism. Riding this wave of popularity and public awareness of naval matters, President Theodore Roosevelt, Navy planners, and pro-imperialist politicians increased the size of the U.S. Navy and implemented plans to deploy the new fleet globally to gain international clout. My project also asserts that the reading habits and buying choices of Americans at the end of the Gilded Age demonstrated their compliance with a more aggressive United States foreign policy.

Introduction, ‘Surest Guaranty of Peace’:

She is no longer to us a mere country on the map. She comes within the dear and sacred designation of Our Country... other nations have undertaken to intrude themselves ... in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness, and checking the fulfillment of our *manifest destiny* to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.¹

-John O’Sullivan, newspaper editor, “Annexation,” 1845

There is a homely old adage which runs: ‘Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far.’ If the American nation will speak softly, and yet build and keep at a pitch of the highest training a thoroughly efficient navy, the Monroe Doctrine will go far.²

-President Theodore Roosevelt, April 3, 1902

American author L. Frank Baum was an emerging talent in 1900. Three years earlier, he had published his first work of children’s literature, *Mother Goose in Prose*, a retelling of the classic nursery rhymes. Baum presented his follow-up work, *Father Goose: His Book*, to George M. Hill Company, a higher-profile Chicago-area print house, and they agreed to publish it. The book of nonsensical children’s poems quickly became a bestseller after its 1899 release, enjoying both strong sales and critical acclaim for its writing and illustrations. Hill Company also published his next work, an expansive children’s epic titled *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. It hit bookstores in September 1900, and soon went on to become an international sensation.

¹ John O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, Volume 17 (New York: 1845), 5-6.

² Speech in Chicago, April 3, 1903, *New York Times*, April 4, 1903.

In the year between these two publications, Baum worked for Hill Company fulltime as a writer and evangelist for American expansion. In this capacity, he worked on several smaller projects, including a children's book that promoted the United States Navy and American imperialism after the Spanish American War. *The Navy Alphabet*, published in tandem with *The Army Alphabet*, used the letters of the alphabet to teach children terminology related to the military and war. But it also did more than this, informing boys and girls about the nuances of naval power in international relations. Baum supported President William McKinley and, evidenced from editorials he wrote as a journalist in South Dakota in 1890 and 1891, believed in the legitimacy of engaging in the genocidal slaughter of Native Americans who endangered white westward expansion.³ In addition to his bombastic bellicosity displayed in his advocacy of conquering the West, many pro-imperialist messages also can be seen in *The Navy Alphabet*. The letter 'C', for example, stood for 'cruiser.' This ship's purpose, children learned, was "to cruise in ev'ry foreign sea, our commerce to protect, and guard our country's dignity from any disrespect."⁴ Through rhyming lyrics, Baum also taught American youth that the Navy's mission was "to guard our colonies afar and carry aid in time of war." He also introduced them to the geography of their nation's new empire: "They sail to fair Manila from the sunny little isle of Guam. And then from Porto Rican blooms to where Hawaii grandly looms."⁵

Baum's book on the U.S. Navy was one of dozens of pieces of children's literature published in the first few years after the 1898 war with Spain that sought to educate American youth on the virtues of U.S. overseas expansion. Books like these, together with a vast array of other cultural ephemera, capitalized on the popularity of the military to sell products to children

³ L. Frank Baum. "Editorial on Sitting Bull," Aberdeen (SD) *Saturday Pioneer*, December 20, 1890; "Editorial on Wounded Knee," Aberdeen (SD) *Saturday Pioneer*, January 3, 1891.

⁴ L. Frank Baum. *The Navy Alphabet*. (Chicago: George M. Hill Company), 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

and their parents. In 1900, the U.S. Navy was not only one of the world's strongest fighting forces but was also a profitable brand name for American advertisers and publishers.

Investigating how and why it became that way has much to tell us about culture, militarism, and the development of American national identity.

Examining the changing place of the Navy in U.S. popular culture during an age of massive overseas expansion, this dissertation shows how Americans began to agree – or at the minimum comply – with the goals of imperialists who were reimagining national purpose and identity. The popularity of the U.S. Navy during this time, my dissertation argues, was essential to its rise as an influential societal institution. Public discourse about the building and implementation of this new navy echoed the varying ways that the American people discussed imperialism, militarism, nationalism, masculinity, employment, and the growing presence of the United States overseas. This project also shows how world events, technological advancements, domestic conditions, the press, and politics influenced the public's acceptance of massive military spending in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Between Congressional approval of America's first four steel-hulled warships in 1883 and the cruise of the Great White Fleet, which ended in 1909, the United States built a maritime force second only to the British.

“A good Navy is not a provocation of war,” President Theodore Roosevelt told Congress in 1902. “It is the surest guaranty of peace.”⁶ Examining the origins and legacies of this idea, *‘Surest Guaranty of Peace’: Rhetoric, Consumer Culture, and the Popularization of American Naval Power, 1883-1909* traces the cultural history of the U.S. Navy, mapping its intellectual development and popularity along with its institutional and technological transformations. In my

⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, 2nd Annual Message to Congress, December 2, 1902. *The American President Project – UC-Santa Barbara*. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/second-annual-message-16>. Accessed June 9, 2019.

project, I show how naval advocates in the late 19th and early 20th centuries — a period often referred to as the “Gilded Age and Progressive Era” — successfully pitched the idea of modernizing the U.S. Navy, and U.S. overseas imperialism more broadly, to the American people. The navalists, military strategists, and politicians who advocated for building industrial navies, I argue, justified federal investment in technological advancement of the Navy as societal progress, arguing that it was essential to achieve a more pronounced presence for the United States on the world stage.

The story this dissertation tells begins in the 1880s and 1890s. During these years, as the United States emerged from the societal transformations of Reconstruction, the Second Industrial Revolution, and the final stages of westward expansion, many Americans experienced an identity crisis. With such significant transformations, they wondered, what would be the path of national development? Should the United States remain in relative isolationism, or should it move toward greater international engagement? If they chose the latter path, what should that engagement look like? In this context, many outward-looking U.S. politicians and industrials set their sights on international markets to continue this expansion. Others began to consider the acquisition of overseas territories, eager to expand the United States’ formal empire overseas.⁷ The United

⁷ Many scholars have examined this transformational period, but see for example Amy Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire in the Making of US Culture*. (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2005); Frank Ninkovich, *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism*. (Harvard University Press, 2009); Matthew F. Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1867-1917*. (New York: Hill and Wang), 2000; Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux), 2019; Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Making of an Imperial Republic*. (New York: MacMillan, 2007); H.W. Brands, *The Reckless Decade: American in the 1890s*. (University of Chicago Press, 1995); David Traxel, *1898: The Birth of the American Century*. (New York: Knopf Publishing, 1998); T.J. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2009); Karl Jacoby, *Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); K. Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: Race and the Reconstruction of Southern Identity, 1865-1915*. (Chapel Hill (NC): University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Levin, Miriam R. *Urban Modernity Cultural Innovation in the Second Industrial Revolution*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

States, it bears noting, was not the only nation pursuing these formal and informal imperial designs. During this same time internationally, the Great Powers of Europe carved up the continent of Africa into colonies and made plans for the economic domination of Southeast Asia. To achieve these goals, European nations began to industrialize and modernize their militaries. As they observed these developments, many American policymakers came to believe that they must do the same.

Growing enthusiasm for international expansion and military expansion marked a critical turning point in the history of the United States and the history of U.S. foreign relations. Prior to the late 19th century, most Americans had distrusted the notion of standing armies, and for the most part invested only in coastal naval defenses rather than maintaining an offensive navy. By the 1880s, however, U.S. government officials were beginning to take tentative steps to expand and modernize the military. They did so by building “The New Navy,” the first U.S. warships that used steel hulls and steam power instead of wood and sails.

But for many naval experts of the time, including most notably Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, author, educator, and administrator at the U.S. Naval War College, this did not go far enough. Mahan and other navalists called for further expansion of the Navy to protect American shipping interests. Mahan saw naval power as essential to opening new global markets, particularly because the United States’ economy had struggled since the Panic of 1873.⁸ In this economic and political context, a growing number of U.S. government officials and industrialists came to agree with Mahan and began to set their sights on expanding its borders overseas to save its struggling economy. They soon realized, however, that they needed public support to do it.

⁸ See for example Eric Foner. *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 531-2, 535; Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867–1960*. (Princeton University Press, 1971), 37; Eric Hobsbawm. *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*. (New York: Vintage Books), 45.

Mahan, co-founder of the Naval War College in 1884 and considered by many historians as the Godfather of American naval strategy, understood the drive of American industrialists. In 1890, he stated that “independently of all bias for or against protection, it is safe to predict that, when the opportunities for gain abroad are understood, the course of American enterprise will cleave a channel by which to reach them.”⁹ Because of the extended series of recessions and non-existent recoveries between 1873 and 1896 – a period several historians have dubbed the “Long Depression” – American urban workers and industrial capitalists had reason to doubt their modern, free market economy. In response to their anxieties and skepticism, leaders in the business sector, Congress, and the military sought stabilizing solutions.

The construction of a modern steel-and-steam navy, many pro-imperialists, capitalists, and advocates of naval power came to believe, represented one such solution. Industrial shipbuilding, they imagined, would add thousands of jobs, cause profits to soar, and open U.S. businesses to international markets. Yet in an era of open-door policies and proliferating global trade, Americans remained divided on whether it was in the national interest to remain isolated or to integrate more fully into global politics and the world economy. Many remained fiercely opposed to imperial ventures of any sort. Even those in the pro-imperialist camp debated how best to expand: through “benevolent assimilation” or military conquest.¹⁰

As Americans considered these questions during the late 1800s, officer-scholars at the Naval War College and policymakers in Washington, D.C. began to answer them publicly in academic books and articles in literary magazines. To resolve these new questions of American

⁹ Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The United States Looking Outward,” *The Atlantic Magazine*, December 1890.

¹⁰ See for example Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico during U.S. Colonialism*. (Durham: University of Duke Press, 2008); Eric Love, *Race Over Empire, Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 2006.

national identity, these naval militarists called for nothing less than the expansion of the U.S. Navy into a global force. The issue for these navalists, particularly those who served in Congress, was that this transformation required an enormous amount of capital, which in turn required the approval of the American people. How they gained that approval — the ways that they convinced the American public to support naval expansion — is the principal focus of this dissertation.

This was never purely an intellectual question; as this dissertation will explore, the Navy's expansion in the 1880s and 1890s had real material effects. During these years, the United States also became involved in several high-profile international incidents that involved the use of naval power. These included the Samoan typhoon in 1889, the *Baltimore* Crisis in 1891, the Hawaiian Revolution of 1893, the Venezuela Crisis of 1895, the Cuban Revolution, and hostile relations with Spain from 1895 through the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898. During the 1880s and 1890s, as events like these saturated American headlines, industrial naval modernization began to generate profits, create jobs, build urban infrastructure, secure international trade, project strength abroad, and demonstrate the sophistication of the United States during the Gilded Age. For all these reasons, the Navy grew increasingly popular with the American public, and was poised to grow even more popular as the 20th century dawned.

After examining these foundational events in the 1880s and 1890s, the narrative of this dissertation shifts to the first decade of the 1900s, when one of these navalist politicians – Theodore Roosevelt – became President of the United States. This event symbolized, in many ways, the consolidation of navalist influence in Washington. Like many Americans at the time, Roosevelt embraced this new outward-looking national identity. Roosevelt also saw the Navy as the centerpiece of his foreign policy aims and focused on its development as one of his top reforms.

Not only did he implement increases in naval construction and continue to improve U.S. technology, but Roosevelt also sought to increase maritime infrastructure globally. Most notably was the signing of the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty in 1903 to begin construction on the Panama Canal. Maritime power and infrastructure, Roosevelt believed, were also essential to maintaining the newly acquired U.S. territories and protectorates in the Philippines, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. T.R.'s jingoist interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine led to several incidents in the early 1900s in which the navalist Executive ordered American ships into the Caribbean and Pacific to influence the internal affairs of Latin American countries. The Venezuelan Crisis of 1902, the Panamanian Revolution of 1903, and the Santo Domingo Affair of 1904 were the first instances of Roosevelt's use of "big stick" diplomacy. Although no major ship-to-ship engagements occurred, the presence of American naval power during each of these international crises shifted the outcomes to U.S. favor. Although these applications of the Roosevelt Corollary made headlines nationwide, the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War shifted the nation's attention to the Pacific. Japan's overwhelming victory impressed Roosevelt, who viewed the modernizers of the Meiji Empire as kindred civilizing spirits and, as newspapers of the time called them, "Yankees of the East."¹¹

As naval construction slowed in the final years of the Roosevelt presidency, Great Britain, already the largest navy in the world, rendered all modern battleships obsolete in 1906 with the launching of the next generation of warship, HMS *Dreadnought*. In response, the President, the Navy Department, the Navy bureaus, the General Board of the U.S. Navy, and the various naval committees in Congress were forced to reassess American naval power and plan accordingly. To better understand his Navy's current capabilities, Roosevelt ordered the sixteen

¹¹ James Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise: A Secret History of Empire and War* (New York: Back Bay, 2010), 30.

battleships of Atlantic Fleet to sail from the Atlantic Ocean into the Pacific, and back to the U.S. west through the Mediterranean Sea. Not only did this help naval planners better understand their task in creating an American *Dreadnought* to match the British, but this worldwide cruise also served as a tool of diplomacy, enabling Roosevelt to form new bonds around the globe and solidify longstanding alliances.

The story this dissertation tells ends in 1909, as the Atlantic Fleet returned home, and Roosevelt left the White House with United States naval power in ascendance. The cruise not only elevated the Navy's international popularity but also raised public awareness in the United States of its significance to the nation's path forward. As President, Roosevelt was perhaps best remembered for being a Progressive reformer on several different issues of the day, including labor, banking, and industry. He also utilized this passion for reform to build a modern navy that he felt best served American interests domestically and abroad.

§§§

The modernization of the Navy, the ideology behind its development, and the founding of its educational apparatuses have been widely studied by historians for decades. Many scholars have also examined how the Navy's evolution mirrored the nation's various transformations during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. This dissertation builds on the work of these pioneering scholars while also making new arguments about the significance of naval educators, government contracts, advertisers and publishers, and politicians in the construction of national identity and purpose.

In the field of U.S. naval history, perhaps no figure looms larger than Alfred Thayer Mahan. Many naval historians have studied Mahan's influence, examining not only his efforts to modernize the Navy, but also his significance to the development of U.S. foreign policy and military strategy through the two World Wars. Many scholars of U.S. military history and U.S. foreign relations during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era name Mahan as one of the most influential pro-imperialist writers of the age. Military historian Dirk Bönker, for example, credits Mahan's *Influences of Sea Power Upon History* as a major intellectual influence on both Queen Victoria and her nephew Kaiser Wilhelm II in planning future naval development for Great Britain and Germany before the turn of the century.¹² Benjamin Coates, a historian of law and U.S. foreign relations, recognizes Mahan as one of the few military strategists of his time who utilized experts in international law to legalize plans for American overseas expansion and, thus, justify the continued investment in the Navy.¹³ Bönker and Coates are but a small, illustrative sample of historians who have written about Mahan's influence on late 19th and early 20th century U.S. international affairs.¹⁴

Yet for all his influence, Mahan was not the only figure who shaped U.S. naval history at the opening of the 20th century. Taking the discussion beyond Mahan, Peter Karsten's 1972 book examined the wider "navalist movement" of the Gilded Age. Drawn from white elite society in the Northeast, these members of *The Naval Aristocracy*, as Karsten termed them, not only

¹² Dirk Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 6.

¹³ Benjamin A. Coates, *Legalist Empire: International Law and American Foreign Relations in the Early Twentieth Century*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 45.

¹⁴ Philip A. Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Naval Historian," *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 444-77; Thomas F.X. Varacalli. "National Interest and Moral Responsibility in the Political Thought of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 69, no. 2 (Spring 2016), 108-127; Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

advocated for naval modernization, but also focused on the development of the American naval officer, seeing professionalism an expression of the United States' own brand of social Darwinism.¹⁵ Motivated by notions of racial supremacy, nationalism, and Protestantism, Karsten argues, this new class of U.S. Navy officer saw themselves as the ultimate expression of societal evolution and intellectual advancement. In his 1977 book, Ronald Spector built on these ideas, focusing on navalism's intellectual origins developed at the Naval War College in the 1880s and 1890s. His work detailed the significance that Mahan and his mentor, Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, had every aspect of the Navy's Gilded Age advancement, including but not limited to seamanship, international relations, military strategy, and industrialization.¹⁶

Writing a generation later in the 1990s, Mark R. Shulman reframed navalism as a significant but often neglected "political movement," led by Mahan, Luce, and Theodore Roosevelt, who reimagined the concept of naval power in the United States through their scholarship, political acumen, and roles as academic experts.¹⁷ Shulman's study demonstrates the different tactics that each of these men utilized to sell the idea of naval modernization to Congress, the President, and the American people. He argues that these navalists were largely responsible for convincing the federal government to expand the Navy's mission beyond coastal defense only and adopt an offense-focused U.S. fleet with global reach.

¹⁵ Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism* (New York: Free Press, 1972), 268; For a more detailed study on the relationship between Alfred Thayer Mahan and relationship to Christian civilizing mission, read Suzanne Geissler, *God and Sea Power: The Influence of Religion on Alfred Thayer Mahan* (Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015.)

¹⁶ Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Navy Profession* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1977); For a detailed look at other influential navalist thinkers, including Rear Admiral Henry Clay Taylor, see John B. Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson and John Wadleigh. *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the Naval War College*. (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1984), 39-40.

¹⁷ Mark R. Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995).

In more recent studies of the development of the Navy during this time, Paul E. Pedisich and Scott Mobley expand on this idea of navalism as a political movement, one that extended well beyond the navalist triumvirate of Mahan, Luce, and Roosevelt. In his 2016 work *Congress Buys a Navy*, Pedisich credits naval advocates in the various Congressional naval committees, not the sitting Presidents or Navy leadership, for advancing American naval power through the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. In his 2018 book, *Progressives in Navy Blue*, Mobley expanded this notion even further, arguing that these advocates for naval modernization were some of the first Progressive reformers in Gilded Age politics.¹⁸ These works, together with others by naval scholars in various fields, demonstrate how the path of American naval development in the late-19th and early-20th centuries paralleled U.S. society more broadly, particularly in regards to such themes as industrialization, social hierarchies, and the changing place of the nation in the world.¹⁹

A significant force for change in the mindset of Americans during the period covered in this study, 1883 to 1909, was Theodore Roosevelt, an advocate for naval power throughout his academic and political careers. It is no surprise that many naval historians are drawn to research the first navalist President. Henry J. Hendrix and Edward J. Marolda, for instance, demonstrate how Roosevelt's foreign policy decisions were directly influenced by his experience as a naval scholar and lecturer as well as his relationships with Mahan and Luce. Marolda's book discusses how Roosevelt's actions as Assistant Secretary of the Navy before the Spanish American War

¹⁸ Paul E. Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy: Politics, Economics, and the Rise of American Naval Power, 1881-1921*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2016); Scott Mobley, *Progressives in Navy Blue: Maritime Strategy, American Empire, and the Transformation of US Naval Identity*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2018).

¹⁹ Scott Mobley, *Progressives in Navy Blue: Maritime Strategy, American Empire, and the Transformation of US Naval Identity*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2018). For an in-depth study on how naval modernization changed urban landscapes and local politics, see Thomas R. Heinrich's *Ships for Seven Seas: Philadelphia Shipbuilding in the Age of Industrial Capitalism*. (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1997).

began a wholesale transformation of the Navy that he continued as President.²⁰ Hendrix mainly focuses on Roosevelt's actions as President during international crises in Venezuela (1902), Panama (1903), and the Dominican Republic (1905), where he applied naval power to the Monroe Doctrine, also known as big stick diplomacy.²¹

Whereas these books acknowledge the significance of Mahan's influence on Roosevelt's foreign policy decisions, naval scholars like Richard W. Turk and John Kuehn argue that Roosevelt formed his own more jingoist version of Mahan's naval doctrine.²² Basing his study on extensive correspondence between the two men during Roosevelt's presidency, Turk shows how Roosevelt and Mahan disagreed on American interventions in Latin American and annexation of the Philippines. Mahan also worried that the Cruise of the Great White Fleet, a worldwide journey of sixteen U.S. battleships, might be considered provocative by Japan. Kuehn's work, focused on the General Board of the U.S. Navy, expands on these arguments, showing how Roosevelt formed his own naval doctrine and implemented it at will while keeping Mahan at a distance as an advisor.

While these naval historians examined the entirety of Roosevelt's presidency, Kenneth Wimmel and James R. Reckner focus their studies on the final phase of Roosevelt navalism, the aforementioned cruise of the Atlantic Fleet battleships from December 1907 to February 1909. Wimmel offers a straightforward history of the cruise, arguing that Roosevelt wanted to test his Navy's technological limits and the capabilities of American sailors. Reckner, taking a more

²⁰ Edward J. Marolda, *Theodore Roosevelt, the Navy, and the Spanish American War* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001).

²¹ Henry J. Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy: The U.S. Navy and the Birth of the American Century* (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 2009).

²² Richard W. Turk, *The Ambiguous Relationship: Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); John Kuehn, *America's First General Staff: A Short History of the Rise and Fall of the General Board of the U.S. Navy, 1900-1950* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017).

analytical approach, argues that the Cruise revealed flaws in naval infrastructure, domestically and globally. Such problems, he contends, would influence the path of naval modernization, national security, and the selection of naval bases and coaling stations abroad.²³

Although Roosevelt was not a wartime President, he was personally connected to the Navy like no other Executive before or after him. Advancing these arguments, Matthew Oyos stresses in his 2018 book that T.R. was constantly in state of preparedness and saw the modernization of the Navy as an important aspect of social and cultural evolution of the United States.²⁴ Oyos's work shows that Roosevelt's obsession with the Navy, particularly as President, was linked to his own Progressive reforms and his belief that American national identity was transformed through conquering the West, a point of view shared by L. Frank Baum. Part of the reason for this reform was to reinvigorate the American sailor and soldier, reinstalling notions of "duty" and "honor" as tenets of a unified post-Civil War U.S. military. Roosevelt's lived experiences as a son of privilege, Harvard graduate, politician, and rugged outdoorsman, along with an intimate knowledge of conflict – both as a naval scholar and veteran of the Spanish American War – helped to reaffirm his ideas of masculinity and white supremacy. The war against Spain was a self-fulfilling prophecy for T.R.'s brand of navalism, Oyos argues. At the same time, the conflict served as a turning point for the United States in so many ways significant to this study, including Americans' opinions on imperialism, patriotism, and themselves at the turn of the 20th century world.

²³ Kenneth Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet: American Seapower Comes of Age*. (Ann Arbor, MI: Brassey's, 1998); James Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988).

²⁴ Matthew Oyos, *In Command: Theodore Roosevelt and the American Military* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, 2018).

Focusing on the Spanish-American War more broadly, scholars of this conflict demonstrate that the many transformations it caused shaped American national identity and purpose. Through an examination of the causes and aftereffects of the Wars of 1898, Paul T. McCartney argues that the embrace of the American civilizing mission changed the path of U.S. foreign policy and became an essential component in the development of this identity and purpose. This compulsion for territorial expansion, McCartney argued, drew upon a cultural framework made up of 19th-century race theory, religion, and the expanded role of the federal government in U.S. society.²⁵ Kristin L. Hoganson connects the rise of American empire with Gilded Age notions of gender, arguing that a multitude of factors, including Reconstruction, the industrial revolutions, and the rising status of women in society, caused a crisis in masculinity that only war against Spain could alleviate. Using a multitude of cultural sources, Hoganson shows how the jingoistic yearning for war was considered a test of American manliness against one of the European powers, in this case Spain.²⁶ Bonnie M. Miller takes a different approach on the gender history of the Spanish American War, arguing that the nation's media makers portrayed Spain's colonial subjects as "damsels in distress" that needed to be rescued by American men in uniform. The editors, photographers, cartoonists, stage performers, and even early filmmakers of the time effeminized those under U.S. colonial rule in their portrayals to American consumers, readers, and audiences, Miller demonstrates, while showing the United States as their strong male protector.²⁷

²⁵ Paul T. McCartney, *Power and Progress: American National Identity, the War of 1898, and the Rise of American Imperialism* (Shreveport, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

²⁶ Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

²⁷ Bonnie Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest: The Visual and Popular Cultures of the Spanish-American War of 1898* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011).

Many of the technological developments, progressive reforms, and ideological movements that transformed the U.S. Navy during this time could not have happened without the larger transformations in American society that were already underway during the Gilded Age. While studies of these transformations (including those that cover naval technology) abound, my dissertation builds particularly on the work of scholars who study the modern press, the rise of mass publishing, consumer culture, and advertising. Ted Curtis Smythe's study on the emergence of mass print journalism during the late 19th century, for instance, examines the American people's interest in the quick pace of world events and their own place in it. Smythe highlights the roles of experts in the press in gaining the public's trust and expanding the range of public thought and awareness of civilizing causes. Cultural studies by T.J. Jackson Lears and Richard Ohmann demonstrate how these same experts were also consulted by advertisers and publishers to help them sell a wide variety of goods, books, and periodicals to Gilded Age consumers. These message makers, both scholars argue, utilized the fears and hopes of the people to make profits while inadvertently contributing to the development of American national identity.²⁸ Robert W. Rydell makes similar claims about the system of twelve World's expositions from 1876 to 1916, one of the most popular forms of entertainment of the time. These exhibitions were essentially theme parks dedicated to imperialism, nation-building, and white civilization, Rydell asserts, which showcased, and many times defined American exceptionalism through exhibition and spectacle. They also taught the typical U.S. citizen about people who lived in the nations under U.S. colonial rule after the Wars of 1898.²⁹

²⁸ T.J. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century*. (New York: Verso Books, 1998).

²⁹ Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at the American International Expositions 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

Together, these existing works show the many ways that the U.S. Navy modernized along with other American institutions at the end of the Second Industrial Revolution and how essential this expanding naval power was to the development American national identity and purpose. My work builds on this scholarship, demonstrating the importance of these pro-navalist writers, politicians, and industrialists in helping to make the Navy, and the idea of U.S. imperialism, more popular to the American people. This dissertation also highlights the significance of publishers, marketers, and manufacturers in building public confidence in the American Navy through educating the masses on naval matters.

This project began as a study of the U.S. empire and, more specifically, why the American people began to support overseas expansion in the transition from the Gilded Age into the Progressive Era. Although *Surest Guaranty of Peace* contributes to the well-documented history of the U.S. Navy, my work also builds on several disparate fields of study, including the histories of imperialism and racism, Gilded Age and Progressive Era society and culture, emerging technologies, and international relations. This dissertation demonstrates how the development of the Navy echoed, and many times led, early progressive reform of American society in the late stages of the Gilded Age.

In short, this is not traditional naval history. Rather it aims to answer larger questions about how the Navy influenced American society and vice versa. It seeks to balance the government and military documents that traditionally inform naval histories with cultural evidence on the U.S. Navy found in academic books, newspapers, and popular literature, as well as consumer goods branded with military themes. Through these sources, I argue that the popularity of the American Navy could be seen in the things that consumers bought themselves and their children, in the books and magazines they chose to read, and in those who they called

“hero.” Moreover, the popular opinion of the military reflected the American people’s acceptance of the United States’ overseas expansion and a growing confidence in its primary national security asset: the U.S. Navy.

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Structured chronologically, this dissertation traces the progression of what naval historians call “navalism,” or naval militarism, from its intellectual wellspring in the Naval War College in the early 1880s to its influence on U.S. public policy during the first decade of the 20th century. The process of normalizing federal naval construction and American overseas territories proceeded, I argue, as follows: First, in the 1880s and 1890s, American militarists like Alfred Thayer Mahan and Stephen B. Luce articulated their vision for a modern Navy in academic books and popular magazines, with the goal to educate the masses and push Congress towards capital investment in ship building. Then, beginning in 1883 and continuing throughout the late 19th century, the construction of this new fleet stimulated urban economies in Pennsylvania and New York, the top two states in Electoral College votes. These developments helped make ship construction popular with politicians, industrialists, labor, and the press. Next, in the aftermath of the 1898 Spanish-American War, marketing experts seized on the people’s increasing fascination with naval power to rekindle a sense of patriotism by branding popular literature, consumer goods, and children’s toys with military themes.

Finally, during the first decade of the 20th century, President Theodore Roosevelt used the nation’s newfound love for the Navy, its understanding of the Monroe Doctrine, and its greatest hero, First Admiral George Dewey, to garner public opinion in his favor validating a

series of Navy interventions abroad. During his presidency, Roosevelt appointed his preferred naval experts to the new General Board while effectively becoming his own Navy Secretary. Near the end of his second term, the President ordered the sixteen battleships of the Atlantic Fleet into the Pacific Ocean on a multifaceted mission to project American power overseas, test the ships and sailors of the New Navy, and embody his domestic and foreign policy aims. Ultimately, the Cruise of the Great White Fleet (as it came to be known), marked the culmination of decades-long process of selling the Navy to the U.S. public and its allies.

While they trace this historical trajectory, my dissertation chapters also examine a variety of specific themes, each offering new perspectives on the cultural history of the U.S. Navy in these years. In the first chapter, the “Intellectual Wellspring of American Navalism,” I identify Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, not Mahan, as the intellectual leader of the navalist movement. Luce wrote the first book on seamanship for the modern U.S. Navy; Luce selected Mahan to write the U.S. Naval Academy’s first set of lectures; Luce was the person who convinced Mahan to publish his book, *The Influences of Sea Power on History*, which was well-received by the public internationally; and it was Luce who joined Mahan in writing about naval topics in popular magazines such as the *Harper’s* publications and *The Atlantic*, among others. As I began to delve into my research, I realized that these two Navy officers combined accounted for nearly 200 published articles from the late 1880s through Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency. In these works, Luce and Mahan attempted to educate military officers, politicians, and the general public on the significance of building, maintaining, and, most importantly, implementing a modern U.S. Navy. By examining the ideological battles over naval pedagogy, the curriculum in the first years of the Naval War College, and articles written by navalists in magazines in the 1890s, this chapter shows how U.S. Navy leaders worked to reinvent its origins, traditions, and its future

mission as an American institution – doing so in a very public way. In this chapter, in short, I argue that historians should elevate Stephen Luce’s name to at least equal footing with Mahan as it relates to the articulation of modern American naval power.

My second chapter, “The Politics and Popularity of Warship Construction,” focuses on the shipbuilding industry in Philadelphia and its environs in the 1880s and 1890s. It demonstrates how industrial capitalists in the steel and shipbuilding industries, union and non-union laborers, publishers, and politicians embraced the navalists’ vision of a modern navy for their own self-interests. The two largest shipbuilding companies in Philadelphia, John Roach’s Delaware River Ship and Iron Works and William Cramp and Sons Shipping, were also the two of the largest shipbuilders in the nation from 1883 through 1909, boasting innovations in steel manufacturing, engine technology, and armor fabrication. As naval construction at these shipyards became more popular among industrialists and labor unions, it also became a serious talking point for politicians on both sides of the aisle. As Democrats and Republicans sought to delegate naval spending to benefit themselves on election day and decide the direction of American foreign policy, moreover, the shipbuilding industry became an object of political desire as well.

Together, as chapter 2 argues, these various groups fueled the popularization of the U.S. Navy beyond even the navalists’ wildest dreams. During these years, industrialists, labor unions, and politicians also learned that the best way to keep the shipyards and steel mills busy and jobs secured was through the implementation of Navy contracts to build warships. Building steel warships increased profits, raised job numbers, and secured loyal voters, yet these benefits varied depending on how many ships were being built at any one time. The bigger the projects and larger the steel orders, the more money was made by all parties. By the 1890s, in short,

shipbuilders and steel producers in Pennsylvania had come to see the implementation of Alfred Thayer Mahan's "two-ocean" battleship navy as a lucrative bonanza.

My third chapter, "Dewey Mania, the Wars of 1898, and the Selling of American Exceptionalism," turns to the era of the Spanish-American War and its aftermath — an episode that saw the United States enter a war with a European power and emerge as an overseas empire, with territorial holdings in the Caribbean and the Pacific. One of the major outcomes of this war was the U.S. defeat of the Spanish Navy in the Philippines, a battle led by Commodore George Dewey. While many historians have focused on the military aspects of this history, my dissertation tells the cultural history of this event. Within days of Dewey's victory at the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1st, 1898, newspaper editors, publishers, and marketing specialists began to make him into an American cultural icon. His popularity can be found in the hundreds of consumer goods, photographs, pieces of ephemera, children's toys and games, and literature that used the Admiral's image or story to sell consumer goods, a cultural fad I call "Dewey Mania." These material artifacts of consumer culture illustrate the significance of non-traditional sources to uncover the nation's past, a methodology growing in popularity among military historians. While contributing to the histories of U.S. foreign relations and military history, this chapter also adds to the history of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era and to such themes as masculinity, consumerism, and industrialization.

The fourth chapter, "Theodore Roosevelt, the General Board, and the Formation of American Foreign Policy," focuses on the first decade of the 20th century. Examining the General Board of the United States Navy, it shows how President Theodore Roosevelt used this advisory body to validate his "Big Stick" approach to U.S. foreign policy throughout his administration. The board, founded on March 13, 1900 by Secretary of the Navy John Davis

Long, was intended to advise the Secretary directly; as soon as Roosevelt took office, however, it became his advisory board. During his nearly eight years as President, Roosevelt rotated through six different Navy Secretaries, selecting political allies versed in law and bureaucracy rather than naval experts for the post. This not only gave the President direct control over naval policy, but also allowed him to add a degree of showmanship and spectacle to American navalism. The General Board, chaired by First Admiral George Dewey and composed of many other high-ranking naval officials, met monthly to plan for future wars, scout for coaling stations, advise on colonial projects, and challenge the bureau chiefs for the President's attention. The board advised on policy, the Secretary confirmed its legality, and Roosevelt tried to enact much of it.

As chapter 4 also shows, the President then used his relationship with the press and Dewey's status as a national hero in an attempt to garner public support for his policies. These included most notably his quest for a Panama Canal, his calls for greater war readiness efforts after the Venezuela Crisis of 1902-1903, and the Roosevelt Corollary of 1904, in part a response to that international incident. Dewey's board also advised the President to shift the nation's foreign policy focus from Germany to Japan following the Eastern nation's victory against Russia in 1906. Through studies of these and other foreign policy crises, this chapter argues that the General Board of the U.S. Navy under Dewey served as nation's de facto Secretary of the Navy under Roosevelt, advising the bureaus, Congress, and the President on naval matters and shaping U.S. foreign policy in marked ways.

This dissertation concludes with the greatest public relations campaign in American naval history to this point: The Cruise of the Atlantic Fleet (or "Great White Fleet," as it commonly referred to today). In a show of American power, President Roosevelt ordered the sixteen battleships of the Atlantic Fleet to cruise around the world, visiting both American and

international ports as both a naval exercise and publicity stunt. Chapter 5, “Feast, Frolic, or Fight: The Diplomacy of the Great White Fleet,” traces this spectacular journey. While several historians have told the history of this cruise, existing scholarship ignores key parts of this story. One of the most neglected aspects of this mission, as I argue in this chapter, was its importance to Roosevelt’s relationship with the Empire of Japan. As newspapers in both the United States and abroad reveal, there was overwhelming support for the American Navy in all its ports of call, including those in Japan. Not only did the President and American fleet commanders show the utmost respect during their visit, but the Japanese delegation welcomed U.S. sailors with parades and celebrations. The Japanese people raised American flags and red, white, and blue bunting alongside the flag of the rising sun. But it was not only Japan. As Chapter 5 shows, millions also lined the shores in Argentina, Australia, Egypt, and the Philippines, just to name a few countries.

By the time the Fleet returned to the United States in 1909, the popularity of the United States Navy – decades in the making – had gone global. With a world war just five years away when Theodore Roosevelt left office, American naval power was also in ascendance, second only to the navies of Great Britain and Germany – the primary combatants in that conflict. Within a generation, American naval power had transformed. The development of U.S. industrial naval power between 1883 and 1909, as this dissertation will show, was as much an intellectual and societal transformation as it was a technological or military one. With a modern maritime force, the United States now had the capability to expand overseas, thus presenting a choice for the people and policymakers in Washington. This new navy opened untapped international markets, increased national pride, and elevated the U.S. to the Great Powers of Europe. This is exactly how navalist scholars, politicians, and even writers of children’s literature such as Frank

Baum sold the Navy to the common American: The U.S. Navy became the ultimate expression of human civilization and national exceptionalism.

Chapter 1 – Intellectual Wellspring of American Navalism:

Alfred Thayer Mahan's historical text on British naval power, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783*, became a worldwide phenomenon quickly after its publication in 1890. Its success was due in part to Mahan's reputation as a historian and career United States naval officer, as well as to the book's fortuitous release during the initial phases of modern steel warship construction. In more than the century that has passed since its release, naval historians have discussed and debated Mahan's influence on global naval proliferation at the turn of the 20th century. As these scholars observe, his ideas influenced the ways that the United States, Germany, France, and Japan modernized their navies.³⁰ Mahan's other writings, beginning with his lectures from years at the Naval War College, also had an enormous influence on early 20th century American foreign policy, inspiring such developments as the construction of a large battleship fleet and the creation of the Panama Canal under U.S. control.³¹

Mahan could not have ascended to this level of global academic and officer respect without his appointment to the new Naval War College in 1885 by its founder, Stephen Bleecker Luce. As an educational reformer and leading advocate for the modernization of American naval power, Rear Admiral Luce believed that complete institutional transformation was necessary for the New Navy, and he surrounded himself with like-minded professionals such as Mahan to help him proselytize and achieve his vision. For Luce, developing better naval strategy and improving

³⁰ Kenneth Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet* (London: Brassey's, 1998), 44, 58-9, 151.

³¹ Richard W. Turk, *Theodore Roosevelt's Navy Diplomacy: The U.S. Navy and the Birth of the American Century* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 154.

seamanship were not sufficient. He saw the need to cultivate a contemporary academic culture within the Navy that would permit the diversification of its graduate school curriculum. He sought officers capable of designing and operating new technological marvels. To do this, Luce recruited civilian historians and academic subject matter experts like James R. Soley, a professor of law, history, and ethics, and historian Theodore Roosevelt, author of the critically acclaimed *The Naval War of 1812*, to lecture at the war college on a variety of topics. This included history, international law, foreign languages, and modern personal hygiene techniques. Luce wanted to produce generations of naval professionals who took a more scientific approach to war and, more importantly, applied comparative studies and critical thinking to matters of international relations in order to avoid conflict.³² At the same time, Luce worried that the professional legitimacy of the officer corps was being usurped by the lower-ranked engineers, mechanics, and equipment operators, whose expertise was becoming a valuable commodity on the new steam-and-steel ships. Luce hoped to reverse this trend by educating a new class of naval officers whose knowledge of war and mastery of technology would make them indispensable leaders.

This new academic direction, however, represented a direct challenge to the existing educational hierarchy within the Navy, which attempted to discredit Luce and his war college from its inception. For its first three decades as one of the nation's preeminent collegiate programs, the Naval War College fought for its very existence on several occasions. Not only did the school face budget cuts and criticism from the anti-imperialist Democrats through the 1880s and 1890s, but internal conflict and debates within the Navy itself threatened to close down the school and end Luce's influence as an educational innovator.³³ While Luce promoted the study

³² John B. Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson and John Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the Naval War College* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1984), 13, 15-18.

³³ Scott Mobley, *Progressives in Navy Blue: Maritime Strategy, American Empire, and the Transformation of U.S. Naval Identity, 1873-1898*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 183-5.

of history and its application to law, international relations, and war preparation, his rivals at the Naval Academy and within the leadership of the Navy in Washington believed that its college programs should focus exclusively on new technologies, shipboard training, and basic seamanship – tried and true techniques for grooming new officers.³⁴

Luce’s response to these attacks was to take his argument to the American people. To save the Naval War College and garner public opinion in favor of an expanded role of the Navy in international affairs, Luce and allies like Mahan targeted upper- and middle-class Americans through the vehicle of mass market publications. Hundreds of their articles appeared in journals, popular literary magazines, and newspapers. Mahan himself published over 150 magazine articles from 1890-1914.³⁵ These American naval insurgents also published many scholarly books, including nineteen by Mahan alone. In these writings, they delved into such themes as history, civilization, progress, masculinity, moral reform, internationalism, and race.

As these navalist writers understood, they had to be recognized as experts on these subjects if they were to credibly educate Americans on the importance of the Navy.³⁶ These men and their allies used their expert status as naval officers, academic professionals, and political insiders to merge naval education with societal discourses important to the American intelligentsia and the economic elite. The late-19th and early-20th centuries, these American navalists argued, had given rise to a host of social and geopolitical problems, including overseas expansion, industrialization, and economic uncertainty—problems, they assured readers, that only U.S. naval power could solve.

³⁴ Ibid., 193-4.

³⁵ Dirk Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 214-5.

³⁶ Ibid. 1, 6, 16. “Navalist” describes militarists and political advocates seeking to expand U.S. naval power.

Although this public outreach was intended to save his college, Luce and his associates fought for other goals as well: their credibility as professionals and, more importantly, their vision of the United States in the world. These men believed that the curriculum they taught had future ramifications for far more than just fleet tactics. They were prognosticators who used history, current affairs, and simulation to predict how the U.S. Navy could be best used to win wars, keep the peace, and play a vital role in the foreign policy-making decisions of the federal government. For these ideas to become policy, however, they had to be embraced not only by the American people, but also by Congress. By reaching out to a larger audience outside the U.S. Navy, these men hoped to promote their ideas to audience members of the general public who were similarly interested in an aggressive American foreign policy, a stronger military, and reestablishing national pride perceived to be lost since the Civil War. By making their case to the American people, Luce and his fellow navalists hoped they could garner support from like-minded Congressmen to continue funding the Naval War College.

This chapter examines how Luce, Mahan, Soley, and other navalist scholars and historians utilized memory, historical reinterpretation, and critical thinking to make expert commentary on current events to influence the American public — and, in turn, U.S. military policy. The establishment of the Naval War College in 1884 institutionalized the practices of teaching history and promoting military training as a science within the college's programs. At its time, Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power Upon History* — written from his many collegiate lectures — was intended to be naval education for a select audience: future naval officers, American military strategists, economic elites, and world leaders. But how did Mahan and his fellow navalists discuss modernizing the fleet with the American people? How did these officers, historians, and educators utilize the rhetoric of modernization to reimagine American national

identity? Who were their audiences? This chapter seeks to answer these questions. By examining the ideological battle over naval pedagogy, the curriculum in the first years of the Naval War College, and articles written by navalists in magazines in the 1890s, one can see how influential factions within the U.S. Navy remade its origins, traditions, and its future as an American institution and sold these ideas to the U.S. public.

Luce's Vision for the Future of Naval Education

Rear Admiral Stephen Bleecker Luce was a prolific writer and a shameless promoter for his beloved United States Navy. Having joined the Navy at the age of fourteen in 1841, the Albany, New York native lived every experience possible for an American sailor in his 48 years of service as a midshipman, then officer, and, finally, as President of the Naval War College. His formative years were spent at sea, where his many international cruises expanded his international consciousness. He then served with distinction for the Union Navy during the Civil War, including a command on the monitor USS *Nantucket* during the Siege of Charleston. In between war assignments, Luce was appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1862, where he served as the head of the Seamanship Department. This is where he began his formal work as a naval educator and professional writer, publishing his first book, a textbook on seamanship.³⁷

From this point forward, Luce was a naval officer with two distinctive careers: one, his traditional role as a ship commander, and the other, an academic, a part of a new breed of progressive educators who focused on interdisciplinary pedagogy to develop the next generation of professional experts.³⁸ Even after his retirement from the U.S. Navy in 1889, Luce continued

³⁷ Stephen B. Luce, *Seamanship* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1862).

³⁸ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 3-4.

his work at the War College, giving lectures and lobbying his powerful colleagues in the Navy and Congress to help keep the program funded. Throughout it all, writing remained a constant part of his life. From 1862 until 1911, Luce published more than 148 works, including instructional textbooks, newspaper articles, book reviews, scholarly essays, government reports, and encyclopedia entries.³⁹ Within this body of work was Luce's interpretation of professionalism, academics, masculinity, modernization, and the direction of American foreign policy. This was also his mission statement for the Naval War College.

Luce's upright posture, steely gaze, and lifetime of military training belied his interests as a writer and educator. Mixed in with his many works on topics one would typically associate with a decorated naval officer – seamanship, naval training, foreign fleet capabilities – were a book on traditional navy songs, several essays on Greek and Roman history, and even an article on extra sensory perception. That article, “The Modern Pythia,” appeared in *The Galaxy* magazine in February 1877. In it, Luce asserted that the Oracle of Delphi from Greek mythology (also called the Pythia, one of Apollo's servants who could see the future), can be found within the ritual of the planchette, which would later be renamed Ouija. Not only did the article recall Luce's fascination with the Quija board rituals performed with passengers aboard a Pacific mail steamship in 1868, but it also revealed his belief in telepathy, precognition, and psychic abilities.⁴⁰ Although he admitted that the planchette held no true power, he was amazed by the truths revealed during the ceremonies, believed that some people had special abilities, and felt that all humans are interconnected through an unseen energy – akin to the new unseen energy of electric power.⁴¹ These spiritual tropes – all-knowing beings, mediums, and miracles – could also

³⁹ Luce, John B. Hattendorf and John D. Hayes, *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1975), 163.

⁴⁰ Stephen B. Luce. “The Modern Pythia.” *The Galaxy*, vol. XXIII, February 1877, 209-216.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

be found in the text Luce was most familiar with, the Bible. He felt that precognition was a gift from God.⁴² Luce saw value in being able to see into the future and, although he did not believe he himself had holy-ordained powers of foresight, he focused most of his work on studying the past to predict future events. He also felt that this future would be more secure if the proceeding generations of American naval officers had the same skill set, of using the discipline of history as a method of controlling what happens in the future.

The academic discipline of history was in its infancy in the United States when Luce did the bulk of his writing on the subject. The American Historical Association, a professional organization of history professors and researchers, was established in 1884, in the same year as the Naval War College. The discipline's legitimacy as a scholarly field, however, was still questioned by conservative academia at top universities.⁴³ Some believed that history belonged to the Classics Department, while others felt it should fall under Archeology as a discipline. Many educators at the Naval Academy shared similar misgivings, concluding that historical study was unnecessary for a new Navy college program and that officer training should be done at sea instead of in the lecture hall.⁴⁴

Appreciating that the discipline of history was undergoing significant changes during this time, Rear Admiral Luce focused in on a significant development within historical research: comparative and inductive methods. He followed pioneers in comparative method from historians/philosophers like Thomas Buckle, Lord Bolingbroke, and Friedrich Mueller who used current developments in history, education, science, and politics to use as analogies to events that

⁴² Ibid. 212.

⁴³ Novick, *That Noble Dream* 4-5.

⁴⁴ John Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson, and John B. Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the Naval War College* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1984), 7-8.

have happened in the past.⁴⁵ Luce also viewed inductive reasoning, or the use of a specific moment in time to make educated assumptions about the larger narrative, as completely complementary to the comparative method. He would combine these two methodologies in using the knowledge of past naval battles to influence future tactics.

In his first work as a historian, Luce contributed a chapter to the 1876 publication *The History of the United States Marine Corps*. In it, he likened American Marines of the future to the *Epibateu* - in Greek antiquity, the word for “marine.” In his chapter, Luce utilized marine landings in ancient Greece and Roman campaigns as well as the long history of the British Royal Marines from 1664 to 1774 to highlight case studies in the effective use of amphibious forces.⁴⁶ In his 1886 article, “On the Study of Naval Warfare as a Science,” the Rear Admiral returned to his case studies of the naval battles of the past. This included the works of Herodotus and Polybius detailing ancient naval battles of the Greeks and Romans, which Luce considered essential in the creation of tactics that could win the wars of the future.⁴⁷ In the article, Luce argued for the implementation of history as a naval discipline by citing one of his favorite historians, Lord Thomas Babington Macauley, that “no past event has any intrinsic importance; the knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads to form just calculations for the future.” He also agreed with Bolingbroke, who asserted that “history is philosophy teaching by example.”⁴⁸

An important part of Luce’s push toward historical study and use of inductive and comparative methods in his own work was his belief that future naval officers needed to establish themselves as professional experts. This was particularly important a time in which

⁴⁵ Luce, “On the Study of Naval Warfare as a Science,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, vol. XII, No. 2, 1886, 527-46.

⁴⁶ Luce, “Chapter II.” *The History of the United States Marine Corps*. (Boston: Shepard Publishers, 1875), 21-30.

⁴⁷ Luce, “On the Study of Naval War as a Science,” 538.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 528-9.

naval technologies shifted from sailing ships to steam-driven, steel-hulled vessels. Luce worried that the tried-and-true methods of naval leadership – expert seamanship, discipline under fire, and tactical knowhow – were quickly being replaced by skills that these traditionally trained Naval Academy officers did not have. It was now the sailors who called themselves naval engineers, boiler technicians, mechanics, and equipment operators who had the expertise necessary to run modern steam-and-steel warships. Luce and many of his colleagues, including Mahan, feared that their power as naval officers was being usurped by less formally educated yet more technically skilled midshipmen, who now garnered the respect and admiration of the common sailor. The essential roles of these “techists” and the complexity of the new modern naval ships rendered “tactics of war” as less important than the very basics of ship operations.⁴⁹

The proponents of techism, Luce and Mahan cautioned, were not taking full advantage of the new technology, training officers on how to keep these complex contraptions running rather than how to win wars with them. While Navy leadership sided with the pragmatism of a technological education for the officer corps, Luce saw the writing on the wall. The members of the officer corps, he warned, had to increase their own credibility by examining naval war as an art or a science. By focusing on an academic knowledge of history, using comparative and inductive reasoning, and through the application of simulation, Luce strove to elevate his new officers beyond both traditional and technological training. He imagined a next generation naval officer to be an evolved military leader who utilized strategy and foresight to win the day no matter what implement of war was being used. Such an approach protected the elite status of the

⁴⁹ For a detailed look at “techism” and the changes sailors experienced during the transition to steam-powered ships, Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson, and John B. Wadleigh, “The Navy that the War College Joined,” *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the Naval War College* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1984), 5-9.

officer corps from any incursion of the techists by elevating these educated professional men above the technology.

Luce's arguments for the professionalization of the U.S. Navy officer corps through the use of interdisciplinary methodology appeared in the December 1883 article, "War Colleges," in which he laid out his plan for what would eventually be the Naval War College. This article was based on a lecture that the Rear Admiral gave at the Naval Institute earlier that fall. In the article, published in the Naval Institute's *Proceedings* magazine, Luce offered several individual accolades to naval officers who had participated in alternative education programs and congratulated Navy personnel who had contributed historical articles to the periodical. He mentioned several students who were studying naval architecture at the Royal Naval College in Great Britain by name, "a dozen young officers studying at the Smithsonian Institute," and a total of twelve naval personnel involved in the study of hard science, including chemistry, geology, mineralogy, ichthyology, botany, and ethnology.⁵⁰ Like a proud father, Luce even quoted the feedback from one of the officers' ethnology professors, who was impressed that a military man would "take advantage of any opportunity he may have of studying manners and conditions of the savage or semi-civilized tribes that he may encounter" in his travels as a naval officer.⁵¹ Even as it revealed contemporary racial biases prevalent among educators and officers, the Rear Admiral thought this commentary important enough to include it in his article using it to validate this interdisciplinary work. Luce described it as "the beginning of a corps of naval scientists who will, by their researches and contributions to scientific literature, add greatly to the usefulness and reputation of our profession."⁵² Luce believed that the U.S. Naval Officer, as a

⁵⁰ Luce, "War Schools." U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings Magazine*, vol. IX, No. 5, December 1883, 633-57.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

profession, was elevated because of these academic endeavors. It was necessary to make that type of curriculum the norm, he reasoned, rather than the exception.

He began the article by congratulating the Naval Institute, its journal *Proceedings*, and the newly formed Office of Naval Intelligence for their contributions as “an indication of the tendency towards higher and broader fields of investigation”; “a hopeful sign to the future” for Luce’s vision of “professional development” within the Navy.⁵³ The subjects and analyses in the previous issue of *Proceedings* (Vol. VII, No. 4, November 1883) inspired glowing praise of these organizations from the Rear Admiral in the very next edition. Luce appreciated the extensive historical analyses done by young naval officers on the 1882 British invasion of Egypt. He referenced nine articles written by ensigns and lieutenants but offered no analysis of the subject matter itself or the individual texts. Luce focused instead on the significance of how these authors acquired their information through research at the Office of Naval Intelligence, observing that “these articles, treating operations in the very highest branch of our profession – war – give to this number of the Journal (*Proceedings*) a value it would not otherwise possess.”⁵⁴ In quick fashion, Luce promoted and praised these historical analyses and the process by which they were achieved to validate the use of history in naval strategy-making. He argued that “it is the part of the naval student to prepare himself by study and reflection for these higher duties of his profession” and to seek a “philosophic” analysis of naval history.⁵⁵

Nearly three quarters of the article, however, was dedicated to a complete overview of the U.S. Army’s various graduate programs, with a focus on the newly reformed Artillery School at

⁵³ Luce, “War Schools,” 633-57; Barton C. Hacker and Margaret Vining, *American Military Technology: The Life Story of a Technology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2007), 59. The Office of Naval Intelligence was formed in 1882 and represented the beginning of the U.S. Intelligence community.

⁵⁴ Luce, “War Schools,” 633-4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Fort Monroe, Virginia. By demonstrating the virtues of these U.S. Army graduate programs, the Rear Admiral sought to emulate the “advanced curriculum instituted in 1867” by the Army’s foremost artillery officer William F. Barry.⁵⁶ Most of this analysis was not Luce’s writing but excerpts from an inspection report by General John C. Tidball detailing every aspect of Barry’s program. This was where the Rear Admiral first articulated how he would like to see his naval college program function, calling for immediate reform for U.S. Navy education. By using this article to detail every aspect of the Army’s collegiate program, Luce began to show his dedication to the interdisciplinary approach to military pedagogy, studying war as a “military art and science.”⁵⁷ He intended to institute this new academic model into the Navy in a similar fashion as Barry had expanded the Army’s collegiate curriculum, to include science, law, and practical applications to military training. In these programs, Luce found validation for his own vision of naval graduate education and began to make overtures about its implementation, including the school’s location on Coaster’s Island in Newport, R.I. By publishing “War Schools” in the Navy’s only academic journal, he was proclaiming what he thought was the superiority of Army training to Naval Academy educators and conservatives within Navy leadership. Luce sought to educate all Navy personnel on what he considered a higher form of military training.

Although the article was successful as Luce sought influential allies, it also provoked resistance against his ideas.⁵⁸ In particular, the article drew the ire of the Superintendent of the Naval Academy, Captain Francis M. Ramsey, who considered Luce’s new program a direct threat to the legitimacy of his institution. Of course, Ramsey was right: The Rear-Admiral made

⁵⁶ Ibid., 645-6.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 648.

⁵⁸ Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession*. (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, 1977), 158.

it plainly obvious that he felt the current graduate course was inadequate and that he intended to reinvent the American naval officer into an academic professional, a scientist dedicated to the study of war. Luce's shift toward historical study, law, and simulation had no place at the Naval Academy, Ramsey and other critics believed, and his new educational institution would not share a roof with the techists at the Navy Torpedo Training School. The school, established on Goat Island near Newport in 1869, was the first training facility in the United States specifically for training officers on tactics and enlisted men on technical aspects of torpedo warfare. It was a practical war school, not a think tank. Luce's proposed Naval War College also faced a challenge from the administrators of the Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting, which sought to combine his war school with the torpedo school located on Goat Island near Newport.⁵⁹

Ignoring these critics, Luce continued to use different methods to proclaim his vision to a specific audience within the Navy hierarchy, challenging the current curriculum at the Naval academy, while making his case directly to Secretary William Chandler for its evolution. This was not the first time he attempted to sell this change to the Secretary of the Navy. The Rear Admiral first wrote to Chandler on the subject of a professional education for Naval Cadets in a letter dated May 9th, 1880, in which he argued for a "postgraduate course as a means of educating the officers of the Navy in the strategy and tactics of their profession." Although the Secretary agreed with Luce's assertions, he took no action to form the school.⁶⁰ Two years later in November of 1882, he wrote to Chandler once again, this time with a more detailed interpretation of a Navy graduate school calling for extensive study in naval history, international law, foreign languages, and "elective branches" of study in interdisciplinary fields. Although this

⁵⁹ Hattendorf, *Sailors and Scholars*, 17, 21.

⁶⁰ Letter from Luce to Chandler, May 9, 1880. Box 8, Roll 6, File 1. Stephen B. Luce Papers, Library of Congress.

letter did not immediately obtain the Secretary's approval, it helped to establish Luce, in Chandler's mind, as an expert on a variety of naval matters.⁶¹ The Rear Admiral now had an important ally in this fight, and he continued to build his relationship with Chandler.

This new relationship Luce formed with the Secretary of the Navy resulted in the Rear Admiral's appointment to two official review boards: The Navy Yards commission in 1883 and Navy graduate school commission in 1884. He utilized both opportunities to write naval policy reports to sell his vision of the future of the American Navy once again. The Navy Yard commission report, published in December 1883, focused mainly on the condition of the nation's ship building infrastructure, but the admiral took several opportunities to discuss matters of professionalism, education, and administration going forward.⁶² The second board, formed in early 1884 to review the Navy's graduate school programs, played a significant role in the eventual establishment of the Naval War College.

After meeting with Luce in early 1884 in Washington and working out details through further correspondence, Chandler ordered Luce on March 30 to form an official review board to consider the future of graduate school education in the US Navy.⁶³ Luce selected captain William T. Sampson, a future naval hero of the Spanish-American War, and lieutenant commander Caspar F. Goodrich to join him on this fact-finding mission. Luce's first order of business for these two young Naval officers was for them to read his article "War Schools," assess the curriculum of the Army artillery school, and to make recommendations on an equivalent set of courses for the Navy.⁶⁴ Luce's other reading assignment was historian James R.

⁶¹ Spector, *Professors of War*, 19, 22.

⁶² *Commission Report on Navy Yards*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883).

⁶³ Albert Gleaves, USN, *Life and Letters of Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, U.S. Navy, Founder of the Naval War College*. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1925), 175-6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Soley's *Report on Foreign Systems of Naval Education*, a book published by Congress in 1880 that detailed the British Royal Navy training program at Greenwich and Portsmouth.⁶⁵ In the report, Soley demonstrated how John Knox Laughton first began the study of naval history at Greenwich in 1874, but failed to institute it into the official military curriculum. Luce intended to correct that mistake for the American Navy.

That summer, the Rear Admiral, Sampson, and Goodrich wrote the "Report of Board on a Post-Graduate Course" aboard the training ship USS *New Hampshire* while docked at Coasters Island in Newport, the future location of the school. The report reaffirmed that the new war college would focus its curriculum on Luce's triumvirate of naval education: historical research, the study of international law, and real-time application.⁶⁶ Moreover, the report stressed that this education was intended to redefine professionalism within the Navy officer corps through interdisciplinary study. As Luce and his colleagues wrote:

A cogent reason for such a school was that there might be a place where our officers would not only be encouraged but required to study their profession proper—war—in a far more thorough manner than had ever heretofore been attempted, and to bring to the investigation of the various problems of modern naval warfare the scientific methods adopted in other professions.⁶⁷

The three officers dedicated the second half of the report to a detailed outline of the school's first-year curriculum, a six-month course divided in to two main subjects: "the science of art and war" and "law and history."⁶⁸ The report also elaborated how the theoretical study of history and law would translate into "practical exercises" that would allow Naval cadets a hands-on training

⁶⁵ James R. Soley, *Report on Foreign Systems of Naval Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880) [46th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Executive Document 51].

⁶⁶ Steven Luce, William T. Sampson, and Casper F. Goodrich, "Report of Board on a Post-Graduate Course," *Report of the Secretary of the Navy, vol. 1*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885) [48th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Document 48], 100-1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

experience in the “study of war.”⁶⁹ In it, Luce made his final pitch to claim Coaster’s Island as the location for his new war school, much to the chagrin of the Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting that wanted the property for its torpedo school.

Responding favorably to Luce’s report, on October 6, 1884, Secretary Chandler issued General Order No. 325, establishing the Naval War College on Coaster’s Harbor Island under the general supervision of the Bureau of Navigation to embrace “the higher branches of professional study” sought so diligently by Luce.⁷⁰ Chandler was in full support of this new vision of naval education, naming Luce as the college’s first president, but he also sought to mend interdepartmental fences by keeping the two graduate schools separate.

Three weeks before the announcements of General Order No. 325, Luce decided to leave his assignment as the commander of the North Atlantic Squadron and focus on his new war school.⁷¹ Although the new assignment would reduce his rank to “Commodore,” — a move that many in the Navy considered a downward trajectory for such a respected officer — Luce felt compelled to make leadership of the Naval War College his new career. On September 20th, the Commodore was relieved of his duties. He then requested to be taken to Coaster’s Island to inspect the grounds of the future school with several fellow officers. The existing building that would eventually house the college was originally built by the city of Newport in 1819 as the Newport Asylum and Poor House, an institution where the destitute, indigent, addicted, and mentally troubled could be kept away from the developing seaside city. Over the years, these patients had been transferred to state hospitals and sanitariums and the city sold the island and

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Navy Department, “General Order No. 325, Establishment of the Naval War College,” October 6, 1884, *Report of the Secretary of the Navy* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885) [48th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Document 48], 103.

⁷¹ Hattendorf, *Sailors and Scholars*, 20-21.

the asylum to the U.S. government in 1880. As Luce approached the building, he placed his hand on the dilapidated door and said: “know all men by these presents, and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I christen this building the War College of the American Navy.”⁷² Some officers at the Naval Academy dubbed the upstart school “Trinity College” poking fun at Luce for the impromptu christening ceremony, an honor typically only bestowed to naval vessels.⁷³

Despite his personal sacrifices and opposition from peers and bureau chiefs, Luce had committed his career to the school. Beginning in February 1884, he started recruiting academic professionals both inside and outside of the Navy who shared his vision for the new college. By the time the school opened on September 4, after a second “christening” by the Commodore, his lecturers for the first course were set.⁷⁴ The Commodore had assembled lecturers with expertise in history, military tactics, grand strategy, and international law to teach the next generation of naval officers the intricacies of a modern global navy.

Master Minds of Naval Education

On September 4, 1884, the Naval War College was inaugurated with an elaborate opening ceremony. The event featured a keynote address by Rear Admiral Daniel Ammen, the author of *The Atlantic Coast: The Navy in the Civil War*, a book published in 1883 as a part of *Scribner’s* 16-volume set on the American Civil War. By selecting a Navy officer and recently published historian to give the main address, Luce demonstrated his intention to elevate like-minded colleagues to further legitimize his own vision. In his remarks, Ammen discussed the

⁷² *Army Navy Journal*, September 27, 1884, 168.

⁷³ *Army Navy Journal*, October 18, 1884, 225.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

differences between the Naval Academy and the Naval War College, asserting that this new institution would teach its students the best practices of avoiding “unnecessarily” sacrificing men or ships – what he called the “economy of war.”⁷⁵ Luce used his time at the ceremony to reaffirm his commitment to his vision of the school and proclaim his intention to staff it with professional educators, *par excellence*. By “knowing ourselves to be on the road that leads to the establishment of the science of naval warfare under steam,” he instructed the small audience of new students, “let us confidently look for that master mind who will lay the foundations of that science.”⁷⁶ Ammen was not the only luminary involved in the new college.

Luce also recruited a variety of master minds to teach his new curriculum. Arguably none of them would become more influential than Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, a former history instructor at the Naval Academy. Although Mahan was the new college’s most famous resident professor, it was James R. Soley, a civilian professor of history, English, and law at the Naval Academy, and Lieutenant Tasker Bliss, an officer from the Army Artillery School, who became its first lecturers in September 1885. Mahan along with retired Naval officer William M. Little joined the faculty the following year. In the first two years, these men formed the core of the curriculum of the Naval War College based on Luce’s vision: history, law, and application.

James Russell Soley began his teaching career at the Naval Academy in 1871, one year after graduating from Harvard. Soley’s expertise as a scholar was sought out by Navy leaders as early as 1876 when he was asked to write “Historical Sketch of the Naval Academy for the Department of Education,” an official report for the 1876 World Expo in Philadelphia.⁷⁷ His academic interests and familiarity with naval education was a perfect fit for Luce’s new program.

⁷⁵ Naval War College Archives, RG16. “Addresses” Box 1, Folder 1. Newport, RI.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ James R. Soley, *Historical Sketch of the United States Naval Academy: for the Department of Education at the International Exhibition* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876).

Soley had already served as the department heads of the English, History, and Law schools at the Naval Academy, demonstrating an interdisciplinary approach in his pedagogy that was underappreciated by established educators at the Naval Academy. He was also an accomplished writer who had published works on the naval histories of the Civil War and War of 1812 as well as a study of foreign military graduate schools, which Luce made required reading for his board on graduate schools. His most recent assignment was as the Superintendent of the Naval War Records Office, where he helped establish the Office of Naval Records and Library in 1883. This position gave Soley a unique perspective on the research process and taught him the virtues of archival analysis. Following the first six-week course held at the newly established Naval College, Luce wrote an official report to Secretary Chandler proclaiming that “the lectures of Professor Soley are so admirably adapted to the wants of naval officers that they must hereafter form an indispensable part of our system of professional education.”⁷⁸ Moreover, Luce felt that Soley’s treatment of international law as a lens to study naval matters would be considered “inseparable from a thorough course of the study of war,” believing that its correct application to real world events could alter the direction of American foreign policy in the future.⁷⁹

Soley lectured on both history and law at the college until 1889, when he left for Washington to get his law degree at Columbian College (later renamed George Washington University). After he graduated in 1890, Soley was named Assistant Secretary of the Navy and served under Secretary Benjamin F. Tracy as the administrator of labor for domestic naval bases and the various shipbuilding facilities. He served in that position until March 1893, when he returned to civilian life as a lawyer in New York City with Tracy as his partner.

⁷⁸ Luce, “Report of the Superintendent of the Naval War College,” *Report of the Secretary of the Navy* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885) [48th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Document 48], 97.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

The Soley-Tracy legal firm's first significant case was to join the Venezuelan arbitration team during the 1898 negotiations between Great Britain and Venezuela over borderlands in British Guiana, although their efforts would gain little for U.S. foreign relations. Venezuelan lobbyists argued that British border expansion represented a challenge to the Monroe Doctrine and, according to Grover Cleveland biographer Henry F. Graff, the Cleveland Administration agreed.⁸⁰ When the Venezuelan government disputed the border, British officials refused to allow international arbitration. The Venezuelan Crisis of 1895 was resolved in the favor of British borders in Latin America, but it opened the region to European military intervention for the next three decades. The U.S. legal team, led by former President Benjamin Harrison, officially lost in arbitration but the case set a precedent for future American interventions in Latin America which strained Anglo-American relations for the next two decades.⁸¹

This lost arbitration, coupled with victory in the Spanish-American War, emboldened a more jingoistic foreign policy in Latin America in the early 1900s. Soley's influence on the panel was diluted by the celebrity of its more famous members, Harrison and Tracy. However, the use of legal and historical justification for a more aggressive interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine going forward was a methodology that he and Luce utilized to justify international legal studies in war college curriculum and their foreign policy proposals.

Tasker Bliss's appointment to the Naval War College was made possible by Luce's "Report of Board on a Post-Graduate Course" and its assertion that "the art of war would best be taught by one learned in military science."⁸² The Army Lieutenant was just that sort of individual. Although he lacked combat experience, the United States Military Academy graduate

⁸⁰ Henry F. Graff, *Grover Cleveland* (New York: Times Books, 2002), 123-5.

⁸¹ Willard L. King, *Melville Weston Fuller, Chief Justice of the United States 1888-1910* (New York: Macmillan, 2007), 249. Fuller was selected by the British and Venezuelans as the head of the impartial Panel of Arbitration.

⁸² Luce, "Report of the Superintendent of the Naval War College," 96.

quickly became a professional academic early in his Army career as an Assistant Professor of French at West Point in 1876. In addition to his command of the French language, Bliss also spoke Russian and Greek. In late 1882, he was assigned to the U.S. Army Artillery School in Fort Monroe, GA as an instructor in the very program Luce wished to emulate. Bliss was the consummate academic professional and, according to Luce, brought “an intimate knowledge of military history” and that “his familiarity with the standard works of military writers enabled him to acquit himself with credit.”⁸³ His appointment as a lecturer proved to be significant, as it opened the door for military experts from different branches of the armed forces to teach at the academies of the other branches. Bliss’s courses included the first formal training in the United States military for the integrated use of ground and naval forces.⁸⁴ He taught eighteen courses in his five years at the college, including classes in history, ground tactics, modern strategy, and foreign languages. His appointment demonstrated the importance that Luce attached to officers who understood the interconnectivity of historical example, current events, and application to modern military education, in and outside the Navy.

In the report on the school’s first class to the Secretary, presented in 1883, Luce indicated that Soley and Bliss were the only two “regular instructors,” and that Mahan’s current assignment and preparation time precluded him from joining the teaching faculty until the following year. The Commodore spun this deficiency into academic diversity by recruiting an eclectic group of experts from Navy, Army, and civilian academia.⁸⁵ Rear Admiral Ammen, for one, taught students that interdisciplinary study was “of vital importance to the naval student”; retired Army General J.C. Palfrey lectured on the 1862 Peninsula Campaign; Navy Commander

⁸³ Ibid., 97.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 96.

Henry Clay Taylor, who served with Luce's training squadron in his previous assignment, and civilian historian John C. Ropes each focused their classes on General Pope's Virginia campaign in the Civil War, which included integrated use of naval and army forces.⁸⁶ This Superintendent's report was Luce's first opportunity to sell the success of his program to the Secretary and, by extension, the entire Navy Department. In his mind, the list of academic professionals, their subjects, and the fact that these men volunteered their time travelling to Newport without a stipend all helped to legitimize the school by signaling their commitment to its founder's vision. This would also represent the first time that Luce requested money for the new war school: \$500 to pay travel expenses for invited lecturers.⁸⁷ From the Naval War College's establishment in October 1884, through its first course in fall 1885, and into the second course in the fall of 1886, the school received no money from the Navy Department. Although the Commodore did secure \$8,000 from the Navy for maintenance during that semester, the school would struggle with funding for the rest of the 1880s. Another setback for the school was Luce's reassignment back the North Atlantic Fleet in the summer of 1886. However, Luce would leave the direction of the college to Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, a man who he felt shared his navalist aspirations.

Rear Admiral Luce began his efforts to recruit Mahan in in early 1884, when Mahan was on assignment in Peru. The newly promoted Captain, however, was not his first choice to teach at the war college. Luce's top choice was his former Post-Graduate Course co-board member, Caspar F. Goodrich, who had just taken a position with the Navy Department in Washington. Goodrich refused the offer in February 1884 because he did not want to relocate to Newport after

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 97.

his recent promotion. Goodrich's opposition reflected the uncertainty of college service as a barrier to advancement in the Navy.⁸⁸ At that time, Mahan was commanding the Civil War-era slope-of-war USS *Wachusett* stationed off the coast of Lima, Peru when he received a letter from his former Naval Academy colleague, Luce. The Rear Admiral had written Mahan a letter on July 23, 1884, requesting his presence as a fulltime lecturer in Newport. Over a month passed before the letter reached his remote location. Upon receiving it, the Captain responded immediately with pronounced enthusiasm to the offer, noting "I should like the position, like it probably very much."⁸⁹

The change was a welcome one. *Wachusett* and the South Pacific Squadron had been stationed in Lima to protect U.S. interests during the War of the Pacific (1879-1884). Taking command in September 1883, Mahan witnessed the end of hostilities between Peru and Chile as the two nations fought both ground and naval campaigns, with Chile emerging as the victor in late 1884. The experience in the waters off the coast of Peru had soured Mahan to capability of the American Navy and how it compared to the British, French, and German navies, also present in the region to protect their nation's interests.⁹⁰ Eyeing these European rivals, the Captain knew his squadron was the least powerful fleet represented. Even the Chilean Navy, he recognized, was superior.⁹¹

Prior to receiving Luce's invitation, Mahan demonstrated a feeling of malaise for his antiquated ship and the equally outdated American Navy. Indeed, he had begun to question even his own choice of profession. This uncertainty set him on a course to reconnect with Luce and

⁸⁸ Letter from Caspar F. Goodrich to Stephen B. Luce, February 12, 1884. Box 3, Vol. 13, Caspar F. Goodrich Papers (1869-1925), University of Michigan Clements Library, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁸⁹ Letter from Mahan to Luce, September 4, 1884, in Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan, vol I, 1847-1889*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 577.

⁹⁰ Letter from Mahan to Samuel A. Ashe, July 26, 1884. *Ibid.*, 571.

⁹¹ Letter from Mahan to Admiral Aaron K. Hughes, December 28, 1883. *Ibid.*, 561-2.

become the most influential naval writer in U.S. history. Although Mahan is now considered one of the most ardent defenders of naval militarization, American territorial expansion, and a larger role in world affairs for the United States, during his assignment in Peru, he expressed some surprising anti-navalist sentiments. Writing to his best friend of 30 years, Samuel A'Court Ashe, in July 1884, Mahan observed:

The question of landing troops in a foreign country is very delicate. I trust it may be avoided. I don't know how you feel but to me the very suspicion of an imperial policy is hateful; The mixing of our policies with those Latin republics especially. Though identified, unluckily, with a military profession I dread outlying colonies or interests to maintain which large military establishments are necessary.⁹²

This is a side of Mahan rarely discussed in naval historiography; however, it is significant because it shows his mental state leading up to a major shift in his mindset, as he transformed from disenchanted naval officer to professional academic historian. No one was closer to Mahan than Ashe, his Naval Academy classmate in 1858-59, and their correspondence illuminates a dark moment in the naval historian's life: the moment he questioned his choice to be a U.S. naval officer.⁹³ The invitation from the Rear Admiral just over a month later seemed to energize the beleaguered Captain with a renewed sense of purpose. As he wrote to Luce upon receiving his invitation, "... I beg you to believe that I shall always remember with pleasure that you thought of me in connection with a most useful, and in a sense distinguished duty."⁹⁴ He eagerly accepted the appointment.

With Mahan's acceptance secured, Luce instructed the Captain to begin writing history lectures based on important naval battles and powerful maritime empires from Greece to the

⁹² Letter from Mahan to Samuel A. Ashe, July 26, 1884. Ibid., 571-2.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Letter from Mahan to Luce, September 4, 1884. Ibid., 578.

British Royal Navy.⁹⁵ Although Mahan requested a year to research and write the lectures in the United States, he began this work while in Peru. According to Mahan's autobiography, the Captain sought out the library at a place he referred to as "the English Club," a British gentlemen's club located in downtown Lima, an hour's train ride from Port Callao where *Wachusett* was docked.⁹⁶ Research published in 2008 by Larrie Ferreiro revealed this location to be the Phoenix Club, established in 1879 as refuge to traveling British subjects and expatriates as well as visiting naval officers from around the world.⁹⁷

In this library, the Captain happened upon *The History of Rome* by Theodor Mommsen and found himself intrigued by the story of Hannibal's failed invasion of Rome. Through his readings of Mommsen, Mahan began to ask how different the history of Rome might have been if "Hannibal invaded Italy by sea" instead of an extended land campaign. What if Hannibal could have stayed "in communication" with Carthage after his invasion began?⁹⁸ Mommsen's treatment of the Punic Wars in the third volume of his four-volume work on Roman history became a mainstay in Mahan's historical repertoire as a part of both his lectures at the Naval War College and the initial inspiration to write *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*.⁹⁹

Upon his return to the United States, in October 1885, Mahan met with Luce in Newport to discuss the vision for the war college, including curriculum, the use of modern historical methodologies, and the focus on history, international relations, and simulation. Mahan had just under a year to research and write the lectures that would form the core of the curriculum for the rest of the 1880s and beyond. After spending the winter and spring of 1886 writing lectures in

⁹⁵ Letter from Luce to Mahan, July 23, 1884.

⁹⁶ Alfred T. Mahan, *From Sail to Steam: Reflections of a Naval Life*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968 (c1907), 277.

⁹⁷ Larrie D. Ferreiro. "Mahan and the "English Club" of Lima, Peru: The Genesis of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*," *The Journal of Military History*, vol. 71, no. 3, (July 2008): 902.

⁹⁸ Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 277.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

New York City, Mahan reported to his assignment on Coaster's Island not only as professor but as the new President of the Naval War College. He came to Newport with over 400 pages of lecture notes that would revolutionize naval education in the United States.

In these lectures, delivered to twenty-one new students in the second class of the college, Mahan introduced his pupils to the naval battles of antiquity, such as Salamis (480 B.C.) and Actium (31 B.C.), as well as more recent ones, including British maritime conflicts with Napoleon's France and Spain. Many of the tactics utilized by the Greeks and Romans, he argued, were the same maneuvers and strategies that the great European navies of the 17th and 18th centuries employed.¹⁰⁰ These same tactics, he went on to explain, were once again used during the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Regardless of the age, Mahan reasoned, universal truths for naval combat were the same for both the first Greek triremes and for the tall ships of the modern British, French, and Spanish navies: positioning the enemy between your ship and the sun, grouping large numbers of ships in battle formations, the integrated use of naval and army forces, and aggressive maneuvers on the open sea.¹⁰¹ He believed that these successful tactics would also benefit future navies.

Mahan, of course, was not the school's only lecturer. In the class of 1886, in a two-and-half-month program that Luce himself constructed, Soley taught law, Bliss taught tactics and hygiene, and Lt. William B. Hoff taught artillery.¹⁰² Perhaps the most important lecturer in 1886 was Lt. William W. Kimball, a staff intelligence officer who was responsible for developing the first war plan against the Spanish Empire. Known as "the Kimball Plan," his strategy called for land invasions of both Cuba and the Philippines and the destruction of the Spanish fleet in the

¹⁰⁰ Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783 (c1890)* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), 13-5.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 16-7.

¹⁰² Hattendorf, *Sailors and Scholars*, 24.

Pacific, selling it as the “quickest way of wounding the prestige of Spain, of crippling her revenues, and of thus bringing her to treat for peace upon reasonable terms.”¹⁰³ While Mahan made historical narrative and case study a major aspect of Naval War College education, he and Luce also wanted to simulate those historical naval battles and future engagements in a hands-on presentation that made sense in the lecture hall.

To achieve these goals, they brought in a new instructor, William McCarty Little. Little, a retired Navy Lieutenant, had learned about war simulation and gaming from Major William R. Livermore, the Army’s foremost expert on the subject and a published author. Little was very familiar with the Army Major’s 1879 book, *The American Kriegsspiel: A Game for Practicing the Art of War upon a Topographical Map*, in which Livermore demonstrated the usefulness of tabletop war simulation to review tactics of the past and plan the maneuvers of the future.¹⁰⁴ He brought these approaches to the war college. In addition to his lecturing responsibilities, Little assisted Mahan with the drawing of maps for his history classes and organized the library in his spare time. He and Mahan also constructed small ships using different color cardboard and used those maps to allow their students to see naval combat turn-by-turn.

In Little’s first series of lectures, given in September 1886, his students learned how to play a turn-based naval war game created by British Royal Navy Admiral Philip H. Colomb, “The Duel: A Naval War Game.”¹⁰⁵ Little taught war gaming for three years at the Naval War College and even welcomed Major Livermore to deliver a series of lectures for the class of

¹⁰³ William W. Kimball, USN, “Plan of Operation against Spain Prepared by Lt. William W. KIMBALL (1896),” Documentary History: Spanish American War. Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, D.C. Website: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/publications/documentary-histories/united-states-navy-s/pre-war-planning/plan-of-operations-a.html>. Accessed January 22, 2022.

¹⁰⁴ William R. Livermore, *The American Kriegsspiel: A Game for Practicing the Art of War upon a Topographical Map* (c1879) (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1882).

¹⁰⁵ Anthony S. Nicolosi, *The Spirit of McCarty Little. Proceedings Magazine*, vol. 110/9/979 (September 1884).

1888.¹⁰⁶ Inspired by this approach, Rear Admiral Luce, now commander of the North Atlantic Fleet, took war simulation to extreme levels for in 1887, steaming his ships into Narragansett Bay for a series of mock battle maneuvers specifically to expand the scope of war simulation for Naval War College students. The Navy Department never allowed Luce to invest the active fleet for this sort of training exercise again for his college.

Various subject matter experts also taught courses at the school. The most famous of the school's outside experts was Theodore Roosevelt, who gave a short series of lectures during the fall of 1888 on the subject of his book published six years earlier, *The Naval War of 1812*. When the book was published in 1882, Roosevelt was 23 and newly graduated. Many naval historians, including Kenneth Wimmell, Richard W. Turk, and James R. Reckner, have recently argued for the significance of this treatise in changing how the American people perceived state naval power.¹⁰⁷ The United States, Roosevelt argued, could no longer afford to fear its own standing military force.¹⁰⁸ As Turk has demonstrated, Roosevelt praised both sides in the conflict: he credited the resourcefulness of U.S. naval forces to give Americans hope for the future and complimented the British Royal Navy for giving U.S. naval planners an example to emulate.¹⁰⁹

These were the same lessons Roosevelt brought to the 1888 class of Luce's war school. The lectures he gave there also represented the future President's return to public life after a five-year sabbatical in the American West. Even though only one class of the Naval War College heard Roosevelt's lectures, his future roles as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1896-97 — and

¹⁰⁶ Hattendorf, compiler, *Register of The William McCarty Little Papers*. (Newport: Naval Historical Collection, NWC, 1981), 1-2.

¹⁰⁷ Turk, *Theodore Roosevelt's Navy Diplomacy*, 18; Kimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet*, 78-9; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812 or The History of the United States Navy during the Last War with Great Britain* (New York: GP Putnam, 1902 (1882c), 17-9.

¹⁰⁹ Turk, *Theodore Roosevelt's Navy Diplomacy*, 18.

as the first navalist President from 1902-1909 — further legitimized the school’s academic credibility over the years. In Roosevelt, Luce and Mahan found a kindred spirit who believed in their new institution and shared their ideology on empire, naval proliferation, and exceptional nature of American power. In time, his support would result in a fully funded Naval War College and complete institutional cross-pollination with the U.S. Navy through its close relationship to the General Board of the U.S. Navy.

Until Roosevelt became President, however, the Naval War College’s success was far from secure. In part, this was because Luce and Mahan — the institution’s leading promoters — were quickly reassigned away from the school. After serving at the college during its first year in 1885, Luce had no daily activity with the institution until he returned as a professor in 1901. Mahan, meanwhile, was reassigned by the Bureau of Navigation from 1889-1892 for special assignments that sent him on extended trips to the West Coast, Maine, and New Jersey.

A second complicating variable was that the first Cleveland Administration (1885-1889) did not support the Naval War College, considering the study of war superfluous to the United States’ foreign policy aims. According to historian John B. Hattendorf, the Naval War College also experienced opposition from Congressman Hilary Herbert, Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, who believed that Luce’s war school should be integrated into the Naval Academy.¹¹⁰ Consequently, the Navy secured no funding for the 1887 class, although lectures nevertheless took place. In late 1888, Herbert and Ramsey successfully lobbied new Secretary of the Navy William C. Whitney to combine the Torpedo School at Goat Island with Luce’s school — something the Rear Admiral had opposed even before the school was established.¹¹¹ This plan

¹¹⁰ Hattendorf, *Sailors and Scholars*, 25.

¹¹¹ Letter from Navy Department to President, Naval War College, January 18, 1886, Early Records of the Naval War College, Box 1, Folder 6, RG-01, Naval Historical Collection Archives, Naval War College, Newport, RI.

was twenty years in the making and Luce would not allow this inauspicious start to detract from what he thought was the school's significance to the modern American Navy.

Despite their distance from Newport and the repeated threats to the college's existence, Mahan and Luce were not deterred from attempting to save the school. Throughout the late 1880s and 1890s, they lobbied government officials strenuously for funding and support. Perhaps more importantly, they also used their writing skills and publishing contacts to make their case to the American people.

Making the Navalist Case to the American People

At first, Mahan considered his assignments away from Newport as "disastrous" to his academic life. Eventually, however, this tour helped forward the navalist agenda by giving him influence in the future of naval construction.¹¹² The first assignment brought him to San Francisco and Seattle in 1889, where he was stationed to help the Navy Department determine future shipbuilding sites on the West Coast. Mahan's next order was to make the same assessment for facilities on the East Coast in Portland, Maine and Elizabeth City, New Jersey.¹¹³ Many of the naval facilities the Captain visited during this trip joined private yards in these port cities in building the new steel navy he had been writing about since Peru.

After Mahan's reports were finished, he received the final and more significant order: to work directly with the U.S. Naval Academy superintendent, Captain Ramsey, to integrate the Naval War College and the Torpedo School, per the instructions of Secretary Whitney. Mahan

¹¹² Mahan letter to Luce, February 6, 1889, in Mahan, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan, vol I, 1847-1889*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 676.

¹¹³ Mahan letters to Luce, February 6, 1889 and October 7, 1899. *Ibid.*, 676, 711.

abhorred this assignment and contemplated refusing it.¹¹⁴ He did eventually fulfill his duty. But he treated the assignment as an opportunity to keep himself, as a founding member of the Naval War College, close to the decision-making processes during the integration. He was ultimately successful in keeping Luce's educational vision separate from training in torpedo technologies. He also successfully lobbied for the construction of a new building for the school, to replace "the little poor house." After a three-year hiatus, Mahan eventually returned to the college as its president in 1892 when the new building was opened. The stage was set for Mahan to play an even larger part in the professional development of the U.S. Navy.

But if Mahan considered these assignments a disruption from his academic pursuits, they did not hinder his success as a published author. During his time away from the college, in fact, Mahan and Luce actively pursued publishers and financiers for *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, managed to get the book published, and oversaw its ascendancy as it became a world-famous work of naval history.

Mahan first began to shop his book to publishers as early as fall 1888. In a letter to Charles Scribner's Sons, dated September 4, the professor pitched the idea of his text by using Luce's vision. He wrote, "It carries along a general thread of the history of the times, with a view to eliciting the effect of naval and commercial power events."¹¹⁵ These individual battles and campaigns, he added, "have a tactical or strategic value, and so afford an opportunity for pointing out a lesson." Unconvinced of the merits of the project, Scribner's turned him down the following week. Undeterred, Mahan pursued publication elsewhere, proclaiming that "I am naturally a teacher and would like to increase my audience."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Mahan letters to Luce, February 6, 1889 and May 21, 1889, Ibid. 731; Mahan letter to Ashe, March 6, 1889, Ibid. 710.

¹¹⁵ Mahan letter to Charles Scribner's Sons, September 4, 1888. Ibid., 657-8.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Despite their respective daily responsibilities as naval officers, then, both Mahan and Luce spent their spare time attempting to sell Mahan's book to a variety of publishing houses and individual investors. Their efforts soon led to success. A few weeks after his rejection by Scribner's, Mahan got word that J. Pierpont Morgan, one of "the one or two wealthy men" that he had solicited to fund *Sea Power's* publication, had pledged \$200 to the cause.¹¹⁷ Although Morgan "would not adopt the proposal as it stood," he agreed to help fund the project more generously if more investors got involved.¹¹⁸ Just a month later, Boston publisher Little, Brown, and Company agreed to publish *Sea Power* thanks to a recommendation from the Naval War College's James R. Soley, who knew one of the partners, John M. Brown.¹¹⁹ While the book's acceptance for publication was a personal success for Mahan, it also represented a victory to Luce and the Naval War College. These were the lectures that formed the backbone of the history curriculum in the school's formative years, after all, and their publication legitimized Luce's vision and the intellectual efforts of those who believed in the college.

As soon as copies of the book became available, Mahan and Luce took it upon themselves to promote it and see it distributed widely within the Navy and throughout the libraries of the federal government. Even before the book was made available to the public, Mahan received a handful of copies and began to distribute them to important people in the Navy Department, including the newly appointed Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Franklin Tracy (appointed by President Benjamin Harrison), Captain Ramsey of the Naval Academy, Congressman Henry Cabot Lodge, and Captain William Henderson who directed the Bureau of Navigation. In a letter and package to Lodge dated May 19, 1890, Mahan forwarded a copy of

¹¹⁷ Mahan letter to Luce, September 21, 1889. Ibid., 706.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Mahan letter to Luce, October 7, 1889. Ibid., 710.

the book and explained that it was his attempt to walk “in the footsteps of military historians endeavoring to make the experience of the past influence the opinions and shape the policy of the future.”¹²⁰ Mahan repeated this sentiment in each one of the letters arguing that his *Sea Power* book could be utilized to educate the general public on the importance of a strong American navy.

Luce had his own strategy for promoting Captain Mahan’s book: by reviewing it, as a fellow academic professional, in the July 1890 edition of *The Critic* magazine.¹²¹ Despite the conflict of interest, Luce lauded the text, introducing it as “altogether an exceptional work: there is nothing like it in the whole range of naval history.” He ended the review with a complex analysis of Mahan’s intent to educate the American people on the importance of naval power:

Small as our Navy is ... we have yet to learn its true functions, and its value as an exponent – to learn, in short, the inadequacy of moral influence, such as this peace-loving country should exert, unsupported by material force. The work before us is eminently calculated to educate the public mind as to what that force should be and the limits it should attain.¹²²

Buoyed by these promotional efforts, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* became one of the American navalists’ first public defenses of the ideas on which the Naval War College was founded. It built upon Roosevelt’s *Naval History of the War of 1812*. Luce’s vision for naval education – allegorical examples of successful navies, the role of the United States in world affairs, and the preparation for war – became the subjects that these master minds, particularly Mahan, began to write about in national publications. The success of *Sea Power* and the publishing contacts that Mahan and Luce gained over the years opened up a multitude of media

¹²⁰ Mahan letter to Henry Cabot Lodge, May 19, 1890, in Mahan. *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan, vol II, 1890-1891*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 11.

¹²¹ Hattendorf and Hayes, *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce*, 102-3.

¹²² Luce, “Review: The Influence of Sea Power upon History,” *The Critic*, vol. XVII, no. 343, July 26, 1890, 41-2.

platforms for them to address the American people about the importance of naval power. Not only did they see many of their articles published in military journals, such as *Proceedings* and the *Army-Navy Journal*, but they also placed pieces in such popular, mass-circulated periodicals as *The Atlantic*, *Harper's New Monthly*, *North American Review*, *The Forum*, *Scripps-McRae Newspaper League*, and *Engineering Magazine*.

Through the 1890s, while Mahan was writing and publishing multiple works, developments in international affairs stimulated interest from the public about national security, the status of the U.S. military, and the direction of American foreign policy. These events included the Navy Act of 1890, which authorized the construction of America's first three battleships; the death of two USS *Baltimore* sailors overseas, which nearly drove the Harrison Administration to declare war against Chile in 1892; the publicizing of the Cuban Revolution in U.S. newspapers, beginning in 1895; and most importantly, the explosion of USS *Maine* and the beginning of war against Spain, in 1898.¹²³ As these and other events catalyzed a national debate over America's role in foreign affairs, navalist writers found receptive audiences to their ideas taught at the Naval War College: to show historical precedence for a strong navy, to understand America's place in the world, and to advise on next steps for the federal government to take.

Between December 1890 and October 1899, Mahan published twelve articles in six different magazines and journals, all of them focused on three main topics: Anglo-American relations, a canal that crossed the Central American Isthmus, and military preparedness.¹²⁴ In these articles that echoed Luce's vision, Mahan examined historical precedents, the extent that

¹²³ William F. Sater, *Chile and the United States. Empires in Conflict*. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 51–68. Details the USS *Baltimore* Crisis: Two American sailors were killed by a mob, but war was averted after Chilean officials apologized for the incident and paid reparations.

¹²⁴ *The Atlantic*, *Harper's New Monthly*, *North American Review*, *The Forum*, *Scripps-McRae Newspaper League*, and *Engineering Magazine* were media platforms that regularly sought out and publish articles by military experts.

the law plays in international relations, and the proper preparation for war. Mahan also criticized many U.S. isolationist policies of the period to correct what he considered inaccurate assumptions in the minds of the American people. The best way to protect the United States, according to him and other navalist writers, was not to assume a defensive posture, as Americans had traditionally done. Rather, it was to project naval power outward.

In many of his articles, Mahan generally argued that American leaders must begin to address the impact of the balance of power in Europe to the national security and economic interests of the United States in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. First-and-foremost, he felt the U.S. government should be leery of Great Britain. In the 1897 article “The United States Looking Outward,” the Captain focused on Great Britain’s role as America’s chief rival to American economic expansion in Europe and Asia.¹²⁵ Mahan reiterated this theme of Anglo-American sea power throughout all twelve articles, including works on the question of Hawaii’s annexation, the Central American Canal, control of the Caribbean, the defense of acquired territory after the Spanish-American War, and war with the America’s greatest rival, the British.

Mahan’s suggestion in all these cases was to strive for peace with Great Britain based on its dominant status as a naval power and the two countries’ mutual historical, cultural, and economic interests. In “Hawaii and our Future Sea Power” and “The Isthmus and Sea Power,” both published in 1893, Mahan acknowledged that the United States benefitted from its isolated geography as it related to its coastal security, yet stressed that Great Britain could easily become interested in the Pacific Coast of the United States and Hawaii if a canal across the Central American isthmus were constructed.¹²⁶ In the latter article, Mahan appeared to contradict his

¹²⁵ Mahan, “The United States Looking Outward.” In *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1897), 27.

¹²⁶ Mahan, “Hawaii and Sea Power” and “The Isthmus and Sea Power,” in *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future*. (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1897), 54-55, 102, 104.

greatest work, *Influence of Sea Power*, by suggesting that a canal was a bad idea. This rhetoric, however, was simply reverse psychology and dry sarcasm, challenging the American people to make its construction a national priority. If it was the will of the people to build a canal to connect the American coastlines, Mahan stressed, a robust, state-of-the-art navy was needed to protect it. Mahan also made the argument that this naval build-up must begin in earnest well before the canal was constructed, due to the length of time and amount of resources needed to build steel ships.

In the article “Possibilities of an Anglo-American Reunion,” published in November 1894, Mahan argued that the United States and Great Britain must solidify their relationship by acting “cordially on the seas ... for the benefit of the world” and, of course, to stimulate mutual economic expansion.¹²⁷ As the title of the article suggested, Mahan hoped for a reconciliation by recognizing the shared history of the United States and the United Kingdom as white, Christian cultures. Mahan’s narrative about Great Britain was simple and sincere. At its current level of naval preparedness and if overseas territories were acquired, the U.S. Navy could not defend a Central American Isthmus canal nor hold onto colonies without a fleet to match the British Royal Navy.

Mahan’s concerns about the dominance of the Royal Navy and the inability to obtain and secure colonies without naval parity informed other articles about another popular topic of interest - military preparedness. Not only did the theme of naval preparedness play a prominent feature in the aforementioned articles, including “Looking Outward,” but Mahan also made it the subject matter of several articles written from October 1895 right up until the beginning of the Spanish-American War. In his June 1898 article “Current Fallacies Upon Naval Subjects,”

¹²⁷ Ibid. “Possibilities of an Anglo-American Reunion,” 122.

Mahan also claimed that the United States government was still not making bold enough strides in naval preparation, citing as evidence the recent explosion of the USS *Maine* in Havana Bay, Cuba.¹²⁸

Mahan continued his discussion of the Anglo-American relationship in the article “The Future in Relation to American Naval Power,” published in the June 1895 edition of *Harper’s New Monthly*. In it, Mahan wrote that, by 1883, all the ships built and acquired for the American Civil War had outlived their usefulness and that the building of a navy should have started years earlier. Conveniently ignoring the U.S. Navy’s role in forcibly opening Korea in the 1870-1880s Mahan blamed two decades of U.S. isolationist policies following the Civil War and the lack of the political will on foreign affairs to follow through on naval spending. The country’s naval spending, he stressed, must be “developed in proportion to the reasonable possibilities of the political future,” meaning that modernizing the U.S. Navy was an American foreign affairs issue as much as it was a matter of fiscal policy.¹²⁹ Mahan continued to argue against negative perceptions of American militarism in the March 1897 article “Preparedness in Naval War” and the aforementioned “Current Fallacies Upon Naval Subjects” one month later. In “Preparedness,” Mahan posited that American military strength, and the maintenance of peace were interconnected, deflecting criticism from anti-imperialists in Washington who asserted that military industrialization was a sure path to war.¹³⁰

Mahan felt that naval preparedness, and national security more broadly, was important to the common U.S. citizen. In “Current Fallacies,” Mahan wrote that pushing through negative

¹²⁸ Mahan, “Current Fallacies Upon Naval Subjects,” in *Lessons of the War with Spain, and Other Articles*. (Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1899), 318-9.

¹²⁹ Mahan, “The Future in Relation to American Naval Power,” *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future*, (Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1897), 138, 170-1.

¹³⁰ Mahan, “Preparedness in Naval War,” 181-2.

public opinion was a necessary challenge to properly educate the American people using what he called the “reputable form of journalism, that power of the press” as a platform to teach.¹³¹ Ironically, Mahan was writing this article when the USS *Maine* accident happened in Havana Bay, Cuba on February 16th, 1898 and in the piece, he warned American politicians not to jump to conclusions considering the dangerous instability of steam ship boilers. Policymakers did not heed his caution, for the United States went to war with Spain on April 21, 1898. Despite his own warning – one that eventually would be proven to be proven correct years later – Mahan joined American politicians, the press, and the people in blaming a Spanish mine for the destruction of the ship and loss of over 600 sailors. Today, many historians consider the event a “final straw” moment which led the McKinley Administration to declare war on the Spanish Empire.

Although Mahan wrote and published prolifically during the 1890s, Luce bested his fellow navalist academic in the sheer number of works he published between 1890 to 1899. These included twenty-one articles in *Proceedings*, *The Critic*, *The Army-Navy Register*, *The North American Review*, and *The Youth's Companion* journals. While serving as Commissioner General of the Columbian Historical Exhibition in Madrid, Luce also wrote the *Commemoration of the Fourth Centenary of the Discovery of America*, published by the Government Printing Office in 1893. Finally, he also published an updated textbook on seamanship in August 1898 for the Naval Academy.

In his articles and other writings, Luce discussed many of the same topics as Mahan, including naval history, international relations, and future war preparedness. In “How Shall We Man Our Ships?” published in *The North American Review* in January 1891, he discussed how

¹³¹ Mahan, “Current Fallacies Upon Naval Subjects” 278-9.

the British Royal Navy remade their officer corps when crew requirements increased with the use of larger ships and more powerful guns. Even during peacetime, he argued, the number of sailors must be maintained to support a robust merchant marine fleet.¹³² In another *North American Review* article, published in December that same year, Luce used examples of pivotal naval battles of the past to argue that “war was one of the great agencies by which human progress is affected. War is the malady of nations; the disease is terrible while it lasts but purifying in its results.”¹³³ In “The Benefits of War,” also titled “War and Its Prevention,” Luce posited that all of great wars in human history, from Marathon to the Civil War, had a regenerative effect on the nations that survived them and that war, as a science, must be practiced by experts capable enough to end them. Being prepared for war, he went on to assert, was a Christian duty for Americans, that “insurance against war by preparation for it is the most businesslike, the most humane, and the most in accordance with the teachings of the Christian religion.”¹³⁴

Mahan and Luce focused their articles in the 1890s on specific topics, all of which justified the need for stronger American sea power. This included the global reach and influence of the powerful navies of the past on world events, the need for American territorial expansion for security and economic reasons, and the requirement of a large navy to protect these interests globally. Many of these articles were extensions of Mahan’s previous lectures at the Naval War College and represented confirmation of the American navalist viewpoints on the relationship between the United States and Great Britain, the current state of U.S. foreign affairs, and role the U.S. Navy would have in the next war.

¹³² Luce, “How Shall We Man Our Ships?” *The North American Review*, vol. CLII, no. 410, January 1891, 64-9.

¹³³ Luce, “The Benefits of War.” *The North American Review*, vol. CLIII, no. 421, December 1891, 672-83.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 682-3.

These complex topics on foreign affairs and the military, however, could be somewhat onerous to average American readers, who were not reading *Sea Power* in great numbers. Most readers were more interested in works by popular writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mark Twain, which turned social commentary into entertainment. To reach larger audiences, American navalist authors like Mahan would need a different approach. The best way to educate the most people was to engage in subject matter already popular in magazines and newspapers of the day. More specifically, Mahan, Luce, and other navalist writers wove popular societal discourse into their naval education articles to show the American people that naval matters and issues of culture were interconnected. To make their arguments about international relations, occupation, and naval spending more appetizing for Gilded Age readers, navalists laced their articles with social discussions about civilization and progress, race and enlightenment, morality, and manhood.

Mahan appreciated Great Britain not only for its legendary maritime acumen, but also because he felt that the island nation shared culture, religion, and racial hierarchy with the United States. He also had a deep respect for the British, seeing theirs as the greatest example of Western civilization.¹³⁵ In “The United States Looking Outward,” Mahan acknowledged the two countries’ instinctually shared a “sense of law and justice drawn from the same sources” and that the United States had a responsibility to find common ground with the British as the only world power at the time that could challenge America’s economic expansion.¹³⁶ In Mahan’s mind, the shared history, traditions, and institutions of the two countries could serve as the foundation of a relationship that would benefit all of western civilization. In “The Isthmus and Sea Power,”

¹³⁵ Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783* (original publication 1890). (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 288-90.

¹³⁶ Mahan, “The United States Looking Outward,” 26-7.

Mahan expressed a racial comradeship between Great Britain and the United States, which was an example to Americans about the possibilities of greatness through naval power. In the article he claimed that “Great Britain’s struggle for the mastery, ... by a kind of natural selection,” had enabled the British people to overcome the Spanish Armada and Napoleon emerging as the world’s single hegemonic empire.¹³⁷

Mahan continued this discussion in “Possibilities of an Anglo-American Reunion” describing a “kinship” with Great Britain that was based on common descendants and “shared blood,” having tested this relationship through war and economic strife. The Admiral made an emotional observation in the article, noting that both countries are “dimly conscious” that this strained relationship *feels* wrong.¹³⁸ By connecting the trajectory of American society to that of Great Britain’s, Mahan asserted that the United States should strive to join its cultural twin as a world power. This included emulating the British Royal Navy by modernizing the U.S. Navy. In an article addressing the Anglo-American relationship, Mahan thus directed the conversation towards progress, civilization, and discussions of racial superiority.

As his conversation turned to the acquisition and construction of a canal across the Central American Isthmus, Mahan’s focus shifted to ideas of racial hierarchy and the American civilizing mission in areas deemed strategically important to U.S. sea power. In his article about the isthmus in September 1893, Mahan referred to Central America collectively as a “wilderness, peopled by savages and semi-barbarians” that would only be improved by U.S. interest in a canal.¹³⁹ In the October 1897 article “Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea,” Mahan referred to the indigenous people as “unwarlike,” arguing they have “adapted

¹³⁷ Ibid., 70, 72-3.

¹³⁸ Mahan, “Possibilities of an Anglo-American Reunion”, 108-9.

¹³⁹ Mahan, “The Isthmus and Sea Power”, 61.

themselves to the institution of slavery” for easy transition into an occupied people.¹⁴⁰ The indigenous peoples of Central American, Mahan argued without offering any convincing proof, would be receptive to a more civilized occupation from a more evolved culture once the canal was completed. His article “The Relations of the United States to their New Dependences,” published in January 1899 following U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War, offered a comparison between the treatment of the occupied by Spanish and British empires, respectively. Echoing earlier arguments, Mahan mimicked many American commentators of the era by stressing that Spanish imperialism was uncivilized and barbaric, while insisting that indigenous peoples under British and American rule benefitted from the experience.¹⁴¹ Part of the advantages of American occupation, according to Mahan, was the righteousness of the U.S. civilizing mission and this higher sense of moral responsibility for the less civilized. Mahan unabashedly championed American exceptionalism even as he sought to emulate the British empire.

Another topic that Mahan wrote about extensively was military preparedness. Although the goal of naval preparedness was the appropriation of billions of dollars of government money to modernize a depleted post-Civil War navy, concerns over national security provided navalist writers with another opportunity to challenge the American people. In the 1896 article “Preparedness for Naval War,” Mahan stressed the importance of a cohesive institutional spirit of militarism that showed a “patriotic willingness” of those who chose to defend their country to become an organized and unified fighting force.¹⁴² Naval militarists argued that the U.S. government must also adopt this abstract version of martial manhood to push isolationists into

¹⁴⁰ Mahan, “Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea”, 274.

¹⁴¹ Mahan, “The Relations of the United States to their New Dependences,” 16-7.

¹⁴² Mahan, “Preparedness for Naval War,” 190-1.

supporting increased military budgets. Mahan, a life-long sailor, defined one aspect of “preparedness” as “the possession of trained men, in adequate numbers, fit to go on board at once and use the material” for naval mobilization or training.¹⁴³

Despite the need for sailors to crew the new ships for which he advocated, Mahan felt that a certain kind of man was necessary for military service, a man who was a servant first to Christ. Mahan’s reserved military man was one of “self-control”, “self-denial”, and blessed with a “resistance to evil” – all attributes Jesus Christ himself sought in his own followers, according to the deeply-religious naval officer.¹⁴⁴ But sea power was not only about the financial capital required to build large navies. It was about having the right type of sailor crewing these ships: loyal, proper, white, and Protestant. Dedicated to Christian values, these sailors would be focused on the chain of command. To achieve this sacred goal for secular purposes, Mahan wished to redeem sailors from their intemperate ways. He hoped that the public’s disdain of ordinary American sailors for drunkenness and licentious habits would be erased and, in its stead, consider their fighting men of the sea to be virtuous heroes.

For Mahan, then, preparedness was not only a strategic consideration. It was as much an intellectual and spiritual aspiration. Although the article was a call for increased navy budgets, Mahan promoted precisely the type of officer that he and Luce helped produce through the Naval War College. Not only would these leaders of men be taught to use their professionalism and higher sense of morality on the battlefield, but those Naval War College graduates would pass it along to the enlisted sailors. The new modern warships, he argued, would be worthless without modern, spiritually enlightened warriors to command them.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 205.

¹⁴⁴ Mahan, “A Twentieth-Century Outlook,” 268. For a detailed study on Mahan’s religious ideology, see Suzanne Geissle, *God and Sea Power: The Influence of Religion on Alfred Thayer Mahan* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2015).

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the founders of the Naval War College reimagined military education at the collegiate level and then fought for its legitimacy in the public sphere through the publication of academic books and hundreds of articles in national magazines. These authors did not write specifically about their beloved college. Rather, they turned its lectures and class subject matter into arguments for increased attention of the Anglo-American relationship, robust military budgets, and a more aggressive foreign policy. Stephen B. Luce, who began his career as an academic professional in 1862, became one of the Navy's foremost experts on seamanship and an accomplished writer by the time he founded his war school in 1884. His desire to incorporate the study of history, international law, and methods of simulation into naval higher education challenged existing power structures within the Navy, which nearly closed the Naval War College in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Luce wanted to redefine the U.S. Naval Officer to that of an academic expert who would study war as a science, elevating his profession as an influential force in the modern world. To turn his vision into reality, Luce sought like-minded military academics and subject matter experts, including James R. Soley, William M. Little, Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Clay Taylor, and visiting lecturers from other branches of the U.S. armed forces.

None of these "master minds" were more significant to the school's cause than Alfred T. Mahan. After a relatively uneventful naval career, Mahan found his calling in September 1884 in an invitation from Luce to become a lecturer at his newly founded school. The 46-year-old Captain was also given orders to research and write a series of lectures that demonstrated the influence of sea power upon history by utilizing the rise of the British Empire through its creation of a powerful navy. These lectures highlighted similarities of the great naval battles of

history – from antiquity through the British victory over the Spanish and French at Trafalgar – revealing that many of the war strategies and battle tactics of antiquity held true throughout time.

In Mahan's and Luce's minds, their knowledge of the past made them insightful prognosticators for future maritime conflicts and projections of power. Mahan used his initial research for his lectures to write the most significant book of the era concerning naval affairs, *The Influence of Sea Power on History*. At the time, it was a popular book with some of the most powerful people in the world, including Queen Victoria and Kaiser Wilhelm II. Its message was initially lost to most U.S. readers despite appearing at a time when reading was very popular. Responding to this lack of domestic acclaim, Mahan and Luce turned their Naval War College lectures into a naval education for the public. Not only did these navalist writers present their arguments for their vision of the new Navy and America's place in the world, but they also pontificated on subjects like civilization, race, masculinity, and religion. In so doing, they sought to frame naval modernization as societal progress for the masses.

Chapter 2 – The Politics and Popularity of Warship Construction:

At the dawn of the 1880s, the United States Navy was woefully outdated. Its fleet was composed of just fifty-two Civil War-era wooden steam ships and ironclad monitors, and only 9,000 sailors and officers counted in its ranks.¹⁴⁵ Officials in the Navy Department and some attentive members of Congress, well aware of these issues, understood that the American fleet was no match for the larger, more technologically advanced navies of the Great Powers of Europe.¹⁴⁶ At the time, even Chile boasted a more modern navy than the United States.¹⁴⁷ In magazine articles and the classrooms of the Naval War College, Stephen Bleecker Luce and Alfred Thayer Mahan argued that this deficiency was a threat to national security and the nation's ability to protect trade interests. Theirs was an uphill battle because few Americans fretted about their nation's vulnerabilities.

And so, these naval leaders and their political allies set out to change this situation. On March 3, 1883, after years of lobbying by the Navy and negotiation through Congressional naval committees and advisory boards, the 47th Congress passed the 1884 Navy Appropriation Act with the full support of President Rutherford B. Hayes. The \$1.4 million bill called for the construction of the nation's first four modern, steel warships, the ABCD ships, named for the

¹⁴⁵ William H. Hunt, *Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1881* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1881), 27; William E. Chandler, *Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1882* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1882), 7-8.

¹⁴⁶ Mahan letter to Samuel. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan, vol I, 1847-1889*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 571. During Alfred T. Mahan's assignment in Peru during its conflict with Chile in 1879, he expressed his dissatisfaction with state of the U.S. Navy, doubting its ability to protect American interests.

¹⁴⁷ "Construction of Vessels of War for the Navy," 47th Congress, Session I, *House Report No. 653*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), i-v.

first letter of their commissioned designations: USS *Atlanta*, USS *Boston*, USS *Chicago*, and USS *Dolphin*.¹⁴⁸

This was just the beginning. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, eager to modernize the Navy, Congress awarded dozens of large naval construction contracts to private shipyards and steel manufacturers. Most of these contracts went to one state: Pennsylvania. The Navy's choice of Pennsylvania proved part of its strategic plan to secure public support in a political battleground. During these years, Pennsylvania was second only to New York in population and, by extension, in Electoral College votes. It was also one of the world's most prolific steel producers, and the five-mile stretch of the Delaware River running alongside Philadelphia was the center of ship production in the United States. From 1884 forward, this city of over 900,000 citizens received several multi-million-dollar stimulus packages from the government in the form of naval shipbuilding contracts. This elevated the state's importance economically and politically for industrialists, labor concerns, politicians, and partisans in the press nationwide. In the process, Philadelphia became a platform for regional and national conversations about corruption, fair business practices, trade policy, naval proliferation, and organized labor.

The two largest shipbuilders in the nation, John Roach's Delaware River Iron Ship Company and William Cramp and Sons Shipbuilding utilized industrial Philadelphia as a competitive arena for the Navy Department's attention. The fortunes of these two conglomerates rested on political alliances, spending trends in Congress, and government contracts to build the new fleet. If there were winners and losers among Philadelphia's great shipbuilding companies, the same was true for the laborers they hired to construct America's new warships. These

¹⁴⁸ Naval Appropriations Bill for 1884, 47th Congress, Session 2, Senate Document 97, March 3, 1883. *Navy* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885), 472-482.

lucrative government contracts and the promise of jobs increased the popularization of naval construction in late-19th century industrial Northeast. The Navy's popularity crossed all socio-economic demographics and political affiliations, as shipbuilding became a national asset and revenue stream that Republicans and Democrats sought to control. Into the 1890s, the importance of these naval contracts to industrial development and political alliances resonated throughout the steel industry as well, particularly in Pennsylvania.

One organization that understood the significance of these Navy contracts was the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, which used a multi-million-dollar battleship armor contract as a platform to dispute Carnegie Steel's wage decrease in spring 1892, a dispute that led to the (in)famous Homestead strike and riot. Laborers demonstrated their grievances by understanding the inner workings of these contracts and applying pressure that threatened the implementation of government work. Homestead also showed how industrialists like Andrew Carnegie intended to protect those contracts from being impeded by organized labor – by any means necessary.

Using these events in Philadelphia and its environs as a case study, this chapter demonstrates how industrial capitalists in the steel and shipbuilding industries, union and non-union laborers, publishers, and politicians in 1880s and 1890s embraced the navalists' vision of a modern navy for their own self-interests. Newspaper and magazine editors realized that naval construction was a popular topic for their readers, particularly in industry-heavy New York and Pennsylvania. Stories about naval affairs generated profits. As naval construction became more lucrative with industrialists and labor unions, it also became a serious talking point for politicians on both sides of the aisle. And as Democrats and Republicans sought to distribute naval spending to benefit their constituents and their own prospects on election day, the shipbuilding industry

became an object of political desire as well. Together, these diverse groups fueled the popularization of the navy beyond even the navalists' wildest dreams.

The Story of John Roach: Naval Contracts, Partisan Politics, and the Press

The story of the failed attempt by John Roach's Delaware River Iron Ship Company to build the ABCD ships offered a cautionary tale for prospective shipbuilders eager to obtain lucrative Navy contracts. Roach's failure revealed how over-confidence, political change, and the speed of technology could end industrial empires. Roach, who grew his company into a shipbuilding conglomerate through alliances in the Republican government, won all four ship contracts for his Philadelphia shipyard by justifying his low bids through the implementation of a vertical shipbuilding empire that saved him overhead costs during manufacturing. However, the presidential election of Democrat Grover Cleveland in 1885 abruptly severed Roach's political connections to the Navy Department and Roach's temporary monopoly on the ABCD contracts was called into question. Subsequently, Navy-dictated design changes caused cost over-runs that bankrupted Roach's company, leading the government to take over Delaware River Shipping to finish the ships. Roach's dismal saga revealed how swiftly the political winds that favored shipbuilding could shift in any particular direction.

By the time the ABCD contracts were drafted in the 1880s, Philadelphia was already a city of industry, boasting the second largest industrial workforce in the nation behind New York. The city's century-old shipyards and related industries experienced massive industrial overhauls in the 1870s and 1880s. Their proximity to the coal mines and steel industry in Western and

Northern Pennsylvania made it an ideal location for modern shipbuilding.¹⁴⁹ Located only a few miles apart in the city, the William Cramp and Sons Shipbuilding Company and John Roach's Delaware River Iron Ship Company and Engine Works were the two largest shipbuilders in the industrial Northeast in 1884. Outside the railroad industry, these two companies were among the nation's largest employers throughout the 1880s and 1890s, when their facilities were operating at full capacity.

William Cramp's company laid down its first hull in Philadelphia in 1830, more than forty years before John Roach moved his operations to the Delaware River from New York City in 1871. However, Roach's aggressive strategies as an industrial capitalist and his political relationships within the Navy Department made him the most prolific shipbuilder in the United States during the 1870s and early-1880s.¹⁵⁰

An Irish immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1832 at the age of sixteen, Roach began his life as an industrial worker at the Howell Works Company in New York City, a vertically integrated business model that combined elements of iron production, machinery fabrication, engine building, and the supply chain under one owner. Roach would eventually become an innovator in this industrial strategy through his own lived experiences. The young Roach learned this system working in multiple roles at Howell, including unskilled jobs in his first two years with the company. After a failed attempt to make farming a career, he returned to Howell for a second career of fourteen years as a skilled laborer in the marine engine fabrication department.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Robert Heinrich, *Ships for the Seven Seas: Philadelphia Shipbuilding in the Age of Industrial Capitalism* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 94-5, 99.

¹⁵⁰ Heinrich, *Ships for the Seven Seas*, 71. From 1873-1885, Roach won \$4 million in Navy contracts, while Cramp only booked \$874,000.

¹⁵¹ Leonard A. Swann Jr., *John Roach, Maritime Entrepreneur: Years as a Naval Contractor 1862-1886* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1965), 9-11.

Although he developed a mentor-mentee relationship with Howell's owner, Roach eventually grew weary of his dependence as a wage laborer and wanted a stable source of income for his wife and four children. He learned firsthand that when Howell experienced a downturn in business, his own family suffered; Roach wanted more control of his life. In April of 1852 Roach invested \$1,000 of his own savings, combined with \$10,000 from a small group of partners and family members, to buy the Etna Iron Works, acquired in receivership for \$4,700.¹⁵²

The Civil War and demilitarization afterward introduced Roach to government contracting as a New York City industrialist, which he parlayed into his own vertical shipbuilding empire in Philadelphia from 1871 to 1885. During the Civil War, the Navy had contracted Etna Iron Works for several of its monitor powertrains, including one for USS *Dunderberg*. By the end of the conflict, Roach's company had become a leading innovator in marine steam engine development.¹⁵³ In the decade following the war, Roach continued to sell engines, industrial tools, and armor plating to the Navy, while many of his competitors suffered losses during demilitarization. Roach took advantage of the situation by acquiring one of his struggling rivals, Morgan Iron Works, in 1867. In addition to giving his iron business access to docks on New York's East River, this acquisition allowed his company to ship directly to his customers and to businesses within his own vertical model.

During this same year, 1867, Roach had his first experience with a naval contract sparking a political controversy, one that almost cost him his business. This episode also convinced the shrewd industrialist that he needed political allies in Washington if he wanted to do business with the Navy Department. The trouble began when Roach's Etna Iron won a

¹⁵² Ibid., 13-4. The investment included \$8,000 from his brother-in-law James Joseph.

¹⁵³ *Scientific American*, Vol. XIX (1868), 327; Swann, *John Roach, Maritime Entrepreneur*, 26.

\$300,000 contract to make industrial tools for the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Subsequently, two of the losing local bidders, Bement & Dougherty and William Sellers & Company, contacted their local Congressman to dispute it. Advocating for the contract to stay in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Republican William D. Kelley amplified his constituents' charges of the Navy's favoritism toward Roach, while also charging that his tools did not meet government standards.¹⁵⁴ These accusations ultimately resulted in a year-long legal dispute that included a Congressional subcommittee investigation and, eventually, a politically driven inquiry by the Navy Department. Although the Rear Admiral and head of the Navy's newly formed Bureau of Steam Power ruled that the Roach tools passed inspection, another powerful rival within another Navy bureau disputed the report, extending the case into late 1868. The government held \$235,584 in payments for over a year while the two Naval heavyweights used the Roach case in an internal battle between proponents of the old and new schools of warship construction.¹⁵⁵

It was during this legal battle that Roach enlisted the help of attorney William E. Chandler, who he consulted as lobbyist throughout the 1870s. Eventually, Etna Iron was cleared of wrongdoing with Chandler's help, but this delayed payment nearly put Roach out of business.¹⁵⁶ After the case was dismissed, his company kept the unfinished tool order but was eventually only paid only \$86,000 by the Navy for the yard's work done to that point.

Despite the political turmoil, the New York shipbuilder learned two valuable lessons about naval contracts. First, Navy standards were rigid, and agenda driven. And second, winning government contracts was not just about submitting the lowest bid; it also involves having powerful political allies to keep those contracts funded. The events of 1867-1868 marked the

¹⁵⁴ Swann, *John Roach, Maritime Entrepreneur*, 42.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 44-5.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

first instance of Roach's name being unjustly associated with corrupt business practices, but it would not be the last. The relationship between Roach and Chandler during this period would eventually be called into question when Chandler became Secretary of the Navy in April 1882.

A combination of factors influenced Roach's decision to go into shipbuilding in the early 1870s, including his knowledge of industrial and technological trends, his own research on industrial shipbuilding in Europe, and the desire to best his mentor as a profitable businessman. Because Etna was a marine engine manufacturer, Roach and his engineers knew the complexities of industrial shipbuilding and stayed well-informed on technological advances coming out of Europe.¹⁵⁷ They understood that the wooden side-paddle steamers and armored monitors, used only for coastal defense, were obsolete and that the next generation ships would be made of iron or steel and be driven by a centerline driveshaft from a triple-expansion engine. Recognizing that the naval ship of the future was currently being built by shipyards across the United Kingdom and in France, Roach sent three naval engineers from his company to those nations to study their manufacturing practices.

In September 1869, Roach then crossed the Atlantic Ocean himself, visiting several industrial shipyards along the Clyde River in Scotland to see the processes first-hand. He spoke to shipyard owners about organizational matters, but also questioned engine manufacturers, boiler makers, steel benders, and propeller fabricators to get "their views about the improvements that were suggested by each man's experience."¹⁵⁸ Roach decided that the best way to build a larger vertical industry model — and to outrival his iron making mentor, James P. Allaire — was to make his company into a shipbuilding empire.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 49.

¹⁵⁸ "Iron Ship Building: A Talk with Mr. John Roach," *Bulletin of the American Iron and Steel Association*, Vol. VII (1873), 424.

Before his trip to Scotland, Roach was already searching for more property along the East River to add shipbuilding facilities. An overabundance of industrial businesses along the New York City riverfront, however, made property there extremely expensive. His best alternative was the industrial center along the Delaware River, just outside Philadelphia. Not only was the land much cheaper, but a solid shipbuilding infrastructure was already in place, including a deep river, industrial docks, and railroad access. Several shipbuilders dotted the riverfront, including William Cramp and Sons Shipbuilders in Philadelphia, but in 1870 none of them were outfitted to build modern warships.

Roach seized the opportunity. In June 1871, the New York industrialist purchased shipbuilder Reaney, Son and Archbold of Chester, Pennsylvania for \$450,000, a bargain because the company had fallen into receivership the previous year. He then immediately began investing in the company's physical and vertical expansion.¹⁵⁹ He added steam-driven cranes, a small internal rail system, and other labor-saving devices to improve efficiency. Roach then started submitting bids to the Navy Department to overhaul the aging monitor fleet in his first year in operation.

Over the next five years, Roach committed his resources to turning the Delaware River Iron Ship Building and Engine Works into what *Harper's Weekly* called "the American Clyde" – the United States' version of Scotland's integrated shipbuilding industry with raw materials, fabricators, and manufacturers located close to the shipyard.¹⁶⁰ Throughout the 1870s, Roach also founded several companies to establish this vertical empire: the Chester Rolling Mill produced the iron, the Chester Pipe and Tube Company bent that iron into boilers and piping, the

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 426.

¹⁶⁰ "The American Clyde," *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. LVI, April 1878: 642-3, 653; David B. Tyler, *The American Clyde: A History of Iron and Steel Shipbuilding on the Delaware from 1840 to World War I* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1958), 111.

Hirsch Propeller Company manufactured a patented European propeller for his ships, and the Chalmers-Spence Company produced and applied a patented asbestos for the ship's tubes and parts.¹⁶¹ These moves allowed the Delaware River shipping to bid low on contracts without losing profitability. In a few short years, Roach employed nearly 3,000 workers and became the most technologically advanced shipbuilder in the United States.¹⁶²

Because Roach employed thousands of local laborers and his companies supported ancillary shops, markets, and small businesses in Philadelphia, Chester, and Camden (New Jersey), he was generally treated well by the local press and was popular among the residents. Editors and writers at the Philadelphia *Inquirer* and the Camden *News*, in particular, made the shipbuilder, his public business dealings, and his innovations daily news. These newspapers were particularly fond of the spectacle of ship launches. Several national magazines, including *National Review* and *Harper's Weekly*, also ran prominent features on Roach, while some of those publications also printed articles written by the shipbuilding innovator himself.¹⁶³ Through his interviews, exposés, and his own published writing, Roach asserted that the United States needed to build its own ships and argued that they should be built his way, "best in the world."¹⁶⁴

Roach maintained popularity with his workers despite his opposition to labor unions because his new shipbuilding conglomerate stayed booked with private shipbuilding orders. His vertical business model and its various specialized trades, each with its own union, addressed their respective laborers over wages and conditions and rarely did workers in different trades unify. Moreover, they had no cause to complain about salary when the Delaware River yard was

¹⁶¹ "The American Clyde," 642; Tyler, *The American Clyde*, 46-8.

¹⁶² Swann, *John Roach, Maritime Entrepreneur*, 235.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹⁶⁴ "Iron Shipbuilding: A Talk with John Roach," *Bulletin of the American Iron and Steel Association*, Vol. VII, No. 54, September 10, 1873.

busy. And when business was slow and certain workers were laid off – up to fifteen percent of his total work force in some cases – the individual trade unions had no negotiating power to stop it. Part of the “Philadelphia Way” of shipbuilding was a reliance on a paternalistic work environment that forced workers to rely on the positive business trends of the employer.¹⁶⁵ Because labor organizers in the shipbuilding industries were divided by trade specialization, their unions had little power to stop layoffs.

After the passage of naval modernization legislation in 1883, however, industrial shipbuilders abandoned this traditional model, as they and their work forces grew more and more dependent on government contracts to maintain the shipbuilding industry’s economic viability. Roach worked on government contracts as early as 1871, but it was not until 1883, and after, that his shipyard became reliant on warship construction. As a result, these shipbuilders in the industrial Northeast, particularly New York and Philadelphia, increasingly turned to political allies and campaign contributions to gain access to government gatekeepers to secure naval contracts.¹⁶⁶ Politicians in urban environments could benefit from the money and clout of industrialists who sought these contracts, increased support from labor interests, and good press for creating jobs in their city, district, or state.

Unfortunately for Roach, the first bid that the Delaware River Ship Works submitted to the Navy in the fall of 1871 resulted in another political controversy for its owner. Roach and Secretary of the Navy George M. Robeson were accused of corruption in the press, resulting in a Congressional investigation over misappropriation of government funds used to repair and overhaul the aging monitors. Their primary public detractor was journalist Charles Dana. A

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Paul E. Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy: Politics, Economics, and the Rise of American Naval Power, 1881-1921* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 5-6, 37-8.

former war correspondent and Assistant Secretary of War under Lincoln, Dana had become an early muckraker against corporate and government corruption as the editor of the *New York Sun* beginning in 1868. In February 1872, Dana uncovered a corruption scandal involving Robeson, accusing him of taking kickbacks from private shipbuilders on the naval contracts for monitors that needed restoration, maintenance, repair, and machinery installations. Dana accused Roach of over-charging the government by \$300,000 on a bid to refit the USS *Tennessee* and splitting the money with Robeson.¹⁶⁷ For weeks, the *Sun* repeated the sensationalist headline, “Robeson, Roach, Robbers!” News of the corruption scandal continued for several more years.¹⁶⁸

Eventually, in July 1876, Dana’s articles led to an investigation by House Democrats. Although House members discovered evidence of Robeson’s corruption in other naval affairs, they found no impropriety in Roach’s contracts.¹⁶⁹ Robeson maintained his innocence and was never disciplined by President Grant, but he was also never exonerated by the government. He would continue to be a living example of government corruption to Democrat newspapers in the industrial Northeast. And the shadow of industrial scandal hovered over many future naval construction programs.

The House may have exonerated Roach, but Dana never retracted his accusations, leaving the shipbuilder’s reputation damaged among the public and Congressional Democrats. Delaware River Shipping almost went bankrupt in 1877 when Congress cancelled several contracts on ships already in production to meet new spending priorities for the Hayes Administration and to quiet emboldened Congressional Democrats. The Navy initially failed to pay Roach for the nearly finished monitor, the USS *Puritan*, leaving a \$200,000 debt that the government

¹⁶⁷ *New York Sun*, February 19, 1872.

¹⁶⁸ *New York Sun*, February 19, 21, 23, 26, 28 and March 2, 4-9, 11-13, 20, 29, 1872; *New York Tribune*, April 8, 1872. Charles Dana used some form of the word “robber” in headlines dealing with Robeson and Roach.

¹⁶⁹ Swann, *John Roach, Maritime Entrepreneur*, 204-5

eventually paid only in 1883.¹⁷⁰ For the second time, a political debate in Congress resulted in the cancellation of a contract that nearly put Roach out of business. Winning bids meant bidding low, which stretched his vertical business model to its limits.

Despite the issues and attacks on his character, from 1877 to 1881, Roach won over \$4 million in warship orders setting the stage for Delaware River Shipping's ascension in the 1880s as the nation's largest shipbuilder. His clouded reputation, however, followed him into the new decade. Despite his allies in the local press and popularity among his workers, John Roach became a controversial figure in the 1880s, with Democrat-leaning publications in the Northeast targeting him as a Republican collaborator and corrupt industrialist. To his chagrin, "Robeson, Roach, Robbers!" would follow him to the grave.

In the early 1880s, Dana's New York *Sun* was joined by political satirist Joseph Keppler's new humor publication, *Puck Magazine*, which also used the subject of Congressional naval appropriations and naval contracts to demonstrate the corrupt business dealings between Republicans and industrialists. Despite its irreverent sarcasm and claims of non-partisanship, *Puck* vehemently opposed the Grant Administration, supported organized labor, lampooned imperialism, fought corruption in business and government, and criticized the Vatican for its influence on American politics. At the same time, *Puck* was often anti-Catholic, antisemitic, dismissive of women's equality, and published blatantly racist portrayals of African Americans, Chinese immigrants, and Native Americans.¹⁷¹ But the cartoonists and editors of *Puck* recognized, as did Dana years before, that the corruption surrounding naval appropriations had become a popular topic of interest of their readers. The name that was synonymous with this

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ "Digging their Own Graves," *Puck Magazine*, No. 20, Vol. 1, July 25, 1877, 315-6, "Puck always upholds the rights of the laborer but when he exceeds his rights, Puck has not a word of sympathy for him."

corruption was former Naval Secretary George Robeson, and *Puck* continued to mock him and President Grant for years after their respective terms in office.

Like many in the Democratic press, Dana and Keppler were dissatisfied with the Compromise of 1877, which saw the Democratic Party acquiesce the Presidency to Republican Rutherford B. Hayes for his assurances that as president, he would remove the remaining federal troops in the South. Many scholars note that this agreement ushered in white reconciliation and almost one hundred years of Jim Crow, ending the Reconstruction Era in the United States.¹⁷² To partisans in the press, including Keppler, the compromise represented yet another corrupt deal involving the Grant Administration and that, because of it, Hayes was an illegitimate President.¹⁷³ Keppler and his fellow cartoonists at *Puck Magazine* looked for opportunities to link President Hayes to the Grant Administration's corruption; Robeson's election to the House of Representatives in March 1879 provided fertile ground for such criticism.

The first of these links appeared in a centerfold cartoon published in early February 1880. In it, Keppler depicted Grant as a carnival strongman hanging from a trapeze bar by his feet with a strap in his mouth that is holding up Robeson and several other Republicans in his administration. On the trapeze bar is written "third term," on the strap "corruption," on one of the rings "Navy Ring," with the author commenting that "Puck wants a strong man at the head of government, but not like this!"¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Edward O. Frantz, *The Door of Hope: Republican Presidents and the First Southern Strategy, 1877–1933*. (University Press of Florida, 2011); Michael Les Benedict, "Southern Democrats in the Crisis of 1876-1877: A Reconsideration of Reunion and Reaction." *Journal of Southern History* (1980): 489-524; Vincent P. DeSantis, "Rutherford B. Hayes and the Removal of the Troops and the End of Reconstruction," *Region, Race and Reconstruction*, Morgan Kousser and James McPherson, ed. (Oxford University Press, 1982), 417–50.

¹⁷³ Keppler, "Conkling as Mephistopheles," *Puck Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 3, October 3, 1877.

¹⁷⁴ Keppler, center fold cartoon, *Puck Magazine*, Vol. VI, No. 152, February 4, 1880, 782-3.

This was only the start of a much longer and sustained barrage against Robeson and his associates. The very next week, on February 11, *Puck* began laying the blame for the beleaguered state of the Navy at Robeson's feet: "The fact is that we haven't a Navy at all . . .," the magazine insisted, "we supplied the money to get one, but we haven't got it."¹⁷⁵ In the two years after Representative Robeson was elected and named Chairman of the Naval Appropriations Committee, *Puck* continued to assert that taxpayer money intended for the Navy would go to waste with "Robber" Robeson in charge. *Puck* caricatured Robeson as a wolf in the hen house (February 1, 1882), an ogre holding up political progress (May 3), an alchemist turning lead into gold to pay for the Navy (June 21), and a drunk Navy sailor carousing with a large duffel bag tagged "Surplus \$150 million" (July 12).¹⁷⁶ As the sailor, Robeson is whispering to the bag of misappropriated naval funds that "with thee to support me, I defy the whole world" demonstrating Keppler's belief that Robeson wasted vast amounts of taxpayer money and would continue to do so without consequence.

John Roach was not at the center of these cartoons or this controversy. Yet unfortunately for him, *Puck*, the *Sun*, and other elements of the press continued to associate him with Robeson in all sorts of ways: through his own controversies with the ABCD contracts, a federal contract dispute over the USS *Dolphin*, and the bankruptcy of Delaware River shipping. Together, this bad press would paint a negative public image of Roach as a grifter and government collaborator as Delaware Shipping was becoming one of the Navy's largest contractors.

¹⁷⁵ Keppler, "Our Navy," *Puck Magazine*, Vol. VI, No. 153, February 11, 1880, 792.

¹⁷⁶ *Puck Magazine*, February 1, 1882; *Puck Magazine*, May 3, 1882; *Puck Magazine*, July 12, 1882.

Roach Loses Everything: The ABCD Ships, *Dolphin* Affair, and Public Opinion

During this time, all the facilities under the Roach's industrial umbrella, particularly the Delaware River shipyard, received state-of-the-art industrial renovations, including the capability to make ships out of steel. Once again, Roach was an industry pioneer with his company's transition from iron to steel ship construction, the first private shipyard in the United States to add this innovation.¹⁷⁷ To fund this across-the-board retooling, he invested money made from naval contracts, passenger liners, and merchant ships in the late 1870s.

In early 1881, Secretary of the Navy William H. Hunt recognized Roach as a technological innovator and asked him to be a consultant during his initial review of the Navy. In his short two-year stint in the position, Hunt organized the institution's critical assessment in the form of an *ad hoc* advisory board responsible for making recommendations about naval construction.¹⁷⁸ His advisory board also included representatives from the shipbuilding and steel industries, including Roach and his chief competitor, Charles Cramp. Although these shipbuilders had no voice on the advisory board (as both men would eventually compete for the contracts), they were consulted as experts on technology, raw materials, and construction techniques. Roach's significant contribution here was his argument for making ships out of steel rather than iron. As he argued, "the marginally higher costs of steel pales in comparison to its strength."¹⁷⁹ Hunt's report to Congress in 1881 called for the funding of five modern steel warships with centerline driveshafts, including two cruisers, two gunboats, and a small dispatch vessel.¹⁸⁰ Although these recommendations were approved by Hunt and Congress, no contracts

¹⁷⁷ Heinrich, *Ships for Seven Seas*, 84-5.

¹⁷⁸ William H. Hunt, *Report of the Secretary of the Navy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1881), 27; *Army and Navy Journal*, Vol. XIX (1881-2), 870.

¹⁷⁹ Hunt, *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 162. Roach testimony before Hunt's advisory board.

¹⁸⁰ Swann, *John Roach, Maritime Entrepreneur*, 157-8.

were drawn up because up because of political infighting between Republicans and Democrats in Congress and the assassination of President James A. Garfield on March 16, 1882.

One month later, on April 16, 1882, William E. Chandler was appointed Secretary of the Navy by the newly sworn-in President, Chester A. Arthur. His appointment as Secretary was not a reflection of Hunt's performance in the role. Rather, Chandler, an official with the Republican National Committee, was being rewarded for his work on Garfield's 1880 election campaign as a high-ranking member of the party. An appointment as Secretary of the Navy was considered a steppingstone to higher political plateaus in Washington and Chandler coveted the position. However, the former lobbyist and lawyer to shipbuilders was not just a political appointment; he proved an active and knowledgeable Secretary. In three years as head of the Navy, Chandler was to be responsible for paradigm shifts in the way that the military did business with private industry. Much to Chandler's frustrations, however, his past relationship with Roach and Robeson would not go unnoticed by Congressional Democrats.¹⁸¹

In his first year in office, Chandler was responsible for organizing the first official Naval Advisory Board. An expansion of Hunt's *ad hoc* group, this board comprised a combination of experts from the Navy, Congress, and private industry responsible for awarding shipbuilding contracts. That same year, Chandler called for a reorganization of the Navy Department, a move that took decision-making power away from the Navy Bureau chiefs and redistributed it to the top, back to the Secretary's office, the Naval Advisory Board, and the legislative branch.¹⁸² This meant that large-scale purchasing decisions of the bureaus, the Bureau of Construction and Repair in particular, were consolidated into appropriation bills controlled by the Secretary of the

¹⁸¹ Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy*, 38.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 35-6.

Navy, naval committees, and advisory board, then these proposals were written into legislation that was paid for by the annual Navy budget.

Chandler's reforms did not go unchallenged. The bureau chiefs, who disagreed with Chandler and various committees on several aspects of ship modernization, saw this shift in funding control as a direct challenge to their respective authorities. Although he sought to limit the influence of the individual Navy bureaus to more forcefully control the direction of the Navy, Chandler asked the chiefs to submit recommendations on the final designs of the ABCD ships to curry their support and speed up the approval processes.¹⁸³ This strategy ultimately worked against him. The bureau chiefs, who each disagreed with different aspects of the direction of ship modernization, used the opportunity to denigrate the new ship designs, recommending multiple design changes that kept coming even after their hulls had been laid months after the contracts were signed. The most expensive and complicated of these changes was the bureaus' insistence that the ships be outfitted as fully functional sailing vessels as insurance against what they called the "unreliability" of modern marine steam engines. This despite the fact that these engines had established a record of reliability years before the Civil War.¹⁸⁴ Using their respective expertise in naval matters, the bureau chiefs joined Democrats in Congress and the press in challenging Chandler's progress and his contracts.

Chandler also changed the nature of naval contracting with the establishment of the Board on Naval Shipyards in 1883 to address "the great and radical changes in the art of naval warfare."¹⁸⁵ Led by Stephen B. Luce, who was still attempting to start his Naval War College,

¹⁸³ Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy*, 44.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 45; "The American Clyde," 642.

¹⁸⁵ *Commission Report on Navy Yards*, December 1, 1883, 5. New York Public Library Digital Collection. Available via HathiTrust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433019422801&view=1up&seq=9&skin=2021>. Accessed January 28, 2022.

the board was convened for three specific reasons: to establish a set of standards for new industrial shipyards, to study and inspect the condition of government navy yards around the country, and to make recommendations about how to proceed with the building the first modern steel warships for the U.S. Navy.¹⁸⁶ Luce and other board members quickly determined that Navy industrial shipyards nationwide were in deplorable condition and not fit for the modernization required to build the New Navy.¹⁸⁷ Luce was also concerned about the strategic locations of potential yards for security purposes, but the bulk of the report focused on industrial capacity and accessibility (including such issues as dock size and draught depth). The board insisted that “a well-appointed navy-yard represents not only years of labor and immense invested capital, but it contains all the materiel for carrying on a maritime war,” conditions that did not exist in the five federal shipbuilding locations.¹⁸⁸ This included the Philadelphia Navy Yard, the government’s largest industrial work site located near the Roach yard and just two miles west of Cramp on the Delaware River. Concluding that it was too expensive to renovate the government navy yards, Luce and his fellow investigators recommended that the best way to proceed with naval construction was using privately held industrial shipyards.

Together, the recommendations of these two Congressional advisory boards, Luce’s report, and the reshuffling of purchasing power in the Navy gave Chandler the ammunition he needed. By March 1883, he began to nudge the Navy somewhat reluctantly into a greater investment in private industry to modernize the American fleet. On March 3, 1883, acting on the advice of Chandler and his Naval Advisory Board, Congress moved forward with legislation to build four modern steel ships. Eventually known as the “Squadron of Evolution” and “the ABCD

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 5, 7-8.

¹⁸⁷ *Commission Report on Navy Yards*, 7.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

ships,” these ships included “one steam cruiser of about 4,500 tons displacement, two steam cruisers each of 3,000 tons displacement, and one dispatch-boat of about 1,500 tons displacement.”¹⁸⁹

A key component to the Naval Appropriations Bill of 1884, drawn from Luce’s report and voted on in 1883, was that these four ships were to be built in private shipyards by industrial corporations. The day after Congress passed the bill, despite not having a complete set of plans for the new ships, public notices for the four contracts were posted in newspapers in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, and New Jersey; the bids were also mailed directly to builders already working with the federal government, including Roach and Cramp.¹⁹⁰ Shipbuilders with the industrial capability to produce steam and steel ships had sixty days to submit their bids, which were opened by the Naval Secretary on July 2. On June 8, the *New York Times* reported the maximum price tags for each of the ships and updated tonnage from the latest design changes: “for the 4,300-ton ship, the *Chicago*, \$1,248,000; for the 3,000-ton ships, the *Boston* and the *Atlanta*, \$788,500; and for the dispatch boat, not yet named, \$899,000.”¹⁹¹

Roach took advantage of his vertical business model and its ability to manufacture all the raw materials needed for shipbuilding, including high-tinsel steel, to underbid their competitors and win all four warship contracts. His final total bid was \$2,440,000, which was \$774,000 less than the advisory board’s total estimate and \$315,000 less than the combined lowest bids of the other companies in the running.¹⁹² Delaware River Shipping was the only company to bid on more than one of ships. On the morning of July 2, the received bids were opened and read aloud

¹⁸⁹ “The New Steel Cruisers,” *New York Times*. April 30, 1883.

¹⁹⁰ Newspaper article about bid, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 4, 1883; article about bid, *Camden News*, March 6, 1883; article about bid, *New York Sun*, March 5, 1883.

¹⁹¹ “National Capitol Topics,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1883.

¹⁹² *Chester Times*, July 3, 1883; “New American Men-of-War,” *The Engineer*, Vol. LVI, October 26, 1883, 329.

on the front steps of Chandler's office in the Capitol with Delaware River Shipping announced as the low bidder on all four ships. A reporter overheard Charles Cramp asking Chandler rhetorically if he was going to award Roach all four contracts; the Secretary's response, "how could I not?"¹⁹³

Although Roach's competitors and detractors were "disgusted," the Secretary of the Navy considered these contracts to be in capable hands.¹⁹⁴ Cramp and several members of the press claimed corruption and favoritism, but the Naval Secretary was not fazed. Chandler understood Roach's expertise and the abilities of his integrated businesses, yet he failed to recognize that these contracts would be perceived by the press and his competitors as a conflict of interest. This naiveté to the power of perception would result in partisan attacks on Roach and challenges to the validity of the contracts, lasting for years after Chandler left office.

The deal made frontpage headlines throughout the industrial northeast, particularly in Pennsylvania and New York. It also became a popular topic for both pro-Roach publications and newspapers and magazines long wary of Republican corruption over naval matters. The Philadelphia *Inquirer* reported that the "prevailing opinion is that the ships went to where they were expected," awarded to Roach's "great yard" as a symbol of the city's emergence as an industrial leader.¹⁹⁵ *The American Protectionist*, accused by Democrat newspapers of being "Mr. Roach's organ," asserted that Delaware River shipping would execute the contracts with an "indomitable energy" and that the ships would "excel over any navy vessels of their cost in the world."¹⁹⁶ Conversely, the day after the bid meeting, the Philadelphia *Times* reported on the "disgust" of the rest of the bidders and of Cramp's vocal repudiation of Roach's abilities, a story

¹⁹³ Swann, *John Roach, Maritime Entrepreneur*, 180-1; *Washington Republican*, July 3, 1883.

¹⁹⁴ "The New Cruisers," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 2, 1883.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ "Facts about the steel ships," *New York Sun*, July 11, 1883.

dispatched to over a dozen other newspapers in the region that same day.¹⁹⁷ On July 12, editors at the Indiana (PA) *Progress* echoed the word “disgust” in reporting that “‘Uncle’ John Roach walked off with the entire bundle in the matter of the cruisers. Cramp seemed to be the most cut up,” the paper continued, with “Charley declaring that the *Chicago* could not honestly be built on the bid by Roach.”¹⁹⁸ Newspapers in Pittsburgh and Homestead followed a similar pattern. While some reported the contracts as a victory for the Pennsylvania’s coal and steel industries, others questioned Roach’s longtime relationships with Chandler and Robeson as suspect.

News of the awarding of the ABCD contracts also attracted familiar opponents in the New York press, ensuring that the contracts’ many problems remained in the headlines for the rest of 1883 and most of 1884, an election year for the United States. On July 11, Charles Dana renewed his editorial attacks on Roach in the New York *Sun*, arguing that he was not “hated by everyone” because the shipbuilder was a wealthy “Irish-American protectionist.” Dana insisted that the industrialist was hated instead for his continued relationship with a corrupt Robeson and the Navy’s “absurd” assessment of his company’s capabilities.¹⁹⁹ That same day, in the weekly edition of *Puck Magazine*, Gillam depicted Roach and Robeson as drunk soldiers in dress uniform dancing together in a cover cartoon titled “The Old Partners in the New Navy.”²⁰⁰ Further denigrating Robeson and Roach, Gillam’s caption read: “once a Navy man, always a Navy man; once interested in contracts, always interested in contracts” and “once the friend, advisor, and abettor of John Roach, always the friend, advisor, and abettor of John Roach.” In typical *Puck* sarcasm, Gillam offered “consolation to Mr. Roach, who, we are sorry to say, has

¹⁹⁷ Philadelphia *Times*, July 3, 1883.

¹⁹⁸ “The New Cruisers,” Indiana (PA) *Progress*, July 12, 1883.

¹⁹⁹ “Facts about the steel ships,” New York *Sun*, July 11, 1883.

²⁰⁰ “Old Partners in the New Navy,” *Puck Magazine*, Vol. XIII, No. 331, July 11, 1883, 328-329.

apparently started on the high road to red ruin by putting in such alarmingly low bids for such expensive ships, and, what more, having them accepted (by the Navy Department).”²⁰¹

On October 26, the highly respected British science journal, *The Engineer*, published an analysis that gave anti-Roach publications, Congressional Democrats, and the Navy Bureau Chiefs the validation they needed to challenge the ABCD contracts. In “New American Men-of-War,” U.K. naval experts claimed that the “condition of the boilers and machinery of the ships, to say nothing of the hull, a manifestation of that desire to be original at any cost, which has done so much harm already for the United States Navy.”²⁰² Further, they warned that “those entrusted with the design of the *Chicago* have not availed themselves of the experience acquired in this country at great expense, and they will regret the fact.” Dana seized on these most damning criticisms, printing excerpts in his New York *Sun* on November 15, as scientific evidence, that Chandler’s designs were flawed, and Roach was doomed to fail.²⁰³ He continued to use this article and the extended design approval process of the Navy Department, advisory board, and bureau chiefs as proof that British naval experts were correct about Chandler’s new Navy.

The Engineer article sparked a Congressional naval inquiry into the plans of the ships, which allowed the bureau chiefs to continue to add their pet design projects.²⁰⁴ This inquiry set an important precedent for future portrayals of the ABCD contracts as invalid and Roach’s work as substandard. This negative press validated concerns by the bureau chiefs and members of Congress, who called for updated changes to ships already under construction. In addition to adding new mechanical equipment, like upgraded air-handlers for example, some of these changes also called for the demolition and reconstruction of completed work, further extending

²⁰¹ Ibid., 325.

²⁰² “New American Men-of-War,” *The Engineer*, Vol. LVI, October 26, 1883, 325.

²⁰³ New York *Sun*, November 15, 1883.

²⁰⁴ “Additional Steel Vessels (ASV), 48th Congress, 1 Sess., *Senate Report No. 161*.

deadlines and straining Roach's already razor-thin margins. Final design plans for the *Chicago* were not completed until the keel was laid in March 1884, over eight months after the contracts were signed.

By this point, even the pro-Republican satirist magazine *Judge* had joined other members of the press in lampooning the contracts. In an early 1884 edition cover cartoon titled "Our Ship Chandler Feeds His Pet Roach," artist Grant Hamilton portrayed Chandler sitting at his desk leaning down to feed the four contracts to a dog-sized cockroach with the head of John Roach.²⁰⁵ In patriotic fashion, the *Army-Navy Journal* rushed to defend the ships, and American shipbuilding in general, in its January 19, 1884 edition, but its arguments mostly fell on deaf ears, as most American readers had easier access to daily newspapers than they did military journals.²⁰⁶ Whatever the defenders of Roach provided in the journal did not mitigate the sharp critiques by *Judge*. In an election year, the public debate over the ABCD contracts provided plenty of political ammunition for Democrats on an anti-government corruption platform.

§§§

On April 12, 1884, the USS *Dolphin* was launched from Roach's Chester shipyard with much fanfare, witnessed by Chandler, a few Senators and Congressmen, several high-ranking officers from the Navy Department, and thousands of dock workers and curious citizens. Newspapers in Philadelphia, Chester, and neighboring Camden announced the launching several days before the event.²⁰⁷ The anticipated launch, however, gave no signal to the ship's troubled

²⁰⁵ "Our Ship Chandler Feeds his Pet Roach," *The Judge Magazine*. New York: Judge Publishing, 1884.

²⁰⁶ "The New Steel Cruisers and their British Critics," *Army-Navy Journal*, January 19, 1884. (New York: Army-Navy Journal, Inc.), 503-4.

²⁰⁷ Philadelphia *Inquirer*, April 10, 1883; Chester *Times*, April 11, 1883.

future, including the many costly design changes, construction delays, failed trials, and malfunctions that eventually turned it into an embarrassment for Roach and the Navy.

From August 1883 through November 1884, the Naval Advisory Board issued fifty-five different change requests on the ship, including twenty-three alterations that involved the removal and reconstruction of previous completed work costing thousands of manhours of work and tens of thousands of Roach dollars.²⁰⁸ Many of these changes, additions, and refits, were a direct result of the criticisms levied by *The Engineer*. On October 9, the same day that cruiser *Atlanta* launched to similar public adulation, the *Dolphin* made the journey from the Chester shipyard in Pennsylvania to Roach's Morgan Iron Works on the Hudson River, where her first sea trials were set to begin the following week. Engineers experienced several mechanical issues on the trip, however, which put the ship into drydock for what was projected to be three days of repair. The President of the Naval Advisory Board then ordered Roach to implement several of the major changes added by the board and the bureau chiefs. Specifically, these new designs included increasing the size of the boiler rooms and replacing the steam blowers, which were deemed essential for the ship to maintain top speeds, with more advanced models.

By this point, the veteran ship builder knew that his ship was already three months overdue with at least another month in drydock to meet the new demands of the Navy Department. These delays were an indication to Roach that the building of the ABCD ships would extend well beyond the Presidential election. Given the opposition he had already confronted from Democratic members of Congress, Roach greatly feared the repercussions that might come with a Democrat in the White House.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Swann, *John Roach, Maritime Entrepreneur*, 201.

²⁰⁹ Roach to Chandler, September 20, 1887. Box 76, File 3, William E. Chandler Papers, Library of Congress.

With the *Dolphin* laid up at Morgan Iron Works for repairs until mid-November and a presidential election looming, Roach believed that the contracts would be in jeopardy if Republicans did not retain executive power. He therefore spent much of his time that October campaigning for GOP candidate James G. Blaine, a Congressional ally of Roach from the George Robeson years, donating over \$35,000 of his own limited cash reserves to the Maine Republican. In a letter to Chandler in September, Roach stressed that “the survival of his business” depended on a Blaine Presidency, adding that he feared increased scrutiny by Congress with a Cleveland win.²¹⁰ These fears, however, did not stop Roach from making an additional \$3,500 donation to the Cleveland campaign. With so much capital tied up in government projects, Roach was clearly hedging his bets. Although Roach had done his best to help Blaine win Pennsylvania’s thirty electoral college votes, Cleveland, the former Governor of New York, won his home state and its thirty-six Electoral votes, narrowly defeating Blaine for the Presidency.

With the election over and expectations from the Navy unchanged, Roach went back to work on the ships. After four weeks, the *Dolphin* was finally ready for its first official sea trial. It took place on November 20, 1884, under the command of newly promoted Captain George Dewey. Unfortunately for Roach, these trials turned into a public relations disaster as the ship experienced multiple malfunctions, including a catastrophic failure of the steel drive shaft.²¹¹ News of these failed trials was widely covered by local, state, and regional papers and dispatched around the country by Dana’s New York *Sun*. The frontpage sub headline on the November 22

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Philadelphia *Inquirer*, November 21, 1884; New York *Sun*, November 21, 1884; Chester *Times*, November 21, 1884.

edition throttled Roach for the failed trial, reporting that “*Dolphin* came back to port at the end of a rope.”²¹²

In the month after the election, as American newspaper readers followed stories about Cleveland’s victory and his plans to implement his platform, they also read frontpage stories about the *Dolphin*’s failed sea trials. Repeated again and again within those news stories was the history of the ship’s many criticisms, delays, and cost overruns. After months of debate that featured Blaine’s corruption as a Congressman, Cleveland’s record of ring-busting as the former Mayor of Buffalo and Governor of New York, and national conversations about the appropriate relationship between private industry and the state, John Roach and his ships came to symbolize Republican corruption, industrial malfeasance, and government inefficiency.

From the election through the first one hundred days of the Cleveland Administration in 1885, Morgan Iron Works labored on the *Dolphin*, working to finish all of the changes ordered by the advisory board and to replace the ship’s steel drive shaft with an iron one, an expensive and labor-intensive procedure.²¹³ By the time William C. Whitney took over as Cleveland’s Secretary of the Navy on March 7, 1885, the ship was already four months overdue and \$50,000 over budget. However, it was ready for final sea trials in a few days. A New York *Sun* editorial published on March 11 warned Whitney that he “enters on his important work in a department that has a long record of crookedness, jobbery, inefficiency, and failure, with which he can make his own administration sharply contrast.”²¹⁴ Heeding this warning, Whitney, a former New York attorney who fought for Cleveland on the front lines against Tammany Hall and the Tweed Ring,

²¹² “Naval Mugwumps in Tow,” New York *Sun*, November 22, 1884; “At the End of a Rope,” Lebanon (PA) *Daily News*, November 22, 1884.

²¹³ “Dispatch Boat Ready for Run,” Delaware County *Daily Times* (Chester, PA), March 9, 1885.

²¹⁴ “The New Navy Plans,” New York *Sun*, March 11, 1885.

notorious political “machines” invested heavily in political corruption, immediately focused his attention on the retrofitting of the USS *Dolphin* and the validity of the ABCD contracts.

Three days after Whitney was sworn in, the *Dolphin* performed flawlessly on its second sea trial in the cold waters of the Long Island Sound, steaming at full power for six straight hours at an average speed of 15.8 knots at over 2,300 horsepower. The ship performed several maneuvers in rough seas, then returned to New York Harbor averaging 15 knots in a “gale force” headwind with no mechanical difficulties reported.²¹⁵ The Naval Advisory Board members onboard for the trials agreed that the ship’s performance met the requirements of the contract; all indications were that the *Dolphin* would be turned over to the Navy within days, with the board’s approval. On March 19, however, Whitney, the newly appointed Secretary “declined to take action on the report” and refused to accept the ship pending a “thorough investigation” of the contracts, bills, and the advisory board’s report on the latest sea trial.²¹⁶ That day, in confirmation of Roach’s fears of a Democratic administration’s reprisals, Whitney wrote Roach a letter indicating his official refusal of the ship and requested that another sea trial be scheduled to verify its 2,300 horsepower requirement.²¹⁷ A stipulation in the contract stated that as long as power levels were close and the ship was in proper working order, that horsepower requirements were flexible. The next day, the New York *Sun* proclaimed on its frontpage, “Mr. Whitney [is] watching John Roach.”²¹⁸

The ensuing drama between Whitney, Roach, and the Naval Advisory Board continued to play out in the press in what would eventually be known as the “*Dolphin* Affair.” On March 28,

²¹⁵ “The *Dolphin* Makes Good Time,” New York *Times*, March 11, 1885.

²¹⁶ “Secretary Whitney and the *Dolphin*,” The Brooklyn (NY) *Union*, March 20, 1885.

²¹⁷ “Compliments of Secretary Whitney,” The Brooklyn (NY) *Union*, March 22, 1885; “The Trial of the *Dolphin*,” New York *Times*, March 22, 1885.

²¹⁸ “Mr. Whitney Watching John Roach,” New York *Sun*, March 20, 1885.

Roach wrote to Whitney requesting final payment for the undelivered *Dolphin*. The Secretary refused, however, telling the “persistent” shipbuilder that he would address the matter the following week, pending his own investigation.²¹⁹ Roach initially refused to make another trial run, hoping to parlay the few Democrat allies he still had left in Washington to convince the new Secretary to accept the ship. Whitney, who learned immediately of this political maneuvering, was also in possession of a letter written by former Delaware River Shipping employee F.W. Shattuck, accusing his former employer of knowing that the ship’s drive shaft was faulty and attempting to hide it from Navy inspectors.²²⁰

Roach’s defiance and escalating desperation prompted Whitney to establish his own board of inquiry, which would act as his office’s lead investigator for the *Dolphin* until its completion.²²¹ Roach and his supporters in the press argued that the Belknap Board, named for its lead investigator Captain George Belknap, was only convened to ensure the ship’s failure.²²² The Naval Advisory Board wrote to Whitney questioning his decision to call for another investigation, which they considered an accusation of incompetence. The letter went unanswered, despite its appearance in newspapers that same week. This correspondence between the head of the Navy, the advisory board, and America’s most prolific shipbuilder circulated in Philadelphia and New York newspapers and across the country. Dana’s *Sun* led the chorus of anti-Roach publications tagging “Uncle John” as “the disappointed collector” and the advisory board as “too sensitive.”²²³

²¹⁹ “Mr. Roach Persistent,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1885.

²²⁰ F.M. Shattuck to Whitney, April 5, 1885. Box 96, Series 1, Vol. 3, William C. Whitney Papers, Library of Congress.

²²¹ Whitney, April 7, 1885, Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1885, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, [54th Congress, 1st Session, Doc. 3], 296-7; *New York Times*, April 8, 1885.

²²² Swann, *John Roach, Maritime Entrepreneur*, 221-2.

²²³ “Roach’s ship,” *New York Sun*, April 20, 1885; “Capital Notes,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 20, 1885.

On May 12, Roach granted Whitney's request for a second sea trial and, in much calmer seas and warmer weather. To Roach's dismay, the *Dolphin* broke down less than two hours into the six-hour, full-speed trial. Roach promised that the over-heated crankpin was not a serious malfunction or design flaw, describing it as "a common problem" with new steam ships pushed to full power. Nevertheless, this failure gave Whitney the justification he needed for continued refusal to accept the ship.²²⁴ This led to a third sea trial on May 18, which also failed. To add insult to injury, Joseph Keppler reminded *Puck Magazine* readers of "Roach's little miscalculation" two days later in a frontpage cartoon. Depicting Whitney handing a scale model of *Dolphin* over to a defeated Blaine, the cartoon read "this was evidently built in the expectations of your election. We have no use for it."²²⁵

Ten days later, the ship steamed east down Long Island Sound for six straight hours in calm conditions at an average speed of 15.5 knots on 2,240 horsepower.²²⁶ By all accounts, including the press, the advisory board, and Belknap himself, this trial was a success. All assumed that Whitney would be forced to accept the ship.²²⁷ On June 12, Whitney responded to Belknap's correspondence, choosing to dismiss the successful test results because speed and horsepower were measured while the trial was "conducted on smooth seas" and "without notice to his office."²²⁸ After making all correspondence available to the press, these two telegrams were held back, lost, or ignored. Unfortunately for Roach, the details of this trial were changed in the official record of the *Belknap Report* sent to the Secretary on June 15. These changes

²²⁴ "John Roach's Bad Luck," *New York Times*, May 13, 1885.

²²⁵ "John Roach's Little Miscalculation," *Puck Magazine*, May 20, 1885.

²²⁶ Belknap telegram to Whitney, May 28, 1885; reprinted in *Army-Navy Journal*, Vol. XXIII (1885-1886), June 5, 1886. 245.

²²⁷ "The *Dolphin* Satisfactory," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 30, 1885.

²²⁸ Whitney to Belknap, June 11, 1885. Box 96, Series 1, Vol. 3, Whitney Papers, Library of Congress.

corrected the average speed to 14.6 knots and top horsepower to 2,190, just below the standards stipulated in his contract.²²⁹

Other than asserting that the successful trial was irrelevant because of weather conditions and scheduling, Whitney gave no reason for ignoring the successful test. The general public, moreover, did not find out about the existence of the Belknap Telegrams until a year later. Although a final Senate inquiry in June 1886 on the *Dolphin* exposed Belknap's correspondence and its findings to the American people, John Roach's legacy of failure was already secured as an innovator and job creator.²³⁰ The telegrams at the very least exonerated Roach in one respect: he produced a ship that met government contract requirements, which should have been accepted by the Navy Department. Yet even if he had accepted it, Whitney would have assuredly challenged Delaware River Shipping on each of the other three ships. Those two corrected statistics in the Belknap Telegrams ultimately cost Roach his shipyard.

On June 18, Whitney sent a report to Attorney General Garland arguing that Chandler's Naval Advisory Board prematurely accepted the final completion of the *Dolphin* and that the Office of the Secretary of the Navy would not receive the ship. Even with a "cursory examination" of the document, Whitney asserted, he was concerned with the "singular looseness of the contract," explaining that the "lack of (negative) stipulations" prevented Roach from being penalized for delays or under-performing products.²³¹ A few weeks later, on July 10, the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, a longtime pro-Roach paper, reported that although Attorney General Garland had "advised Whitney to accept the ship," the Secretary "did not immediately make his

²²⁹ "Report of the Examining Board on the Trial and Construction of the *Dolphin*," *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1885, I, 311.

²³⁰ *Army-Navy Journal*, Vol. XXIII (1885-1886), June 5, 1886, 245.

²³¹ "Dispatch Boat *Dolphin*," St. Louis (MO) *Globe-Democrat*, June 19, 1885.

final decision known to the press.”²³² Two days later, the Attorney General released a bombshell reversal, in the form of a letter to Whitney printed in newspapers across the nation. Specifically, he requested that the Navy Department *not* take ownership of *Dolphin* because it did not meet minimum speed and power requirements, the ship was not “staunch and stiff enough” for service, and that “her workmanship does not come up to the requirements of the contract.”²³³ Many of the same terms used in Garland’s statement were quoted directly from the Belknap Report.

The final rejection of the ship by Whitney and Garland was a devastating blow to Delaware River Shipping. It meant Roach would have to pay back all the money he had received for the *Dolphin* thus far. Payments for all four contracts were now in jeopardy as well. At over \$200,000 in debt with the Navy Department and without the guaranty of incoming payments, banks would not loan Roach the money required to fund daily manufacturing needs or pay his workers. By this point, the sixty-nine-year-old shipbuilder was also suffering from the beginning stages of mouth cancer. Although Roach became extremely ill in the months his company fell apart, that did not stop him from making statements to the press, claiming that “the mendacious Free-trade press had not so extensively deceived them, the failure of John Roach would be recognized as a national calamity.”²³⁴

In mid-July 1885, Roach’s lawyers filed for bankruptcy and the Delaware River Shipping Company in Chester and Morgan Iron Works in New York went into receivership. Within weeks, the Navy Department, on Whitney’s authority, resumed work at both facilities on all four ships using Roach’s work force. Just under six months later, the USS *Dolphin* was finally commissioned, joining the fleet on December 8, 1885 as its first modern “New Navy” warship.

²³² “Whitney’s Navy,” Philadelphia *Inquirer*, July 10, 1885.

²³³ “The *Dolphin* Rejected,” Philadelphia *Times*, July 13, 1885.

²³⁴ “John Roach Gives Up,” Harrisburg (PA) *Telegraph*, July 20, 1885.

The reaction to Roach's implosion by newspapers and magazines nationally fell along predictably partisan lines. Democrat publications like the *Sun* and *Puck* expressed validation in their aspersions of past Republican corruption, while the friends of Roach in Philadelphia, Chester, and Camden rushed to his defense worried that the thousands of jobs created by "Uncle John" would soon disappear.²³⁵ The *Philadelphia Times* claimed that the "hostility shown towards him by the Examining Board especially appointed by Secretary Whitney ... was enough to ruin any man" and that "he should be respected by the new administration" for his contributions to the industry.²³⁶ The York (PA) *Daily* printed an interview from an anonymous "club man," claiming that he voiced "the sentiment of a large number of leading businessmen of the country when I say that Mr. Roach has the sympathy of the commercial world, irrespective of party affiliation."²³⁷ Outrage over the *Dolphin's* rejection and perceived government over-reach was echoed in newspapers and magazines across the nation. Thomas Edison, whose electric lights were installed on the ABCD ships, defended Roach in his diary, arguing that "(Roach) has been pursued with great malignity by newspapers and others, from ignorance, I think. Americans ought to be proud of Roach, who started in life as a day laborer and became the giant of industry and the greatest shipbuilder in the United States."²³⁸

After almost two years of pain, surgery, and convalescence, John Roach passed away from mouth cancer on January 10, 1887 at the age of 71, with Delaware River Shipping still under control of the Navy Department. Roach's final moment of redemption came after his

²³⁵ "The New Sheriff in Town," *Puck Magazine*, June 24, 1885; New York *Sun*, June 20, 1885; Philadelphia *Inquirer*, June 21, 1885; Philadelphia *Times*, June 30, 1885.

²³⁶ "John Roach Fails," Philadelphia *Times*, July 19, 1885.

²³⁷ "A Great Failure: John Roach, the Veteran Shipbuilder, Assigns," York (PA) *Daily*, July 20, 1885.

²³⁸ Thomas A. Edison, *The Diary and Sundry Observations of Thomas Edison*, Dagobert D. Runes, ed. (New York: Philosophical Books, 1948), 29. Diary entry dated August 3, 1885 provides commentary on Roach's death and legacy.

death, as over 6,600 former business partners, competing industrialists, Congressmen, local politicians, present and former employees from New York and Philadelphia, members of the press, and thousands of citizens attended his public funeral in New York.²³⁹ Also in attendance at St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church were longtime ally and friend William Chandler, *Chester Times* editor John A. Wallace, and Civil War General and Freedman's Bureau commissioner Clinton B. Fisk, all of whom sat with Roach's family in the front row pews. Several members from the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, the American Yacht Club, the Maritime Exchange, the New York Chamber of Commerce, and the Society of Architectural Iron Manufacturers also attended the service demonstrating a cross-section of socio-economic organizations that paid their respects.²⁴⁰ Those who knew Roach witnessed the toll the *Dolphin* Affair took on his health, including his family minister of ten years, Howard Grose, who placed his painful death at the feet of the Navy Department in his eulogy.

Grose was also responsible for writing and curating a written record of the memorial service, which included all three eulogies, Roach's life story, prayers for the family, press reports describing the funeral, and various letters of condolences from around the country. Included in this section were seven letters sent to Roach in the weeks and months after he closed the Chester shipyard, which demonstrated the support he had from his peers, partners, and political allies. Among those who corresponded with Roach to encourage him at his darkest hour was someone unexpected: German H. Horton, a competitor at Poole and Hunt Engineering and Machinery Company. On July 21, 1885, at the end of the *Dolphin* Affair, Horton had written to Roach:

I am a pretty strong Democrat, but must confess, as I understand your case, I look upon you as having been unfairly treated. A man who has done as much as yourself for the industrial interests of the country deserves to be encouraged and sustained by the

²³⁹ Howard B. Grose, *John Roach, Born December 25, 1813, Died January 10, 1887* (New York: Atlantic Publishing and Engraving, 1888), 23-5.

²⁴⁰ Grose, *John Roach, Born December 25, 1813, Died January 10, 1887*, 24-6.

Government to the utmost verge of propriety and should not have been crushed as you have been.²⁴¹

Years later, scholars would assert that Roach negligently over-promised and under-delivered on these contracts.²⁴² However, it can also be argued that it was simply Roach's over-confidence in his vertical shipbuilding conglomerate and his lack of political savvy that led to Delaware River Shipping's failure. No proof of Roach's corruption was ever confirmed, and he firmly believed that his shipyard could handle all four ships at once. Moreover, because Roach owned the supply chain and parts manufacturing, he felt confident that his pricing would yield a considerable profit. In the end, however, design changes and public scandal over the smallest vessel proved fatal to his empire.²⁴³ Roach was a partisan businessman who used his connections in Washington for the betterment of his company and suffered the consequences after a shift in power. Predictably, Charles Cramp wrote in his memoirs years later that he believed Roach became a "martyr" for Republican cronyism and industrial overindulgence in the Gilded Age, answering for the perceived crimes of the Grant and Hayes administrations, both real and imagined.²⁴⁴ Horton's defense of Roach also has the ring of truth. What cannot be disputed is the fascination that American publishers had in presenting Roach's professional successes, many battles against the federal government, and eventual downfall to their readers.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 66.

²⁴² Heinrich, *Ships for Seven Seas*, 102; Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy*, 52.

²⁴³ Swann, *John Roach, Maritime Entrepreneur*, 207; Tyler, *The American Clyde*, 69-70; Heinrich, *Ships for Seven Seas*, 102.

²⁴⁴ Augustus C. Buell, *Memoirs of Charles H. Cramp* (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1906), 170.

Cramp, Whitney, and Tracy: A Nonpartisan Triumvirate of Naval Modernizers

Roach's failure created a golden opportunity for his primary competitor, William Cramp and Sons Shipbuilding. In the wake of Roach's bankruptcy, Cramp's company regained its place as the largest, most technologically sophisticated shipyard in Philadelphia. The company's leaders did so by being strategic about which warships to bid on, remaining apolitical, and adding incentive and penalty stipulations within their contracts to ensure financial stability should problems arise. They learned from Roach's mistakes.

Inspired by the release of Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power on History* in 1890, which argued for the construction of a fleet modern battleships, Naval Secretary Benjamin F. Tracy authorized the building of the nation's first battleships, commissioning Cramp and Sons to build them. The Naval Acts of 1890 and 1891 financed a total of four of these next-generation warships, ushering in a new era in industrial militarization that would ensure Cramp's success for the next four decades.

Perhaps the reason why John Roach's reputation remained tarnished for so long is that William C. Whitney used the embarrassment of the *Dolphin* Affair as an example to justify systematic changes to naval contracting rules. As a naval reformer, Whitney enlisted the help of Philadelphia's other veteran builder and Roach's nemesis Charles Cramp determined to create a shipbuilding process that was free of political favoritism, rushed and untested ship designs, and unrealistic construction proposals doomed for failure. During Whitney's service as Naval Secretary, he added steps to the bidding process and new regulations, which slowed down production from 1885 to 1889. In the end, however, these bureaucratic evolutions and efficiency improvements helped to improve American naval technology and created a more collaborative

relationship between builders and the Navy, despite being criticized by the press, politicians, and Navy Bureau chiefs.

Early on in this process, Whitney sought out Cramp for his expertise. With Roach's industries under assignment to the Navy, Cramp's company, William Cramp and Sons Shipping, had now become the Northeast's most prominent private shipyard. Charles's father, William, had opened the shipyard in 1830 on the Delaware River just to the northeast of Philadelphia, leaving the company to his son after his death on January 6, 1879. In reaching out to the private sector, the new Navy Secretary insisted that he was not looking for business partners. Rather, Whitney "considered himself and all the naval officials as partners and associates of the contractor, each mutually interested and determined to get the best vessel they could for the Navy."²⁴⁵ Fostering "cooperative" relationships between the contractors and the Navy, he explained, meant that inspectors need not be "the enemy." Whitney and his allies wanted to build a cooperative system that was apolitical, so that the gains of the U.S. Navy and American shipbuilders in one administration would not be reversed by the next party in power. They also wanted to build quality ships for the Navy, ignoring criticisms in the press and from the Navy Bureaus to do what they thought was best for modernization.

The most unpopular of Whitney's reforms was his decision to open up the Navy Department to purchasing ship designs and engineering plans from foreign nations to build American warships. This move provoked strong criticism from members of the Bureaus of Construction and Steam Engineering as well as trade tariff-supporting newspapers like the *Washington National Republican*. The paper reported that several British naval designers they described as "a syndicate" were "interested financially" in designing the ships "to be built by the

²⁴⁵ Buell, *Memoirs of Charles H. Cramp*, 178.

American navy.”²⁴⁶ Although Whitney denied the story of the involvement of a syndicate, he did admit to obtaining plans from one of the companies mentioned by the *Daily News*. The first protected cruiser approved under the new Secretary, USS *Baltimore*, was designed by Sir W.G. Armstrong Whitworth & Company Ltd. of Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K. In addition, its state-of-the-art triple expansion engine was designed by Humphrys, Tennent & Company of London.

When he was not implementing reforms, the Naval Secretary and his wife, Flora Payne Whitney, were heavily involved in the Washington social scene, hosting lavish parties and dinners at their estate near the White House. Many of the news stories that featured Whitney from late 1885 through 1886 focused on his wife’s parties, a press junket on the Great Lakes aboard the steamship *Michigan*, and the couple’s lavish capital lifestyle.²⁴⁷

A year after the *Dolphin* Affair, however, Whitney’s name was frequently in the press for all the wrong reasons. On March 2, the New York *Times* printed a story claiming that Whitney was linked to the Broadway Surface Railroad Scandal, a series of questionable business transactions unearthed in late February by *Times* reporters that involved price-fixing, bribery, and a “syndicate” style takeover of the Broadway surface rail line in Philadelphia.²⁴⁸ Newspapers across the country reported the rumor as well. In a letter to the investigative committee, the Secretary defended himself, explaining his involvement as an initial investment that he and his partners lost control of when larger investors took over.²⁴⁹ Still, the accusations kept coming. Two months later, newspapers reported another rumor that Whitney wished to purchase the

²⁴⁶ “Secretary Whitney Denies,” Washington *National Republican*, April 2, 1886.

²⁴⁷ “New York Editors at the Capital,” New York *Tribune*, May 13, 1886; “Secretary Whitney’s Proposed Junket,” Buffalo (NY) *Weekly Express*, May 20, 1886; “Democratic Simplicity,” (Washington) *National Republican*, February 6, 1886.

²⁴⁸ “The Broadway Railroad: And Secretary Whitney’s Connection to It,” New York *Times*, March 1, 1886.

²⁴⁹ “Whitney’s Predicament,” *Daily Deadwood (SD) Pioneer Times*, March 2, 1886; South Bend (IN) *Tribune*, March 1, 1886; “Whitney and the Franchise,” New York *Times*, March 3, 1886. Whitney’s letter to Chairman Low of the investigating committee was printed in its entirety.

Washington *National Republican*, a newspaper owned in part by former-Secretary William Chandler, who used this platform to criticize Whitney's Navy as "a dreary outfit of superannuated tubs now in commission."²⁵⁰ A Rochester (NY) *Democrat and Chronicle* editorial echoed those sentiments arguing that "we had no coast defense and no navy, but it is reported that the Secretary has bought a part of a Washington newspaper"²⁵¹ Whitney denied any improprieties and was absolved in each case, but the negative press emboldened Republican journalists to manufacture further outrage.

In the same week that Whitney was clearing his name in newspapers, many pro-Republican publications continued to criticize the Secretary for buying British ship designs plans and sourcing armor, engines, and naval guns from English steel mills. On May 19, 1886, editors at the Everett (PA) *Press* proclaimed that "the failure of Secretary Whitney to make sensational discoveries in the Navy has been admitted to be a mortification."²⁵² Writers from the Detroit *Free Press* demanded that "builders of the American Navy must patronize home industries," which also included utilizing American naval architects inside and outside the U.S. Navy.²⁵³ Their fear was that relying on foreign countries to design the new American fleet was an embarrassment and eroded the public's confidence in the Navy.

Fortunately for Whitney, outrage over using British ship plans faded rather quickly as Charles Cramp chose to embrace the new designs and build on the British plans with a state-of-the-art boiler design purchased from a Scottish engineer. Cramp's engineers were particularly enthusiastic about building their own version of a large triple-expansion engine that would power the *Baltimore*, the first of its kind of that size built in the United States. Cramp also used the

²⁵⁰ "Amusements," *Washington National Republican*, February 10, 1886.

²⁵¹ "Notes and Opinion," *Rochester (NY) Democrat and Chronicle*, May 12, 1886.

²⁵² "Our Washington Letter," *Everett (PA) Press*, May 19, 1886.

²⁵³ *Detroit Free Press*, March 2, 1886.

plans purchased from another British company for a smaller version of the triple-expansion engine, which was installed in the gunboat USS *Yorktown*. Years later, Cramp admitted in his memoirs that he was aware of Whitney's frustration over the "turmoil" surrounding these designs successfully "passing off" the *Yorktown*'s English triple-expansion engine off to the Naval Secretary as Cramp's own design.²⁵⁴

Because of the public scrutiny, Whitney enlisted Cramp's help to devise a classification system. Intended to standardize each type of private company bid, this system also allowed naval planners some flexibility in the selection process while still maintaining standardization. Classification I was a bid based on the plans as presented by the Navy Department. Classification II was based on the original Navy Department plans but with modification to "the hull or the engine or both."²⁵⁵ Classification III was the most liberal of the three as the design was based on "the bidder's plans wholly." Shortly after Whitney left office, Classifications II and III would be combined so that planners only had two types of bids to consider: Navy planned or not. These classifications allowed U.S. naval planners to use the best technology available to them, integrating superior British design into the American engineering vocabulary. It also allowed American ingenuity room to grow by not roundly rejecting new domestic designs.

This classification system would allow for an easier transition for American naval engineers to reach parity with their European counterparts by copying modern designs, adjusting their plans based on American engineering capabilities, and instituting upgrades where needed. Despite being unpopular with Republican newspapers, purchasing designs from Great Britain vastly improved American naval technology when it needed it most, particularly with the

²⁵⁴ Buell, *Memoirs of Charles H. Cramp*, 177-8.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 203.

addition of the triple-expansion engine. Of the eleven warships produced by Cramp from 1887 to 1893, only *Baltimore* was built off of a foreign ship plan; the other ten were U.S. Navy Classification I designs.²⁵⁶ Ironically, the very Navy Bureau Chiefs that denounced Whitney for buying plans abroad were discovered to have paid up to \$300,000 from 1883 to 1886 on ship and engineering designs from Europe.²⁵⁷ It is very likely that the designs for some or all of the ABCD ships were inspired by these foreign ship plans.

Another criticism of Secretary Whitney, levied by pro-tariff newspapers throughout his term, was that his partisanship had brought the American shipbuilding industry to a standstill. Newspaper editors were not shy about publishing repeated reminders of his involvement with the *Dolphin* Affair. In the June 1886 edition of *Harper's Weekly*, Rear Admiral Edward Simpson defended the seaworthiness of the USS *Dolphin*, which was finally accepted by Whitney on June 5; Simpson adamantly endorsed the ship's quality without attacking Whitney. In Beaver's aforementioned speech of November 1, the General accused Whitney of partisanship characterizing "the ruin of John Roach as a deliberate plan carried out by the Democrat Party."²⁵⁸ Later that week, Whitney declared that the Navy as "ring free" after putting the *Dolphin* Affair behind him as his department received "a record number of bids" on seven new warships proposed in his 1886 report.²⁵⁹

Although the Secretary had not built as many ships as his predecessor, he had approved more gross tonnage during his term. Despite this fact, many in the domestic press considered the status of the U.S. Navy a bad joke—inferior ships and the home of continuous scandals.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 180.

²⁵⁸ "The Last Shot: A Great Republican Mass Meeting," Delaware County *Daily Times* (Chester, PA), November 1, 1886.

²⁵⁹ "Be Honest with the Tariff," The Clarion (PA) *Democrat*, November 4, 1886.

Meanwhile, people in other parts of the world used the U.S. Navy as an excuse to ridicule American culture internationally. In the 1887 satirical novella *The Canterville Ghost*, for instance, famed British author and playwright Oscar Wilde told the story of a ghost haunting a British house who interacts with its new residents, including the daughter of an American diplomat named Virginia. Wilde used the story as an allegory to compare the decrepit, yet extravagant British Empire to the naïve and arrogant United States. When Virginia makes the claim that the U.S. has “no ruins and no curiosities,” the ghost responds “no ruins, no curiosities? You have your navy and your manners.”²⁶⁰

Despite the bad publicity, the ABCD ships were under construction and several other contracts to build the New Navy had been approved. Still, it was a learning process. Both Cramp and Whitney believed that Roach’s failure was a direct result of former-Secretary Chandler’s rushed actions through the various building processes in a technology space unfamiliar to everyone involved. Whitney’s classification system was intended as the first step in slowing down the process for the best possible design even if his intimate relationship to Cramp benefited a Democrat-leaning shipyard instead of a Republican one. The Secretary also decided to run all Navy contracts through the Department of Justice, known then as the Law Department, to verify that the federal government’s interests were met and that, although litigious as naval doctrine, the shipbuilding industry would be protected from “unscrupulous influence.”²⁶¹

The final piece of Whitney’s safeguards was a system of penalties and incentives designed by Cramp to ensure that private shipyards did not over-promise and under-deliver on contract obligations. At the same time, they aimed to reward those shipyards whose work that

²⁶⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Canterville Ghost* (c. 1887), (New York: Creative Space Independent Publishing, 2018), 12.

²⁶¹ Buell, *Memoirs of Charles H. Cramp*, 177.

exceeded expectations. When a shipyard failed to make a deadline or did not meet a speed requirement, a penalty measured in thousands of dollars was taken away from the ship's final total instead of the Navy outright refusing the ship (which usually resulted in that company's bankruptcy). Conversely, shipbuilders now had a motivation to significantly improve their bottom line by turning in ships early and making them lighter, faster, and more powerful.

In late 1886 and early 1887, the Naval Secretary Whitney made several proposals before the Congressional Committee on Naval Affairs arguing for a system of penalties and bonuses that penalized private shipyards for poor work and missing deadlines, while rewarding companies that exceeded design standards.²⁶² He convinced Senator Hilary A. Herbert, a Democrat and longtime member of this naval committee, that his "Premium System" would create positive incentives that would drive builders into utilizing their best practices in order to achieve their bonuses. Both Republican and Democrats on the committee initially pushed back, warning that it created an opportunity for a return to cronyism, government overreach, and abuse. Herbert was also worried that the federal government would be over-paying for warships. In the face of these skeptics, Whitney ardently defended his proposal, asserting that the "Navy's interests will have been met either way."²⁶³ Either the Navy received a superior piece of machinery that added value to the ship, or it received the ship early, which also met the Navy Department's needs. If they did not receive a premium, then the Navy Department paid less for a ship that would eventually clear standards and be received anyway.²⁶⁴

According to Cramp's biographer, August Buell, "the system remained in effect nearly ten years, and was applied to every vessel built for the new navy up to and including the *Iowa*

²⁶² William C. Whitney, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy 1887*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1888), vii.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 184.

²⁶⁴ Buell, *Memoirs of Charles H. Cramp*, 185-6.

and *Brooklyn*.”²⁶⁵ The eleven U.S. warships that Cramp’s shipyards built from 1887 to 1896 “earned a premium for excess of either indicated horsepower or speed” with \$1.915 million in bonus; none of ships received a penalty during this time.²⁶⁶ *Baltimore* exceeded horsepower requirements to earn a bonus of \$106,441 after the Navy received the ship on January 7, 1890, one of seven ships that earned over \$100,000 each in incentives. This also included speed-based bonuses on cruiser Philadelphia at \$100,000, cruiser New York at \$200,000, cruiser Columbia at \$300,000, cruiser Minneapolis at \$414,600, battleship Massachusetts at \$100,000, and battleship Baltimore at \$100,000.²⁶⁷

Although no notable scandals emerged for Cramp during this time, these large payouts could have easily been affirmation of the perceived collusion between Republicans Roach and Robeson. However, former critics of John Roach, like Charles Dana’s *Sun* and *Puck* magazine, and his supporters in the Republican press were silent on Charles Cramp. The U.S. Navy did not expand its fleet in a significant way during Whitney’s tenure as Secretary, something his partisan critics predicted would result from his appointment. Between 1885 and 1889, Congress approved only seven warships for production, including an armored cruiser and a mix of six gunboats and torpedo boats.²⁶⁸

What was more significant about Whitney’s term were the changes he contributed to the relationship between the Navy Department and private contractors. First, he strengthened the relationship between the two entities. Second, he created a collaborative environment for design. And finally, he established an incentive program that rewarded efficiency and innovation (even though it was vulnerable to suspicions of favorable contracts that rewarded certain builders more

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 186.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 187.

²⁶⁸ Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy*, 68-9.

than others). Editors at the *The Columbian*, a newspaper in Bloomsburg, PA, applauded Whitney for his bipartisan efforts, telling their readers “from every side his energy and sagacity is applauded, the work he has done to beguile bidders to accept offered terms and the ability he has in directing the work of his department.”²⁶⁹ Cramp hoped that the next Navy Secretary, Republican Benjamin Franklin Tracy, would sustain Whitney’s strategies as standard operating procedures for American naval construction going forward.²⁷⁰ He would not be disappointed.

In the Election of 1888, Benjamin Harrison defeated Grover Cleveland, thanks in part to the Republican’s appeal to industrialists in the Northeast and their workers promising to strengthen trade tariffs. Included in these promises was a proposal for government subsidies to increase the merchant marine fleet. It was another hotly contested election with the Indiana Senator winning 233 Electoral College votes to the incumbent’s 168, including thirty-six from New York and an additional thirty from Pennsylvania. Harrison won Cleveland’s home state New York by less than 15,000 votes, only 1.09% of the total votes cast.

Once elected, President Harrison selected Tracy, a Union Army officer and Civil War Medal of Honor winner, to serve as his Secretary of the Navy. Tracy was chosen because of his experience as the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York from 1866 to 1877, as well as his service as a judge with the New York Court of Appeals in the early 1880s. Now, he was now the third consecutive Secretary of the Navy with no prior experience with maritime matters other than a passing interest in naval history.

Tracy took office on March 6, 1889. Picking up where predecessor left off, he took steps toward strengthening Whitney’s standardization policies and government oversight on naval

²⁶⁹ “Washington Letter,” *The Columbian* (Bloomsburg, PA), April 1, 1887.

²⁷⁰ Buell, *Memoirs of Charles H. Cramp*, 187-8.

contracts. The new Secretary also teamed with Charles Cramp, other shipbuilders, and steel manufacturers, soliciting their expert feedback on the proper way forward for modernization. With Harrison's promise to tax foreign goods and support American shipbuilders, many of the Philadelphia and New York shipyards began to invest in infrastructure renovations and high-capacity machinery to ready themselves for all the new merchant marine and naval business on its way from Washington.

Unfortunately for Tracy and the shipbuilders, Democrats in Congress, joined by Populist Party leaders Jeremiah Simpson of Kansas and Tom Watson of Georgia, opposed his plans. Arguing that massive spending on maritime infrastructure and naval building was a waste of taxpayer dollars, they ensured that no subsidies for shipbuilders were approved during Harrison's Administration.²⁷¹ No inland states nor remnants of the Confederacy fancied lavish awards to New England manufacturers. This left American shipyards stretched for equity and starving for new business. However, this over-investment in infrastructure by shipyards around the country, including William Cramp and Sons Shipping, also positioned the industry to be ready for the first generation of American battleships, to be built in the 1890s.²⁷²

Three weeks after Tracy was sworn in, officials in Washington learned via telegram that three American warships, engaged in a three-month standoff with three German ships near Apia Bay in Samoa, had been sunk when a typhoon devastated the area on March 15-16, 1889. All three German ships also sunk in this episode of gunboat diplomacy, which developed as both nations sought to annex Samoa as a coaling station and thereby fuel the new steel navies' voracious appetites for fossil fuels. The loss of screw steamer USS *Trenton*, gunboat USS *Nipsic*,

²⁷¹ Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy*, 86.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 88.

slope-of-war USS *Vandalia*, and fifty American lives became Tracy's first rallying cry for increases in the scope and scale of naval modernization.²⁷³ In his first annual report to the Congress, Tracy dedicated over half of its 577 pages to the details of the Samoa disaster, including eye-witness accounts, a list of the lost American sailors, and the condition of the wrecked vessels, proclaiming the event as a threat to American interests in the Pacific. He also stressed that U.S. Navy, already depleted, was now down an additional three ships with only half a dozen in production.²⁷⁴ This proved to be an effective rallying cry for Democrats in Congress and the American press, who now saw a way to rationalize the approval of an increase in spending for the Navy.²⁷⁵ Over the next few months, the Naval Appropriations committee would receive the last building proposal to date: \$281 million for 192 vessels, including 35 battleships, 35 cruisers, 100 torpedo.²⁷⁶

Although Tracy had found some success during his first year in office, the Secretary's life took a tragic turn in February 1890, when his home in the Capital burned to the ground killing his wife and youngest daughter.²⁷⁷ Out of this tragedy, however, came new opportunities for Tracy. President Harrison himself revived Tracy at the scene and then took him and his two surviving children into the White House while they convalesced; this experience made the men close life-long friends. Shortly thereafter, the grieving Secretary read a newly published book by Naval War College scholar that would change the direction of American warship building for the next fifty years.

²⁷³ "Six War Vessels Sunk," *New York Times*, March 30, 1889.

²⁷⁴ Benjamin F. Tracy, United States Navy Department, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy 1889*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1890), 10.

²⁷⁵ Benjamin F. Cooling, *Benjamin Franklin Tracy: Father of the American Fighting Navy* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1973), 64.

²⁷⁶ "Report of the Policy Board," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 16, 1890, 207-73.

²⁷⁷ Cooling, *Benjamin Franklin Tracy*, 83.

Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, published in June 1890, provided Secretary Tracy with all the justification he needed to ask Congress to allow him to build battleships.²⁷⁸ In this book, a compilation of his many historically-themed lectures at the Navy War College, Mahan argued for the United States to build a large "blue water navy" consisting of battleships that could compete against the navies of Europe, particularly the British Royal Navy.²⁷⁹ America's international ascendancy, in Mahan's view, depended largely on its acquisition of a battlefleet, its use by audacious leaders like Admiral Horatio Nelson, the victor-martyr of Trafalgar (1805), and the skilled seamanship required to operate complex machines afloat. Tracy also used the recent unpleasanties with the German Navy in Samoa as a prime example that the U.S. Navy was vastly outgunned, outnumbered, and outclassed on the high seas. Without a modern navy, Tracy argued, the United States could not protect its shipping interests abroad. Bereft of coal, the Navy's new expansion boilers would limit the range of U.S. ships far more severely than Age of Sail ships—the "new" Navy had embraced critical limitations in its technologies that had geopolitical repercussions.²⁸⁰

Based on these arguments, the Secretary asked for a massive commitment from Congress over the next five years, which included the funding for ten modern battleships. Congress partially fulfilled this request, authorizing three. Clearly, Congress had not fully accepted either Mahan's or Tracy's rationale for fleet expansion. On June 30, Congress passed the Naval Appropriations Act for 1891, which approved the construction of the United States' first three battleships: USS *Indiana*, USS *Massachusetts*, and USS *Oregon*. News of the legislation was

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 76, 78.

²⁷⁹ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (New York: Brown and Little, 1890), 7-8.

²⁸⁰ Cooling, *Benjamin Franklin Tracy*, 78.

reported throughout Pennsylvania's shipbuilding and steel producing communities, which overwhelmingly supported the decision to start building capital ships in earnest.

Tracy continued to partner with Cramp through his tenure as Secretary. Their partnership including undertaking detailed work on the designs for the three battleships and the armored cruiser USS *New York*, which was awarded to Cramp and Sons Shipping in August 1891.²⁸¹ In contrast to their predecessors, Tracy and Cramp's relationship received little scrutiny by the press, Democrat- or Republican-leaning. During his four years in service, Tracy was responsible for the approval of four battleships, three armored cruisers, and several other torpedo boats and gunboats, a slight improvement on the Whitney years in tonnage.²⁸²

Another case study in U.S. foreign relations that furthered the resolve of the Navy to build American battleships was the *Baltimore* Crisis of 1891. On October 16, two U.S. Navy sailors on shore leave from USS *Baltimore* were killed by a mob outside a bar in Valparaiso, Chile. At first, the Chilean government refused the American Consulate's protest over the killing, but eventually Chile apologized for the incident and paid the United States \$75,000 in gold. Outrage in the American press over the crisis and its outcome was expected. The Indiana (PA) *Democrat* reported that there was an "an anti-American feeling" among the "bloodthirsty Chileans" and that the "bad blood between them ... reached a climax."²⁸³ Ugly, racist denunciations of Chilean society for its new government's reluctance to bow to U.S. demands revealed that American ire was unmatched by genuine U.S. power to project against Chile should war have resulted. Many of those closely familiar with the current state of the U.S. Navy, however, were not so sure that the United States could win a naval war against Chile. In recent

²⁸¹ Buell, *Memoirs of Charles H. Cramp*, 180, 191-2.

²⁸² Cooling, *Benjamin Franklin Tracy*, 123; Pedisich, *Congress Builds a Navy*, 88; Buell, *Memoirs of Charles H. Cramp*, 188.

²⁸³ "Blood Thirsty Chileans," Indiana (PA) *Democrat*, October 22, 1891.

years, Chile had purchased a state-of-the-art British cruiser that outclassed every U.S. warship and its coastal guns in Valparaiso, obtained from the Krupp armaments factory in Germany, would have shattered any U.S. offensive. Commander Robley D. Evans functioned as an officer and ambassador who helped to defuse the crisis, but it was he who first recognized the disparity in strength between American expectations and abilities. The Navy swiftly undertook to remedy these material weaknesses that Evans identified.

In addition to the crises in Samoa and Chile generating support for naval construction, Tracy constituted a sympathetic figure in the public's eye because of his family tragedy. His naval policies were well-received by both Democrats and Republicans. Maintaining Whitney's push for industrial cooperation, he responded with haste to two international crises with calls to fund shipbuilding as the prospect of war between the United States and other maritime powers became more prominent in American life. For the past eight years, editors of the four Philadelphia-area newspapers and six Pittsburgh area publications had printed the same stories about of the controversies of the ABCD ships and the political drama of the *Dolphin* Affair. Now, in June 1891, they published the news of Congress approving three new modern battleships for production. These editors understood, as did the leaders of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers Union (AAISW), how important a new multi-million-dollar armor contract would be to the workers in the steel mills of Western Pennsylvania. War or rumors of war proved good for the shipbuilding industry.

Naval Contracting and Labor in the Age of the Battleship

On November 20, 1891, Secretary Tracy and U.S. Steel Chairman William Abbott signed the \$4 million "Contract for Steel-Armor Plates and Appurtenances," awarding the order for

6,000 tons of nickel-plated steel armor plates to the largest steel manufacturer in the world. Andrew Carnegie's massive Homestead Steel Mill, located on one hundred acres of land just east of Pittsburgh on the Monongahela River, was the only facility in Pennsylvania that could produce these plates, which would eventually be installed on two cruisers and the three new battleships. Although this was cause for celebration for Carnegie and Homestead general manager Henry Frick, the timing of the armor contract coincided with an impending labor negotiation with the Amalgamated Association union laborers, for a contract due to expire on June 30, 1892. Carnegie saw the contract as an opportunity to rid his most productive plant of the powerful Amalgamated union. Homestead workers, and their AAISW leaders, meanwhile, understood the critical importance that Navy contracts had on Carnegie's bottom line. Both parties attempted to use the deal as leverage in one of the most significant labor disputes in American history, one that would eventually end in bloodshed.

Despite supporting the labor unions publicly, Carnegie had a contentious relationship with Amalgamated since buying the Homestead mill in 1883. The union, which had been organized in the plant since 1876, represented the steel magnate's first formidable challenge from labor in one of his facilities. Amalgamated Union members were skilled laborers who felt a sense of ownership over the plant. Considering themselves as "partners rather than employees," they felt that they helped build the mill through a "life of toil."²⁸⁴ In the six years after he purchased the mill, Carnegie invested millions of dollars into making Homestead the most technologically advanced steel production facility in the United States, including the installation of an open-hearth furnace in 1886 essential for armor plate manufacturing. The addition of hydraulic cranes and lifts, pneumatic tools, and other machinery cut down on manufacturing

²⁸⁴ Krause, *The Battle for Homestead*, 84, 186-7, 340.

times, and increased production. Yet significantly, it also reduced the number of skilled workers. In June 1889, responding to Carnegie's efforts to decrease the labor force, the AAISW organized a strike and take-over of the Homestead mill to protest the end of a collective bargaining agreement. The two sides signed a three-year deal to end the strike with an expiration date of July 1, 1892.

From 1889 to 1891, steel prices plummeted nearly nineteen percent, due to both Carnegie's over-production and a national economy slowed by Harrison's tariff policies and a collapsing railroad industry. Even so, profits for Carnegie reached an all-time high in 1891, when the possibility of a strike began to loom at the start of a \$4 million government contract. At the AAISW Convention in January 1892, Amalgamated President William Weihe discussed wage expectations of the impending contract talks. He felt that the union had a strong bargaining posture, however, because of the importance of the naval contract to Carnegie's success. Confident in their position, union leaders refused to budge.

In April 1892, with negotiations at a standstill, Frick ordered the floor managers in his armor mill to ramp up production of navy plates in anticipation of a strike in July, a tactic not missed by pro-labor newspapers or Weihe. They underestimated Frick's resolve and the amount of reserve steel that he aimed to produce by the end of June. At the 17th annual Amalgamated Association convention, held in Pittsburgh the weekend of June 18-19, union members were urged to "stand together as an unbroken body" but that "arbitration was preferable to violence."²⁸⁵ Several of the speakers congratulated the Homestead workers for their "victory in 1889" reminding them that the same courage would be required in June.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ "Homestead Workmen Firm," Pittsburgh *Daily Post*, June 20, 1892.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

Frick had no intention of conducting a fair negotiation. He had been lying to the workers and union leaders about overproduction and lower wages from the beginning of the year.²⁸⁷ One of the negotiating points between the two parties was Frick's insistence that mill workers had to decrease production, thus eliminating jobs; in this context, his new order to speed up production made little sense. Weihe felt that Carnegie Steel was overproducing steel billets on purpose to bring the cost down, thus allowing him to lower wages. He accused Frick of sabotaging the negotiations before they even started. In the final weeks leading up to the strike, the main sticking point in negotiations was a sliding scale wage system that tied the price of steel billets per ton to the workers' pay; these billets were essential in making armor plates. This sliding scale system only applied to four of Homestead's mills, the most important of which was the armor plate mill. The talks went back and forth with Frick offering \$23 per billet and Amalgamated countering with \$25. Eventually \$24 was discussed by both sides, but they could not reach an agreement on the final dollar amount. According to Frick, the difference of one dollar equaled a fifteen percent pay cut for workers, while Weihe's statistics showed a twenty-five to thirty-five percent drop.²⁸⁸

On June 24, Frick telegraphed Carnegie while he was on vacation in Europe informing him that the difference in the wage negotiation was only one dollar. As Carnegie's response revealed, he did not believe the Union was negotiating in good faith. He claimed that "this was not only fair, it was liberal, it was generous, and under ordinary circumstances, it would have

²⁸⁷ *Investigation of the Employment of the Pinkerton Detectives in Connection with the Labor Troubles at Homestead* (Homestead Investigation) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), 72-3; Les Standiford, *Meet You in Hell: Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, and the Bitter Partnership that Transformed America* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2005), 119, 121-2.

²⁸⁸ *Homestead Investigation*, 24-5; *Pittsburgh Gazette*, June 28, 1892; Standiford, *Meet You in Hell*, 112.

been accepted by the men with thanks.”²⁸⁹ On June 25, armed with Carnegie’s support, Frick announced that there “would be no further conferences of the Carnegie Steel Company with Amalgamated Association.”²⁹⁰ One of the other conditions that Frick was holding out for was the timing of the contract. While Amalgamated preferred recalculations to happen during the summer months when the reduced hours increased the cost of steel billets, Frick wanted contract negotiations to happen in December, when prices were at their lowest.

The Homestead Strike and subsequent riot, on July 6, 1892, has been discussed and debated by historians and journalists since the day after it happened.²⁹¹ Frick cut off negotiations on June 25, locked the workers out of the factories on June 29, and telegraphed the Pinkerton Detective Agency that day to send 300 armed men upriver to protect his plant. Predictably, the Homestead workers called for a strike on the day their contract expired, on June 30, and then took the mill by force the following day. Five days later, over 10,000 strikers and their sympathizers attacked Pinkerton agents as they attempted to disembark from two barges at the plant’s main dock. Thirteen people died during the ensuing riot, including eight Pinkertons and five workers.

In the aftermath of the riot, investigators pressed Frick on this subject during questioning, using the Homestead production numbers he provided to prove part of Weihe’s charge: that the plant ramped up production with two months left on the contract that helped to bring the overall price of steel billets down in time for the deadline.²⁹² The plant averaged 3,458 tons of 119-inch

²⁸⁹ Andrew Carnegie, *The Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie*. (New York: Signet Classics, 2006), 199; Carnegie telegram to Frick, June 25, 1892.

²⁹⁰ “Frick Stands Firm,” *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, June 26, 1892.

²⁹¹ Arthur Gordon Burgoyne, *The Homestead Strike of 1892*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979); Kenneth Warren, *Triumphant Capitalism: Henry Clay Frick and the Industrial Transformation of America*. (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Edward S. Slavishak, “Working-Class Muscle: Homestead and Bodily Disorder in the Gilded Age,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol. 3 (October 2004): 339–68.

²⁹² *Homestead Investigation*, 20.

plate mill steel per month from July 1889 to April 1892. Records showed that in May 1892, the mill produced 5,268 tons for a production increase of 50.6% while Frick promised a reduction. Frick insisted that the increase was intended to “keep up our organization and give employment to our (non-union) workers.”²⁹³ The increased production meant twelve-hour days, seven-day work weeks, and schedules that required skilled laborers to contribute at least one twenty-four-hour shift during the week. Workers averaged just over two dollars a day and accidental deaths and injuries increased during this time, which drew the attention of the press.²⁹⁴

The event quickly sparked national conversations about industrial malfeasance and poor working conditions in American factories.²⁹⁵ Although this sequence of events ended the Amalgamated Association’s influence at Homestead, they would become a rallying cry for organized labor across the United States, helping to propel Samuel Gompers’s American Federation of Labor into national prominence. As historian Paul Krause later put it, Homestead became the “site of the world’s largest and most progressive steel mill and of America’s most infamous debate over the politics, culture, and morality of steelmaking.”²⁹⁶

The events in Homestead, Pennsylvania are not generally understood as a part of traditional naval history. But they certainly deserve to be. Early American labor movements, including Amalgamated, benefited from the modernization of the United States Navy, despite initially being victims of this new military-industrial complex.²⁹⁷ In turn, this episode demonstrated that labor organizers and their workers understood the lucrative nature of these

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁹⁴ “Iron Fell on Him,” *Pittsburgh Press*, April 20, 1892; “Homestead Victim,” *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, March 29, 1892.

²⁹⁵ *Pittsburgh Post*, July 7, 1892.

²⁹⁶ Krause, *The Battle for Homestead*, xiv, 351-2.

²⁹⁷ Heinrich, *Ships for Seven Seas*, 116-7.

naval contracts and that going forward, they would use their professional knowledge of the steelmaking process to push for greater returns.

The Homestead strike led to the end of Amalgamated Association's influence on Carnegie Steel, returning the workers to a paternalistic labor system that kept Carnegie in control of his contracts by controlling the wages of his labor force. At the same time, however, this episode hurt Carnegie's standing with the U.S. government. One year after the Homestead riot, the already strained relationship between the Navy and Carnegie endured another controversy as Frick was accused by naval inspectors of falsifying the results of an important armor test during the 1891 contract.²⁹⁸

Carnegie biographer Peter Krass has referred to this drama as "the Great Armor Scandal," a moment when the steel manufacturer's penalties were drastically reduced after a meeting between President Cleveland, Carnegie, and Frick.²⁹⁹ And indeed, newspapers and politicians on the left and right accused the President of granting special privileges to an American elite. Cleveland, however, did not leave their December 17, 1884 meeting emptyhanded. For the rest of his time in office, the President stopped supporting pro-tariff policies and politicians. And even though he had endured multiple public relations nightmares, Carnegie kept making armor plating for the Navy through the turn of the century. Despite all the labor problems, failed investments, avoidable deaths, and internal corruption, Carnegie needed those contracts to maintain his profitability as the economy slowed in 1892. He believed that he could not afford to be penalized by delays or poor craftsmanship. The events at Homestead demonstrated that Carnegie would protect the ability to meet those contract requirements no matter the sacrifice.

²⁹⁸ Peter Krass, *Carnegie*. (New York: Wiley Publishing, 2002), 242.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 260.

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Together, the strains of the protectionist 1890 McKinley Tariff and the crash of the railroad industry caused a ripple effect that began to slow the economy in early 1892, an election year for Harrison. His opponent, former President Grover Cleveland, ran on a platform of free trade, supported the gold standard, and opposed a voting rights bill that protected African American voting rights in the South. With this platform, Cleveland handily won his second, non-consecutive term as President. Cleveland won in a landslide, taking New York, California, and every Southern state for 277 Electoral College votes to Harrison's 145. Democrats also maintained control of the House of Representatives and flipped the Senate, taking control of the legislative branch as well.

Although this marked the first time that one political party held both Houses of Congress since before the Naval Appropriation Bill of 1884, Cleveland was an anti-imperialist, and had not made naval modernization a priority in his first term. His selection of Senator and fiscal conservative Hilary A. Herbert as Secretary of the Navy seemed to confirm this policy. The question of Hawaiian annexation and the Secretary's trip to the Naval War College in the summer of 1893, however, changed the apparent trajectory of the U.S. Navy in considerable ways.³⁰⁰

Herbert was a legendary budget cutter working for over a decade as the lead Democrat on the Naval Appropriations Committee. He was a key figure in the debates, approvals, and rejections in the ABCD contracts, the Congressional investigations into the USS *Dolphin*,

³⁰⁰ Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy*, 92-3.

Carnegie Steel, and every appropriation bill since 1883.³⁰¹ Although Cleveland selected him for his expertise in naval matters, he also expected Herbert to reduce the Navy's budget and slow the production of battleships.

Two events in 1893 changed Herbert's opinion on modernizing the American Navy: the use of the U.S. Marines to overthrow of Hawaiian Queen Liliuokalani in January and his reading of Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* five months later.³⁰² The situation in Hawaii did not directly cause a policy shift in the Cleveland Administration to start building more ships. It did, however, raise Herbert's awareness that foreign naval forces – including German, British, Japanese, and possibly even the navies of several Latin American nations – might claim Hawaii if the United States did not. Although Cleveland opposed U.S. annexation, he disliked the thought of another foreign power taking the island chain and strategic advantage in the Pacific.³⁰³ In contrast to his previous posture, Cleveland began to show a public appreciation for the Navy. Writers at *The North American Review* in June 1893 observed this new outlook, reporting that the President was “saluting with pride” as he was greeted by hundreds of American sailors at the Naval Review at Hampton Roads, Virginia.³⁰⁴

Throughout the remainder of his presidency, Cleveland became more open to naval construction in order to protect American interests overseas, particularly in the Pacific.³⁰⁵ By the time of the crisis in Hawaii, Naval educators like Captain Mahan, Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, and James Soley had begun to advocate for the building of a large battleship navy that could be used to secure trade routes and coaling stations, particularly in the Pacific Ocean.³⁰⁶

³⁰¹ George F. Parker, *Recollections of Grover Cleveland* (New York: The Century Company, 1909), 396-8.

³⁰² Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy*, 92-3.

³⁰³ Rexford G. Tugwell, *Grover Cleveland*. (New York: The McMillan Company, 1968), 170, 242.

³⁰⁴ “The Lesson of the Naval Review,” *The North American Review* (June 1893), 644.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 646.

³⁰⁶ Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, 10; Soley, *Report on Foreign Systems of Naval Education*.

Throughout the early 1890s, they taught these lessons to officers at the Naval War College and published their ideas in popular magazines and academic journals across the nation. The most popular of these works was undoubtedly Mahan's book on the history of sea power, which at the time had become an international success.

Herbert read *The History of Sea Power* in June 1893. Before he read Mahan's magnum opus, he had originally been planning to close the Naval War College in Newport.³⁰⁷ Reading Mahan's work, however, completely changed Herbert's opinion of naval proliferation. He became convinced by Mahan's arguments, and particularly by his thesis that battleships were the future of the Navy. In his first official report to the President, in November 1893, Herbert reflected this transformation as the new Secretary sought to implement some of those ideas into his own form of Democratic navalism.³⁰⁸ In this and his three subsequent annual reports to the President, Herbert fought ardently for the Navy. He requested higher naval budgets, more battleships and support warships, more merchant marine ships, and the negotiating of coaling stations with nations already allied with the United States.³⁰⁹

Although he was not very successful in rallying support to fund naval projects during the first two years as Secretary, Herbert's lobbying efforts began to make headway in 1895, with the beginning of Cuba's revolution against Spain in February and the Venezuelan Crisis in May. Both international incidents directly revealed the problems of the U.S. Navy in the early 1890s. The situation in Cuba demonstrated the American military's inability to protect U.S. coasts as

³⁰⁷ Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy*, 92-3.

³⁰⁸ Hilary A. Herbert, United States Navy, *Report of the Naval Secretary, 1893* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), 10.

³⁰⁹ Herbert, *Report of the Naval Secretary, 1893*, 10-4; *Report, 1894* (Government Printing Office, 1895), 12-4; *Report, 1895* (Government Printing Office, 1896), 3-4; *Report, 1896* (Government Printing Office, 1897), 10-12.

hostilities raged sixty miles off the Florida Keys, while the situation in Venezuela revealed that the Navy could not project power in any meaningful way against a modern naval power.

American newspaper coverage of the Cuban Revolution was largely responsible for the era of yellow journalism that dominated U.S. newspapers from 1895 through the end of U.S.-Philippine hostilities in the early 1910s. Newspapers and magazines across the country – both Republican and Democrat – disparaged the “decrepit state” of the Spanish Empire, arguing that Spanish officials should be held accountable for the “atrocities” committed on the people of its “colonial possessions.”³¹⁰ Although William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal* and James Pulitzer’s *New York World* were most famous for vilifying the Spanish Empire, most American newspapers printed dispatches testifying to the plight of the Cuban freedom fighters. Newspapers along the east coast also printed frightening forecasts about the Navy’s inability to protect American cities should the Spanish Armada turn its attention to the United States.³¹¹ Reflecting Spain’s decline as an empire, the Spanish Navy by this point had no modern steel ships and posed little real threat to the U.S. whatsoever. Even so, news of navy threats made for sensational headlines, sure to sell newspapers.

Fortunately for the Cleveland Administration, the Venezuela Crisis ended in January 1896, when Great Britain relented on the claim against Venezuela that it was occupying territory legally part of British Guiana, avoiding a possible Anglo-American naval standoff over the application of the Monroe Doctrine.³¹² Despite this diplomatic victory for the United States, the situation demonstrated to the Department of War, Congress, and the White House that the United States could no longer enforce the Monroe Doctrine, especially if they wished to keep a

³¹⁰ Ted C. Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press, 1865-1900* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2003), 187-8.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² *Ibid.*, 140-1.

European power out of Latin America. Throughout the country, headlines showed the U.S. Navy was at the mercy of Spain, Latin America, and the European powers on the high seas. All this negative publicity which emphasized American weakness against other nations and peoples described as politically and racially inferior, helped American society to justify greater spending on naval projects going forward.³¹³

Operating in this charged context, Herbert turned out to be the most successful of the Gilded Age naval modernizers. During his term as Navy Secretary, he gained Congressional approvals for thirty-two total warships, including five battleships, nineteen torpedo boats, and six gunboats.³¹⁴ He also oversaw the launching of USS *Maine*, USS *Olympia*, and several of the battleships and cruisers that blockaded Santiago Bay in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. Although the Secretary had been appointed to trim naval expenditures, he came to believe that he must put the nation's military interests over party's politics. In so doing, Herbert ironically contributed to the expansion of American overseas empire while working for an anti-imperialist President. Yet in his mind, the position of the United States in world affairs and the expertise of American naval strategists served to justify his acceleration of the building of a modern Navy.³¹⁵

Utilizing the United States' first national political campaign, backed by hundreds of thousands of dollars from the private sector millionaires, Ohio Governor William McKinley defeated William Jennings Bryan rather handily in the Election of 1896.³¹⁶ Mark Hanna, a McKinley campaign manager in Ohio, invented a strategy to solicit donations from the country's industrialists, businessmen, and other wealthy influencers, asking them to put a price tag on their

³¹³ *Report of the Naval Secretary, 1893*, 10-4.

³¹⁴ Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy*, 105.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ William T. Homer, *Ohio's Kingmaker: Mark Hanna, Man and Myth* (Daytona: Ohio University Press, 210), 195-6, 201.

losses should the Democrats win the White House.³¹⁷ New York millionaires, whose value was estimated “half a billion” by the *New York Journal*, contributed nearly half a million of McKinley’s \$3.5 million total campaign haul. With coffers overflowing with cash, the campaign planned a nationwide train tour, rallies in every major city, and, more importantly, bought advertising space in every city and small-town leading to a landslide victory.

With backing from the sixty-six Electoral College votes of Pennsylvania and New York, financial contributions from its many industrialists and labor unions, and the support of pro-tariff newspapers, McKinley was expected to increase the industrial capacity of the Northeast, which meant further acceleration of naval modernization. With the Cuban revolution still raging sixty miles off the coast of Florida, yellow journalists continuing to feed public fears of the Spanish Empire, and the lingering question of Hawaiian annexation, McKinley and his new Secretary of the Navy, John Davis Long, planned to continue Herbert’s work. They had little expectation of the sea change in American popular attitudes favoring navalism that war with Spain would arouse. The Battle of Manila Bay on May 1, 1898, and Spanish-American War, however, would forever correlate the United States’ place in the world to the level of sophistication of its Navy. American media consumers were soon inundated with all things Spanish-American War through newspapers, magazines, literature, children’s books, and a wide array of military-themed ephemera. This was an indicator that American navalism had become a national phenomenon.

³¹⁷ “Half a Billion Back of McKinley,” *New York Journal*, August 3, 1896. John Rockefeller (\$120,000), Cornelius Vanderbilt (\$100,000), J.P. Morgan (\$23,000), and Andrew Carnegie (\$20,000) were among a list of millionaire contributors to the Republican campaign, dubbed by the *New York Journal* as “a half a billion back of McKinley.”

Conclusion

This chapter tracked the early development of industrial shipbuilding along the Delaware River in Pennsylvania, demonstrating the historical significance and public acceptance of naval contracting to build the modern steel navy from 1883 to 1898. Newspaper and magazine editors recognized the public's interest in the subject of American naval matters, printing and dispatching hundreds of news stories and opinion pieces about ship production across the nation during that time. Through these publications, readers followed the rise and fall of John Roach, an innovator in the use of steel shipbuilding and a vertical business model. They also read about how the *Dolphin* Affair changed the relationship between private industry and the government. Through the print media they consumed, Americans also learned about the political nature of government contracting, the importance of large shipbuilding contracts to wage laborers, and the deleterious effect that having a weak Navy had on America's role in international affairs.

During these years, industrialists, labor unions, and politicians also learned that the best way to keep the shipyards and steel mills busy and jobs secured was through the implementation of Navy contracts to build warships. Many times, these issues were hashed out and dealt with through the printing of important letters, telegrams, and government reports in newspapers. Building steel warships increased profits, raised job numbers, and secured loyal voters, yet these benefits varied depending on how many ships were being built at any one time. The bigger the projects and bigger the steel orders, the more money was made by all parties. By the 1890s, shipbuilders and steel producers in Pennsylvania had come to see the implementation of Mahan's battleship navy as a lucrative bonanza.

As these developments unfolded domestically, the United States also became involved in several high-profile international incidents that involved the use of naval power. These included the

Samoan typhoon in 1889, the Chilean *Baltimore* Crisis in 1891, the Hawaiian Revolution of 1893, the Venezuela Crisis of 1895, the Cuban Revolution, and hostile relations with Spain from 1895 through the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898. Together these episodes validated navalists' belief that as the United States ventured outward, it would need a modern maritime force with global reach. During the 1880s and 1890s, industrial naval modernization thus generated profits, created jobs, built urban infrastructure, secured international trade, projected strength abroad, and demonstrated the sophistication of the United States during the Gilded Age. For all these reasons, building the New Steel Navy grew increasingly popular with the American public, and was poised to grow even more popular as the 20th century dawned.

Chapter 3 – Dewey Mania, the Wars of 1898, and the Selling of American Exceptionalism:

In the late 1890s, the plight of the Cuban people in their revolution against Spain became a *cause célèbre* in the United States, ushering in the age of yellow journalism and increased public awareness of international relations.³¹⁸ Some historians have even referred to the conflict as a real life melodrama with Spanish colonial subjects portrayed as “damsels in distress” and Americans as their “saviors.”³¹⁹ Although many scholars have recently downplayed the role of sensationalism to McKinley’s decision to declare war against the Spanish empire in April 1898, avid American newspaper readers at the time certainly believed that freedom-seekers in Cuba could only be rescued by a benevolent, Christian nation – which could then cultivate Cubans into a civilized, free people. When Spain’s major colony in the Pacific, the Philippines, was drawn into this conflict shortly thereafter, pro-imperialist politicians and authors portrayed the Filipino people as another group of civilization’s “children” that needed to be educated on the virtues of self-governance. In this context, Americans themselves began to reimagine national identity and purpose as patriarchal and exceptional.³²⁰

Contributing to these scholarly conversations about the origins of the Spanish-American War, this chapter examines how American publishing houses and marketing companies

³¹⁸ Ted C. Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press, 1865-1900* (Westport CT: Praeger Publishing, 2003), 213.

³¹⁹ Bonnie Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest: The Visual and Popular Cultures of the Spanish-American War of 1898* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 20.

³²⁰ Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale Publishing, 2011), 13; Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 13.

employed the portrait of a victorious U.S. naval officer to redefine the image of American manhood and argue for a more-assertive foreign policy abroad. Within days of Commodore George Dewey's victory at the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1st, 1898, newspaper editors, publishers, and marketing specialists began to forge him into an American cultural icon. The McKinley Administration and Navy Department leadership fully supported this effort by promoting Dewey as a legendary figure and relieving him of his service duties to be celebrated by the nation. Between 1898 and 1900, Dewey's life and his exploits during the Spanish-American War were the topics of dozens of books and magazines. His image was also used to market a variety of consumer items, including games and toys for young boys. The popularity of these items demonstrated not only the American public's affinity for Dewey, I argue, but also their acceptance of this new image of modern American masculinity and the nation's place as a global power.

This widespread adoration for Dewey, however, would ultimately be short lived. As the situation in the Philippines grew more unstable by 1900 and the once thrilling victory against Spain was tarnished by mounting insurrection, "Dewey Mania" – and by extension, the American imperialism it symbolized – ceased to be as profitable to publishers and marketers. As it charts Dewey's rapid rise and fall as a marketing icon, then, this chapter also reveals the fickle nature of American public opinion.

This chapter also analyzes why many Americans began to accept U.S. imperialism as a legitimate – even positive – undertaking in the late 19th century, and particularly of the gendered nature of this process. The choice of a prim-and-proper military man as the symbol of U.S. foreign policy was an indicator of how Americans generally wanted to be viewed by the rest of the world: strong, masculine, and refined. Part of the reinvention of American national identity

after the Civil War was the recalibration of a postbellum masculinity crisis. Scholars have argued that this crisis was caused by the reshuffling of social hierarchies during Reconstruction, the emasculating qualities of modern convenient living, and the more active roles that women played in late 19th century society.³²¹ My work demonstrates the Navy's role in this broader process of remaking and manufacturing American manhood.

This chapter also contributes to the historiography of the early industrial U.S. Navy, showing how essential a cooperative press and subsequent support of the American people were to the on-going construction of modern maritime power. Companies used military imagery to sell board games for children by Parker Brothers, hand soap, and silverware sets, clocks, and printed art pieces. Consumers' purchases of these items, I argue, constituted a collective endorsement of his actions in Manila and affirmed him as the embodiment of American strength abroad. The way the American people loved Dewey demonstrated their agreement, or at the minimum their compliance, with the goals of imperialists who were reimagining national purpose and identity.

Taken as a whole, this chapter argues that the image of First Admiral George Dewey became the personification for what Americans expected from their new empire as the United States entered the 20th century – dignified, proper, restrained, yet able to overwhelm enemies through the application of aggressive martial manhood at a moment's notice. This balance of both restrained and martial manhood was exemplified by portrayals of Dewey as a sailor, professional officer, and as an American man.³²² Publishers presented him as a man of action, but also disciplined and merciful; as belligerent, but also measured and patient; as pillar of moral

³²¹ Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11-12; Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*, 5.

³²² For an in-depth discussion on the crisis in American masculinity in the 19th century, see Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and Antebellum American Empire*, 11.

fortitude, yet jovial and thoughtful. They sold Dewey as simultaneously grounded in the traditions of the Navy and as an advocate for its modernization.

These carefully constructed *images* of Dewey, however, were not necessarily an accurate reflection of the man himself. While Dewey was in the Philippines, he was considered the most credible expert on the subject by both the press and the McKinley administration elevating his image at first. Before Manila Bay, Dewey did not support annexing the Philippines. For variety of reasons Dewey's opinion shifted in the opposite direction; by late 1898, he would become a leading advocate for U.S. rule.³²³ As a Presidential candidate in 1900, he would change his mind again. By the time he returned home, the situation in Philippines was already volatile and public opinion was starting to sour for the United States' continued presence there. That did not stop cultural producers from selling this more-militarized United States to the American people. As it analyzes the images of Dewey that media producers constructed and the meanings that the American public contributed to them, this chapter also stays attuned to Dewey himself, tracing the lines between myth and reality.

The Public and Private Construction of an American War Hero

When William McKinley was inaugurated as president in March 1897, a war for independence in the Spanish colony of Cuba had been raging for two years. The Cuban insurgency had finally begun to see successes against Spain in early 1896, following nearly two years of struggle to acquire weapons and gain international support – including in the United States. In response to these military victories, Spain had increased the intensity of the conflict

³²³ John Barrett, *Admiral George Dewey, A Sketch of the Man* (New York: Harper's and Brothers Publishers, 1899). Biography documented series of events that changes Dewey's opinion on U.S. rule in the Philippines.

wagging a terror campaign against its Cuban subjects. Somewhere between 150,000 and 170,000 Cubans were killed by Spanish forces during this escalation of violence, which outraged American newspaper readers.

During his first year in office, the McKinley administration weighed public opinion against Spain and the needs of American businesses, which feared that continued violence in Cuba would jeopardize their exports. Throughout this tumultuous year, the administration did all it could to avoid all-out war. Hoping to protect American interests and project U.S. strength, the President eventually ordered the battleship USS *Maine* into Havana Harbor in January 1898. Despite wanting hostilities to abate and to maintain stability, many in his administration, particularly leadership within the Navy, had already begun to prepare for what a war against Spain. By the summer of 1897, experts at the Naval War College had finished a war plan. Their plan not only included the ground invasion of Cuba, but also called first for the destruction of the Spanish empire's navy in the Pacific Ocean.³²⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, who served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1897-1898, said that the commander of the Asiatic Squadron must understand the historical significance of American interests in the region and be "bold and forthright" in his abilities.³²⁵ Commodore George Dewey, many believed, was the right man for the job.³²⁶ When the *Maine* exploded on February 15th, 1898, all of the pieces of the Navy's war plan were already in-place in the Pacific, including Dewey as commander. Years after, pieces of the ship itself, including masts, bells, and guns would be the focus of USS *Maine* memorials across the nation, including one at Arlington National Cemetery.

³²⁴ Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession* (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, 1977), 105.

³²⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt, an Autobiography* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1913), 231.

³²⁶ George Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey, Admiral of the Navy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Publishing, 1913), Preface.

Dewey was very protective of his image and defended it from an early age. In one of the dozens of “instant” history books and Dewey biographies written by journalists in the year after the war, William J. Lawrence recollected a story in which the young Vermont native fought a fellow first-year cadet at the Naval Academy. The fellow student had repeatedly called Dewey a “Yankee doughface,” a derogatory term used by Herman Melville to describe a common sailor and by southerners at the time to describe sycophant northern politicians who gave into reconciliation policies, thus turning their backs on freed slaves and their personal honor.³²⁷ This attack on Dewey’s manhood spurred him to “beat him under the table” until the two cadets could be restrained. When he later discussed the event in his autobiography, Dewey recalled that the superintendent told him that he “could do nothing else” but respond with violence.³²⁸ Dewey claimed, in other words, that the incident was one of the rare instances that fighting between cadets should ever be tolerated. This insult to his reputation did not go unchallenged and violence against a fellow student in the name of honor was even validated by his commanding officer. Dewey finished near the top of his class as one of the most popular cadets in Annapolis; this “born fighter” with a “quick temper” was never disciplined officially by the Navy for the incident.³²⁹ This was just one of many academy fisticuffs documented by Dewey’s “instant” biographers, who portrayed the cadet as belligerent, but “fair.” Before he left the Naval Academy, he acquired a new nickname: “the Lucky,” for this uncanny ability to stay out of trouble (or to escape the consequences if he did).³³⁰

³²⁷ William J. Lawrence, *A Concise Life of Admiral Dewey* (New York: J.F. Murphy News Agent, 1899), 20-21.

³²⁸ Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey*, 19.

³²⁹ Lawrence, *A Concise Life of Admiral Dewey*, 10.

³³⁰ Louis Stanley Young, *Life and Heroic Deeds of Admiral Dewey, including Battles in the Philippines* (Boston: B.B. Publishers, 1899), 31-3.

Throughout his fifty-nine-year naval career, George Dewey continued to find himself in the right place at the right time professionally. His first assignment after the academy in 1858 was aboard the flagship of the Navy's Mediterranean Squadron. He then served under the legendary Admiral David Farragut at the Battle of New Orleans in 1862. In 1884, he was selected to captain the Navy's first modern steel-hulled warship, USS *Dolphin* – subject of John Roach's *Dolphin* Affair, and he became hero at the Battle of Manila Bay thirteen years later. These postings were indicative of a promotion-driven professional with influential connections. In his autobiography, written in 1913, Dewey described his life in the Navy as “not personally significant” enough to warrant an autobiography, claiming that his own career as a military man “merged into the life of the whole navy.”³³¹ However, this self-described “man of action” maintained a polished and indefatigable reputation in the first forty years of his naval career bolstered by two appointments in Washington, D.C. in the 1880s and 1890s.

Even before he reached the peak of his professional career, Dewey was clearly being groomed to be a high-profile leader within naval leadership. After a four-year survey cruise of the Pacific Coast from 1873 to 1877, Dewey was assigned to light duty as a lighthouse inspector in the nation's capital in May 1880. At the time, the Navy's lighthouse commission was charged with transitioning the nation's lighthouses to electric light, and the 42-year-old officer embraced an opportunity to make his mark on naval modernization. The newly promoted commander also enjoyed the social aspects of his job, becoming a popular figure among capital elites as a member of the influential Metropolitan Club.³³² In his biography, Dewey referred to these times as “most enjoyable ... but tiresome,” citing a constant barrage of dinners, drinks, and

³³¹ Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey*, Preface.

³³² *Ibid.*, 148; “Busy Officials: The Work of the Departments,” *Washington National Republican*. October 17, 1882. Story on Cabinet-level business, including reports from the Secretary of the Navy. This story reports that Dewey was given an elaborate party on October 16, 1882 to celebrate his assignment to the Asiatic Fleet.

conversations with military, national, and international elites being courted by the U.S. Navy.³³³ As Chief Inspector, he shared cigars with Civil War icons General William Sherman and brandy with Admiral David Porter on more than one occasion.

Sharing eyewitness stories of Civil War glories with American heroes of consequence made its mark on Dewey and, after two years in Washington, he requested a “significant” overseas assignment.³³⁴ He received his wish and was appointed to command of the Civil War-era slope-of-war USS *Juanita*, which was assigned to join the Asiatic Squadron in early 1883, a “welcome” assignment according to his autobiography. In his final months in Washington, Dewey used the resources available to him to educate himself on Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, and the life of Admiral Matthew C. Perry, the man responsible for opening Japan to the United States in the 1850s.³³⁵

Little is written about this time in his life, either in Dewey’s own autobiography, in instant biographies, or in later scholarly biographies. His first posting with the Asiatic Squadron lasted less than two years but was significant because the cruise elevated his personal awareness to the importance of the Far East to U.S. foreign relations. After a four-year Pacific survey and a tour in Southeast Asia, Dewey became a highly regarded and knowledgeable expert on the Pacific within the Navy officer corps. After this tour of duty, he was promoted to captain in October 1884 and given one of most the high-profile assignments available – command of the USS *Dolphin*, still under construction in Philadelphia. Dewey had already become a fixture in the capital and his technical acumen from his years on the lighthouse board made him a logical selection to command the most technologically advanced ship in the fleet.³³⁶ Because of

³³³ Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey*, 150-1.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

³³⁶ Benjamin F. Cooling, *USS Olympia: Herald of Empire* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 67-8.

construction quality problems, however, *Dolphin* never passed inspection. Roach's quality issues coupled with his lack of partisan relationships in Congress cost this ambitious and rising sea captain his first opportunity to command his own ship, the first steel ship made by Americans.

Dewey was instead given command of the USS *Pensacola* in the European Squadron in 1885 and returned to Washington in 1889 to join the Bureau of Equipment as its Chief. This posting as Chief led directly to a promotion to Commodore, his appointment as commander of the Asiatic Squadron, and his ascendance to hero of the nation. Dewey looked back fondly on this period in his life, not for his new command or acquired taste in his capital social status, but instead for his work in "building the new Navy" for the bureau.³³⁷ As bureau chief, he oversaw the approvals of over a dozen warships, including the battleship *Maine*, during a time, in his words, "when the American public noticed the Navy."³³⁸ He resumed his place at the Metropolitan Club, where he served as one of its most active members. It was during this time at the club that Dewey befriended fellow member and navalist Theodore Roosevelt.

Although Dewey appreciated his time as Chief of the Bureau of Equipment, after his promotion to Commodore in May 1896 he sought another significant overseas assignment.³³⁹ Specifically, he wanted command of the Asiatic Squadron and used his political contacts to convince McKinley to give it to him. Biographies of Dewey written in 1899 indicated that the Commodore did not want the Squadron when it became available in the fall of 1897, preferring a Washington assignment during peacetime. Yet in his autobiography, written fourteen years later,

³³⁷ Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey*, 150-166. For more details on Dewey's role in early shipbuilding, see chapter titled "Building the New Navy."

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

³³⁹ Ronald Spector, *Admiral of the New Navy: The Life and Career of George Dewey* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 32-3).

Dewey disputed that assertion.³⁴⁰ He revealed that he in fact “had his heart set on the assignment,” having studied that part of the world extensively since his Pacific survey in the 1870s.³⁴¹

Dewey credited Roosevelt and Vermont Senator Redfield Proctor for his Asiatic Squadron appointment, despite “never wanting to use that type of political influence.”³⁴² After the young Assistant Secretary found a letter addressed to his boss John Davis Long recommending Commodore John A. Howell for the job, Dewey recounted, Roosevelt sprang into action as his promoter. He met with Dewey immediately and strategized on how they could convince McKinley to give him the command. Roosevelt asked Dewey if he had any political friends. The Captain admitted to a family friendship with Senator Proctor but was reticent to call on him for a favor.³⁴³ Roosevelt appreciated Dewey’s “honorable” trepidation but ordered the Captain to call on the Senator, which he did that day. Sources also indicate that the Assistant Secretary met with McKinley that day as well to make his recommendation without Long’s approval.³⁴⁴ The next day, Proctor called on the President with the same recommendation. The Senator, who served as Secretary of War during the Harrison Administration, was a trusted Republican confidant of the President on military matters. Much to Long’s dismay, McKinley select Dewey for the assignment soon after.³⁴⁵ This narrative was confirmed by Roosevelt’s and Dewey’s autobiographies in 1913 as well as biographies published in 1944 and 1974.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁰ Halstead, *The Life and Achievements of Admiral George Dewey*, Preface; Barrett, *Admiral George Dewey*, 73; Dewey, 167-8.

³⁴¹ Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey*, 168.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 148.

³⁴³ Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt, an Autobiography*, 167.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

³⁴⁵ Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey*, 167-8.

³⁴⁶ Laurin Hall Healy and Luis Kutner, *The Admiral*. (Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 1944), 139-41; Spector, *The Admiral of the New Empire*, 42-3.

In stark contrast to these subsequent accounts, the instant biographies published in 1899 did not refer to any direct influence from Roosevelt on McKinley. Instead, they chose to portray the Commodore as having greatness thrust upon him by his superiors. Murat Halstead, the most famous of the Dewey image-makers, did refer to Proctor's recommendation to the President, but the story about Dewey meeting with Proctor is missing.³⁴⁷ Some of these books did not detail the event at all. Halstead even argued that future historians might try to "cast aspersions" onto the Admiral, saying that he called in political favors for the assignment, which of course he did.³⁴⁸

In truth, Secretary Long did not react well to his subordinates' breaking the chain of command.³⁴⁹ He chastised both Roosevelt and Dewey individually and refused to promote the Commodore to Rear Admiral, a rank traditionally held by a squadron commander. Dewey would have to wait until his victory in the Philippines to get his promotion to Rear Admiral. Although Dewey later confirmed the Secretary's slight in his autobiography, instant biographers in 1899 chose to tell American readers a different story: that the Commodore preferred this rank for honor's sake. They said he considered it as a tribute to the great Admiral Perry, who made his famous cruise to Japan as a "commodore who opened the door to Asia" in 1854.³⁵⁰ These instant biographers thus utilized every opportunity, even an obvious disciplinary action against him, to demonstrate Dewey's understanding of military tradition and honor, while also showing his humility and civilized demeanor.

Of course, popular depictions of the U.S. Navy in the Pacific began well before the Spanish-American War, and depictions of Dewey built on well-established foundations in

³⁴⁷ Halstead, *The Life and Achievements of Admiral Dewey*, 126.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 126.

³⁴⁹ Spector, *Admiral of the New Navy*, 32, 67.

³⁵⁰ Halstead, *The Life and Achievements of Admiral Dewey*, 106.

American popular culture.³⁵¹ In particular, the exploits of Commodore Perry on his trade expedition to Japan, 1853 to 1855, were well documented in his own published account of his missions, newspaper articles, and children's literature of the late 1850s and 1860s.³⁵² Perry's book functioned as both a chronological account of his cruise and official documentation of Chinese and Japanese culture that he felt was pertinent to American "trade relations towards the Far East." He presented the U.S. Navy as a leader in first-contact situations and essential in the development of American economic diplomacy.³⁵³ Newspapers and children's books portrayed Perry as a peacetime hero, explorer, and diplomat. To enlisted sailors and officers, Perry was all of that and more. Even before his expedition to the East, the Commodore was already one of America's few antebellum naval war heroes from the War of 1812 and the war with Mexico in the 1840s.

In addition to these depictions of Perry, stories of many rank-and-file U.S. sailors in the Pacific circulated in 19th century American culture. For servicemen in the Navy in the late 1880s and early 1890s, duty in the Asiatic Squadron meant "exotic" locales and "native women," diplomatic outreach, hours of ship drills, and "an excess of pageantry and circumstance."³⁵⁴ Sailors were eager to tell their stories about these experiences, and the Navy was happy to let them. Not only did newspapers and magazines publish tales of U.S. sailors overseas, but the Bureau of Equipment, while under Dewey, requested the installation of small printing presses on several of their ships, including the USS *Olympia*, flagship of the Asiatic Squadron.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ *Bounding Billow*, Vol. XX, November 1897. Henderson Archive, Philadelphia, PA.

³⁵² Mathew C. Perry, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan* (New York: D. Appleton & Company Publishing, 1856).

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, Preface.

³⁵⁴ *Bounding Billow*, Vol. XX, November 1897.

³⁵⁵ Young, *Life and Heroic Deeds of Admiral Dewey*, 63.

From these presses, sailors published *The Bounding Billow*, a bimonthly newspaper reporting on squadron activities, ships' events, shore leave anecdotes, and occasionally news from home in the six months before and six months after the Battle of Manila Bay. The publication also featured photos from several cameras, furnished by the Navy, to document the journey. Apprentice Seaman and former printer Louis Stanley Young created and edited the paper from November 1897 to November 1898. He eventually edited together all six editions and added an introduction documenting the ship's journey from 1895 to 1897 into a single book that was published in 1899.³⁵⁶ Taken together, the *Bounding Billow* represents the collected experiences of educated, sophisticated military men in the foreign service and is significant for a level of sociological detail that cannot be found in a ship's logbook.

A vast amount of the publication's stories center on the social activities of the sailors, including sporting events against Japanese sailors, musical performances by the various *Olympia* bands, and stage shows that featured everything from Shakespeare to blackface minstrel performances (with men playing women's parts). *Bounding Billow* publishers boasted that their black face troupe, "the Warm Ones," regularly entertained dignitaries in Nagasaki and Hongkong as early as 1896.³⁵⁷ Although U.S. sailors enjoyed their time as ambassadors-in-uniform and understood their role to represent American interests, 19th century attitudes on race were evident in the newsletter. In the inaugural issue documenting the *Olympia*'s cruise to Japan, *Billow* writers joked about "the little brown men" who came aboard the ship in crowds to "sell their trinkets and wares" to "green and gullible" sailors.³⁵⁸ Not only did these sailors mark the

³⁵⁶ Cooling, *USS Olympia: Herald of Empire*, 54-55; James Berkley, "Splendid Little Papers from the Splendid Little War: Mapping Empire in the Soldiers' Newspapers in the Spanish American War," *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2012), 158.

³⁵⁷ *The Bounding Billow*, 25-6.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 22.

Japanese people as racially inferior subordinates, but the passive-aggressive inference of the jest also accused them of taking advantage of American hospitality.

Although the newsletter did cover the accidental death of an *Olympia* sailor and the murder of another in early 1897, most of the paper's stories were of a jovial nature. In 1898, however, three events would change that relaxed posture of the men and their newsletter – the arrival of Dewey, explosion of the *Maine*, and the beginning of war with Spain.

Tensions with Spain, together with Dewey's arrival in early 1898, changed the tone and focus of the *Billow's* publications. Commodore Dewey took command of the Asiatic Squadron on January 24th, 1898, yet the event was only given a short one-paragraph mention in the February 1st edition of the *Billow*. The new squadron commander spent his first two weeks getting familiar with his ship commanders and learning his diplomatic responsibilities.³⁵⁹ Like the men under his command, the Commodore reportedly enjoyed the “minstrel troops, boat-racing, foot and base-ball, and, in short, everything in the line of amusement.” Three weeks into his new assignment, however, the *Maine* exploded far away in Cuba, and war preparations in the United States and in the Asiatic Squadron commenced immediately. The fleet was reinforced by artillery and coal supply ships called in from the American West Coast, including USS *Baltimore*. Dewey also purchased three other steamers in Japan to utilize in support roles.

In the next edition of the *Billow*, published on March 31st, Young printed his own story about the *Maine*. Although *Olympia* sailors had learned of the disaster three weeks earlier, it signified a major shift in publication's tone. No longer were they entertaining each other with stories of baseball games, losing at cards to locals, and parades for dignitaries; stories now focused on ship drills, gunnery practice, and the treachery of the Spanish Empire. Stanley's story

³⁵⁹ Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey*, 160, 175-6.

proclaimed Spanish guilt with what he called “conclusive proof of an external explosion” and called on his fellow sailors to “remember the *Maine*.”³⁶⁰ He and the other writers of *The Bounding Billow* joined the cacophony of yellow journals making a case for war against Spain.

Since the end of the Civil War, George Dewey’s career path had been on an upward trajectory. He served under the legendary Admiral David Farragut during the war, acted as liaison between Congress and the Navy Department in several high-profile Washington appointments, stayed involved in naval modernization efforts, and was connected to elite social circles in both Washington and New York. Dewey was in the right place at the right time, but he also knew all the right people, including the activist Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, who recognized the Commodore as a kindred navalist spirit. Dewey was exactly the right person to lead the Asiatic Fleet against the Spanish Navy, Roosevelt believed, should hostilities erupt between Spain and the United States.

Dewey Mania, A Creation of the Media

When the United States declared war on Spain on April 24th, Dewey’s Asiatic Squadron was already prepared for combat. Two days later, the squadron embarked for the Philippines from Yokohama, Japan with orders from Secretary Long to “capture or destroy vessels” of the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay.³⁶¹ Commodore Dewey, the Navy Department, and the McKinley Administration understood that the antiquated, unarmored ships of the Spanish Armada were not going to be a match for the new American fleet of modern steel warships. An indicator of Dewey’s confidence before the upcoming battle can be seen in the personal care he took in

³⁶⁰ *The Bounding Billow*, 61.

³⁶¹ George Dewey, *War with Spain: Reports of Admiral George Dewey; Operations of the United States Navy on the Asiatic Station* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1900), 7.

welcoming journalist Joseph L. Stickney to accompany *Olympia* to war.³⁶² In the days leading up to the battle, American newspapers printed stories about the impending American victory at Manila Bay, including a frontpage article in the April 27th edition of the Salt Lake *Herald*, which questioned whether the Spanish fleet would “sail out to meet Dewey” at all.³⁶³

In the end, they did. At 5:40 a.m. on Sunday, May 1st, 1898, six American warships, led by the protected cruiser *Olympia*, engaged seven ships of the Spanish Pacific Squadron, led by the unprotected cruiser *Reina Christina*. All seven Spanish ships were sunk, 77 imperial sailors died, and at least 377 were wounded in just over six hours of combat. Dewey’s squadron only suffered nine injuries and minimal damage to *Olympia*. Reports at the time claimed no American sailors died.³⁶⁴

In the immediate aftermath of this victory, newspaper editors, authors, photographers, and other image makers quickly constructed a public image of Dewey by sensationalizing every aspect of the Battle of Manila Bay. Although the outcome was all but determined before the first shots were fired, the press portrayed the event as one of the greatest naval triumphs in American history. According to these reports, it was Dewey who had become America’s indispensable man in this great international crisis.

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³⁶² Stickney, “Presentation Lecture Notes: Photo Slide Show of the Battle of Manila Bay,” Box 5, Glass Lantern Slides (1898), Joseph L. Stickney Collection, Henderson Archive, Independence Sea Museum, Philadelphia. 1899.

³⁶³ “How the Case Stands ‘Twix US and Spain,” Salt Lake *Herald*, Salt Lake, UT, April 27, 1898.

³⁶⁴ Navy reports many weeks later confirmed that Engineer Francis B. Randall died during the battle of a heart attack, but that he did not die directly from Spanish gunfire, reported in Washington *Republican*, June 30, 1898.

The first news of Dewey's victory was printed in American late edition newspapers on May 1st, 1898 as "speculation." Confirmation came the next day through British and Spanish sources and was reported in multiple publications across the nation.³⁶⁵ American newspaper editors were not surprised by the one-sided American victory, yet that did not stop them from sensationalizing the event as an exceptional and unexpected spectacle. Newspapers in every state splashed multi-sentence banner headlines, which acted as the article's "lede," detailing aspects of the battle, Dewey's brilliance, and American military strength in easy-to-read bold lettering. In many cases, these banner headlines took up the top third-to-half of a newspaper's front page, leaving the accompanying articles well below the fold.

News of the battle was frequently comingled with editorial commentary about an impending occupation of the Philippines, as was case for example in the Decatur *Daily Republican*. Referring to the island nation as "meat" to American conquest, *Daily Republican* headlines proclaimed:

Commodore Dewey's Magnificent Battle! Spanish Fleet at Manila Crushed and Completed Annihilated by America's Courageous Commodore. Glory of the Greatest Naval Victory of Modern Warfare Belongs to the United States – Manila Our Meat in Less Than Two Hours.³⁶⁶

The Louisville *Courier-Journal*, likewise, offered its own editorial commentary, this time in the form of a full paragraph headline:

Spanish Fleet Destroyed. Brilliant Victory Achieved By Admiral Dewey and the Asiatic Squadron Off Manila. Nearly All of the Enemy's Ships Sunk or Burned. The Famous "Fighting Admiral" Montojo Forced to Quit His Flagship, Which Was Burned to the Water's Edge. Dewey Preparing To Make Another Onslaught. They Remembered the Maine.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ "News at Washington," Decatur *Daily Republican*, Decatur, IL, May 2, 1898.

³⁶⁶ "Commodore Dewey's Magnificent Battle!" Decatur *Daily Republican*, Decatur, IL, May 2, 1898.

³⁶⁷ "Spanish Fleet Destroyed!" *Courier-Journal*, Louisville, KY, May 2, 1898.

At the center of these headlines was George Dewey, lauded by the press nationwide and around the world as the man of the hour. His adulations were shared by President McKinley and Secretary Long, who quickly made Dewey the leading executive advisor on the Philippines, promoting him to Rear Admiral just two weeks after Manila Bay.³⁶⁸ Journalists such as John Barrett, Joseph Stickney, and Murat Halstead, who followed Dewey in the Philippines from May 1898 to February 1899, amplified those narratives to the American people during the war through articles and after its end through published books. Their narratives proclaimed that Dewey should be celebrated by the American people and that he had become their trusted expert on “our new possessions” in the Philippines.³⁶⁹

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It wasn't just the newspapers. Dewey's legacy was also taking form while he was still in the Philippines through the over one dozen instant biographies written about him that were published in late 1898 and 1899, including several books for children. Books by Joseph L. Stickney, John Barrett, and Murat Halstead offered the most popular versions of Dewey's life story at the time and remained the most commonly referred-to accounts in later scholarship.

Stickney, a freelance journalist and former graduate of the Naval Academy, was welcomed aboard *Olympia* by Dewey on April 10, 1898 as a war correspondent but was officially listed as Dewey's “assistant” on the ship's crew list. His 1899 treatise, *War in the Philippines; and, the Life and Glorious Deeds of Admiral Dewey*, echoed these same platitudes

³⁶⁸ Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire*, 67.

³⁶⁹ James Baldwin, *Our New Possessions: Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Philippines* (New York: American Book Company, 1899). Baldwin's work was one of over a dozen books written in 1899 referring to the Philippines as a colonial possession of the United States.

to “America’s Hero Admiral” seen in the other biographies of the time and helped to develop the future historical significance of the Battle of Manila Bay.³⁷⁰ Stickney differentiated himself from other civilian journalists as an eyewitness to the Battle of Manila Bay aboard the *Olympia*. He also stayed in the Philippines for a year after the war, remaining even after Dewey’s departure in April 1899, to document the end of the war, transition of power to the United States military, and the beginning of the Philippine insurgency.³⁷¹ Although Stickney lacked the publishing experience of a John Barrett or Murat Halstead, he still held professional expertise as a former naval officer and eyewitness to the great event.

John Barrett was a journalist working on the West Coast in the early 1890s when he impressed President Grover Cleveland with his knowledge of foreign affairs and was offered a position as the United States Foreign Minister to Siam. After serving in that role from 1894 to 1898, Barrett left his position as a diplomat to join Dewey’s Asiatic Fleet the week after the Battle of Manila Bay where he became a war correspondent. From Dewey’s side, he reported back to his Harper and Brothers editors with articles for their two of their national magazines, *Harper’s Weekly* and *Harper’s New Monthly*, but was called back into diplomatic service shortly after the war as the Admiral’s lead adviser. As diplomatic attaché, he had expertise and access to the commodore that other journalists did not have. Based on these experiences, Barrett completed *Admiral George Dewey: A Sketch of the Man* while he was still in the Philippines; Harper’s and Brothers published it in June 1899.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ Joseph L. Stickney, *War in the Philippines; and the Life and Glorious Deeds of Admiral Dewey* (Philadelphia: Brown Publishing, 1899), Preface.

³⁷¹ Stickney, “Presentation Lecture Notes: Photo Slide Show of the Battle of Manila Bay,” Box 5, Glass Lantern Slides (1898), Joseph L. Stickney Collection, Henderson Archive, Independence Sea Museum, Philadelphia. 1899. Collection includes set of photos on glass slides and typed slideshow script, including Stickney’s hand-written notes.

³⁷² Barrett, *Admiral George Dewey*, v.

Using the sailors' accounts of the "exceptional victory" on May 1st and making editorial commentary legitimized by his own expertise and close relationship with the Admiral, Barrett painted a picture of Dewey as intelligent, chivalric, decisive, loyal, stern, humorous, and sometimes aggressive. Through these descriptions and anecdotal stories about his life, and especially his actions at Manila Bay, Barrett contributed to the construction of the image of the "Hero Admiral." The work, which was intended to highlight "his remarkable character and personality," endeavored to tell the American people about this "great man as he appeared under the trying conditions which brought him his highest fame and responsibility."³⁷³ Throughout his book, Barrett asserted that Dewey occupied "a unique place in history." Barrett placed the Admiral with such great figures in American history as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, David Farragut, and "others who have had such an influence upon the history of this expanding republic."³⁷⁴

Barrett's book is especially significant because it recorded Dewey's shifting opinion on U.S. rule in the Philippines before, during, and after the four-month-long Spanish-American War. Although he never claimed that the Admiral was an anti-imperialist, Barrett portrayed Dewey's concerns about annexation to demonstrate the reserved aspects of his masculinity.³⁷⁵ On the Rear Admiral's order, as Barrett described, *Olympia* transported Philippine revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo from his exile in Hongkong to rally Philippine resistance at the war's beginning. Dewey carried a positive attitude about Filipino self-rule through the first half of the war while his relationship with Aguinaldo was at its best. Dewey's letters written to his brother Charles during the war showed this more conservative approach to the impending invasion and

³⁷³ Ibid., 3-4.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 12.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 42-3.

its spoils, proclaiming that Filipinos “were more intelligent” and more “capable of self-government” than the Cubans.³⁷⁶

As his relationship with Aguinaldo began to sour, however, so too did Dewey’s feelings about Filipino self-governance. The Spanish surrender of Manila to the American Army on without the help of Philippine revolutionaries confirmed Aguinaldo’s fear that President McKinley wanted to occupy the Philippines. Over the next six months, tensions grew between Aguinaldo’s followers and American soldiers until violence between the two groups erupted in February 1899. According to Barrett’s book, before leaving his station to return to the United States two months later, Dewey boldly stated that “our moral responsibility to the natives and the world will not allow us to retreat from what is before us.”³⁷⁷ As Congress, the White House, and the American people debated whether or not the United States should occupy the Philippines, Barrett – acting as both a journalist and a diplomat – made the case for annexation through popular national magazines and a history book, using Dewey’s words to validate his own arguments.

On May 17th, Dewey gave the order to bring Aguinaldo from Hongkong to Manila aboard USRC *McCullough* to rally Filipino resistance to help American ground forces fight the Spanish colonial army. The revolutionary leader was under the assumption that U.S. forces intended to free the Filipinos; little did he realize that they would be trading one imperial overseer for another. During the war, Aguinaldo’s forces captured most of the Philippines, except for Manila Bay, and on June 12th, the Philippine Revolutionary Army declared independence, a proclamation that both American and Spanish officials ignored. The American press, too, treated

³⁷⁶ Adelbert M. Dewey, *Life and Letters of Admiral Dewey. From Montpelier to Manila* (New York: The Woolfall Company, 1899), 87.

³⁷⁷ Barrett, *Admiral George Dewey*, 45.

Aguinaldo's declaration like a joke.³⁷⁸ U.S. forces secured victory against Spanish troops on August 12th, they insisted, without Philippine assistance. Dewey and the commander of U.S. ground forces, Brigadier General Wesley Merritt, agreed in private to not turn over the Philippines to Aguinaldo's forces.³⁷⁹ A second Battle of Manila Bay and U.S. invasion of the city was "staged" later that day in order to allow the Spanish contingent to officially surrender to a "worthy" opponent in the United States rather than to the Filipinos.³⁸⁰

Another factor in Dewey's shift to a more assertive role for the United States in the Philippines, Barrett explained to American readers, was the increasingly aggressive posture of the German Navy during and after the war. Not only was the Rear Admiral weary of the German Empire's desire to occupy the Philippines once the Spanish fled as evidenced by a German squadron which lay at anchor in Manilla, Barrett confirmed, but those concerns turned into public criticism and international embarrassment for the McKinley Administration.³⁸¹ After a flippant, off-the-record remark about "sinking the German navy" made it into the press, the Admiral was ordered to walk back his comments. Dewey later clarified that he was only criticizing an overly aggressive German navy, not calling for another war against a European power. A fleet of Germany ship remained close to Manila Bay in the days after the Battle, which angered Dewey at the time (which he did not hide from the press). He felt that if the United States turned away from its "duty in the Philippines," it would invite the Germans to "conquer the island nation" and place Filipinos back under imperial rule.³⁸²

³⁷⁸ "New Dangers Arise: Aguinaldo May Ask Recognition of Philippine Independence," *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), June 29, 1898. Author calls Aguinaldo an "idiot" if he proceeds without American assistance.

³⁷⁹ Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey*, 113.

³⁸⁰ Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest*, 130-3.

³⁸¹ Barrett, *Admiral George Dewey*, 103-4; "Dewey Warns of German Aggression," *Washington Star-Republican*, September 12, 1898.

³⁸² Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey*, 109; Barrett, *Admiral George Dewey*, 45-6.

Where Barrett used his expertise as a U.S. diplomat to give his biography of Dewey weight, Murat Halstead, a long-time advocate for American overseas expansion, instead relied on his popularity as a well-published and respected journalist with over thirty years of experience. The biography was one of seven books Halstead had published about the Spanish-American War and the Philippines in 1898 and 1899, demonstrating his desire to write the official narrative of the war and the associated American civilizing mission. Halstead understood he was witnessing historical events that would be considered significant for decades to come and wanted to place himself there as an expert observer, along with the indispensable man, Dewey, to document it. The frontispiece of *The Life and Achievements of Admiral Dewey* is a lithograph of Halstead and Dewey standing together on the deck of *Olympia* with “the Admiral telling the author all about the Battle of Manila Bay.”³⁸³ Halstead’s subsequent account of Dewey’s life included several warnings about commentators in the future who would attempt sully George Dewey’s reputation or cast aspersions on the idea of Philippine annexation. Near the end of the book, Halstead gave his narrative of Senator Proctor’s role in appointing Dewey to the Asiatic Squadron. He wanted to quiet the rumor that Dewey sought out the position, insisting instead that he was recommended by “friends in the Navy Department” and that Proctor talked to McKinley about Dewey on his own accord. Any other accounts written by “anti-Americanists” in the future, he proclaimed, were sure to be “falsehoods” and “misrepresentations.”³⁸⁴

Halstead wrote the most overtly jingoistic of the Dewey “instant” biographies and his work is significant for its vilification of both Aguinaldo and the Philippine people. Like his other books, the biography was imperialist propaganda and social Darwinism masked as professional

³⁸³ Halstead, *The Life and Achievements of Admiral Dewey*, frontispiece.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 338.

journalism. Halstead portrayed Dewey as a diplomat and ally of the Filipino people, insisting that he was betrayed by the “half-devil, half-child” Aguinaldo and his revolutionary “barbarians” after the war.³⁸⁵ Halstead also insisted that American public opinion was firmly behind the Rear Admiral and that it would be his “strong hand” that might be “the one to save them [Filipinos] from their own tyrants.”³⁸⁶ Halstead wanted his readers to believe that the prim-and-proper Rear Admiral was the very man to take on the ‘white man’s burden’ and lift the Philippines into civilization, referring to the Rudyard Kipling’s essay multiple times throughout the book. The author’s feelings about annexation were verified in the book’s final chapter, which asserted that “the (Philippine) people should be treated like children, licked [beaten] when they need and firmly yet gently dealt with.”³⁸⁷ Ending his Dewey-Aguinaldo narrative with the claim that the two were “never friendly,” Halstead inferred that their relationship was more paternalistic rather than a proper military alliance; in his estimation, Dewey played a stern, yet understanding stepfather to Aguinaldo’s petulant adopted child.³⁸⁸

Throughout this Dewey book, as well as his other two works about the Philippines, Halstead reiterated a fascination with the civilizing aspects of hygiene, comparing the cleanliness of white American civilization to the “unclean nature” of the Filipino people. Dewey became the perfect example of “a gentleman, a man of the world, of refinement” and that “cleanliness and order were among his virtues.”³⁸⁹ Halstead was careful to qualify his appreciation of Dewey’s clean habits as a product of his race, naval education, and sensibilities as a modern man, warning those anti-Americans who question the validity of his manhood that “it was a misrepresentation

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 17, 193.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 206, 310.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 320.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 362.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 87, 315.

... to say that he is dandified.” He wrote that the Rear Admiral was “not a prodigy but the result of a manliness that was hereditary, and the product of many years of preparation.” Dewey, according to Halsted, was literally the “embodiment of American manhood.”³⁹⁰ They portray him as a common American man who, through moral fortitude, grit, and upbringing, ascended to greatness. He also made several detailed observations about the Rear Admiral’s appearance to confirm the image as “clean and keen ... sparkling eyes ... strong jaw and neck over massive shoulders ... that photography cannot spoil.”³⁹¹

In a poignant story written in the final chapter, Halstead conveyed Dewey’s thoughts about North-South reconciliation through a story about the Rear Admiral receiving a letter of thanks from a Confederate Veterans Group of Tennessee, one of hundreds of official declarations of congratulations from the general public. Dewey responded to these former Confederates by calling for “healing of all the wounds that have been rankling since 1865, and I believe that from now on we will be a united people ... with no North, no South.”³⁹² In his descriptions of Dewey’s physique, personal habits, and correspondence, Halstead managed to establish a specific brand of white masculinity that was strong, clean, handsome, and racially unifying.

When Halstead first arrived in Manila Bay in September 1898, public adoration of the Admiral – ‘Dewey Mania’ – was well underway in the United States. During the many interviews he conducted, Halstead debriefed Dewey on public perceptions of the war, the Navy, and the Rear Admiral himself, attempting to get his reaction to the overwhelming support of the American people. Halstead boasted that there was an innate understanding of Dewey’s greatness in the United States, observing that even “children are possessed by it and answer with the

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 87, 164.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 87.

³⁹² Halstead, *The Life and Achievements of Admiral Dewey*, 331.

emotions that are not the prophecy but the untaught and unpurchaseable expressions of cloudless reputation. The children all know Dewey and believe in him,” Halstead continued. “They are glad to be alive with a hero.”³⁹³

Several American publishing houses also helped to promote the idea of the Admiral as a hero to the nation’s children by producing more than a dozen works of literature, history, and photo books about the war, Dewey, and the U.S. Navy intended for juveniles.³⁹⁴ One of the most popular of these media productions was 1899 action-adventure novel, *A Sailor Boy with Dewey, or Afloat in the Philippines*, by Captain Ralph Bonehill. “Ralph Bonehill” was one of the many pseudonyms used by children’s writer Edward L. Stratemeyer, who would go on to publish over 1,300 books and short stories for children in his four decades as a writer, editor, and publisher. He was responsible for the adventure series *The Rover Boys*, *The Hardy Boys*, and *Nancy Drew*. He also wrote a non-fiction history book of the Battle of Manila Bay intended for youths, titled *With Dewey at Manila*, also published in 1899.

In addition to writing these books, Stratemeyer invented and modernized the book packaging system. This publishing strategy called for the creation of a series of novels using the same characters participating in different adventures in each book, creating a young fan base that would always be enthusiastic to buy the next adventure. Companies that implemented the book packaging system utilized multiple freelance writers and editors to produce a prolific mount of media during this era. The books were then credited to fictitious authors who the publishers turned into subject matter experts or established writers. American readers were none-the-wiser. A book

³⁹³ Ibid., 334

³⁹⁴ See Mabel Borton Beebe. *The Story of Admiral Dewey and Our Navy of 1898 for Young Readers*. (New York: Werner School Books, 1899); Edward S. Ellis. *The Life Story of Admiral Dewey, together with a Complete History of the Philippines and Our War with Aguinaldo* (Chicago: Chapman Brothers Publishing, 1899); Edward Stratemeyer. *Under Dewey at Manila or The War Fortunes of a Castaway* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard Company, 1899).

written by Captain Ralph Bonehill, presumably a military officer and author of no less than seven books on Americans at war, carried an imagined credibility that “written by Edward L. Stratemeyer” did not.

Stratemeyer wrote many of the same pro-annexation narratives and used the same language of hero worship employed by Halstead and Barrett to sell American imperialism as a force for good in the world. The only difference was that his books targeted a much younger audience.³⁹⁵ *A Sailor Boy With Dewey* followed the adventures of two young American merchant sailors, Dan and Stanley, who found themselves in the Philippines and Hong Kong before, during, and after the Spanish-American War. Their journey involved a shipwreck off the coast of Luzon, encounters with unfriendly Spanish soldiers and Philippine natives, a chance meeting with then Commodore Dewey, and eventually service aboard *Olympia* during the Battle of Manila Bay. The protagonists’ experiences allowed the author to demonstrate his beliefs to young readers of the stubbornness and brutality of the Spanish, the uncivilized status of the Filipinos, and the exceptionalism of the American military. One unusual encounter on Luzon before the war was the pair’s discovery of the bodies of seven black men who were buried up to their necks and executed, demonstrating the “barbarism” and “savagery” of the native Filipinos, “some reports from the Spanish notwithstanding.”³⁹⁶ In one short passage of dialogue, the author managed to portray the Spanish as liars and the Philippine people as “cannibals” while using the desecration of black bodies as an acceptable anecdotal spectacle to shock young readers. Twice in the novel, the young men are captured by the Spanish Army but demonstrate superior American ingenuity to escape their “don” jailers. Throughout this book, Stratemeyer used Gilded

³⁹⁵ Ralph Bonehill, *A Sailor Boy with Dewey or Afloat in the Philippines* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, 1899), Preface.

³⁹⁶ Bonehill, *A Sailor Boy with Dewey*., 39-41.

Age racial language to teach young readers how to identify the various peoples encountered overseas, including “Chinamen ... negroes ... dons ... (and) savages (Filipinos).”³⁹⁷

Stratemeyer dedicated three chapters of the book to the few days before the Battle of Manila Bay, the battle itself, and its immediate aftermath allowing plenty of opportunities for teach young readers about duty, honor, and loyalty. Most of the narrative is fast-paced, page-turning action of the naval battle and subsequent U.S. military invasion of the Philippines. Through this adventure story, Stratemeyer presented George Dewey as a role model to his juvenile audience. When Dan and Stanley first meet Dewey, the author shows how they were awed by the Commodore’s appearance and how his promise to “protect American interests” inspired them to enlist and board the *Olympia* the next day.³⁹⁸ The new adventure for the novel’s protagonists was to become Navy men, which entailed learning proper techniques in cleanliness, seamanship the Navy way, and how to handle themselves in a fight. All their encounters with Dewey, even a distant glance at him walking the decks on his daily rounds, were cause for fascination.

Although Dewey’s hero worship was present throughout *A Sailor Boy with Dewey* and other stories for American youth, in short, the infatuation these authors tried to cultivate was equivalent to that of the “official” histories of the Spanish-American War or the Dewey biographies written by professional journalists. By targeting interested and receptive audiences, both adolescent and adult, American writers helped to perpetuate Dewey worship and to transform Dewey Mania into a national phenomenon. Not only did this allow the Dewey image, and naval imagery more broadly, to be used as a popular brand to make money for publishers,

³⁹⁷ Ibid. Throughout *A Sailor Boy with Dewey*, the author uses racially derogatory nomenclature to describe non-white people that the characters encounter on their adventure through the Pacific Islands.

³⁹⁸ Ibid, 135.

but Dewey Mania profiteers also turned to manufacturers to take advantage of his celebrity status.

Camera Time for America's Hero Admiral

USS *Olympia's* scheduled layover in Naples, Italy in the summer of 1899 gave Dewey's image makers another opportunity, in both the private and public sectors, to influence his character construction one last time before his return home. Those in publishing wanted to continue to profit off the Dewey story, while navalists in the government sought to make him, and the Navy in a broader sense, into a champion of the people. Navy sailors, according to these narratives, were ordinary, everyday American men who did exceptional things during the war. One of these image makers who journeyed to Naples to document Dewey, *Olympia*, and her sailors before their return to New York as heroes was early photojournalist Frances Benjamin Johnston.

Johnston's beginnings as a photographer included mentors who were foundational innovators in the field, and her subjects were some of the most famous people in the United States. Shortly after graduating college, Johnston received her first camera from family friend John Eastman of Eastman-Kodak fame, and she received training in film development and photography from Smithsonian photo director Thomas Smillie.³⁹⁹ When Johnston opened her photo shop in Washington in 1894, she was the only woman in D.C. working as a photojournalist. Johnston broke Gilded Age gender norms as an unmarried, professional woman who quickly became the most respected person in this new field.⁴⁰⁰ She became famous early in

³⁹⁹ Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 19.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 23. In one series of self-portraits from 1903, Johnston dressed in men's clothing in professions held typically by men.

her career for her portrait photos of Susan B. Anthony, Mark Twain, and Booker T.

Washington.⁴⁰¹ Because Johnston ran with social elites in the nation's capital, she was acquainted with Theodore Roosevelt while he served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

Johnston scheduled a working vacation to Paris for the summer of 1899 and added a detour to Naples for a photo opportunity aboard *Olympia* at the behest of her agent. He was eager to sell photos of America's newest celebrity, George Dewey, to newspapers and magazines across the country before his arrival in New York. In anticipation of this trip, Johnston visited Roosevelt's home at Oyster Bay, NY to consult the former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, "Rough Rider" and now New York Governor on contacting Dewey in Italy. According to a possibly apocryphal recounting of this meeting in a St. Louis newspaper several years later, "Roosevelt came out of the surf to give her a card of introduction to Dewey," a card which "proved an open sesame to the Admiral's heart."⁴⁰²

With Dewey only a month away from returning to a hero's welcome, anti-imperialists in Congress began to question the military about its conduct during the war, including Dewey's failed relationship with Aguinaldo, who was now leading a violent insurrection against the U.S. Army.⁴⁰³ The photo opportunity idea started as a profit generator for Johnston's agent, but with Roosevelt's assistance and with the approval of the U.S. Navy, it also became a chance for the self-proclaimed benevolent assimilators to show a softer side of American empire. Her photos, which included now famous portraits of Dewey and several candid moments of him interacting with his sailors and pets, were featured in dozens of newspapers and magazines, including the Harper publications, Hearst's New York *Journal*, and Pulitzer's New York *World*. The

⁴⁰¹ "Woman Pioneer of Newspaper Photographers Entertained Here Where Her Work is Admired," *The St. Louis Republic*, November 15, 1903.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 17-8.

“domestic images” she made, captured from a woman’s point of view, portrayed the gentler aspects of American empire-building, depicting sailors at domestic work and play, warship *Olympia* as a literal menagerie of pets accumulated from the journey, and a war hero at peace.⁴⁰⁴

A cursory look at Johnston’s photos reveals several universal style and composition decisions that demonstrated how the Navy was portrayed to the American people. First, no matter what activity the sailors or officers were engaged in, they were wearing clean, all-white uniforms, suggesting the Navy’s most civilized standards. Second, aside from a photo of three Chinese cooks, no people of color were included in the photos. And third, American masculinity took center stage in many of the shots. In scenes that were obviously staged, Johnston captured photos showing the sailors getting tattoos, running gun drills, fencing, fixing and cleaning equipment, posing in front of the large guns, and sharing meals with the “lady photographer.”⁴⁰⁵ She also managed to subvert the idea of naval manliness, albeit in an innocent manner, showing the sailors playing with kittens, engaged in domestic chores that would have been typically done by women, and dancing with fellow shipmates – men playing the women’s parts once again.⁴⁰⁶

Johnston’s three most famous of the photos from this shoot, unsurprisingly, focused on Dewey. All three demonstrate how his public image was under construction. The first of the frames, which appeared in newspapers across the country, featured Dewey sitting under an awning on the deck of *Olympia* in his personal wicker chair. In the background, his officers were posed in front of the main guns in deep discussion, while in the foreground, his dog Bob looks on, panting in the Italian air. Although Dewey was dressed in his formal whites, the picture was one of domestic tranquility: an American man and his dog. A second photo, which also appeared

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁰⁵ Francis B. Johnston USS *Olympia* photos, Box 1, Benjamin Franklin Littlejohn Collection, Henderson Archive, Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

nationwide, again depicted Dewey sitting, but this time looking up stoically from his desk. His shoulders were broad, his posture straight; he was clearly in command. Johnston captured two sitting positions, yet they presented two very different depictions of a war hero's demeanor, illustrating both the reserved and martial aspects of his manhood represented.

Though it was not published widely at the time, the third photo revealed the side of Dewey as the self-promoter, a character trait that drove his decision to welcome the press aboard *Olympia*, his patience with journalists like Murat Halstead, and his close involvement with Johnston's shoot. The photo featured Dewey sitting with his legs crossed next to Johnston as the two of them examine and discuss her photos. Although no record exists of this conversation, the photo clearly shows a very engaged Rear Admiral in deep conversation with the artist.⁴⁰⁷

As Laura Wexler argues, *gender* was many times the focus of Johnston's work and her photo shoot onboard *Olympia* demonstrated how the "the cult of domesticity was a crucial framework for American imperialism" during this time.⁴⁰⁸ Whether it was a conscious decision or a case of naivety, Johnston portrayed Dewey as a relaxed and thoughtful leader, who was not above enjoying the pleasures of a simple life. Through her performative staging, she showed the daily lives of sailors not as warriors, but as American men, who sat for haircuts, played with pet kittens, gave each other tattoos, danced, laughed, and posed for photos with friends – all facets of a regular domestic life. Gone were the images of drunken sailors fighting in Latin American bars, replaced by professional sailors and all-American boys. The images of the *Olympia* herself, moreover, presented it neither as a warship nor as the site of the Battle of Manila Bay, but as the sailor's home away from home.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 38.

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From 1898 to 1900, jingoist newspapers, advertisers, and influential advocates of naval power constructed the public image of George Dewey, elevating “the hero of Manila Bay” to iconic status to sell an array of products, newspapers, and new notions of American power at home and abroad. The Rear Admiral’s popularity with the people blossomed with the first newspaper reports of the Battle of Manila Bay at the start of the “Splendid Little War.” Although the Spanish surrendered on August 13th, 1898, the Treaty of Paris was not signed until December 10th of that year. With it, the Spanish empire ceded control of Guam, Puerto Rico, and Philippines to the United States, as well as its sovereignty over Cuba. In a speech the next day addressing the treaty, President McKinley declared a policy of “benevolent assimilation” eliminating the possibility of Filipino self-rule.⁴⁰⁹ The Teller Amendment, passed before the war began on April 20th, guaranteed that the United States could not take control of Cuba, but no such condition was written for the Philippines or the other islands. As these events unfolded on the global stage, a Dewey Mania craze would erupt in the mainland United States.

‘Dewey Mania’ and American Consumer Culture

By the time Dewey returned to New York in September 1899, publishers and marketers had manufactured him into a national hero. Many of them also hoped to profit from the patriotic zeal they had helped to stir. Recognizing that large segments of the American public had grown

⁴⁰⁹ William McKinley, “Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation,” December 21, 1898. Speech printed in its entirety in James H. Blount’s *The American Occupation of the Philippines, 1898-1912*. (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1913), 147-50.

interested in all things Spanish-American War related, manufacturers rushed to take advantage of this new emerging fascination, mass producing George Dewey ephemera for eager American consumers. Dewey's image, his flagship *Olympia*, and the ill-fated USS *Maine* quickly became marketing tools and the focus of commemorative commercial items produced for all ages, genders, and socio-economic classes. Manufacturers also utilized the images of Dewey or the profiles of the ships by placing them on an array of consumer goods, including silverware sets, beverage pitchers, clocks, art, and other household items. Buying these goods offered ordinary Americans a way to place themselves in Manila Bay, alongside Dewey, to relive the exceptional moment and to demonstrate their patriotism. Between May 1898 and June 1900, in short, 'Dewey Mania' swept the United States.

Analyzing the consumer items that bore the Dewey image offers valuable insights about the American public's opinions of imperialism at this time. Typically, most of these consumer goods were sold in retail stores and by mail-order catalogs but many promotional items, like buttons and flags, were also sold to the millions of Americans who thronged the streets for the Dewey Day parades in late 1899. These parades, held in the major cities of New York, Washington D.C., and Boston, drew two million spectators each – each of them a potential customer.

One of the most prolific of the Dewey consumer items was spoon sets - evidence of the commodification of domesticity by the nation's manufacturers. Well over a dozen sterling silver manufacturers from across North America — among them Alvin-Beiderhase Company, maker of commemorative spoons for the 1893 Columbia Exposition, Standard Silver of Toronto, Canada, and artisan manufacturer George E. Homer of Boston — produced multiple spoon sets featuring America's newest celebrity. The typical design featured either a relief image of Dewey's face on

the pommel and an etching of *Olympia* on the spoon's bowl, or the Rear Admiral in the bowl and his ship on the pommel. From 1898 to 1900, these same companies also produced spoon sets based on the Spanish American War, warship *Olympia*, and the ill-fated battleship *Maine*. One particular set of sterling silver spoons manufactured by the Watson Company in 1899 featured Dewey's face on the handle and a photo of the newly built Dewey School in Ida Grove, Illinois etched into the bowl.

Spoon sets were just one of many kitchen and dining implements bearing the Dewey image, including commemorative plates, serving bowls, beverage pitchers, butter dishes, tea sets, and chaffing dish.⁴¹⁰ Many of these items were proudly displayed in American homes.

Purchasing decisions are both public and private acts, which demonstrate consumers' socio-economic status, political leanings, and their opinions on topics of the day. Gender, though, proved not to be a qualifier for domestic Dewey worship. A man could shave his face with a Dewey razor, neaten his hair with a Dewey comb, smoke a Dewey pipe that he lit with a warship *Olympia* lighter, and finish off his evening sipping brandy from a Dewey snifter. Likewise, women could wear Dewey ribbons in their hair, apply makeup from a compact with a relief Dewey on the lid, sew with a needle set adorned with Dewey and *Olympia*, and, of course, serve their dinner guests a Dewey-themed party, every accoutrement gilded in the Admiral's image. Consumers could also buy Louisiana, California, and Florida citrus marketed with the Dewey lithography, while a farm in Georgia promoted a new type of peach for patriotic customers called "the Dewey Peach."⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ An example of each of these items can be found at the Dewey artifact collection, Henderson Archive, Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴¹¹ Lithography advertisement for the "Dewey Peach" located in the Dewey artifact collection, Oversized Files, Drawer 1, Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia.

Dewey consumers could also display much of their ephemera throughout their homes, this including items such as clocks, intended for a prominent place such as a fireplace mantle, a library bookshelf, or on a dining room credenza. Several of the nation's artisan clockmakers, including E. Ingraham Company and E.N. Welch Manufacturers of Connecticut, produced ornate desktop clocks made of oak and brass with Dewey's portrait carved at the top flanked by American eagles and stacks of cannon balls. The clockfaces were glass etched in gold inlay with the image of *Olympia*. These types of clocks could sell for anywhere from \$15 to \$30 depending on the type of materials used; for comparison, in 1898 that same amount of money could buy a rolltop desk, a mahogany framed love seat, or sit-down sewing machine from the Sears, Roebuck & Company.⁴¹²

Artists and artisan goods manufacturers also took advantage of "Dewey Mania." Several notable painters of the time were commissioned by wealthy clients to create original works of art depicting Dewey and the Battle of Manila Bay, among them Théobald Chartran, Fred Pransing, and John Mason. The desire to demonstrate this post-Manila patriotism broke class barriers as well. At least one patriotic family who could not afford a retail model of a Spanish American War clock, built a homemade version of their own. The outside casing of the clock was a spice rack, while the clock face was constructed from cardboard, shelf paper, and a color page from a magazine article about the Spanish-American War, which depicted the timeline of the conflict starting with Dewey's victory in Manila. A set of toy Civil War soldiers in blue uniforms were also placed behind the clock's glass, further embellishing the item. The clock mechanism itself was taken from an inexpensive clock with thin brass hands, repurposed for the improvised

⁴¹² Consumer Guide # 107, *Sears, Roebuck & Company Catalog*, 1898. Winterthur Museum Digital Collection via Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/consumersguideno00sear>. Accessed January 26, 2022.

Dewey clock.⁴¹³ In the act of displaying a homemade Dewey clock or an original work of art depicting Manila Bay, Americans confirmed the economic standing of their homes. Uniting households of all classes, however, was the resolve in supporting American military actions in the Philippines through conspicuous displays of Dewey and American militarism.

Customers also bought Dewey and Spanish-American War themed goods for their children. Parker Brothers co-founder Charles S. Parker, hoping to profit from a new sense of American nationalism, producing six board games from 1897 to 1900 based on the Cuban Revolution, the Spanish-American War, and Filipino Insurrection. The company also published several other games on these topics that had originally been the property of smaller game companies. Taking full advantage of the sensationalism and exaggerated headlines, Parker Brothers contributed to the broader construction of popular yet misguided understanding of the conflict with Spain. Its games reflected changing notions of American civilizing mission, societal progress, and imperialism. Parker Brother's recognized that if the war could be used to sell millions of newspapers and thousands of books, then they should be using it to sell their games.

For example, the first of these games, *The War in Cuba*, taught families the geography of the Spanish Empire and the plight of Cuban revolutionaries. Released in 1897, it offered these lessons even before U.S. entry into the conflict. For \$1.25, the game promised players a chance to shoot wood "bullets" in order to knock down "toy Spaniards and Cubans ... the contesting armies of the game."⁴¹⁴ While the mothers and fathers of young boys read newspaper articles and books about conflict within the Spanish Empire and discussed American responsibilities to help

⁴¹³ An example of each of these items can be found at the Dewey artifact collection, Henderson Archive, Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴¹⁴ Parker Brothers ad, *The War in Cuba*. *Harper's Weekly* (May 1897). Dewey artifact collection, Henderson Archive, Philadelphia, PA.

freedom fighters, Parker Brothers educated their children on the binary nature of revolutionary conflict and asked them to take sides.

Other games, including *The Battle of Manila* and *The Siege of Havana*, were released in late 1898 after Dewey's victory. In *The Battle of Manila*, game players assumed the role of Commodore Dewey and were given the opportunity to ascend, as he did, into American greatness. Instructions promised that winners would assume the "rank of Rear Admiral and bear that rank in the next game ... and if a player wins three, the rank of First Admiral is bestowed."⁴¹⁵

Over the next couple of years, Parker Brothers rebranded their first two games about the Spanish American War, releasing *The Blockade Runner* in 1899 and *Dewey's Victory: Never Beaten* in early 1900. Although the latter, *Dewey's Victory*, was an exact copy of the *Manila Bay* game made two years earlier, Parker Brothers seized the opportunity to rebrand the outside packaging with the famous lithograph of the Admiral in his white uniform made famous by the media. The company clearly recognized the value of the Dewey name to sell products for children.

Parker Brothers continued to see profitability in the Spanish-American War for several years. In late 1900, the company released its sixth board game on the subject, *The Philippine War: Crushing the Rebellion in Luzon*. The instruction manual asked players to prevent Filipino insurrectionists from taking back the island of Luzon by moving U.S. troops around the board to capture as territory as possible.⁴¹⁶ Such innocuous descriptions belied the realities of colonial projects, reflecting similar and shifting attitudes of Americans – including even young children –

⁴¹⁵ Parker Brothers. *Instruction Manual for The Battle of Manila Bay*. Salem, MA: Parker Brothers, 1898. Henderson Archive, Philadelphia, PA. Instruction manual for the game located with the game in artifact collection.

⁴¹⁶ Parker Brothers. *Instruction Manual for The Philippine War*. Salem, MA: Parker Brothers, 1890.

toward normalizing American empire. By today's standards, the scenes depicted in lithographs on the game's box are not so innocuous: a dozen U.S. soldiers shooting in all directions against guerrillas, a U.S. artillery unit opening fire illustrating superior firepower, and U.S. ships off-loading cargo for the war effort at a Filipino dock. An American soldier can be seen doubled over taking a bullet in the belly. Although these are accurate portrayals of war in the Philippines, the designs were meant to romanticize combat and normalize empire to young boys especially.

Despite Charles S. Parker's own "anti-imperialist ideology," Parker Brothers continued to use popular cultural tropes of the time, including militarism, to sell its products.⁴¹⁷ Parker Brothers helped to commodify empire and the Navy by placing its field of activity in the hands of ordinary Americans. Regardless of their creators' intent or ideology, what can be seen in these games is a reshuffling of American ideals about freedom fighters, revolution, and colonization as liberators became occupiers. Parker Brothers' first game gave players the chance to support the Cuban revolutionaries before U.S. military intervention; yet just three years later, many of these youths were asked to destroy the Filipino revolution in order to preserve U.S. rule. In two of these Parker Brothers' games, the exploits of Admiral Dewey take center stage with game-players, allowing them to attach the epaulettes of the great man himself during his greatest hour. Although Dewey's image was used to inspire patriotism among American youth, offering the Admiral as an avatar was, in reality, simply an effective marketing gimmick and nothing more. While Dewey (and imagery from the Spanish-American and Philippine wars) was used to market children's games and toys, the willingness of parents to buy these games suggests their eagerness to pass down their own jingoistic beliefs to the next generation.

⁴¹⁷ Philip E. Orbanes, *The Game-Makers: The Story of Parker Brothers from Tiddlywinks to Trivial Pursuit* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2014), 3-4.

Parker Brothers was not the only American company that grew its brand using Dewey's image and the Spanish-American war in the late 1890s. Many other American companies used the Admiral's carefully constructed image as a viable marketing tool, rushing to take advantage of it to sell a multitude of items. As historian T.J. Jackson Lears contends, "advertisers collaborated with other institutions in promoting ... dominant aspirations, anxieties, and even notions of personal identity."⁴¹⁸ The U.S. Navy, as the history of these products suggests, was one such institution, used by marketers to both sell products and construct American national identity. As the variety and popularity of these items suggests, the American public desired to relive and commemorate the Spanish-America War, a moment in their minds that defined American greatness. In turn, a variety of companies used these sentiments to sell their products, and in so doing, sold imperialism to the American public.

'Dewey Mania' becomes a Political Issue

Scholars have argued that advertisers sought to be "vanguards of history" by connecting "their products to incidents of the grand stage of historical event."⁴¹⁹ In the fall of 1899, advertising experts decided that images of Admiral Dewey and Rudyard Kipling's ideas on empire made good marketing tools to sell hygiene products. In October 1899, a Pears Soap advertisement appeared in *McClure's Magazine*, featuring a lithograph of Admiral Dewey dressed in his all-white uniform washing his hands in the sink of an all-white bathroom. The text of the ad assumed a familiarity with Kipling's commentary on Philippine annexation: "the first

⁴¹⁸ Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 2.

⁴¹⁹ Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (London: Verso Publishing, 1996), 204.

step of lightening the white man's burden is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness."⁴²⁰ What makes this slogan even more disturbing to the modern reader, however, are the small drawings that appeared in the ad's lower corners. In the lower right corner is a Christian missionary handing a box of Pears Soap to a kneeling and grateful native person, while on the left is a picture of a ship unloading crates of the soap for what we can assume is a U.S. colonial project. The application of Kipling's work to the advertisement's message also showed the company's sensitivity to the popular discourse of the day. Many corporations felt that these new notions of American internationalism were popular enough to be marketable to a wide variety of customers and they did not want the clients to think their organizations were unpatriotic in not supporting U.S. colonial expansion abroad. "Pears Soap," the ad stressed, "is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth as civilization advances, while amongst the cultured of all nations it holds the highest place – it is the ideal toilet soap."⁴²¹

By comparing a civilizing mission to clean hands, Pears created a piece of American rhetoric and racialized propaganda that is shocking by modern standards. As Dewey's inclusion in this ad suggests, advertising experts in 1899 recognized that they could profit from his celebrity status, historical significance, and his relevance to the changing place of the United States in the world. Over the next few years, however, events in the Philippines would quickly diminish his popularity as the Navy became less involved there – and, more importantly, as negative headlines recounting violent clashes between American and Filipino forces became increasingly more commonplace.

⁴²⁰ Pears Soap Company, *Lightning the White Man's Burden* (1899). Open source - Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b32850/>.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

While American advertisers used Dewey's popularity to sell their products, the United States Navy and the McKinley Administration did their own form of hero-making by promoting Dewey to First Admiral of the Navy on March 3, 1899, making him the first and only man to ever hold that rank. By this point, however, Dewey was growing weary of living on *Olympia* and in the Philippines. At the same time, his feelings towards the new colonial "possessions" were beginning to change. In his final weeks in the Philippines, frustrations with Aguinaldo and the increasing violence led Dewey to revert towards a somewhat more non-interventionist attitude. On the eve of his triumphant return to the United States, the Admiral that had kept the McKinley Administration informed on the Philippines had begun to lose faith in his President's foreign policy.⁴²² Writers at the Tokyo *Yorodzu Choho*, recognizing this fact, "were very glad that so great and popular a man as Dewey is favorably inclined toward the cause of the Filipinos" and that he would be integral in "changing American public opinion" in favor of Philippine independence.⁴²³ Such optimistic hopes in Dewey, however, were to prove woefully misplaced.

On May 20th, 1899, Dewey steamed out of Manila Bay, the first time that he left the archipelago since the start of the war. According to Halstead, the Admiral chose to cruise west to New York City rather than east to San Francisco to reward his "Olympians an opportunity to see something of the world"⁴²⁴ Other accounts suggest that his health had deteriorated in early 1899 and that he required time to recover before facing the millions of eager fans and rigorous schedule of parades, celebrations, and social engagements.⁴²⁵ Whatever the reason, his ship's

⁴²² "Ourselves and the Philippines," *The Literary Digest*, Vol. 20, No. 1. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, January 6, 1899), 25.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Halstead, *The Life and Achievements of Admiral Dewey*, 446.

⁴²⁵ Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire*, 80.

four-month cruise through the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, and Atlantic only amplified the country's anticipation of welcoming back the great hero of the Spanish-American War.

Arriving in the United States on September 27th, 1899, Dewey was greeted as both a hero and a celebrity. Millions of spectators lined streets and waterways across the nation to welcome the Hero Admiral back to the United States. The Dewey celebration in New York City included parades on the Hudson River and through Manhattan, with over two million spectators in attendance, as well as the erection of a 105-foot-high triumphal arch. The Boston parades in Dewey's honor, held a week later, drew another two million admirers. After a third grand reception in Washington, where President McKinley presented the Admiral with a \$10,000 Tiffany and Company sword, Dewey kicked off a Navy-approved cross-country tour to meet the demands of his adoring fans.⁴²⁶ This would last a year.

Although these locally funded celebrations in cities and towns across the nation kept the media spotlight on the Hero Admiral throughout the fall, by the time the parades ended in late October 1899, publishers had begun shifting their coverage to the U.S. Army's struggles against the Filipino insurrectionists. Dewey's celebrity, in turn, was already beginning to fade, as publishers increasingly replaced stories on his accomplishments and public adulations with headlines about U.S. atrocities in the Philippines. Greeted as a hero in 1899, Dewey's popularity would all but evaporate by June 1900.

Dewey's declining popularity was intimately tied with the disastrous course of the U.S. war in the Philippines. In the time between the signing of the Treaty of Paris in December 1898 and the Dewey parades in September and October 1899, the U.S. Army and the Philippine Revolutionary Army became engaged in a full-scale war. Although President McKinley relied on

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 67-8.

Dewey to forward American interests and to keep him informed, the Admiral misrepresented Aguinaldo early in the war and his quest for independence, claiming that he did not realize that Philippine independence was one of their overarching goals.⁴²⁷ Dewey may have been keeping the truth from the President; alternately, he may have believed that Filipinos, including their leader, desired American governance. Whatever the truth, Dewey had clearly failed to convey the complex reality of the situation to McKinley.

Subsequent generations of historians would generally agree with Dewey's own assertion in his autobiography that he was "not a diplomat." At the time, however, many pro-annexation newspapers reported that it was Aguinaldo's treachery that doomed U.S.-Philippine relations, not Dewey's stubborn adherence to his own interpretation of American foreign policy. Violence between American and Philippine forces began on February 4th, 1899, a month and half before Dewey's departure, when U.S. Army private William W. Grayson shot two Philippine officers sparking the two-day Battle of Manila Bay of 1899, the first and largest battle of the U.S.-Philippine War. The violence only continued from there. Although the American military had enjoyed overwhelmingly positive press during most of the Spanish-American War, as violence continued into 1899, many Americans began to question annexation. Through their reading and buying habits, Americans had demonstrated their support for the American military and its "rescue" of colonial subjects from their tyrannical rulers. Now, however, many of those same Americans began voicing their opposition to the war and to imperialism as U.S. foreign policy.

Anti-imperialism and organized opposition to U.S. policies in the Philippines began well before 1899. On June 15th, 1898, over two months into the Spanish-American War, former banker and businessman Gamaliel Bradford formed the first organizing committee for the Anti-

⁴²⁷ Dewey, *The Autobiography of George Dewey*, 276; Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire*, 89-90.

Imperialist League in Boston, bringing together community leaders opposed to the war and annexation of any type. Bradford, whose letter to the *Boston Evening Transcript* was published on June 2nd, claimed that American annexation of Spanish territories would destroy the Constitution and the United States as they knew it. The committee was tasked with finding like-minded people in publishing, religion, labor, business, and politics to spread the word that American imperialism would lead to the “moral ruin” of the country. By November 1898, chapters of the Anti-Imperialist League had sprung up in Chicago, New York, and Washington. These chapters boasted the membership of such notable anti-annexationists as Grover Cleveland, ex-US Missouri Senator and Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz, abolitionist news writer Edwin L. Godkin, Andrew Carnegie, American Labor Federation leader Samuel Gompers, and American satirist Mark Twain.⁴²⁸

These various members had vastly different reasons for opposing imperialism. Bradford worried about the morality of jingoism; Schurz was a pacifist since his experiences as a Civil War general; Gompers warned that American jobs would be at risk from the influx of “Chinese, the Negritos, and the Malays” into the labor force; League Vice President William Graham Sumner cautioned against creating new wards for the government and believed it was a “perversion of patriotism.”⁴²⁹ These disparate viewpoints among anti-imperialist thinkers

⁴²⁸ E. Berkeley Tompkins, *Anti-Imperialism in the United States: The Great Debate 1899-1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), 89.

⁴²⁹ Letter by Gamaliel Bradford, *Boston Evening Transcript*, June 2, 1898; Speech by Samuel Gompers, “Imperialism: Its Dangers and Wrongs,” given Chicago Peace Jubilee on October 18, 1898, and printed in its entirety in *Save the Republic, Anti-Imperialist Leaflet No. 11*, Anti-Imperialist League, Washington, D.C. Website: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.2390200h/?sp=1&st=text>. Accessed January 20, 2022; William Graham Sumner, *The Conquest of the United States by Spain, a lecture before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Yale University*. (Boston: Dana Estes and Company, 1899), January 16, 1899. Library of Congress. Website: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t53f4vc49&view=1up&seq=3&skin=2021>. Accessed January 20, 2022.

reflected the feelings of many segments of the U.S. population as a whole, as well as the increasing embrace of anti-imperialist sentiments among the American people.

To disseminate their anti-annexation message, the Anti-Imperialist League distributed newsletters, gave speeches, and enlisted the cooperation of newspapers and magazines like the *New York Times*, *The Independent*, and *The Nation*. Of these, *The Nation* gained perhaps the most notoriety in early 1899, when it published a series of articles written about American challenges in the Philippines. *The Nation*, a magazine published each week as an insert for the *New York Evening Post*, was owned by the former President of the Northern Pacific Railway Henry Villard, who turned over editorial control to his friends Edward L. Godkin and Horace White. The two Anti-Imperialist League members used the platform to critique annexation to a large New York readership.

The Nation voiced criticisms of McKinley's Philippine policy, the Treaty of Paris that ended the U.S. war with Spain, and its provision to pay Spain \$20 million for ceding the island nation to the United States. The paper's editors also questioned the validity of the President McKinley's First Philippine Commission, a body created to determine whether to turn the Philippines over to local rule, and which included Dewey as one of its core members. In the January 6th 1899 edition, published two weeks before the Commission's establishment, *Nation* writers dismissed the Commission arguing that taking these "colonies" will only invite more international discord and calls for Congress for "more soldiers" and "more ships."⁴³⁰

A little over a week later, violence broke out between American troops and the Filipino revolutionaries. After witnessing the actions of the insurrectionists and internal conflict with Aguinaldo's government, the commission concluded that, although the Philippine people desired

⁴³⁰ "The Week," *The Nation*, Vol. 68, No. 1749. January 5, 1899, 1.

self-government, they were not “civilized enough” for self-rule.⁴³¹ General Elwell S. Otis, a member of the commission, was given the final decision-making power of annexation, taking Dewey out of the process. Soon after Commission members met in Manila in March, the Rear Admiral was ordered back to the United States. *The Nation* had predicted that it was not “likely the conditions would remedy themselves” and that the commission would result “in militarism.”⁴³² Following the conclusion of the Commission, editors called the McKinley Administration “would-be conquerors.”⁴³³

The Nation and other anti-imperialist newspapers also began to use the testimony of American soldiers to argue against annexation, doing so as early as April 1899. General Otis, a veteran of the Civil War and Plains Indian Wars, attempted to control press reports and vilify Filipinos for torturing American prisoners, going so far as to expel four members of the international press who disputed that report.⁴³⁴ At the request of Aguinaldo, F.A. Blake of the American Red Cross arrived in Manila Bay as an observer, but his movements were limited by General Otis’ forces. While there, he managed to witness Filipino villages that American troops had destroyed, and other indicators of violence committed against Philippine civilians. In the April 6th edition of *The Nation*, Blake indicated that American soldiers were ordered to “kill every native in sight” and that this level of violence was present just one week after the fighting began in early February.⁴³⁵

⁴³¹ *Report of the First Philippine Commission 1901*, Vol. I, Part IV, Chapter 2. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), 83. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.35112203989308&view=1up&seq=7&skin=2021>. Accessed on January 20, 2022.

⁴³² “The Week,” *The Nation*, Vol. 68, No. 1749. January 5, 1899, 1.

⁴³³ “The Week,” *The Nation*. Vol. 68, No. 1763. April 13, 1899, 267.

⁴³⁴ Miller, title, 89, 93; *Public Opinion*, Vol. 27, 1899, 291; *San Francisco Call*, February 23, 1899.

⁴³⁵ “The Week.” *The Nation*, Vol. 68, No. 1762. April 6, 1899, 249.

That same month, Army Colonel Charles McCormick Reeve returned home from the Philippines. Critical of the tactics of the American military, Reeve claimed that General Otis turned down a last-minute offer of peace by Aguinaldo, infuriating the revolutionary leader and leading to continued violence.⁴³⁶ In the May 4th edition of *The Nation*, Reeve was quoted as saying that “bloodshed . . . could have been avoided” and that annexation was against the founding “principles” of the United States.⁴³⁷ Although imperialists and anti-imperialists disagreed on American foreign policy, they understood that the language of patriotism was a powerful motivating tool.

By late 1899 and early 1900, mainstream publications like the Boston *Globe*, *Literary Digest*, *New York Journal*, and *New York World* were all printing stories about guerilla warfare, civilian casualties, and a Filipino people unwilling to submit to U.S. rule. In the August 1st edition of the San Francisco *Call*, for instance, an anonymous source from “the Oregon regiment” reported that American forces had “ransacked every house and church” and shot Filipino citizens who tried to surrender.⁴³⁸ Satire magazines *Judge* and *Puck*, too, regularly published political cartoons, now using the images of Dewey and the U.S. Navy as negative symbols of American jingoism. On the front page of the August 19th, 1899 edition of *Judge*, Dewey’s face was superimposed over a map of the Pacific in a cartoon titled “The Features of Admiral Dewey.”⁴³⁹ His signature moustache was an American eagle, his formal collar was the hull of warship *Olympia*, his ear was the U.S. flag, and in his eyes are the faces of two of his sailors. Although he had been replaced as the expert on the Philippines by Otis, Dewey remained

⁴³⁶ “The Week,” *The Nation*. Vol. 68, No. 1766. May 4, 1899, 323.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ “Our Policy in the Philippines,” *San Francisco Call*, August 1, 1899.

⁴³⁹ “The Features of Admiral Dewey,” *Judge Magazine*, August 19, 1899.

the face of annexation and American jingoism in the media, despite his own reservations about U.S. rule in Luzon.

In the fall of 1899, ‘Dewey Mania’ was at its height in popularity among the American people, but the events in the Philippines, together with two life decisions Dewey made just after his return — a marriage to a widowed socialite and a brief run for President in spring 1900 — would soon relegate him to relative obscurity outside of the U.S. Navy. Within weeks of returning to the United States, Dewey rekindled a friendship with Washington, D.C. debutante Mrs. Mildred McLean Hazen, marrying her on November 9th in “a ceremony made with all secrecy” at St. Paul’s Catholic Church in the nation’s capital.⁴⁴⁰ Hazen, the daughter of Cincinnati *Inquirer* owner and prominent Democrat Washington McLean, was the widow of Civil War General William Babcock Hazen. She converted to Catholicism during her first marriage, which Protestant critics would use against her and her new husband in the coming months. Sullyng her reputation, several newspapers at the time, including the *New York Times* and *Metropolitan Magazine*, portrayed her as far too influential in the Admiral’s affairs and as a “clever woman” who understood the potential of her husband’s name.⁴⁴¹

One incident in particular drew the criticism of the *Times*. Dewey transferred the title of his newly gifted house in Washington, purchased through public donation, to his new wife so she could pass it down to his son in compliance with D.C. inheritance statutes. On November 23rd, 1899, the *Times* ran a story about the transaction, accusing the Hero Admiral of squandering the nation’s gift. After a delayed explanation from Dewey about the transfer to his son, the *Times* denied its credibility and claimed “public dissatisfaction” with Mrs. Dewey’s ownership of the

⁴⁴⁰ “Admiral Dewey Married,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1899.

⁴⁴¹ Edith Warren Stetson, “Admiral Dewey’s Home and its Mistress,” *Metropolitan Magazine*, Vol. XI, No. 1, January 1900, 23-28.

property was what prompted the deed transfer.⁴⁴² Three days later, the *Times* falsely reported a rumor that Mrs. Dewey was going to donate the Admiral's gift from the people to the Catholic Church, which stirred up anti-Catholic sentiment among its readers.⁴⁴³

This would not be the first time that Dewey would be accused of not making his own decisions, even when media reports about the couple were intended to be complimentary. *Metropolitan Magazine* printed an exposé in its January 1900 edition that featured photos of house, its appointments, and a feature story about Mrs. Dewey's rise to social prominence. The author described the "wonderful" Mrs. Dewey as "ambitious" for a "woman in her position," predicting that as "a result of her persuasion we may yet have a naval man in the White House."⁴⁴⁴

As Dewey's biographer Ronald Spector has argued, the Admiral's public image never recovered from this incident as it was entangled in the unsettling awareness that victory in Manila was not absolute and America's virulent anti-Catholicism. It would be further battered by a disastrous run for President in the spring of 1900.⁴⁴⁵ Discussions about 'Dewey for President' began while the Admiral was still in the Philippines, and only grew more pronounced after his return to the United States. After the first Battle of Manila Bay, Dewey received multiple requests to consider a run at the office. According to Barrett, however, the Admiral told the journalist that he had no ambition for the position and that "he was not fitted to be President."⁴⁴⁶ At the center of Democrats' pursuit of Dewey as a candidate was the fear of their conservative wing about William Jennings Bryan's stance on silver. Gold Democrats reportedly liked

⁴⁴² New York *Times*, November 23, 1899.

⁴⁴³ New York *Times*, November 25, 1899.

⁴⁴⁴ Stetson, "Admiral Dewey's Home and its Mistress," 26.

⁴⁴⁵ Spector, *Admiral of the New Navy*, 109.

⁴⁴⁶ Barrett, *Admiral George Dewey*, 47-8.

Dewey's name recognition, his position on keeping the gold standard, and his somewhat ambiguous interest in Philippine independence.

Not everyone was so enthusiastic about a Dewey campaign, however. The satirical New York magazine *Puck*, boasting the motto "what fools these mortals be," cautioned those who called for Dewey as President on October 25, 1899 with a political cartoon titled "Heeding History's Warning."⁴⁴⁷ Artist Louis Dalrymple's rendition of Dewey shows the Admiral being visited by the ghost of General Winfield Scott Hancock, a Civil War veteran who ran as the candidate for the Democrat party in the 1880 election but lost to Rutherford B. Hayes because he lacked political savvy. A newspaper sits on the table in the cartoon with the headline "For President, George Dewey, as Suggested by Yellow Journals." *Puck's* warning, however, went unheeded. The Admiral had a host of legitimate Democrat supporters including Grover Cleveland, New York *World* owner Joseph Pulitzer, and philanthropist Nathan Straus, heir to Macy's Department Store, that encouraged him to run.

After months of speculation Dewey granted an evening interview to a young Washington correspondent of the New York *World* on April 3rd, in which he announced his intention to enter the 1900 Presidential campaign. When the story appeared in the April 4th morning edition, it said nothing of the Admiral's political affiliation or platform. The announcement was met with skepticism by some in the media, ridicule by politicians, and surprise by his Democratic supporters. In the article, Dewey stated that "the office of the President was not a hard one to fill" and that its main requirement was "to execute the laws of Congress."⁴⁴⁸ His Democrat allies were not happy that their new candidate failed to mention the party and, more importantly, that

⁴⁴⁷ Louis Dalrymple, artist, "Heeding History's Warning," *Puck Magazine* cartoon, April 25, 1899.

⁴⁴⁸ New York *World*, April 4, 1900.

he was already ceding his power to the legislative branch. Straus, one of those supporters disturbed by the interview, convinced the Admiral to announce his party affiliation and, the next day, Dewey called a group of reporters together to declare: “yes, I am a Democrat.”⁴⁴⁹ That story first appeared in the April 6th edition of the New York *Times*. Despite the criticism, the *Times*, the *World*, the *Atlanta Constitution*, and the *Milwaukee Journal* each gave their early endorsements to Dewey in that first week of April.⁴⁵⁰

In the month following the awkward interview, Dewey’s run for the Democrat nomination was critiqued by Republican newspapers and ridiculed regularly by political satirists. On May 2nd, *Puck Magazine*’s center insert cartoon, drawn by Jack Keppler, depicted Dewey walking down “political bowery,” arm-in-arm with Pulitzer and his father-in-law Washington McLean of the Cincinnati *Inquirer*.⁴⁵¹ The two prominent Democrat newspaper owners were attempting guide him to the convention past the “free silver” Democrats and “high tariff” Republicans. As these images implied, many Democrats did not desire William Jennings Bryan to be their candidate in 1900 because of his economic policies. A week later, *Puck Magazine* turned his presidential campaign into a complete joke. In another Dalrymple piece titled, “A Much Needed Comedy Element in the Campaign of 1900,” Dewey was depicted as a clown at the center of a three-ring circus, providing comic relief to an all-to-serious election. In a May 18th article that appeared in the *Times*, the Admiral seemed to be dropping out of the race, joking with a reporter that “I don’t know how I came up with that idea in the first place.”⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁹ New York *Times*, April 6, 1900

⁴⁵⁰ New York *Times*, April 7, 1900; New York *World*, April 9, 1900; *Atlanta Constitution*, April 7, 1900; *Milwaukee Journal*, April 8, 1900.

⁴⁵¹ Jack Keppler, artist, *Puck Magazine* cartoon, May 2, 1900.

⁴⁵² “Admiral Dewey Loses Hope,” New York *Times*. May 18, 1900.

By June, Dewey had ceased to seriously consider a run for the presidency. Yet even after he had apparently left the race, *Puck Magazine* kept up its ridicule of the Admiral. In a cartoon titled “The Cock That Crowed Too Soon” published on June 13th, Dewey was drawn with a chicken’s body crowing “I want to be President!” while Uncle Sam, having been awakened too early, throws a shoe at him.⁴⁵³ Even though all indicators pointed to the end of the Dewey campaign, he still remarked to the Boston *Globe* on June 27th, that “if the American people wanted him, that we would accept.”⁴⁵⁴ In that same interview, he remarked that Bryan was strong with voters in the West and believed that he would be elected in November.

Eventually, in September 1900, Dewey publicly endorsed President McKinley, thus ending his run for President and his brief stint as a member of the Democrat Party. Tellingly, the one piece of Dewey literature that does not mention either his marriage to Mildred or his short run for president is the Admiral’s autobiography.

Conclusion

Towering one-hundred and five feet over New York’s Madison Square Park – basking in the glow of electric spotlights – the Dewey Victory Arch was visible for blocks down Broadway and Fifth Avenue at all hours of the day and night from 1899 to 1900. Its designer, Charles R. Lamb, chose the arch of Titus as his inspiration but the structure’s location over Fifth Avenue at Broadway and 24th Street was reminiscent of the Arc de Triomphe’s place at the center of the Champs-Élysées in Paris. At the time, Madison Square was the center of Manhattan. Four sets of eighty-five-foot-high columns lifted the seventy-foot-wide arch to its overall height of 105 feet

⁴⁵³ “The Cock That Crowed Too Soon,” *Puck Magazine*, June 13, 1900.

⁴⁵⁴ “With the People, Rests the Decision as to Dewey’s Candidacy,” Boston *Globe*. June 27, 1900.

thanks to an imposing ten-foot-tall statue of winged Victory at its top. She was stepping forward, wreath held high, standing on a globe led by four horses pulling a chariot.⁴⁵⁵ At the arch's base stood statues of past heroes of the United States Navy, including John Paul Jones, Steven Decatur, and David Porter. Along the façades of the two main columns were relief statues, aptly titled "Protection of Our Industries" and "Progress of Civilization." The monument was built to be seen by socialite theatergoers as they exited shows and restaurants, by affluent shoppers of New York's famous department stores, and by children playing in Madison Square Park.

Lamb's National Sculpture Society was credited with the design of the Dewey Arch. The city spent more than \$26,000 on the project, marshalling several of New York's top architects and twenty-eight sculptors to complete it. Together they contributed hundreds of hours in its design and construction. Because the arch had to be completed in just two months, it was built out of plaster-based *staff*, the material used to construct temporary World's Fair buildings. Lamb intended to one day rebuild the monument out of marble and concrete, but a fund-raising effort to reach the \$500,000 necessary to replace the faux arch failed to reach even half that goal. The arch began to fall apart quickly after the parade, public interest in Dewey waned, and funds went elsewhere. Within a year, the arch was deemed a public danger and city officials ordered its demolition. Some of the individual statues were sold to organizers of the 1901 South Carolina Interstate/West Indian Exposition held in Charleston. This monument to Dewey's achievements proved to be as short-lived as the Admiral's status as a celebrity.⁴⁵⁶

The story of the Dewey Victory Arch is an analogy to the public image of the man himself: a meteoric ascent, a short time in the spotlight, and a veneer of greatness, soon eclipsed

⁴⁵⁵ "The Dewey Arch," *Architects' and Builders' Magazine*, Vol. 1, Old Series 711-722, October 1899-September 1900 (New York: William T. Comstock Publishing, 1900), 4.

⁴⁵⁶ Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes: Monumental Parallels; The Arch and the Bandshell," *New York Times*, May 10th, 1992.

by growing disappointment in him as a political figure. Symbolically, the arch was destroyed just a month after Dewey's failed Presidential campaign. The Hero Admiral and champion of the white man's burden was eventually bested by religious prejudice and political naivete. 'Dewey Mania' lost its momentum not just because of his political missteps, however, but also — and perhaps more importantly — because of the public's dissatisfaction with the situation in the Philippines. 'Dewey Mania' was already fading during the three big parades on the East Coast in 1899. By the time he contemplated a run for President in early 1900, his marketability was all but over.

Dewey's rise and abrupt disappearance as a public figure also represented another phenomenon: a fleeting public fascination with overt, jingoistic hard power at the end of the 19th century. Moving forward, pro-imperialist politicians would have to hide aggressive foreign policy loosely within the framework of soft power or as a cause in the name of freedom for their goals to remain favorable to the general public.

Chapter 4 – Theodore Roosevelt, the General Board, and the Formation of American Foreign Policy:

Theodore Roosevelt's use of the slogan, "speak softly and carry a big stick," is most associated with the aggressive foreign policy stance he assumed during his presidency. However, the first time he used the phrase — which he called a "West African proverb" — Roosevelt was the Governor of New York, writing to a political ally to celebrate a recent victory against state Republican Party officials. Roosevelt privately boasted that if he had not "carried a big stick to the Organization" or not have been "good-humored ... cool ... and steadfast" in his demands, that he would not have been able to convince the GOP to reject a corrupt candidate as insurance inspector.⁴⁵⁷

The next time Roosevelt invoked this phrase was on September 2, 1901, in a speech as the newly sworn-in Vice President. This time, the metaphor's reference was not New York state politics. Instead, Roosevelt used it to refer to the application of the Monroe Doctrine and American foreign relations more broadly. The new Vice President proclaimed to the crowd at the Minnesota Fair Grounds that "we have brought peace" to the Philippines, laying out the McKinley Administration's foreign policy strategy "to always use moderate language" but "not tolerate injustice being done us in return." He also promised to free those "people living in

⁴⁵⁷ Theodore Roosevelt to Henry L. Sprague, January 26, 1900. Letterbook 52A, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 299.

barbarism ... by destroying barbarism itself” and that “the missionary, the merchant, and the soldier will play a part in this destruction, and in the consequent uplifting of the people.”⁴⁵⁸

Four days later, President William McKinley was shot by an assassin. After the President’s death on September 14, Theodore Roosevelt was sworn-in as President. Though given while he was Vice President, the speech he had made in Minnesota turned out to be his first Presidential foreign policy proclamation. Over the course of his presidency, moreover, the term “big stick” became synonymous with Roosevelt’s unapologetic use modern naval power.⁴⁵⁹ For Roosevelt, it offered a justification for intervention in Latin America, investment in a U.S.-owned Panama Canal, and the expansion of American overseas influence.

This chapter focuses on the General Board of the United States Navy, examining how President Theodore Roosevelt used this advisory body to validate his “Big Stick” approach to U.S. foreign policy throughout his administration. The board, founded on March 13th, 1900 by Secretary of the Navy John Davis Long, advised the Secretary directly, but as soon as Roosevelt took office it became *his* advisory board. In his eight years as President, Roosevelt rotated through six different Navy Secretaries, selecting Congressional insiders versed in law rather than naval experts. This gave the President direct control over naval policy, allowing him to add a degree of showmanship and spectacle to American navalism.

In his 2020 essay, Branden Little discussed the unappreciated contributions of these Secretaries of the Navy to helping Roosevelt enact his navalist agenda.⁴⁶⁰ My work is not intended to detract from their accomplishments; rather it shows the President’s intention to make

⁴⁵⁸ “Extracts from the Vice President’s Speech,” *Minnesota Star Tribune*, September 3, 1900.

⁴⁵⁹ Henry J. Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Naval Diplomacy: The U.S. Navy and the Birth of the American Century* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009), xiv-xv.

⁴⁶⁰ Branden Little, “Useful Allies: Theodore Roosevelt’s Secretaries of the Navy and American Naval Ascendancy,” *Forging the Trident: Theodore Roosevelt and the United States Navy*, edited by John B. Hattendorf and William P. Leeman (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2020): 177-207.

himself the leading civilian decision-maker in the Navy, not the Secretaries. The General Board, led by First Admiral George Dewey, was composed of high-ranking naval officials. These men met monthly to plan for future wars, scout for coaling stations, advise on colonial projects, and challenge the bureau chiefs for the President's attention.⁴⁶¹ The board advised on policy, the Secretaries confirmed its legality, and Roosevelt tried to enact much of its recommendations. The President then used his relationship with the press and Dewey's status as a national hero to garner public support for his policies.

The General Board had no real power despite wielding tremendous influence over naval policy. Officially, it was only an advisory board to the Secretary. However, the ideas the group generated – in many respects offering a continuation of Naval War College curriculum – now directly influenced U.S. foreign, colonial, and military policy under Roosevelt. These included, most importantly, U.S. policies toward Latin America and the acquisition of a canal in Latin America, a dream that Alfred Thayer Mahan and other navalists had pursued since the late-1880s. In addition to advocating for the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of 1901, which launched the Panama Canal project, the board focused on advancing other U.S. foreign policy goals in Latin America which relied on naval contributions. These included, most notably, criticizing the nation's war readiness efforts after the Venezuela Crisis of 1902-1903 and supporting the Roosevelt Corollary of 1904 as a response to that international incident.⁴⁶² Dewey's board also advised the President to shift the nation's foreign policy focus from Germany to Japan following the Eastern nation's victory against Russia in 1905.

⁴⁶¹ General Order 544, Navy Department, March 13, 1900. Naval History and Heritage Society Archive, Washington, D.C. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/g/general-orders/general-order-no-544-1900-establishment-general-board.html>. Accessed on November 10, 2019; John T. Kuehn, *America's First General Staff: A Short History of the Rise and Fall of the General Board of the Navy, 1900-1950* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2017), 9-10.

⁴⁶² Kuehn, *America's First General Staff*, 47-8.

The General Board of the U.S. Navy under Dewey, this chapter argues, served as the nation's *de facto* Secretary of the Navy under Roosevelt, advising the bureaus, Congress, and the President on naval matters and foreign policy. This explains how this peacetime war advisory board managed to remain intact, with Dewey as chairman, while Roosevelt changed Navy Secretaries every two years on average. Through the General Board, navalists had finally gained direct influence on the President and Congress. They pitched ideas they felt were integral to naval construction, national security, and, most importantly, continuity of strategic direction of the Navy. Although the President did not always accept the Board's advice, Roosevelt utilized their expertise when it suited him to justify his own more aggressive foreign policy initiatives to Congress and the American people – particularly when it came to developing new naval technologies and increasing the size of the fleet.

Modest Beginnings: The General Board, 1893-1900

In his 2017 work on the General Board, John Kuehn argues that the creation of the Board was the United States' reaction to what scholars like Holger H. Herwig called the "Battlefleet Revolution."⁴⁶³ Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, European militaries had industrialized at a rapid pace, while Sir John "Jackie" Fisher of the British Royal Navy had revolutionized capital ship building. In contrast to Great Britain and Germany, which both had a general staff that advised state leaders on the military, American leaders had to rely on a disparate group of naval advisors, many of whom did not agree on important issues, to make recommendations for the

⁴⁶³ Kuehn, *America's First General Staff*, 9. Holger H. Herwig, "The Battlefleet Revolution, 1885-1914," *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050*, ed. Macgregor Knox and Williamson Murray. Cambridge University Press, 2001, 114-131.

future of the fleet. Typically, these advisors came from the Navy Bureaus, each of which had different goals.

Responding to this situation, Henry Clay Taylor formalized the idea of what would become the General Board during his time as the President of the Naval War College from 1893 to 1896.⁴⁶⁴ Taylor, only a Commander when outgoing college President Alfred T. Mahan recommended him as his successor, served in Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce's training squadron from 1880 to 1884. He was well-versed in Luce's brand of navalism and was selected by the Rear Admiral to give a lecture for the 1885 Naval War College class.⁴⁶⁵ Commander Taylor was an outspoken advocate for the school when it was unpopular amongst the Navy's officer corps in the 1880s and 1890s.

As war college President, Taylor called for an overhaul of the curriculum, expanding courses in international law and war planning. In his second year at the school, he began the practice of selecting an international maritime rival each year to wargame against, which would allow students and scholars alike to do in-depth, semester-long examinations of American capabilities. This included research and analyses on other navies around the world. The college staff would then continue to work on the problem during the winter months. After studies were completed, they would write and submit position papers and war plans to the Office of Naval Information (ONI), formed in 1882 for record retention and to aid in modernization efforts. The Office of Naval Information and Naval War College, both which fell under command of the Bureau of Navigation, became integral parts of Taylor's plan for an American general staff, a group of top military experts that advised the President directly.

⁴⁶⁴ Kuehn, *America's First General Staff*, 22.

⁴⁶⁵ John B. Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson and John Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the Naval War College* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1984), 39-40.

The war problems Taylor proposed during his tenure as President of the Naval War College demonstrated his awareness of the shifting focus of American foreign policy. He first selected the United Kingdom as the international maritime rival for the 1894 course, ordering his students and instructors to formulate a defense of New York City from an invading fleet. The battle simulation and analysis focused on whether twenty American ships – five battleships and fifteen cruisers – could protect the harbor from a combined fleet of over one hundred and fifty British Navy ships, including sixteen battleships, thirty cruisers, and one hundred amphibious landing craft.⁴⁶⁶ The 1894 class concluded that, first, the U.S. fleet had reached its technological capacity; second, Navy planners and builders needed to standardize ships based on tactical function; and lastly, the war game proved that the United States could not win a naval war against the United Kingdom on the open ocean. New York City would fall, and U.S. forces would be forced to retreat to coastlines and inland waters to defend ports, channels, and rivers from blockade or invasion.⁴⁶⁷

Over the next two years, as revolution erupted and intensified in Cuba, Taylor shifted his students' focus to Spain and Latin America. Students and scholars in the 1895 course discussed American maritime operations in the Caribbean against multiple European forces followed the next year by an all-out war against Spain. Naval War College scholars in the 1896 course called for a two-pronged attack on the aging empire's colonial possessions: a blockade of Cuba by the Atlantic Fleet that included all available American battleships and an assault on Spanish naval forces in the Philippines by the Asiatic Squadron.⁴⁶⁸ This was to become the plan used by the McKinley Administration against Spain two years later and included the Kimball Plan to invade

⁴⁶⁶ Hattendorf, *Sailors and Scholars*, 40.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 42-3.

⁴⁶⁸ Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Navy Profession*. (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1977), 89-90.

the Philippines. Students also war-gamed the defense of the Hawaiian Islands from a Japanese invasion, despite President Grover Cleveland's opposition to annexing the islands.

Taylor was immensely satisfied with the development of war gaming at the college during this time as it was "useful to a degree far beyond my most sanguine anticipation."⁴⁶⁹ The year his students helped develop the plan to defeat Spain was his last at the college, as Taylor was promoted to Captain and given command of the Navy's first battleship, USS *Indiana*, in February 1896. This assignment led to his participation in the very blockade on Santiago, Cuba that he helped design the previous year in Newport.

Before this promotion, Taylor had finalized his plans for the U.S. Navy's first "general staff," as he called it, and was ready to make his proposal to Navy Secretary Hilary A. Herbert.⁴⁷⁰ He patterned the board after the German and British general staffs, which was controversial within the Navy Department even as tensions with Europe over their influence in Latin America grew. These general staffs comprised elite groups, made up of a nation's highest-ranking military officers, who advised imperial and royal leaders on military matters, including foreign strategy, colonial projects, and naval development. Its designation as "staff" also mirrored the nomenclature used by the German military. The creation of the general staff thus reflected the transnational development of naval culture, spurred by events on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴⁷¹ However, the idea's close association with Germany became problematic, given contemporary American concerns with that rival nation.

⁴⁶⁹ Taylor letter to Luce, August 18, 1885, Early Records of the Naval War College, Box 1, Folder 3, RG-01, Naval Historical Collection Archives, Naval War College, Newport, RI.

⁴⁷⁰ Kuehn, *America's First General Staff*, 2.

⁴⁷¹ Dirk Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2012), 3-4.

Before the Spanish-American War, the Navy Secretary did not have a singular, high-ranking advisory body to guide him directly. Though he could rely on the individual subject matter expertise of the Navy's technically oriented bureau chiefs, his own administrative staff in Washington, and naval committees in Congress, this was hardly equivalent to a permanent general staff focused on questions of strategy and waging war. The boards formed by the Navy Secretaries from 1881 to 1895 – including the Naval Advisory Board, Luce's board on national shipbuilding capacity, and the Belknap Board involved in the Navy's dispute over the USS *Dolphin* – were also situational and considered temporary. John Kuehn argues that the General Board, although inspired by the European-style general staff that Taylor was so fond of, was a “uniquely American” attempt to give the civilian leadership access to the naval experts needed for proper decision-making.⁴⁷² Taylor's intent was to assemble a team of Navy experts who directly advised the seat of power on national military policy. Such an embrace of professional expertise demonstrated a Progressive turn for the New Navy.

On January 12, 1896, Taylor pitched his idea for a permanent advisory board to Secretary Herbert. Consisting of the chief of the Bureau of Navigation, the President of the Naval War College, the head of the Office of Naval Information, and two executive assistants, the proposed board would operate directly under the Secretary of the Navy. Having witnessed Herbert's conversion from Democrat budget-cutter to Progressive Navy ally after reading Mahan's book in the summer of 1893, Taylor hoped to utilize the Secretary's embrace of navalism in his favor.⁴⁷³ Much to Taylor's disappointment, however, the Secretary did not feel that another advisory body was necessary, particularly given that the Bureau Chiefs and Congressional naval committees

⁴⁷² Kuehn, *America's First General Staff*, 2.

⁴⁷³ Paul E. Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy: Politics, Economics, and the Rise of American Naval Power, 1881-1921* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 92-3.

still held influence on his decision-making as the head of the Navy. Civilian secretaries like Herbert viewed as alarming the concentration of decisionmaking power in an officer's secretariat. Ever jealous of their domains and opposed to intruders, the Bureau Chiefs also viewed this type of board as a challenge to their authority, despite that one of their own from Navigation was slated to be one of its top decision-makers.

Though rejected by Herbert, Taylor did not give up. Even though he was on assignment in command of a battleship, Taylor corresponded with Rear Admiral Luce through the rest of 1896, continuing to strategize on getting a general staff approved. Just a day after Herbert turned down the proposal, Taylor wrote to Luce suggesting they grow the general staff "slowly by a process of natural evolution in the Bureau of Navigation" believing that a coalition with the bureaus was essential.⁴⁷⁴ Though Taylor knew that the Bureau Chiefs did not support this idea, he felt that they could use their position under the Bureau of Navigation as a pathway towards legitimacy. Five months later, Taylor wrote to Luce again on the matter, suggesting that Herbert was already using the war college as his own *ad hoc* board with the duo of Taylor and Luce themselves serving as his co-chairmen.⁴⁷⁵ By October, Taylor indicated that he wished to proceed with future board proposals by forwarding it "gradually" through "regulation or legislation" rather than relying on the singular decision of the Navy Secretary.⁴⁷⁶

For all his efforts, Taylor did not make much headway. When the captain returned the *Indiana* to the Washington Navy Yard in late 1897 for repairs, he met with the new Navy Secretary, John Davis Long, to pitch his idea. Much like his predecessor, Long proved "cold to

⁴⁷⁴ Taylor to Luce, January 13, 1896, Stephen B. Luce Papers, Box 10, Reel 9, Folder 4, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁷⁵ Taylor to Luce, June 26, 1896, Luce Papers, Box 10, Reel 9, Folder 4, LOC.

⁴⁷⁶ Taylor to Luce, October 1, 1896, Luce Papers, Box 10, Reel 9, Folder 4, LOC.

the idea.”⁴⁷⁷ Even newly appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt did not support Taylor’s general staff idea. Falling on deaf ears, Taylor’s proposal for a general staff would have to wait for several more years.

By the time Taylor returned to Washington in late 1897, moreover, naval leaders had turned their attentions to matters in the Caribbean. Having grown increasingly concerned with Cuba’s revolution against Spain, American foreign policymakers committed their full attention to this conflict after February 15, 1898, when the USS *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor. This event provided the catalyst that the McKinley Administration required to declare war. Less than a month after the explosion – which many at the time perceived as an attack against the United States – Captain Taylor and Assistant Secretary of the Navy Roosevelt convinced Secretary Tracy to establish a Navy War Board, tasked with planning for a possible conflict with Spain from Washington.⁴⁷⁸ “The Strategy Board” as Roosevelt called it, was not officially formed until after the United States declared war on Spain, on April 25, 1898. However, according to letters between the Assistant Secretary and Long, the board began formulating a war plan before McKinley declared war on April 20th. The board consisted of Rear Admiral Montgomery Sicard as its President, the Bureau of Navigation Chief Arent S. Crowninshield, and Captain Mahan with Roosevelt serving as Department liaison.

Scholars are mixed about the significance of this board on naval operations during the war. This includes Roosevelt historian Edmund Morris, who argues that T.R. was “largely responsible” for starting the Spanish-American War during this time.⁴⁷⁹ Not only did this body

⁴⁷⁷ Taylor to Luce, December 3, 1897, Luce Papers, Box 10, Reel 9, Folder 5, LOC.

⁴⁷⁸ D. J. Costello, *Planning for War: A History of the General Board of the Navy 1900-1914* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Fletcher School, 1968), 32-3.

⁴⁷⁹ Reference to Trask and Shaeffer books. Edmund Morris. “A Matter of Extreme Urgency: Theodore Roosevelt, Wilhelm II, and the Venezuela Crisis of 1902.” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 55, No. 2, Article 6: 74-85.

directly advise the President, but was also instrumental in developing a strategic plan for the United States to acquire coaling stations around the world after the war's end.⁴⁸⁰ The board even used Secretary Long's official Navy Secretary letterhead to make recommendations to President McKinley during the war, directly linking these naval experts to the executive. The direct connection between these two entities was a feature of the European-style general staff that Taylor had written about. This development was significant, as it set a precedent for future President Roosevelt that he could have direct access to a group of fellow Progressive navalist experts as his private attachés. This concentration of mutual aspirations allowed Roosevelt, a respected naval scholar in his own right, to act as his own Navy Secretary during his postwar Presidency.

Though the Naval War Board proved attractive to many U.S. policymakers during the Spanish-American War, support for a permanent, general war board did not automatically follow. And actions by the board's members also undermined their wishes for a general staff. Two months after the establishment of the Naval War Board, Captain Taylor was serving in the Spanish-American War, commanding *Indiana* during the bombardment and subsequent blockade of Santiago de Cuba. At the same time, Roosevelt famously resigned as Assistant Secretary of the Navy two weeks after the Battle of Manila Bay to organize and lead his own militia unit, the Rough Riders, in the U.S. invasion of Cuba.

With the two most influential advocates for a general board at war, it was left to Luce and Mahan to keep the idea of a permanent board alive. Luce pitched the idea to jingoist Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, while Mahan made his appeal to Secretary Long.⁴⁸¹ Although

⁴⁸⁰ Morris, "A Matter of Extreme Urgency," 75-6.

⁴⁸¹ Luce to Lodge, May 24, 1898; Lodge to Luce, May 27, 1898. Luce Papers, Box 10, Reel 9, Folder 5, LOC.

Luce's letter of May 24 to Lodge was received well and his arguments carefully considered, Lodge did not possess the political will to help Luce organize a permanent peacetime advisory body "while the nation was still at war."⁴⁸² Mahan quickly discovered what Taylor already knew: The Navy Secretary was not interested in any organization that may possibly undermine the secretary's authority.

After the war, Long offered Taylor a promotion to head the U.S. Naval Academy, but the Captain turned it down, requesting that the Secretary give him an assignment that would allow him to continue the staff's development. Although he granted Taylor's request, Long still resisted the notion of a general staff for three reasons. First, he felt it would be a controversial political move for the Secretary of the Navy to establish a war planning board during a time of peace.⁴⁸³ Second, Long did not want to rearrange existing power structures within the Navy and his own office, and worried that he would be relegated to "figurehead" status by a seasoned group of naval insiders.⁴⁸⁴ Third, Long was concerned that Taylor's use of the German model of the General Staff made him uneasy because of its "royal and imperial" ideological origin. Taylor made a final attempt to convince Long that this General Staff would be limited to advising on the "proper disposition of the fleet," not the "constructing, manning, arming and equipping of ships."⁴⁸⁵ He also hoped to assuage the Bureau chiefs' fear that they would lose their power.

From the signing of the Treaty of Paris in December 1898 through the following year, President McKinley focused his foreign policy on securing the newly acquired territories of Hawaii, Guam, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba after the war. Not only were American

⁴⁸² Lodge to Luce, May 27, 1898, Luce Papers, Box 10, Reel 9, Folder 5, LOC.

⁴⁸³ Hattendorf, *Sailors and Scholars*, 39-40, 57-9.

⁴⁸⁴ Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire*, 68-70; John Davis Long, *The New American Navy, Vol. I* (New York: The Outlook Company, 1903), 122-3.

⁴⁸⁵ Long to Dewey, March 30, 1900, John Davis Long Papers, Box 54, Massachusetts Historical Society Archive, Boston, MA.; Costello, *Planning for War*, 39-40, 44.

war planners dealing with an increasingly violent insurgency in the Philippines, but many within the Navy feared that these new “possessions” in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans opened the American fleet to attack from both Germany and Japan. The beginning of the Boxer Rebellion in China in late 1899 caused scholars at the Naval War College to shift their war planning focus back to the Pacific Ocean and the Japanese Navy. With U.S. military forces engaged overseas, American diplomats grappling with unrest in China, and with Europe’s Race for Africa at its peak, many Americans, including Secretary Long, gained an increased awareness of conflict as the constant dynamic in international affairs.⁴⁸⁶ It was in this environment, that Taylor made one last appeal to Long to see his general staff established and avoid a potential disaster by not planning for an international war.

At the same time, Secretary Long was searching for a meaningful position for George Dewey, who was promoted to a newly created rank of First Admiral of the Navy through Presidential decree and Act of Congress on March 3, 1899. Despite Dewey’s professional credentials, Long felt that the aging officer was no longer healthy enough for command at sea. Nor, in Long’s mind, did Dewey have the departmental expertise and political savvy needed to serve again as a bureau chief.⁴⁸⁷ And Long still resented the ways in which Dewey’s political supporters had thrust him into command in the Pacific over the secretary’s intentions. Taylor was well aware of Long’s dilemma over Dewey and recruited the First Admiral to chair the staff in December 1899.⁴⁸⁸ He hoped to take advantage of his celebrity status and professional clout as a

⁴⁸⁶ Gardner Weld Allen, *Papers of John Davis Long, 1897-1904*. (Norwood, MA: Plimpton Press, 1939), 175-178. This entry includes a letter from Mahan to Long on August 5, 1898 arguing that naval strength was a form of diplomacy and correspondence between Long and Horace Fisher that same day looking for ways to end hostilities in the Spanish-American War.

⁴⁸⁷ Kuehn, *America’s First General Staff*, 28-9.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

national hero to finally convince Long, proposing an idea that would get all three men what they wanted.

On February 16th, 1900, Taylor made his final pitch for a General Board.⁴⁸⁹ This proposal was very similar to the first, save one exception: First Admiral Dewey would chair the two-level group. The principals would also include the President of the Naval War College, the head of the Office of Naval Intelligence, the chief of the Bureau of Navigation, and two ranking officers to be named by the NWC and ONI. Several other high-ranking officers served on a secondary board to war game these problems as they did at the war college, but the executive committee, led by Dewey, was the core of the organization.

Nearly five years in the making, Taylor's efforts to create a general staff finally met with success. After consulting with Dewey and making several adjustments to Taylor's proposal, including its name, Secretary Long established the General Board of the United States Navy on March 16, 1900.⁴⁹⁰ Long wanted to distance the idea from its German origins, insisting that the nomenclature of "staff" to be changed to "board," a term he associated with his war board from 1898. He also sought to limit the responsibilities of the board, attempting to deflect criticisms from the Bureau Chiefs and Congressional naval committees that they were being replaced. In Taylor's final proposal, the General Board was charged with war planning, preparing officers on the advanced tactics of modern naval war, and to reconnoiter the navies of international competitors. In Long's final text of General Order No. 544, however, he simplified its purposes

⁴⁸⁹ Taylor to Long, February 16, 1900. John Davis Long Papers, Box 53, Massachusetts Historical Society Archive, Boston, MA.

⁴⁹⁰ Kuehne, *America's First General Staff*, 29-30; General Order 544, Navy Department, March 13, 1900. Naval History and Heritage Society Archive, Washington, D.C. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/g/general-orders/general-order-no-544-1900-establishment-general-board.html>. Accessed on November 10, 2019.

to “ensure efficient preparation of the fleet in case of war and for the naval defense of the coast,” a muted mission statement intended to protect the Board from its detractors.⁴⁹¹

Despite the additions of his own amendments to the Board’s mission and installing a national hero as its leader, Long was still hesitant to make Taylor’s proposal permanent. He referred to it as an “experiment” and promised to “dissolve it the moment it was not useful.”⁴⁹² But Taylor, by his design, had already installed the insulation the General Board needed in First Admiral George Dewey; his legacy would ensure the group’s survival for decades.⁴⁹³

Despite Dewey’s and Long’s assumptions that they held leadership of the General Board, it was Taylor who was both its architect and *éminence grise*. The Captain immediately became the group’s unofficial administrator, curator of research materials, and the First Admiral’s lead advisor. Taylor wrote a memorandum to Secretary Long on March 29 suggesting a series of updated directives and agenda items for the group’s first meeting, including “the maintenance of our power in our dependencies” in the Caribbean and the defense of the Philippines and surrounding waters.⁴⁹⁴ The next day, Long reiterated much of Taylor’s assessments in a letter to Dewey, reestablishing the Board’s mission and setting the first meeting’s focus points on the Secretary’s own letterhead. Its duties were expanded to include much of what Taylor’s had originally intended: “to prepare plans of campaign for such theatres of war at home, in our

⁴⁹¹ General Order 544, Navy Department, March 13, 1900. Naval History and Heritage Society Archive, Washington, D.C. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/g/general-orders/general-order-no-544-1900-establishment-general-board.html>. Accessed on November 10, 2019.

⁴⁹² *House Naval Affairs Committee, Hearings on Appropriations for 1905 and for General Board* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 951.

⁴⁹³ Testimony of Rear Admiral Cameron Winslow, USN, in House Naval Affairs Committee, *Hearings on Estimates Submitted by the Secretary of the Navy, 1916, Vol. 1*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), 1401.

⁴⁹⁴ Taylor to Long, March 29, 1900, John Davis Long Papers, Box 54, Massachusetts Historical Society Archive, Boston, MA.

dependencies, or abroad as may in any case become the scene of hostilities ... [and] ... to observe the probable base of foreign navies in such fields of action.”⁴⁹⁵

The Secretary did make it clear that the Board would have no influence over the “constructing, manning, arming and equipping of the ships.”⁴⁹⁶ He set the agenda, according to Taylor’s advice, to focus on the two areas that he wrote about in his memorandum: establish tactics and a network of bases in the Caribbean to defend against its European rivals and to develop a strategy to protect America’s new possessions in case of invasion. These were general descriptions of any number of problems for the U.S. Navy in both theaters of operation, opening the options for Taylor to select the specific rivals and scenarios for the actual meeting. He chose to focus on two the United States’ two greatest rivals: Germany and England.

When the General Board met for the first time in Washington, D.C., on April 16, 1900, Taylor updated the general orders given by Long and set the specific program to study three problems as if the group was his newest class at the war college. The first and most likely possible incident, according to the Captain, was a German invasion of Puerto Rico. His second scenario involved the expulsion of a German occupation force from Latin American territories, while his third study took the form of a war simulation against the British Royal Navy “for control of the Isthmian Canal.”⁴⁹⁷ With these scenarios in mind, the secondary committee made up of a select group of officers at the Naval War College and ONI, set to work on a variety of other problems presenting position papers that year which included mobilization in Latin America, naval logistics, “disposition of the fleet,” and locations of possible naval bases and coaling stations.

⁴⁹⁵ Long to Dewey, March 30, 1900, John Davis Long Papers, Box 54, Massachusetts Historical Society Archive, Boston, MA.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Costello, *Planning for War*, 42.

All the proposed studies demonstrated the Board's intention to provide military solutions to the application of the Monroe Doctrine against European foes in the Atlantic. However, events in early summer in the Pacific would change the Board's focus to the violence escalating in China and the Philippines against American forces by early summer 1900. When the General Board met again for three days in mid-May, its members' focus was still firmly on the Germans and the British in the Atlantic. Although the Boxer Rebellion had recently begun in China, most considered it a secondary matter. They adjourned until late June when the executive committee joined the secondary group at the Naval War College to study and wargame its first "summer problem." By the time the Board reconvened on June 26, however, Chinese imperial forces joined the Boxers to expel foreign forces from their country, laying siege to the international legation located in the center of Peking on June 20. This began a fifty-five-day standoff and eventual rescue by Eight-Nation Alliance forces.

In response to this escalating conflict in China and the continuing bloodshed in the neighboring Philippines, Board leaders reoriented their summer study to the Pacific theater. More specifically, the group set out to devise a war plan to defend the United States' "new possessions" in the Philippines from German invasion and identify possible coaling stations and naval bases in the region. Just two weeks before, on June 4th, American forces were decimated by Filipino insurrectionists at the Battle of Makahambus, which left twenty Americans dead and wounded. This shocking defeat in Asia exacerbated public concern over the current hostilities in China. It also elevated the pressures felt by the McKinley Administration to protect its "dependencies" in the Pacific and Caribbean as Africa was being carved up by the Great Powers of Europe. Although the geography of the group's spotlight had shifted, its enemy had not. As

First Admiral Dewey correctly stated in a letter to Long on June 30, “our next war is going to be fought against the Germans.”⁴⁹⁸

The significance of the activities of the Board during its first year in operation was the way in which Taylor’s group took a *realpolitik* approach to naval war planning. Not only did they assess the historical precedents, but also considered what was actually happening on the ground, current diplomatic maneuverings, and how events were being reported in newspapers.

In 1901, Taylor and Dewey expanded the scope of the General Board to thirty-five different studies, which occupied the group from February 7th through November 27th. Now, their activities included war planning against rivals in the Pacific *and* Atlantic oceans.⁴⁹⁹ Gone were the limits imposed by Long to avoid mission creep into Navy Bureau and Congressional spheres of influence. The group now provided detailed studies and made recommendations about naval administration, international relations, logistics, naval technology, and issues of modern seamanship directly to the Secretary. Much as it had been in the General War Board of 1898, Long’s letterhead was used to forward those reports to McKinley.

For all intents and purposes, then, Taylor’s group was directly advising the President on military matters and international affairs. Officially, however, it remained one step away from his original intent. His General Staff was created to consult the executive office without interference. In September 1901, Taylor would finally get to see this idea through to fruition with the ascension of fellow navalist Theodore Roosevelt to President of the United States.

⁴⁹⁸ Dewey to Long, June 30, 1901. George Dewey Papers, Box 12, File 4. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁹⁹ Kuehn, *America’s First General Staff*, 46, 229-30.

Dewey Mania Resurgent: The Popularity of Big Stick Diplomacy in the Caribbean Basin

Theodore Roosevelt became the 26th President of the United States in a fashion fitting the spectacle that was the man's life. He was not elected by pedestrian means; Roosevelt was thrust into the seat of power when William McKinley died on September 14, 1901, six days after he was struck by an assassin's bullet at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. "T.R.," as he was known in the press, pledged to maintain McKinley's agenda. However, the former war college lecturer was also a convert of the Mahan-Luce brand of navalism. As president, he would seek to institute its tenets as American foreign policy.

Three years removed from the victories of Manila Bay and San Juan Hill in the Spanish-American War, and despite the growth of anti-imperialist sentiments among some groups of Americans, considerable public support still existed for an American-controlled canal across the Isthmus of Panama, overseas expansion, and a more pronounced place in the international community. Roosevelt believed that all these goals could be achieved through the development of modern naval power. The Navy's popularity with the American people, he believed further, would justify its ongoing, peacetime implementation.

For nearly twenty years before he assumed the presidency, Roosevelt had burnished his reputation as one of the most famous and well-respected public advocates for the U.S. Navy — first as a historian and lecturer in the 1880s, and then as Assistant Secretary of the Navy from 1897 to 1898. In 1883, he wrote the definitive *naval history of the War of 1812*, lecturing on the subject for the 1885 and 1886 courses at the Naval War College. His first project as Assistant Secretary was to expand and rebrand the Navy exhibit at the 1897 Tennessee Centennial and

International Exposition in Nashville.⁵⁰⁰ Although he was a militarist at heart, Roosevelt sought to project the image of the Navy as not only a world-class military force, but also a technologically advanced institution, adept at solving problems.

Just two days after being sworn in as president, T.R. facilitated the transfer of several U.S. Naval Museum of Hygiene exhibits to the exposition in Nashville, designed to highlight the Navy's advanced medical training, modern hygiene techniques, and innovations in surgical technology.⁵⁰¹ In the years before war with Spain, Navy exhibitors presented their warships to the public primarily as "wonders of the modern world," portraying them only secondarily as tools of war.⁵⁰² Roosevelt believed, just as Luce and Mahan did, in the virtues of a peacetime navy as a deterrent to war. He also assumed that popularity would be enhanced as it developed beyond the battlefield. He continued to focus on the image of the Navy while President.

Roosevelt, a master showman who understood the power of narrative, was an innovator in cultivating the relationship between the executive office and the press. On his first full day in office, the President called a meeting at the White House of the press managers at the New York *Sun*, the Associated Press, and the Scripps-McRae Press Association to establish unprecedented access for their reporters to the Oval Office. That access came with a price: he would "keep them posted" on important events and they would print only what *he* approved.⁵⁰³ With this move, Roosevelt had created the first incarnation of the modern White House Press Corps.

⁵⁰⁰ Theodore Roosevelt to C.M. McCormick, USN, April 21, 1897. Box 1, PC-31, Entry 101. General Records of the Navy, 1798-1947, Navy Exhibit at the Tennessee Centennial Exposition, and Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, Omaha, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Ibid. The image of the technologically progressive Navy would change after the war with a more militaristic tone with the Trans-Mississippi Expo of 1899.

⁵⁰³ Doris K. Goodwin, *The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft and the Golden Age of Journalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 280-1.

With an easily accessible and cooperative press just a few steps away from the Resolute desk, President Roosevelt spent his first one hundred days in office mapping out his military, international, and domestic policy in an aggressive campaign of progressive reform. Although the popularity of the U.S. Navy was still strong when T.R. took office, negative news coverage of the war in the Philippines was beginning to draw headlines, replacing the ones that lifted George Dewey into stardom after Manila Bay. As President, Roosevelt sought to keep the Navy in the headlines in a positive way, while emphasizing its relevance to the American people.

In his first address to a joint session of Congress on December 3, 1901, Roosevelt laid the groundwork for this ambitious administration in a 19,606-word speech that included everything on his Presidential wish list. Over 6,000 of those words – roughly one-third of the entire speech – were dedicated to the Navy, maintenance of U.S. international territories, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Panama Canal. Insisting that “no nation [was] more anxious for peace than the United States,” Roosevelt declared that the U.S. Navy was “the cheapest and most effective peace insurance.”⁵⁰⁴

In many ways the speech confirmed that Roosevelt intended to keep the status quo of McKinley’s second term conservative agenda intact. One of the ways the navalist President would differentiate himself, however, was through an aggressive application of the Monroe Doctrine, validated by pursuit of an isthmus canal in Latin America. In this address, the President celebrated the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty. Signed on November 18th, the treaty nullified an 1850 agreement between the United States and Great Britain, which had tied the two nations together

⁵⁰⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, “First Annual Message to Congress,” December 3, 1901. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/206187>. Accessed January 20, 2022.

on a canal project. Now that a path to Panama was secured, increasing the size and readiness of the Navy became paramount.

To make his close association to naval militarism that much clearer to members of Congress, President Roosevelt endorsed the General Board of the U.S. Navy in this first address, giving it an institutional *gravitas* that even Congressional recognition could not provide:

Many of the essentials of success are already recognized by the General Board, which, as the central office of a growing staff, is moving steadily toward a proper war efficiency and a proper efficiency of the whole Navy, under the Secretary. This General Board, by fostering the creation of a general staff, is providing for the official and then the general recognition of our altered conditions as a Nation and of the true meaning of a great war fleet, which meaning is, first, the best men, and second, the best ships.⁵⁰⁵

By establishing the Board's expertise on the "altered conditions" of America's place in the world and through a rearticulation of the Monroe Doctrine, Roosevelt was foreshadowing the group's direct involvement in its military application in the Caribbean.

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At the time of his first speech, Roosevelt knew that Venezuela was quickly becoming this example as its debts to Germany, Great Britain, and Italy grew untenable. It was widely reported in the United States and Europe that Venezuela owed a combined sixty-two million bolivars to the three nations with Germany growing impatient with Venezuelan dictator Cipriano Castro. T.R. reaffirmed these issues his second address to Congress on December 3, 1902. If these Latin American nations acted irresponsibly in their dealings, he asserted, then their European debt

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

holders had the right to intervene, short of taking territory as payment.⁵⁰⁶ The State Department monitored the situation carefully and called for arbitration but did not officially warn the blockading countries during the crisis. Behind the scenes, the President took steps leading up to the deadline to have his Navy ready to act. Through private channels and nuanced actions, he also warned Germany and England that if they did not accept arbitration, the U.S. was prepared to intervene. While the United States negotiated with the Colombian, then Panamanian, governments on the canal from early 1902 until November 1903, Roosevelt also focused on preventing these European powers from establishing a naval base in Venezuela, located on the approach to the future canal.

The Venezuelan Revolution and subsequent debt crisis were popular topics in American newspapers from the summer of 1902 through February 1903; as an avid news junkie, Roosevelt was very aware of this media attention.⁵⁰⁷ Readers nationwide consumed articles daily detailing every aspect of the crisis developing off the coast of Venezuela involving the potential violation of the Monroe Doctrine by the German, British, and Italian navies.⁵⁰⁸ At the same time, those publications reported on the reemergence of “America’s Hero Admiral” George Dewey and his involvement in T.R.’s first expression of “big stick diplomacy,” masked as a training exercise. Although the marketability of Dewey’s image had waned since the Philippine War, he was still a very popular and well-respected figure to the American people and Congress. Roosevelt would rely on the popularity of “Admiral Dewey’s Navy” to garner the support of the American people

⁵⁰⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, “Second Annual Message to Congress,” December 3, 1902. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/206194>. Accessed January 20, 2022.

⁵⁰⁷ Roosevelt letter to Whitelaw Reid, June 27, 1906. Theodore Roosevelt, Elting Elmore Morison, and John Morton Blum. *Letters, selected and edited by Elting E. Morison*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 319.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

in favor of U.S. foreign policy during the final months of 1902, in what contemporary newspapers reported as a “violation of the Monroe Doctrine.”

Roosevelt’s first two addresses to Congress confirmed his intent to use the Monroe Doctrine as an instrument of American foreign policy. Although his administration acknowledged the validity of Anglo-German accusations of Castro’s malfeasance, Roosevelt’s speeches contained carefully crafted warnings to Germany and Great Britain about Venezuela. Yet, the unlikely German-Anglo alliance (which Italy joined later) proceeded with a blockade to force Castro to pay them back.⁵⁰⁹ Since its 1823 inception, British leaders had downplayed the Monroe Doctrine, circumnavigating it through treaty and partnership. By 1902, however, German emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II considered the policy a direct threat to his country’s economic interests.⁵¹⁰ Castro also asserted publicly that, through the Monroe Doctrine, the United States was committed to protect his country against its debtholders in London, Berlin, and Rome.⁵¹¹ Although the Venezuelan dictator initially refused international arbitration in October 1902 through the Permanent Court of Arbitration, established by the 1899 Hague Conference, this would change the day after the blockade began.

Roosevelt, significantly, did not have a problem with European investment in Latin America nor in their right to collect on debts owed. For the President, the more important issue was whether these nations wanted Venezuelan territory in exchange for debt relief. Captain Henry Taylor and the General Board advised Roosevelt that this is how Germany intended on gaining a foothold in Latin America, knowing that Castro did not have the money to pay them

⁵⁰⁹ “Venezuela adds to her enemies,” *The Buffalo (NY) Commercial*. December 16, 1902. Italy announced on December 15 their intention to join the German-Anglo alliance to collect debts accrued during the revolution.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹¹ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Naval Diplomacy*, 29.

back. They believed, as did the President, that the Kaiser intended to be paid back with land for military bases.⁵¹²

Even before Roosevelt became president, Germany had represented a growing U.S. foreign policy concern. In its first two years, the General Board filed multiple reports based on their studies of the Kaiser's naval capabilities, mock invasions of Puerto Rico by his navy, and the expulsion of a German landing force from Latin America. Before his assassination, McKinley received the Board's "War Plan: Black," code for the war simulation against the German Navy. Both this plan and the simulation conducted by the Naval War College scholars the previous year, as several historians have noted, demonstrated that Germany would be victorious in an all-out naval conflict against the Americans in the Atlantic.⁵¹³

The Board's war plans against Germany also included the building of a U.S. naval base in Puerto Rico that could support military intervention in Latin America and protect a future canal. In January 1902, Roosevelt moved forward with establishing one of these bases, ordering Marines to secure several coastal areas on the island of Culebra, located fifty miles east of Puerto Rico. The Navy planned to build multiple facilities within the island's massive harbor, Cano Quebreo, to provide logistical support to large groups of American warships and to protect them from hurricanes. Dubbed "Camp Roosevelt" initially, the naval base at Great Harbor would be one of many General Board suggestions adopted by the President throughout his tenure.⁵¹⁴

The call for increased scrutiny of Germany and Great Britain for their respective colonial aspirations in Venezuela grew louder on April 29th, 1902, with the promotion of Captain Taylor to Rear Admiral and his appointment as the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation. In addition to

⁵¹² Taylor to Roosevelt, November 1902. *Letters, selected and edited by Elting E. Morison.*

⁵¹³ Kuehn, *America's First General Staff*, 23, 34.

⁵¹⁴ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 33.

now being the highest-ranking decision-maker for the Naval War College and the Office of Naval Intelligence, Taylor now directly commanded fleet movements and decided the locations for military exercises. The day after this organizational change, Roosevelt also named four-term Republican Congressman William H. Moody as his new Navy Secretary, replacing the aging Long with an “energetic” political ally. Moody was essential in the implementation of T.R.’s “big stick” diplomacy in Latin America, as he was one of the founding members of the House Committee on Insular Affairs, established in December 1899 for Congressional oversight over U.S. colonial territories.⁵¹⁵

While the Administration proclaimed an official end to military operations in the Philippines by June 2nd, 1902 – a position that the President declared in his first address to Congress – Roosevelt, Moody, and Taylor were already anticipating a war in the Caribbean.⁵¹⁶ Under Roosevelt’s direction, Taylor had soon transformed the Navy’s annual “winter exercise” from a limited training cruise involving one of the four Atlantic Ocean squadrons into the single largest concentration of American warships ever assembled before the First World War.

On June 28th, 1902, Congress passed the Spooner Act, approving of \$40 million to begin the building of the Panama Canal. Emboldened by this development, Roosevelt pressed forward with Taylor’s plans. Their shared goal was to turn the many General Board plans, weeks of war college research, and hours of war simulation – on gaming boards and at sea – into an active expression of American naval power. This expanded winter exercise, commanded by First Admiral Dewey with Taylor as his Executive Officer, coincided with the impending deadline for Castro’s debt in early December, and was conducted within striking distance of Venezuela.

⁵¹⁵ Little, “Useful Allies,” 183-4.

⁵¹⁶ Kuehn., *America’s First General Staff*, 37.

Roosevelt, on Taylor's advice, requested that Dewey personally take command of this "training exercise" despite being years removed from active service at sea and because of the typically mundane nature of this annual naval maneuver.⁵¹⁷ Taylor and Dewey had already corresponded on this matter weeks before the President made his request to the First Admiral in late June.

In July 1902, Secretary Moody ordered ships from the Caribbean Squadron to reconnoiter the Venezuelan coastline to provide exercise planners the latest information about possible defensive deployments and the locations of potential landing sites for an invading force.⁵¹⁸ With a plan in place, a base under construction, a popular military hero secured as commander, and the battlefield surveyed, Roosevelt levied his first warning to Germany and Great Britain in August through an unofficial channel. In a letter to friend Arthur Lee, a former British military attaché of the U.S. Army in Cuba and current member of Parliament, T.R. asserted that Dewey was "training the Navy for war," expecting this honorary member of the "Rough Riders" to recognize how serious he was about interference in Latin America.⁵¹⁹ The warning went unanswered.

As construction of the base on Culebra continued into the fall, each of the Navy's four Atlantic squadrons – the North Atlantic, South Atlantic, Caribbean, and European – were ordered to prepare for the winter exercise, eventually breaking from their respective regional patrol duties to participate. The Caribbean Fleet steamed for Puerto Rico on October 21st, 1902, followed by the Central Atlantic on November 1, and the North Atlantic Fleet two weeks later. By November 14th, a total of fifty-five American warships, including all eight of its battleships and thirty cruisers, were either in route to Camp Roosevelt or already on station in the South Caribbean.

⁵¹⁷ Roosevelt to Dewey, June 14, 1902, George Dewey Papers, Box 13, Folder 2, LOC.

⁵¹⁸ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 37.

⁵¹⁹ Fredrick W. Marks III, *Velvet on Iron: The Diplomacy of Theodore Roosevelt* (University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 53-4.

By this point, the base at Culebra was now capable of supporting this “winter exercise.” It included facilities for coaling, docks for minor ship repair, and a few simple buildings for barracks, storage, and administration. This base was not constructed in secret; both the American public and the German General Staff knew of its existence.⁵²⁰ Although the German Navy had a numerical battleship advantage of twelve vessels to eight in the Atlantic, all eight U.S. capital ships were currently deployed in the Caribbean. The German battleship fleet was divided up along the Atlantic coastlines and among its colonial interests, including three off the coast of Venezuela. Despite War Plan Black’s prediction of German victory in the Atlantic and the Kaiser’s battleship superiority, Roosevelt was confident that he held strategic advantage during the crisis. According to his own recollection of the events, T.R. used it to force the Germans into arbitration in late December.⁵²¹

The press covered both the “winter exercise” and the impending Venezuela deadline as two separate news stories in October and November 1902, with the President uncharacteristically silent on both issues. The November 26th edition of the *Washington Evening Star*, for example, published a front-page story updating readers on “the upcoming naval maneuvers,” including details on scheduling, which ships would roleplay the enemy naval units, and the locations of the individual squadrons.⁵²² Two other stories detailed the Venezuelan Crisis, including a dispatched story from the *Chicago Tribune* with no mention of the fleet. This was repeated around the country with each story swapping front-page headlines depending on the significance of the day’s events.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 50; Morris, “A Matter of Extreme Urgency,” 77-8.

⁵²¹ Roosevelt, letter to Whitelaw Reid, June 27, 1906. In Theodore Roosevelt, Elting Elmore Morison, and John Morton Blum. *Letters, selected and edited by Elting E. Morison*, 319.

⁵²² “Coming Naval Maneuvers,” (Washington, DC) *Evening Star*, November 26, 1902. This theme of two separate storylines was also repeated in the November 26, 1902 edition of the *Buffalo Commercial*.

By December, however, newspaper editors began to merge the two storylines into one: the ships of “Dewey’s fleet” were ready to “police” the Germans and the English, preventing them from violating the Monroe Doctrine should the situation in Venezuela escalate.⁵²³ For instance, the main headline on the front page of the December 16 edition of the *Washington Times* proclaimed “Admiral Dewey’s Fast West Indian Fleet to Watch German and English Ships.”⁵²⁴ On the same day, the *Buffalo Express* reported that the United States was beginning to doubt the “good faith measures of the (German-Anglo) alliance,” but that “Dewey’s fleet was not that far away.”⁵²⁵ Again, this narrative was disseminated and published nationwide with a clear message: First Admiral Dewey, a man trusted by the people in matters of war, was not in the Caribbean for a mere training exercise; he was there to protect American interests.

Despite the corruption and irresponsible actions of General Castro, Dewey felt, as did many of his compatriots, that Venezuelans had been taken advantage of by Europe’s top industrial powers. They viewed the debt as a false justification for invasion. In reality, the dictator stated publicly several times that he had no intention of paying back these debts and began a campaign of harassment targeting German nationals working in the country.⁵²⁶ U.S. sailors in Caracas confirmed in October that Venezuelan citizens had taken to the streets to protest German and British intervention, calling on the United States to “save Venezuela” from itself.⁵²⁷ Based on this intelligence and press reports in Venezuela, Taylor conveyed to Roosevelt in a private memorandum in early November his fear that Castro was emboldened not to pay

⁵²³ “Admiral Dewey’s Fast West Indian Fleet to Watch German and English Ships,” *Washington Times*, December 16, 1902; Assertion of TR that Germany was making all the important decisions.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁵ “Explanation is Needed,” *Buffalo Express* and *Buffalo Express Illustrated*, December 16, 1902.

⁵²⁶ “Venezuela Out of Frying Pan, into Fire,” *Washington (DC) Evening Times*, November 24, 1902; “Troubles are Piling Up for Castro,” *The Salt Lake (UT) Herald*, December 17, 1902.

⁵²⁷ “Must Pay Up or Fight: Further Punishment for Little Venezuela,” *The Salt Lake (UT) Herald*, December 17, 1902.

these debts and that Germany and England would be forced to seize land to settle their investments.⁵²⁸ Through this memorandum, the General Board was now directly advising the President on foreign policy matters in the same manner as Germany's General Staff advised the crown. Despite an elevation of tensions, Roosevelt's first warning to the Germans was just as nuanced as his personal letter to Lee, embodying the "speak softly" aspects of T.R.'s U.S. foreign policy. It garnered the same lack of results.

By mid-November, Germany and Great Britain reached an agreement to proceed mutually on a "peaceful blockade" of Venezuela, which would prevent either nation from arbitrating with Castro without the other. On November 24, the President held a private dinner in honor of German diplomat and friend Baron Hermann Speck von Sternburg, inviting several German and American dignitaries to the event. The two socialized in the same Washington circles in the early 1890s, with von Sternburg at his nation's embassy and T.R. a member of the U.S. Civil Service Commission. One of Roosevelt's dinner guests that night was First Admiral Dewey, who was strategically seated between von Sternburg and the President, a passive-aggressive gesture he felt would be unmistakable to the veteran German diplomat.⁵²⁹ Not only was Dewey the only military man in attendance, but he was also a public figure who was famously critical of Germany's intentions towards the Philippines after the Battle of Manila Bay. Dewey had commented to journalist and biographer John Barrett in the summer of 1898 that he "should have sunk those [German] ships," a remark that caused controversy in Washington and resulted in a minor condemnation by President McKinley via telegram.⁵³⁰ Roosevelt never found

⁵²⁸ Kuehn, *America's First General Staff*, 51.

⁵²⁹ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 38; Roosevelt letter to Whitelaw Reid, June 27, 1906, *Roosevelt, Morison, and Blum, Letters, selected and edited by Elting E. Morison*, 318-320.

⁵³⁰ Barrett, *Admiral George Dewey, A Sketch of the Man* (New York: Harper's and Brothers Publishers, 1899), 103-4.

a moment to talk to von Sternburg in private about the situation in Venezuela and apparently the significance of Dewey's placement at the dinner table went unrecognized. His second attempt at "personal diplomacy" was also a failure, but T.R. did not have to wait long for an indicator on how to proceed.⁵³¹

The next day, November 25, Germany and Great Britain announced that Venezuela had reached the deadline to pay its debts and that the two nations would initiate a blockade of the country's ports in December. Newspapers around the world discussed the situation in earnest, critiquing the relationship between Germany and England more than the blockade itself.⁵³² American newspapers were decidedly opposed to the action, calling it a direct violation of the Monroe Doctrine. Public support for a strong stance against this blockade grew quickly, including sensationalist outrage from papers on both sides of the political aisle. Political satire magazines *Puck*, which was typically harsh on Republicans, and *Judge*, which cast similar aspersions on Democrats, remained surprisingly quiet about the topic, publishing only one cartoon on Venezuela throughout the crisis. The cartoon, published in a January 14th issue of *Puck*, used the 1899 poem "The White Man's Burden" to poke fun at the German-British alliance referring to it as "[Rudyard] Kipling's Nightmare."⁵³³ *Puck* joined the cacophony of voices, domestically and internationally, critiquing this unusual alliance.

With an impending blockade and the U.S. government taking no official action to stop it, Castro called for arbitration through The Hague on December 1st. Germany and England promptly rejected it. That same day, President Roosevelt personally saw Dewey off at the Washington Navy Yard as the First Admiral and Rear Admiral Taylor boarded USS *Mayflower*,

⁵³¹ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 38.

⁵³² "Emperor's Hand Forced by Diplomacy," Buffalo (NY) *Courier*, January 22, 1903.

⁵³³ "Kipling's Nightmare," *Puck Magazine*, January 14, 1903.

the Presidential yacht, to join the “winter exercise” at Great Harbor in Culebra. The selection of *Mayflower* was intentional: any attack on the ship would represent a direct attack on the President himself. Roosevelt and Dewey exchanged words at the dock, but the details of their conversation were not mentioned in either man’s autobiography. One can only speculate that the two men shared a mutual understanding that this was no ordinary “winter exercise” and that Dewey might be called upon, once again, to be the “Hero Admiral of the Nation” should tensions flare.

With the Venezuelan Crisis quickly approaching a critical moment, a blockade of a Latin American country pending by Europe’s two most powerful nations, and a fleet of fifty-five American warships in position to engage that blockade, President Roosevelt gave his second address to Congress, on December 3, 1902. In it, he doubled down on the Monroe Doctrine, its principle of non-transfer of territory in the Americas without U.S. consent, and defined the operational intent of the American Navy as a part of his foreign policy:

The Monroe Doctrine should be treated as the cardinal feature of American foreign policy; but it would be worse than idle to assert it unless we intended to back it up, and it can be backed up only by a thoroughly good navy. A good navy is not a provocative of war. It is the surest guaranty of peace.⁵³⁴

Four days later, on the morning of December 7, the Anglo-German blockade began. These actions sparked immediate civil unrest in Venezuela, including student protests in the cities and the capture of a British merchant ship at anchor in Port Cabello by a citizen mob. President Castro also called for the arrest of British and German nationals as retaliation against

⁵³⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, “Second Annual Message to Congress,” December 2, 1902. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/206194>. Accessed January 20, 2022.

the blockade, elevating tensions further. The German Navy responded by shelling nearby military installations during in an eventful first two days in Caracas.

In response to the escalating violence in what was supposed to be a “peaceful blockade,” Roosevelt made one last attempt to warn Germany and Britain through personal means before ordering his diplomatic team to intervene.⁵³⁵ The official declaration of the blockade by Germany and England assured the international community that Venezuelan sovereignty would not be violated and that the action would cease once payments resumed. On December 8th, the President invited several German businessmen to the White House accompanied by Ambassador Theodor von Holleben. There, in a private conversation, Roosevelt made it clear that the United States would go to war with Germany if they did not accept arbitration by December 18th.⁵³⁶ Von Holleben refused to forward the ultimatum to Berlin believing that Roosevelt was bluffing, a mistake that exacerbated the situation the following week and led to his recall to Germany in January 1903. That same day, Dewey arrived off the coast of Culebra while all four American squadrons were already engaged in the winter exercise and practicing state-of-the-art artillery techniques with live ammunition.

The American press continued to link the winter exercise to the Venezuela Crisis, using the figure of Dewey to both calm its readers and sell upcoming holiday issues of their publications. In the December 8th edition of the Elmira (NY) *Star-Gazette*, editors ensured their readers that “the presence of Dewey in Venezuelan waters means that England and Germany will not use excessive force.”⁵³⁷ An advertisement four days later in the Buffalo *Morning Express* read: “Should the American squadron be sent to Venezuela, Admiral Dewey, now in the West

⁵³⁵ Roosevelt letter to Whitelaw Reid, June 27, 1906, *Roosevelt, Morison, and Blum, Letters, selected and edited by Eliot E. Morison*, 318-20.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*; Hendrix, 38-40.

⁵³⁷ Elmira (NY) *Star-Gazette*, December 8, 1902.

Indies, will command it. This fact gives special interest to a fine picture of Dewey and his staff, which will appear in the beautiful Holiday Number of *The Express* next Sunday.”⁵³⁸

With Roosevelt’s “surest guaranty of peace” deployed in the Caribbean and all unofficial diplomatic channels exhausted, the President directed his ambassador to Venezuela to make an official request to the Permanent Court of Arbitration, asking that it intercede on behalf of Venezuela on December 9th. Although Great Britain agreed to arbitration, Kaiser Wilhelm II did not. After assessing the situation, the Imperial seat realized that if the matter went to arbitration, Germany would no longer be able to demand land in exchange for debt appeasement. Two days later, tensions escalated further still. Multiple American newspapers ran stories that Venezuela was now “at war” reporting on the alliance’s failed attempt to capture President Castro, and that German forces took the port facilities at La Guairá. Press around the world also reported that France, joined by an international contingent of nations, had publicly condemned the attack.⁵³⁹

On December 14th, Roosevelt called another meeting with von Holleben to ascertain the Kaiser’s response to his ultimatum, only to find out that the Ambassador had not relayed his warning. The President was furious. He gave the Germans a new deadline: arbitration in forty-eight hours or the two countries would go to war. Reflecting on the event years later, Roosevelt explained that this was his final attempt to give Kaiser Wilhelm the choice to pull his own forces out of the blockade. The alternative was a narrative that would have showed the United States pressuring Germany to withdraw.⁵⁴⁰ Von Holleben conveyed Roosevelt’s message to his superiors immediately via telegraph. After traveling from Washington to New York City later

⁵³⁸ Buffalo *Morning Express*, December 12, 1902.

⁵³⁹ “Fierce Fighting in Venezuela; France Protests,” New York *Evening Journal*, December 11, 1902; “Venezuela at War with Two Powers,” Buffalo *Evening News*, December 11, 1902; Morris, “A Matter of Extreme Urgency,” 81-2.

⁵⁴⁰ Roosevelt to William Roscoe Thayer, August 26, 1916, Letter 6132, in *Roosevelt, Morison, and Blum, Letters, selected and edited by Elting E. Morison*, 332.

that day, he consulted another German diplomat who knew Roosevelt personally, confirming to von Holleben's fears that the man "did not bluff."⁵⁴¹ The German General Staff made a final assessment the next day, advising the Kaiser to accept arbitration.⁵⁴²

In early 1903, British Admiralty war planners and the German General Staff assessed and war-gamed an engagement with American forces in the Caribbean, reaching the same conclusion. Although the U.S. Navy was smaller in size than either its German or British counterparts, the American fleet had now reached a sufficient size and capability to make peace preferable to war. Scholars of the crisis believe that this was one of the first steps that led to the "special relationship" that developed between the U.S. and U.K. by the time of the Second World War, nearly forty years later.⁵⁴³ In his autobiography, Roosevelt proclaimed that "there was a real danger that the blockade would finally result in Germany's taking possession of certain cities or custom-houses." Continuing his story, the president noted, "I succeeded, however, in getting all of the parties in interest to submit their cases to the Hague Tribunal." The president said nothing of the backroom threats of naval war against the Germans.⁵⁴⁴

Historians over the past century, most recently Nancy Mitchell and H.W. Brands, argue that Roosevelt was revising his own history in claiming that the private threats of war over Venezuela resulted in Germany agreeing to arbitration on December 18th.⁵⁴⁵ Knowing Roosevelt's penchant for exaggeration, these scholars argue that he was attempting to paint a picture for journalists in 1916 that he (and not President Woodrow Wilson) had solutions to deal

⁵⁴¹ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 48-9; Morris, "A Matter of Extreme Urgency," 80.

⁵⁴² Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire*, 147.

⁵⁴³ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 53; Matthias Maass, "Catalyst for the Roosevelt Corollary: Arbitrating the 1902–1903 Venezuela Crisis and Its Impact on the Development of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol. 20, No. 3, (2009), 383-402.

⁵⁴⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913), 553.

⁵⁴⁵ Nancy Mitchell, "The Height of the German Challenge: The Venezuela Blockade 1902-1903," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (April 1996): 187, 206-9; H.W. Brands, *T.R.: The Last Romantic*. (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 469, 527.

with Germany on the eve of U.S. entry into the First World War. These same scholars question the veracity of his threats, noting the lack of documentation in the official record linking the 1902-1903 “winter exercise” to the Venezuela Crisis. These historians also posit that Great Britain’s influence over Germany, as it relates to arbitration, has been largely ignored.⁵⁴⁶

Other scholars of U.S. foreign relations and naval historians, including Edmund Morris, Henry Hendrix, and Lawrence Lenz, do not discount these arguments. However, they assert that the winter exercise of 1902-1903 created a heightened state of awareness worldwide that the U.S. Navy’s presence directly affected Germany’s decision-making processes involving Venezuela.⁵⁴⁷ The Kaiser’s order to go to arbitration on the same date as Roosevelt’s deadline, they note, cannot be considered a coincidence. This is further evidenced by Germany’s request two days after the shift that President Roosevelt personally oversee the arbitration instead of The Hague, an attempt to force T.R. to the role of third-party arbitrator. Roosevelt graciously refused this offer on December 21st and instead turned the matter over to The Hague, a decision that was applauded by the international community. On December 28th, the members of the Tribunal praised Roosevelt for saving the court from “practical extinction.”⁵⁴⁸ The *Bourse Gazette* in St. Petersburg, Russia called T.R.’s actions “a splendid Christmas gift to Europe.”⁵⁴⁹

However, the President had no intention of naming the United States as a third-party arbiter; he wanted to take a more pronounced role in Latin American affairs, not adjudicate them from afar.⁵⁵⁰ Over the next decade, as several historians have noted, Roosevelt repeated the story

⁵⁴⁶ Mitchell, “The Height of the German Challenge,” 206-7; Brands, *T.R.*, 525-527.

⁵⁴⁷ Morris, “A Matter of Extreme Urgency,” 74-5; Hendrix, title 38, 52-53; Lawrence Lenz, *Power and Policy: America’s First Steps to Superpower, 1889-1922* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2007), 127-8.

⁵⁴⁸ “Members of the Hague Court Congratulates Roosevelt,” The Brooklyn (NY) *Daily Eagle*, December 28, 1902.

⁵⁴⁹ St. Petersburg (Russia) *Bourse Gazette*, December 29, 1902.

⁵⁵⁰ Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 552.

of his threat to Germany to the press, to various authors and scholars, and in his own writing.⁵⁵¹

Was this revisionist history with intent to obfuscate the truth? Or was this simply how T.R. interpreted events that were obvious to him? As mentioned previously, Roosevelt was a published historian who understood the significance of narrative and the historic record to future perceptions. He also realized the importance of spectacle to drawing attention to a story. Elevating Dewey to a position where he could reprise his role as national hero added greatly to the dramatic flair of this incident and reaffirmed the continuity of leadership in an age of intensifying global crises.

Roosevelt's political strategy to "speak softly" was essential to the story, as he preferred not to start a war with Germany. Even so, he hoped to demonstrate to Europe that the U.S. Navy, the "big stick," had come of age. T.R. believed the winter exercise to be the moment that the U.S. Navy reach its closest level of parity with England and Germany as military powers, an achievement that was difficult to document in real time. Without open war, military parity could only be assessed by looking at the ways these international rivals reacted to each other, which minor conflicts happened, which ones were avoided, and each nation's level of industrial and technological sophistication. Whether or not Roosevelt threatened to go to war by December 18th, the Germans capitulated before the President's deadline and did not challenge the United States in the Caribbean after the blockade ended. As several naval scholars have asserted, Dewey's order to build a fully staffed and equipped hospital on the island proves that this expanded "winter exercise" was not just for training purposes. This was an active mobilization

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 527; Roosevelt letter to Whitelaw Reid, June 27, 1906, *Roosevelt, Morison, and Blum, Letters, selected and edited by Elting E. Morison*, 318-20.

primed for combat with every contingency addressed, including the possibility of incoming casualties.⁵⁵²

Although the blockade remained in place throughout January 1903, and while the situation remained mostly peaceful until arbitration was settled on February 13th, this did not stop American newspapers from providing daily coverage of the crisis. Nor did it stop them from stressing Dewey's proximity to the crisis and assuring readers of the First Admiral's capacity to counter German aggression. In a news article critical of the ongoing alert status of the American Navy, the Brooklyn (NY) *Standard Union* warned in the January 4 edition that "Uncle George Dewey hasn't yet cut the cable, but there is no telling what he might do," referencing his actions during the Spanish-American War when he cut Spain off from communicating with the Philippines via telegraph.⁵⁵³ Less than two weeks later, with the blockade still in place and the winter exercise still in progress, Dewey and *Mayflower* left Culebra, arriving at the Washington Navy Yard on January 17th. Despite his departure, the press still maintained their storylines. On January 24th, the Buffalo *Courier* commented that "it may be suspected that Admiral Dewey ... [has] an itching to be with a good fleet in Venezuelan waters right now," and on February 6th, the *Star-Gazette* (Elmira, NY) asserted that "the Kaiser may carry his little game to the point where he will not have any navy at all. That is what may happen if he provokes us to the point of turning Dewey loose."⁵⁵⁴ On the eve of February 13th, the last day of arbitration and the blockade, the Hero Admiral cancelled all appointments, spending the day at home with a severe cold, nowhere near the fleet in the South Caribbean. Yet the press still placed him on location in

⁵⁵² Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 47; Kuehn, *America's First General Staff*, 53.

⁵⁵³ "Twenty Pages," *The Standard Union* (Brooklyn, NY), January 4, 1903.

⁵⁵⁴ Buffalo (NY) *Currier*, January 1903; Elmira (NY) *Star-Gazette*, February 6, 1903.

spirit, continuing to refer to the U.S. fleet as “Dewey’s Navy” despite his absence at the crisis’s end, even as late as April 1903.⁵⁵⁵

In the immediate aftermath of the Venezuela crisis, in October 1903, the General Board submitted a proposal to Secretary Moody to increase the pace of naval building. It proposed to construct at least two battleships, and at least thirteen other warships, including cruisers and torpedo boats, every year.⁵⁵⁶ The “2 battleship” plan, intended for Moody to present to Congress, was designed to increase the total number of American battleships to forty-eight to out-pace the Germany naval building program. This plan remained the Board’s building recommendation through 1919, serving as a baseline projection for naval construction, through three Presidents, technological innovations, and the call to war against Germany.⁵⁵⁷ At the same time, scholars at the Naval War College, experts in the Navy Bureaus, and members of Congress began debating whether to continue to build battleships in the current design with several different calibers of guns and coal-burning plants or start building the next generation of warship, the dreadnought. This evolution in battleship design exclusively featured as its main battery large, 12-inch guns (the most powerful navy guns at the time) and new oil-fueled steam engines. However, several years would pass before this debate was decided.

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For over a century, scholars have maintained that the Venezuela Crisis of 1902-1903 pushed the President into expanding the reach of the Monroe Doctrine with what is now known as the Roosevelt Corollary. This addendum, included in his State of the Union Address of

⁵⁵⁵ “German Press Kindly to Roosevelt’s Speech: Temporary Irritation over Admiral Dewey’s Navy Comparison has Passed Away,” Brooklyn (NY) *Daily Eagle*, April 5, 1903.

⁵⁵⁶ Kuehn, *America’s First General Staff*, 54.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

December 6th, 1904, stated that the United States would intervene in the domestic affairs of “irresponsible” Latin American nations to prevent future European interference.⁵⁵⁸ Although he had supported arbitration, T.R. was displeased with the final judgement of The Hague, which gave Germany and England priority over the United States for debt repayment. For most scholars, this is key piece of evidence linking the Venezuela Crisis to the Corollary. Roosevelt himself, however, referred to two other incidents involving the use of naval power that were equally significant to his more jingoistic turn: Panama’s separation from Colombia in November 1903 and the Santo Domingo intervention in February 1904.

While the Venezuela Crisis was nearing its end in early 1903, U.S. Secretary of State John M. Hay and Tomás Herrán of Colombia signed the Hay-Herrán Treaty on January 22nd, intended to set the final parameters to setting up an American canal zone. The agreement was ratified by Congress on May 14th by an overwhelming majority. However, Colombia was at the end of the Thousand Days’ War, a bloody partisan civil war between liberal and conservative factions, and, because of parliamentary disagreement, the Colombian Senate rejected the canal treaty on August 12th.⁵⁵⁹

Believing this was an illegitimate delay tactic, meant to improve the terms of the treaty in their favor, an angered Roosevelt sought another solution. At the same time, the liberal-leaning region of Panama sought to separate itself from Colombia’s conservative government because of the conflict, taking advantage of the recent refusal of the U.S. treaty by the Colombian Senate to gain favor with the Americans. Most citizens in Panama believed that independence, supported

⁵⁵⁸ Roosevelt, “State of the Union Speech,” December 6, 1904, Records of the House of Representatives, 1789-2015 [58th Congress of the United States], RG-233, Digital Collection. National Archives, Washington, D.C. Website: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5752367>. Accessed January 20, 2022.

⁵⁵⁹ Frank Safford and Marco Placios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 247–51.

by the U.S. canal project, would result in an economic bonanza for their new nation if they could separate from Colombia.⁵⁶⁰ As General Castro used the United States to protect Venezuela from the German-Anglo alliance, Panamanian separatists felt that if they could offer a new canal agreement to the American president, the U.S. would protect them from Colombia. Their predictions proved correct.

On October 12th, Panama's leading diplomatic representative, Philippe-Jean Bunua-Varilla, met with President Roosevelt at the White House to discuss the situation and American involvement in it. He was in Washington throughout the month lobbying for support for Panama. Bunua-Varilla, a French engineer and stockholder in the canal company, confirmed to Roosevelt that revolution was coming in November, and asked if the United States would protect the interests of Colombia in the conflict. He also asked whether the U.S. Navy would stop Colombian troop transports from landing in Panama should war break out. The President was non-committal on all these issues; however, he made it clear to Bunua-Varilla that Colombia's rebuke of the Hay-Herrán Treaty had "forfeited any claim upon the U.S." and that he had "no use for a government that would do what that government has done."⁵⁶¹

By the end of October, Roosevelt had ordered eight Navy ships into the waters off Colombia and Panama – five from the Atlantic fleet and three from the Pacific. The only one to arrive before the revolution began was USS *Nashville*, captained by Commander John Hubbard. As the American gunboat arrived off the coast of Colón on November 2, Hubbard received

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Thomas Schoonover, "Max Farrand's Memorandum on the U.S. Role in the Panamanian Revolution of 1903," *Diplomatic History*, volume issue (Fall 1988): 505.

orders from Washington to “prevent landing of any armed forces, either government or insurgent, with hostile intent.”⁵⁶²

The revolution began in the streets of Colón on November 3. Although 500 Colombian troops landed in Panama before *Nashville* could act, Hubbard was able to land a small contingent of his own troops that same day to secure the Panama Railway before Colombian forces could do so. After the arrival of USS *Dixie* and her 400 troops the next day, Colombia could no longer use its navy to move troops into Panama and could not make large-scale maneuvers overland through mountains and jungles during the rainy season. With no additional troops coming and Colombian naval units captured in the Bay of Panama without violence, Panama declared its independence on November 4, relaying that news to Colombia two days later. That same day, Colombian military leaders made inquiries to the United States for help – only to see their requests were answered with an unofficial recognition of Panama’s independence in a telegram from Hay to diplomats in Bogota.⁵⁶³

The United States officially recognized Panama’s sovereignty on November 13th. Five days later, U.S. and Panamanian representatives signed the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, officially establishing the Panama Canal Zone. Roosevelt insisted that “every consideration of international morality and expediency, of duty to the Panama people, and of satisfaction of our own national interests and honor, bade us take immediate action.” He was also proud to be the first world leader to recognize Panama as an independent nation, later noting that “practically all of the countries of the world immediately followed suit.”⁵⁶⁴ Considering the importance T.R. placed on the Panama Canal, his use of naval power in this regard was relatively measured; even

⁵⁶² Lenz, *Power and Policy*, 139; S. Nearing and J. Freeman. *Dollar Diplomacy: A Study in American Imperialism*. (New York: Modern Reader Paperbacks, 1969), 79.

⁵⁶³ Lenz, *Power and Policy*, 139-40; Nearing and Freeman, *Dollar Diplomacy*, 80.

⁵⁶⁴ Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 565.

so, its application was not as well-received by the American public as the 1902-1903 winter exercise had been. This was considered more as an aggressive intervention rather than just a show of force to keep European jingoism in-check.

Soon thereafter, a similar use of naval power in Santo Domingo yielded similar negative criticisms of Roosevelt's foreign policy in Latin America. Yet these criticisms, too, did little to deter T.R.'s jingoism. At the beginning of an era now known as the Banana Wars – a series of revolutions and U.S. military interventions in Latin America from 1898 through the 1930s – the U.S. Navy regularly patrolled conflict areas in the region, reporting back to the ONI with the latest intelligence. On February 1, 1904, the auxiliary cruiser USS *Yankee* was patrolling off the coast of the Dominican Republic, observing clashes between government and rebel forces in the port city of Santo Domingo. The commander sent half a dozen men ashore to contact Dominican officials when their launch was attacked from shore by rebels' small arms fire, which killed an American sailor J.C. Johnson.

An outraged Roosevelt immediately sent in protected cruisers *Newark* and *Columbia* to restore order, protect American interests, and “to punish the man who killed ensign Johnson” as reported in American newspapers.⁵⁶⁵ After a ten-day ceasefire, insurrectionists opened fire on a launch from *Newark* that was escorting an American merchant ship into port; no one was harmed in the attack. Nevertheless, the U.S. Navy responded by shelling rebel-held areas where the shots originated, and landing Marines to capture Fort Ozama, a four-hundred-year-old former Spanish strong hold being used by Dominican insurrectionists as a base.

⁵⁶⁵ “Drastic Action to be Taken in Santo Domingo,” Washington (DC) *Times*, February 6, 1904; “United States Orders Rear-Admiral Wise to End the Quarrels,” Rochester (NY) *Democrat and Chronical*, February 7, 1904.

Although the crisis abated after U.S. military intervention, naval forces and Marines remained in Santo Domingo for the remainder of year. These actions set the stage for a series of subsequent U.S. interventions in the Dominican Republic, carried out through the 1930s. In the week prior to Johnson's killing and resulting military action, newspapers across the United States ran stories about how the Dominican Republic was close to defaulting on debt with several European nations and was declaring publicly that their "great and good friend, the United States" would protect them as they did for Venezuela.⁵⁶⁶

Although the building of the Panama Canal and enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine were popular among the American public, both sides of the partisan press proved rather critical of the role the Roosevelt Administration played in the Panama Revolution and Santo Domingo, particularly when compared to their more positive coverage of Roosevelt's actions in the Venezuelan crisis. A *Puck* cartoon titled "Defining the Doctrine" published on January 22, 1902, showed a Venezuelan citizen pointing to a German battleship to a caricatured Abraham Lincoln, who the artist depicts chastising him for his debts.⁵⁶⁷ Two years later, after the Santo Domingo Affair, *Puck* published the now famous cartoon by William Allen Rogers critiquing Roosevelt's "big stick" jingoism. Roosevelt was drawn as a giant from *Gulliver's Travels* pulling a fleet of U.S. ships behind him with one hand and carried a big stick in his other hand as he stomped by Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Panama.⁵⁶⁸

Years later T.R. would recall that after Colombia denied the treaty, he "directed the Navy Department to station various ships within easy reach of the Isthmus, to be ready to act in the

⁵⁶⁶ "Dominicans Ask for American Protectorate," Philadelphia (PA) *Inquirer*, February 8, 1904.

⁵⁶⁷ Front cover, "Defining the Doctrine," *Puck* Magazine, January 22, 1902.

⁵⁶⁸ William Allen Rogers, photographer, "The Big Stick in the Caribbean Sea," 1904, Image 4384. (Brooklyn, NY: Granger Academic Educational Picture Archive).

<https://www.grangeracademic.com/results.asp?W=3&F=0001&Step=1&screenwidth=1280>. Accessed January 20, 2022.

event of need arising.”⁵⁶⁹ However, Roosevelt also maintained that he “did not lift a finger to incite the revolutionists.” Rather he “simply ceased to stamp out the different revolutionary fuses that were already burning.”⁵⁷⁰ Although the President recognized public opinion, read newspapers daily, and attempted to steer the press in his favor, he also dismissed criticisms of his foreign policy decisions that could “only come with misinformation, or else from a sentimentality which represents both mental weakness and a moral twist.”⁵⁷¹

The Venezuela Crisis had demonstrated to Roosevelt that it was necessary for the United States to intervene in the economic affairs of “irresponsible” Latin American nations before they acted irresponsibly towards Europe. Subsequent events in Panama and Santo Domingo, meanwhile, taught the President that he also needed influence over how these nations interacted with each other, and domestically, to safeguard American interests in Latin America vigorously. Taken together, not only did these instances seemingly justify Roosevelt’s more jingoistic tendencies in his foreign policy more broadly, but his actions in Venezuela, Panama, and Santo Domingo also represented the evolution of civilizing mission into U.S. foreign relations in Latin America.

Orange is the New Black: A New Relationship with the Empire of Japan

Although the intervention in Santo Domingo was a popular topic with newspaper editors and anti-imperialist commentators, the collective attention of American readers, the General Board of the U.S. Navy, and Roosevelt started shifting toward the Pacific with the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904. The conflict was the result of a decade-old dispute

⁵⁶⁹ Richard W. Turk, “The United States Navy and the “Taking” of Panama, 1901-1903,” *Military Affairs*, v. 38, no. 3, October 1974, 92-96; Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 540.

⁵⁷⁰ Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 540.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 566.

over warm water ports in Manchuria and Korea – territories each nation considered its “spheres of influence.” The Japanese Imperial Navy attacked the Russian naval base at Port Arthur in Manchuria three hours before the official declaration of war reached St. Petersburg via telegram.⁵⁷² Less than eighteen months later, the overwhelming defeat of Tsarist forces resulted in the destruction or capture of all eight Russian battleships in the Pacific. It also marked the emergence of Japan’s Meiji Dynasty onto the world stage following three decades of modernization. Scholars have noted that Japan’s victory also challenged notions of white superiority globally as this was the first victory of an Asian power over one of the original Great European Powers, establishing Japan’s imperial aspirations in Asia. Additionally, the Japanese victory signaled the beginning of the end of the Russian monarchy, a process that would eventually culminate with the Russian Revolution during the First World War.⁵⁷³

In the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War, President Roosevelt wanted to demonstrate a military presence in the Pacific without starting a war with the Japanese Imperial Navy. Hoping to use naval power as a unifying force for American allies, T.R. turned to the General Board for a solution on the question of Japan. In the years leading up to the Russo-Japanese War, U.S. policymakers had come to consider Japan a capable power; however, they still considered the German and British navies the American Navy’s greatest threat in the Pacific. The General Board’s first version of War Plan Orange, a U.S. attack on a neutral Japanese homeland, was developed in the second half of 1901, but it did not rise to the level of an executive committee annual “war problem.” Those studies were reserved for Germany (Black) and Britain (Blue).

⁵⁷² Kuehn, *America’s First General Staff*, 68-70.

⁵⁷³ Kenneth Pyle, *Japan in the American Century* (London: The Hampton Press of Harvard Press, 2018), 2-3.

By the time Roosevelt requested a contingency plan be made against Japan during the Russo-Japanese War, this obsolete version of Orange no longer reflected the Imperial Navy's current capabilities, ship numbers, combat experience, and autonomy as a naval power in Asia. Making matters worse for Navy war planners was the death of their intellectual leader and Orange's original designer, Rear Admiral Henry Taylor, who passed away suddenly of heart failure on July 26, 1904.⁵⁷⁴ Taylor was one of the Navy's leading experts on the Pacific, second only perhaps to Mahan. His absence meant a new plan for Orange and a gaping hole in the Board's organizational disposition. Despite his passing, the Board's mission remained unchanged: its professional experts retained the duty it to advise the civilian leaders on naval matters.

Since the General Board's inception, Taylor and Dewey had either hand-selected each member directly or relied on the structure they had established, in which new executive members would be appointed from the highest levels of Navy leadership from specific naval institutions. By consulting the leaders of the Naval War College, Office of Naval Intelligence, the Bureau of Navigation, and the Bureau of Construction and Repair on U.S. naval policy, they ensured cooperation between Navy academia and the eight Bureaus, and a continuation of Taylor's design.⁵⁷⁵ This also set the stage for one of Taylor's final proposals, one that he did not see through before his death: the establishment of a Joint Board of the Navy and Army in late 1905, an idea even more in-line with the German-inspired idea of a General Staff. Each advisory board retained its service identity, but the combined group was consulted on important military matters or combined operations.

⁵⁷⁴ Kuehn, *America's First General Staff*, 47. Author argued that Rear Admiral Taylor's tireless work as the Bureau Chief of Navigation, lead advisor of the General Board, and as one of Roosevelt's leading advisors came at the expensive of his health.

⁵⁷⁵ Henry C. Taylor, USN, "The Fleet," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol. 29 (December 1903), 803.

The first problem that Roosevelt posed to the new group was what do about Japan. Since the late 19th century, when Japan began an ambitious program of modernization and westernization, many U.S. policymakers and citizens had begun to feel more positive about Japan and its people, referring to Japanese as “honorary Aryans” and the “Yankees of the East.”⁵⁷⁶ Throughout his Presidency, Roosevelt demonstrated his own affinity for industrialized Japan in various ways. These included maintaining close diplomatic communication, developing personal relationships with dignitaries like Count Kaneko Kentaro, negotiating in its favor at the Portsmouth Peace Conference, and opposing anti-Asian policies in California. T.R. also supported the Meiji’s claim to Korea publicly as early as 1900, viewing it as “a check-up on Russia,” and promised to side with Japan should any European nations join with the Russians in the conflict.⁵⁷⁷ Following the attack on Port Arthur, the President announced he was “pleased with the Japanese victory” and observed that “Japan is playing our game.”⁵⁷⁸

The game T.R. was referring to was Japan’s desire to establish its own Monroe Doctrine for the region; its first successful defense came against the Russians. Part of this game also included the Meiji founding fathers’ intent to modernize Japan, a strategy to retain parity with Western industrialized nations. Since the late 19th century, Japanese leaders had started building steel warships and adding railroads and telegraph lines to their national infrastructure. They also attached greater importance to other trappings of white European and American society already implemented in Japan, including the manufacturing of consumer goods, wearing of western-style clothing, and the publishing of newspapers, magazines, and books for the public.

⁵⁷⁶ Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise*, 118-9; Robert W. Rydell. *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 30.

⁵⁷⁷ Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise*, 208. TR warned Germany and France that if they assisted Russia “I should promptly side with the Japanese and proceed to whatever length was necessary on her behalf.”

⁵⁷⁸ *New York Times*, February 8th, 1904.

The Meiji industrial transformation had begun as a method to survive white imperialism, which many Japanese leaders felt would eventually cross the Pacific. However, when meshed with traditional notions of honor, religion, and national pride, this Restoration – as Japanese leaders called it – ultimately became the foundation of Japanese exceptionalism. The Meiji Restoration also included the establishment of “State Shinto” as a state religion centered on the divine origin of their emperors. This marked the beginning of emperor worship in modern Japan as a facsimile of the role of God (or Jesus Christ) as the Christian world’s monotheistic focus.⁵⁷⁹ The divinity of the Japanese seat of power ensured the loyalty and synchronicity of purpose, and its practice was considered a non-religious act of national pride.

The Meiji Restoration also featured compulsory education for Japanese children and state-sponsored educational experiences abroad, which sent the nation’s most promising students to the best colleges around the world. In the United States, this included Harvard, Princeton, and other elite universities. When the first two Japanese students to attend Rutgers were asked by a newspaper reporter about what they wanted to learn, one proclaimed: “to build big ships and make big guns to prevent the powers from taking possession of [my] country.”⁵⁸⁰

Kaneko Kentaro was also one of these international students, attending Harvard Law in the late 1880s/early 1890. While there, he met fellow Harvard graduate Theodore Roosevelt, who was then serving as the U.S. Civil Service Commissioner. At Harvard, Kaneko heard the same lessons about Americans’ Aryan heritage and white superiority as T.R. had from his professors, lessons which helped inform his opinions on civilizing missions and racial

⁵⁷⁹ Yijiang Zhong, “Freedom, Religion and the Making of the Modern State in Japan, 1868–89,” *Asian Studies Review*. Vol. 38, (March 2014): 53–70.

⁵⁸⁰ Foster Rhea Dulles, *Yankees and Samurai: America’s Role in the Emergence of Modern Japan, 1791-1900* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1965), 203.

superiority. In 1904, Kaneko would reconnect with Roosevelt in Washington, where he helped to convince the President to arbitrate the end of the Russo-Japanese War.

Roosevelt viewed the Meiji Dynasty as a kindred civilizing force. He saw Japan as the singular Asian nation expanding its influence using a western-style industrial military and a progressive urge to uplift those they deemed “uncivilized.” With common interest in the Japanese war effort and the Meiji’s civilizing mission, Roosevelt and Kaneko met regularly during the conflict, including a series of secret meetings beginning in late 1904 that would eventually lead to T.R.’s role as arbiter between Japan and Russia at the Portsmouth Peace Conference after the war concluded. Kaneko became popular with the American press as well, publishing several articles comparing the goals and aspirations of each nation, as well as being a noted expert on his home nation. During these talks, Roosevelt asked Kaneko to suggest a book that would give the President insight on the Japanese people; Kaneko chose a book on the Bushido Code, the chivalric code of the samurai, hoping to appeal to Roosevelt’s appreciation for honor and notions of traditional masculinity.

After an overwhelming naval victory against the Russians in the Battle of Tsushima in late May 1905, the Japanese victory was nearly complete. Following his discussions with Kaneko, Roosevelt agreed to arbitrate. In a telegram to Kaneko dated July 8, 1905, T.R. expressed his admiration:

Japan is the only nation in Asia that understands the principles and methods of Western civilization. She has proved that she can assimilate Western civilization yet not break up her own heritage. All the Asiatic Nations are now faced with the urgent necessity of justifying themselves to the present age. Japan should be their natural leader in that process and their protector during the transition stage much as the U.S. assume the leadership of the American continent many years ago, and by means of the Monroe

Doctrine, preserve the Latin American nations from European interference while they are maturing in their independence.⁵⁸¹

With the war nearly over and negotiations pending in August, the President wanted to further strengthen the U.S.-Japanese relationship. He chose to do it in a very public way. On July 8, the same day that T.R. sent his telegram to Kaneko, the luxury liner S.S. *Manchuria* departed San Francisco on a diplomatic mission to Japan and the Philippines. On board were Secretary of War William Howard Taft, more than one hundred Congressmen and diplomats, and the President's daughter Alice.⁵⁸² Dubbed "the Imperial Cruise" by historian James Bradley, the trip was intended to sanctify the Japan-United States relationship and help to establish guidelines for Japan's post-war colonial aspirations while the nation was still at war with Russia.⁵⁸³ The inclusion of media darling Alice Roosevelt, the President's daughter, to the passenger list guaranteed a heightened sense of awareness by American newspapers.

After a series of state dinners, meetings, and military parades offered by the Japanese, the cruise culminated in a meeting between Taft and Japanese Prime Minister Katsura Taro on July 27, 1905. Although no formal treaty was signed, the two men did issue official statements of intent, agreeing that the Philippines would remain under American control and that the Japanese government was free to pursue its colonial interests on the Korean peninsula.⁵⁸⁴

Fulfilling his promise to Japan and the American people, Roosevelt took a more proactive role in Japanese affairs after the war. Most notably, he mediated the negotiation of the Treaty of

⁵⁸¹ Viscount Kentaro Kaneko, L.L.D., "A 'Japanese Monroe Doctrine' and Manchuria," *Contemporary Japan 1, No. 1*, September 1932: 175-84. Roosevelt to Baron Kentaro Kaneko July 8, 1905, 176-7.

⁵⁸² James Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise: A Secret History of Empire and War* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2009), 1-5.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Tyler Dennett, "President Roosevelt's Secret Pact with Japan," *The Current History Magazine* (October 1924). The United States and Japan were proceeding to the Portsmouth Peace Conference on a unified front, and with the Empire's overwhelming victory, all evidence indicated that Roosevelt would negotiate in Japan's favor.

Portsmouth in August 1905, which settle the terms of the conflict. Roosevelt won the 1906 Nobel Peace Prize and international praise for the effort, and he considered the treaty one of his greatest foreign policy achievements.⁵⁸⁵ While Roosevelt received considerable acclaim for these efforts, he did have his detractors. News that the Portsmouth Treaty favored the Japanese over a “white Christian nation” stirred anti-Asian activists on the West Coast of the United States and Canada.⁵⁸⁶ Roosevelt found it increasingly more difficult to “speak softly” to Japan without angering xenophobic constituents in the Western states. Complicating matters further, Meiji officials criticized the terms of Portsmouth claiming that it did not reflect the total victory Japan achieved against Russia.⁵⁸⁷ Specifically, they pointed to a stipulation in the agreement that called for Japan and Russia to evacuate all military forces from Manchuria in eighteen months, returning all captured provinces to China.

On top of the anti-Asian rhetoric printed daily in West Coast newspapers throughout 1905, racial tensions intensified the following year, when the San Francisco School Board voted to segregate its 93 children of Japanese descent out of the twenty-three public schools they attended and into one facility. In making this move, the School Board was bowing to pressure from the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League, a group of private citizens and business owners that sought to extend the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) to other Asian Americans, segregate Japanese school children, prevent the hiring of Asian Americans, and organize propaganda campaigns to address what they thought was a “public menace.”⁵⁸⁸ This story made headlines across the country and across the Pacific in Japan. The tumult and devastation of San Francisco’s Great Earthquake on April 18th, 1906 only intensified the racial animus. As emotions ran high

⁵⁸⁵ Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 587.

⁵⁸⁶ San Francisco (CA) *Examiner*, July 31, 1905; Los Angeles *Times*, July 31; San Francisco *Chronicle*, August 6.

⁵⁸⁷ Pyle, *Japan in the American Century*, 24.

⁵⁸⁸ “Metcalf’s Report Pro-Japanese?” San Francisco (CA) *Call*, December 11, 1906.

and resources diminished, many white San Franciscans turned on Japanese Americans in the devastated city. Tokyo newspapers reported that spring that the segregationist policies were an “insult” to Japan’s national pride.⁵⁸⁹

As tensions mounted, President Roosevelt decided to act. He believed that he could not allow a city school board to insult Japan, unravel the work done at Portsmouth the previous year, and defy his foreign policy aims. T.R. used his traditional bully pulpit of the annual address to Congress to make his position clear on the treatment of Japanese Americans. He admonished the School Board proclaiming that “to shut them out from the public schools is a wicked absurdity” attempting to distance the rest of the nation from this anti-Asian policy.⁵⁹⁰ Roosevelt also warned Californians that their actions could derail the United States’ Darwinist competition with Japan, asserting that “throughout Japan, Americans are well treated, and any failure on the part of Americans at home to treat the Japanese with a like courtesy and consideration is by just so much a confession of inferiority in our civilization.”⁵⁹¹

Before he gave the speech, the President ordered his Secretary of Commerce and Labor, Victor Metcalf, to travel to San Francisco to investigate the policies and have them revoked. Although Metcalf could not find a solution, he reported back to the President that there was no basis for the segregation, a remark that drew criticism from newspapers on the West Coast. The San Francisco *Call*’s front-page headline asked the rhetorical question “Metcalf’s report pro-

⁵⁸⁹ Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 35-6.

⁵⁹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, “Sixth Annual Message to Congress,” December 4, 1906. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/sixth-annual-message-4>. Accessed January 20, 2022.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

Japanese?”⁵⁹² Despite Metcalf’s actions and the ensuing public relations gaffe, Roosevelt would nevertheless name him Secretary of the Navy shortly after he returned to Washington.

Following Metcalf’s report, the President invited a delegation from San Francisco to discuss a compromise in January 1907. In exchange for the School Board removing the ban on Japanese students, T.R. offered to slow the pace of Japanese immigration. Still hoping to reduce tensions across the Pacific, Roosevelt offered an appeasement to Japan in what became known as the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907. Under its terms, the U.S. government promised to protect the rights of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans currently in the United States, while the Meiji government agreed not to issue new passports to the United States for most Japanese citizens.

The President’s attempt to tamp-down racial strife to benefit his foreign policy aims demonstrated this respect for Japan and an understanding of how American racial attitudes worked against U.S. interest abroad. In the end, however, this agreement was not ratified by Congress. It would eventually be nullified by the 1924 Immigrant Act, which effectively banned all Asian immigration to the United States.

Despite Roosevelt’s efforts, tensions continued to build between the United States and Japan throughout 1907, both internationally and domestically. On July 30th, Japan re-established relations with Russia under the Russo-Japanese Agreement. The Japanese government also delayed its withdrawal from Manchuria and publicly questioned the “Open Door Policy” of the United States in China.⁵⁹³ These developments concerned Roosevelt greatly. At the same time, a series of anti-Asian riots, organized by the Asiatic Exclusion League, spread to several cities on

⁵⁹² “Metcalf’s Report Pro-Japanese?” *San Francisco (CA) Call*, December 11, 1906.

⁵⁹³ Matsui, Masato. “The Russo-Japanese Agreement of 1907: Its Causes and the Progress of Negotiations.” *Modern Asian Studies* 6, No. 1 (1972): 33.

the Pacific Coast, most famously in San Francisco in May and Bellingham, Washington in September. These events marked the pinnacle of the Japanese War Scare of 1906-1907. With domestic violence against Asian-Americans on the rise, coupled with an ever-increasingly aggressive Japanese Empire vis-à-vis China, the President felt that he had reached an impasse about what to do about Japan.

Although Roosevelt had hoped to demonstrate strength in the Pacific without threatening Japan, the president increasingly felt that a more delicate approach was required. The United States was not prepared for war against Japan in the Pacific, given that a majority of its fleet and naval infrastructure remained in the Atlantic. How, Roosevelt wondered, could he simultaneously demonstrate U.S. military strength to Japan while also extending a hand in friendship? Within a seemingly minor proposal by the Joint Board of the Army and Navy— to send the Atlantic Fleet on a cruise to the Pacific to test ship capabilities and secure coaling locations abroad – the president found an answer to this dilemma.

In addition to its various diplomatic implications, the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War also marked the end of the dreadnought debate in the United States, and, moreover, within military advisory boards worldwide. Before the conflict, naval strategists believed that warships should have a mix of larger 10-to-12-inch guns for long-range combat and smaller guns for when enemy combatants engaged at close ranges. Advocates for this design of ship, which would eventually be known as a “pre-dreadnought,” argued the smaller guns would increase firing rates and accuracy as the ships closed in on each other. At the battles of Yellow Sea in August 1904 and Tsushima in May 1905, the Russian and Japanese navies had proved that the accuracy of large-caliber guns had improved enough for enemy fleets to engage at up to thirteen kilometers with devastating effects on each fleets’ ships. This was particularly true for the vessels of the

Russian Navy.⁵⁹⁴ Although Japan was already making all-big gun ships during the war, it was Great Britain's launch of HMS *Dreadnought* on February 10th, 1906 that rendered the hundreds of pre-dreadnoughts around the world obsolete.⁵⁹⁵ By December that year, construction began on the Navy's first all-big gun dreadnoughts, USS *South Carolina* and *Michigan*.

Conclusion

As this dissertation has made clear, Stephen Luce, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and Theodore Roosevelt spent most of their professional careers analyzing naval history and utilizing their expertise to advocate for the United States to build a modern navy. These navalists believed that the more the American public – and by extension, the members of Congress they elected – knew about naval matters, the more of their ideas might be turned into policy.

Inspired by Germany's use of a 'general staff' as military advisors to the Kaiser, Henry Clay Taylor, a Navy officer and Luce-Mahan protégé, developed the General Board of the U.S. Navy to accomplish similar goals. Not only did this board of experts endorse Roosevelt's navalist vision for the country, but it operated as the *de facto* Secretary of the Navy advising the President on naval strategy directly. This allowed T.R. to command the Navy from the White House and helped him to set foreign policy goals based on a realistic and wholistic assessment of U.S. military capability in a global context. The cruise of George Dewey's fleet to Puerto Rico to establish boundaries for the Monroe Doctrine in Venezuela, the long-term plan to construct a global navy, and the shifting of the national focus to Asia after the Russo-Japanese War were all

⁵⁹⁴ Robert Forczyk, *Russian Battleship vs Japanese Battleship, Yellow Sea 1904–05* (London: Osprey, 2009), 56-57, 72. Forczyk argues that one of the most significant reasons that Japan defeated Russia so quickly was the advanced fire control systems of the Japanese Navy.

⁵⁹⁵ Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War* (New York: Random House, 1991).

ideas that had originated with the General Board. The addition of Theodore Roosevelt to the equation was the vital ingredient, allowing those plans to come to fruition.

Although T.R. was planning to leave office in 1909, he still made the Navy one of his top priorities during his last few years in office. From 1907 to 1909, Roosevelt was to launch the most ambitious Board vision yet, and the greatest public relations campaign in American military history to that point. According to the General Board's original plans, the worldwide journey of the Atlantic Fleet, known more famously as the Cruise of the Great White Fleet, was to be part-military exercise and part-diplomatic mission. However, it quickly evolved into a monumental public relations campaign – a campaign that had all the earmarks and spectacle of Theodore Roosevelt-led initiative.

Chapter 5 - 'Feast, Frolic, or Fight': The Diplomacy of the Great White Fleet:

Having steadily gained influence throughout Theodore Roosevelt's presidency, the navalists' power reached its pinnacle in 1906 as many of their prognostications about national defense and foreign policy in the 1880s and 1890s became self-fulfilling prophecies for the United States. American naval power was protecting both U.S. shipping interests and an empire abroad. American companies were building the Panama Canal and, more importantly, it was under U.S. control. And, American shipbuilders were constructing the next generation of warship, two all-big gun battleships akin to the groundbreaking HMS *Dreadnought* launched by the British in December 1906.⁵⁹⁶

Largely due to Roosevelt's enthusiasm as a progressive naval reformer, the popularity of the Navy remained high almost a decade after the Battle of Manila Bay. The President continued to sell Congress on greater expenditures to build dreadnoughts utilizing the people's fear of an emerging arms race with the British, Japan's victory against Russia in 1905, and the ever-present threat of Germany as a maritime power. Naval advocates and jingoist politicians turned to speeches and articles in newspapers and magazines to elevate these fears and, at the same time, proselytize national strength through use of a global navy. Despite this, Congress was growing

⁵⁹⁶ The launch of HMS *Dreadnought*, a steam-turbine-driven ship featuring all large-caliber, uniform gun platforms revolutionized warship design rendering all previous battleships obsolete. In 1906 the Royal Navy was by far the largest maritime force in the world, but after the launch of *Dreadnought*, that advantage dropped to just one ship. See Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War* (New York: Random House, 1991). USS *South Carolina* and USS *Michigan* were the first two "dreadnought-style" battleships built by the U.S. and commissioned in 1910.

increasingly cautious about the naval budget. Although the navalists had made considerable progress, a lack of federal funding threatened to reverse those hard-earned goals.

Understanding the power of publicity and armed with a plan from the General Board of the U.S. Navy, Roosevelt decided to send the Atlantic Fleet on a military exercise to the Pacific. The President saw this cruise as a way to achieve two goals: to rally public opinion in favor of his navalist agenda at home and to burnish the United States' image overseas. Once launched, the cruise quickly assumed the characteristics of Roosevelt's brand of American domestic and foreign policy. Although the Cruise was not the President's idea initially, the spectacle it became was pure *Theodore Roosevelt*. "In my own judgment," he recollected, "the most important service that I rendered to peace was the voyage of the battle fleet around the world."⁵⁹⁷

Many scholars argue that the worldwide cruise of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet from 1907 to 1909, which came to be known as "the Cruise of the Great White Fleet," was first and foremost a military mission. It was designed to display American power and seamanship, complete with tactical maneuvers, mechanical trials, and gunnery practice.⁵⁹⁸ It was also intended to test the capabilities of the now obsolete "pre-dreadnoughts" of the American Navy. Building on this scholarship, this chapter analyzes how the United States Navy was received around the world, how the press covered the cruise, and how the Roosevelt Administration used it as a means of diplomacy, domestically and internationally. This chapter also calls for a greater understanding of the cruise as an international public relations tour for the United States, the likes of which had

⁵⁹⁷ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1913), 592.

⁵⁹⁸ Newspapers as early as April 1908 began using the moniker "the Great White Fleet" to describe the sixteen battleships of the Atlantic Fleet deployed by Roosevelt in December 1907: "Great White Fleet Comes to Its Own as Welkin Rings Welcome," San Francisco *Examiner*, April 15, 1908; "The Great White Fleet," Long Beach *Press*, April 16, 1908. For more information on the military aspects of the cruise, see James R. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988), Henry J. Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy: The U.S. Navy and the Birth of the American Century* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009), and Kenneth Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet: American Naval Power Comes of Age* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

never been seen before. The Cruise reaffirmed international alliances, formed new ones, secured coaling locations abroad, and bolstered support for the Navy on the American West Coast, which strengthened the hand of the General Board and Roosevelt.⁵⁹⁹

While the first leg of the cruise met all the military requirements suggested by the General Board, the Army and Navy Joint Board, and Navy Bureau chiefs, the remaining legs of the cruise were equal parts publicity stunt and diplomatic mission. These visits, often paid for by private citizens and local organizations, were intended to extend a hand of friendship to allies globally, particularly Japan, and to raise awareness of national security on the West Coast of the United States.⁶⁰⁰ Through an examination of first-hand accounts of the U.S. Navy's reception in ports around the world and the press coverage that followed the ships, this chapter demonstrates how successful the media coverage of "the Great White Fleet" was in selling American exceptionalism and American navalism to a global audience – including to U.S. citizens. As these sources suggest, there was overwhelming support for the American Navy in every port of call, in the United States and abroad. Millions lined the shores and docks in Argentina, Australia, Egypt, and the Philippines just to name a few.

This chapter also argues that each leg of the worldwide cruise of the Atlantic Fleet exemplified an important aspect of Roosevelt's navalist reforms, national security concerns, and foreign policy goals. The first leg, in Latin America, confirmed the Roosevelt Corollary, showcasing how American power could be implemented in the region. The second leg, along the West Coast of the United States, revealed deficiencies in American naval infrastructure while also giving citizens confidence that the Navy could protect them from Japan. The third leg, to

⁵⁹⁹ Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet*, 155. An industrial age fleet of its size – sixteen battleships and support vessels – had never circumnavigated the global in such a manner.

⁶⁰⁰ Reckner, *Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, ix-x.

New Zealand and Australia, put the British on notice that the U.S. Navy was establishing a wider sphere of influence in the Pacific. The fourth leg, to Japan and China, served as a diplomatic mission, intended to show mutual respect, and expand economic opportunities in the East. The final leg, from China west through the Mediterranean Sea, was intended to solidify relationships in Europe. The chance occurrence of a major earthquake in southern Italy in late 1908 provided a fortuitous opportunity for the U.S. Navy to showcase its peacetime capabilities.

“The Cruise of the Great White Fleet” was the culmination of the navalists’ three-decades-long efforts to modernize the Navy and mold public opinion in favor of continued naval preparedness, particularly during times of peace. Fueled by boosters within the United States since the late 19th century, the popularity of the United States Navy had now gone global. By the time Theodore Roosevelt left office in 1909, American naval power was firmly in an upward trajectory, second only to the navies of Great Britain and Germany. After more than three decades of effort, the navalists had won the battle for hearts and minds of Americans, and of many other people around the world.

Launching the Fleet at Jamestown

On July 27, 1907, Roosevelt called a meeting at his home in Oyster Bay, New York inviting the new Navy Secretary Victor F. Metcalf, members of the General Board, and several Navy Bureau chiefs to attend. Their charge was to discuss the details of the original General Board plan to send the Atlantic Fleet to the Pacific. The President had decided before this meeting to send the ships, and, initially, he agreed with the Navy Department, Bureaus, and the Board that the cruise should prioritize the military aspects of the journey.

It took less than a week for the cruise plans that were developed in this meeting to be leaked to New York newspapers. Also included in the news was a positive response to the plan from the Japanese Ambassador Aoki, who indicated that Meiji leadership did not consider the action provocative.⁶⁰¹ Although the mission was obviously a military exercise, the decision to have all sixteen battleships painted peacetime white with gilded bows carved into the bow in red, white, blue, and gold belied the fleet's equally important mission objective: displaying American goodwill. Admiral "Fighting Bob" Evans, a hero of the Battle of Santo Domingo during the Spanish-American War, was the natural choice to lead the cruise as the current Commander-in-Chief of the North Atlantic Fleet. Although Roosevelt's opponents in Congress – most notably Maine Senator Eugene Hale of the naval appropriations committee – threatened to defund the cruise, T.R. famously called their bluff, reminding legislators that the fleet had already put to sea and that it would need to be fully funded to bring them home. His decision was "absolute" on the matter. Surprisingly, one of the cruise's most vocal critics was Roosevelt's long-time ally Mahan, who felt that sending the fleet would leave the East Coast undefended and risk provoking war with Japan. This disagreement led Roosevelt to distance himself from Mahan, his former colleague and ally, for the remainder of his presidency.⁶⁰²

From the start, the press was very active in spinning the narrative of this cruise. Though some papers were against it, most were in favor, and the news was overwhelmingly positive throughout the trip. Several prominent newspapers sent reporters and photographers with the ships, including the pro-cruise newspapers New York *Herald* and New York *Sun*. The *Sun*'s special correspondent was journalist Franklin Matthews. Matthews, who had become famous as

⁶⁰¹ New York *Herald* and New York *Times*, July 3, 1907.

⁶⁰² Richard Turk, *The Ambiguous Relationship: Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

a war correspondent during the Spanish-American and Russo-Japanese Wars, was considered one of the foremost military experts in the press. He documented the entire journey via telegraph back to New York daily. He also wrote his complete account in two volumes, *With the Battle Fleet* and *Back to Hampton Roads*, published in 1909.⁶⁰³ Although Matthews initially reported negatively, his observations became increasingly positive as trip went on, echoing observations of other newspaper reporters.

Attempts to put a positive spin on the Fleet's cruise began even before its ships departed from the United States. Much to the chagrin of its sailors and commanders, the North Atlantic Fleet became the lead attraction at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition. Held at Sewell Point on Hampton Roads in Norfolk, Virginia, this event marked the 300th anniversary of the establishment of the Jamestown colony. From the beginning of the exposition on April 27 until its end on December 1st, the fleet, including its sixteen battleships led by Evans' flagship USS *Connecticut*, remained in the waters off Norfolk. While there, they participated in regular naval parades and mock battle maneuvers, and welcoming expo visitors and dignitaries from around the world. From time to time, several ships of the fleet broke formation for patrol duties and some returned to their ports of origin, but Evans was instructed to always leave a contingent of ships behind for the crowds.

Although the Jamestown Exposition is most often remembered for its infamous problems – economic failures, low crowd numbers, and the controversial “Negro Building,” an exhibit that highlighted the “progress” of African Americans – the event also deserves to be remembered as a

⁶⁰³ Franklin Matthews, *With the Battle Fleet: Cruise of the Sixteen Battleships of the United States Atlantic Fleet from Hampton Roads to the Golden Gate*. (New York: B.W. Huebsch Publishers, 1909); Matthews. *Back to Hampton Roads: Cruise of the United States Atlantic Fleet from San Francisco to Hampton Roads*. (New York: B.W. Huebsch Publishers, 1909).

key moment in navalist history.⁶⁰⁴ Despite less-than-expected attendance, a consistent draw for the fair was the waterfront. There, crowds witnessed warships from around the world, Civil War re-enactments of the Battle of Hampton Roads, and ships of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet as they prepared for the great journey, which was being written about in newspapers across the country.

News of the cruise first broke three months into the expo, and the Fleet became its own propaganda campaign. Most of the ships were present for the closing ceremonies on December 1st, but it took eight days for all sixteen battleships to rejoin at Hampton Roads, where they remained until their departure for South America on December 16th. All sixteen battleships formed into two parallel lines of eight vessels each, led by squadron leaders USS *Connecticut* and *Minnesota*. They dropped anchor on the waters next to the Chamberlain Hotel, which hosted luncheons, dinners, and a Grand Ball for the sailors and officers during “Naval Farewell Week” from December 9th to 13th.⁶⁰⁵ Hinting at the multifaceted nature of the mission, Admiral Evans told the press that “his men were ready for a feast, frolic, or fight,” only one of which was an official service duty.⁶⁰⁶

The almost week-long celebration culminated in President Roosevelt’s scheduled naval review on December 16, 1907. T.R. had already paid a visit to the expo, going there on opening day for the initial naval review. At the fair’s end, he returned to see off the North Atlantic Fleet personally from the Presidential yacht, USS *Mayflower*. The fleet’s presence at the expo was meant to be pure spectacle, appealing to foreign Admirals, Congressmen on both sides of the political aisle, newspaper editors, thrill-seekers, consumers, and children of all ages. The *Mayflower* received a simultaneous twenty-one-gun salute from all sixteen battleships, and a

⁶⁰⁴ Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 73, 197.

⁶⁰⁵ Reckner, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet*, 21-22.

⁶⁰⁶ “Evans Ready for a Frolic or a Fight,” Los Angeles *Herald*, November 4, 1907.

second salute from nearby Fort Monroe. Several accounts of this moment recall an emotional Roosevelt proclaiming to his Navy Secretary, “did you ever see such a fleet? Isn’t it magnificent? Oughtn’t we all feel proud?” After the review, the admirals and ship commanders boarded the *Mayflower* for a final word and photo opportunity with the President. According to the *Buffalo Morning Express*, T.R. welcomed “half a dozen photographers” from “newspapers and illustrated periodicals” to capture this event for publication.⁶⁰⁷ As the fleet began to move out from Hampton Roads, forming into a single line as it transitioned into the Atlantic, the President ordered *Mayflower* to steam alongside, prompting some journalists to comment that the President might “join the fleet.”⁶⁰⁸

The showcasing of the North Atlantic Fleet at Hampton Roads left an indelible mark on the town of Norfolk. Just eight years later, the Navy would move its fleet operations headquarters to the exhibit site. The base expanded even further during Woodrow Wilson’s presidency, eventually becoming the largest naval station in the world. A handful of original buildings from the exposition site are still being used at Naval Station Norfolk today, including the Admiral’s quarters. This was the first of several locations on the path of the Great White Fleet that became future navy bases or centers of naval construction after its visit.⁶⁰⁹

The First Leg: Latin America, the Navy, and the Monroe Doctrine

The first leg of the cruise took the fleet and its support ships – which included torpedo boats and several colliers on loan from Britain – from Hampton Roads through the Caribbean, down the East Coast of South America, through the Straits of Magellan in southern Chile, and

⁶⁰⁷ “Below the Sea Rim Now,” *Buffalo (NY) Morning Express*, December 17, 1907.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁹ Reckner, *Theodore Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet*, 8.

back north up the West Coast to Mexico. The 14,556-mile, four-month journey was an arduous one. The fleet's 14,000-plus sailors and officers were tested on every aspect of modern seamanship, coordinated fleet maneuvers, and advanced gunnery. This military work was broken up by shore leave and official visits to Trinidad, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Mexico. In Roosevelt's mind, this represented essential military training. In his annual message to Congress on December 7th, 1907, the President proclaimed that "the only way by which to teach officers and men how to handle the fleet so as to meet every possible strain and emergency in time of war is to have them practice under similar conditions in time of peace."⁶¹⁰ Privately, T.R. wanted all "failures, blunders, and shortcomings to be made apparent in a time of peace and not in time of war."⁶¹¹

With the new American dreadnought USS *South Carolina* currently under construction at the William Cramp and Sons Shipyard in Philadelphia and her sister-ship, USS *Michigan*, at the New York Shipping Company, it was more important than ever to test ship designs, systems, and weaponry. This first leg provided ample opportunity. This part of the cruise through the Caribbean and Latin America focused mostly on its military aspects, so it stands to reason that official state visits to these ports represented a physical manifestation of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. That included not-so-subtle indications to Europe, particularly Great Britain and Germany, that Latin America was still off limits to further colonial expansion.

The true extent of the cruise was not known until the ships were underway in route to the Caribbean. Even the sailors themselves had no idea they were going to be circumnavigating of

⁶¹⁰ Roosevelt, "Seventh Annual Message to Congress," December 7, 1907. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/seventh-annual-message-4>. Accessed January 20, 2022.

⁶¹¹ "Cruise of the Great White Fleet," Naval History and Heritage Command, history.navy.mil. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/c/cruise-great-white-fleet-mckinley.html>, Accessed December 20, 2021.

the earth until the day the fleet departed. On December 16th, using the ships' inter-fleet telegraph transmitters, Admiral Evans instructed all ships that after a stay in California, the fleet was to steam home west via the Suez Canal. This communiqué, though initially intended to be secret, was quickly picked up by land telegraph operators and subsequently leaked to the press. While the President and Metcalf denied the report, Evans backtracked, stating days later that it was his belief that this was their mission.⁶¹² The truth was somewhere in between. The original intent was to steam the ships into the Pacific but no visits to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, or beyond were planned; so, the true itinerary ended the cruise in California.⁶¹³ Despite this error, the scope of the trip was not public knowledge as late as May 14th, when newspapers reported that the cruise would "end in San Francisco."⁶¹⁴

The extravagance and level of public excitement for the fleet's various visits in Latin America depended on the current state of affairs between the United States and that particular nation. In the case of Trinidad, a British colony, this also reflected the ambiguous relationship the United States had with Great Britain. The six-day visit to the Port of Spain in Trinidad could have been a public relations disappointment for the Navy. There, the Trinidadian people were celebrating the beginning of the annual horse racing season that begin in late December, largely ignoring the Navy's presence. However, newspapers in the United States painted a vastly different picture than Matthews' accounts, emphasizing the considerable level of enthusiasm by the people of Trinidad. The crews of the fleet spent Christmas Week aboard their own ships, celebrating with music, gift exchanges, and religious ceremonies but with very little fanfare. Despite the spectacle of sixteen battleships off the coast and hundreds of American sailors

⁶¹² Reckner, *Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 27.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ "Big Fleet at Magdalena Bay," *The Eagle* (Bryan, TX), March 14, 1908.

coming ashore, little was prepared in advance for their visit – an indicator of the somewhat tepid opinions of Great Britain about the presence of the U.S. fleet in the West Indies and the overall purpose of the cruise.⁶¹⁵

Looming over the Navy's visit to Trinidad was the Swettenham-Davis Affair of 1907, also known as the Jamaica Incident, which had just taken place the previous year and was covered extensively in U.S. and British newspapers.⁶¹⁶ On January 15th, 1907, American naval forces in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba responded to a humanitarian crisis after an earthquake hit Jamaica, but U.S. Rear Admiral Charles Davis broke protocol by not using his guns to salute the British colonial flag. The British governor of Jamaica, Sir Alexander Swettenham, was also offended that Davis met with his subordinate at the initial landings, even though it was the Governor who retired earlier in the day and was unavailable. These acts angered Swettenham, who called for an immediate withdrawal of American troops even though they believed their aid was needed for earthquake victims.⁶¹⁷ Although the *New York Times* asserted that Swettenham was "justified" in his criticisms, the Governor was famous for his anti-American attitude and the negative publicity led to his resignation later that year.⁶¹⁸

One year later, the affair was still fresh in the minds of American officers and British colonial officials, not only in Jamaica but also in Trinidad. When the Atlantic Fleet arrived there, the British Governor of Trinidad, Sir Henry Moore Jackson, refused to meet Rear Admiral Evans

⁶¹⁵ Reckner, *Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 28-9.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid, 29. "London Waits for Reports: Some Dispatches Suggest that Gov. Swettenham was Justified." *New York Times*, January 22, 1907; "Jamaican Businessmen Score Swettenham," *The Herald Democrat* (Leadville, CO), January 30, 1907; William N. Tilchin, "Theodore Roosevelt, Anglo-American Relations, and the Jamaica Incident of 1907," *Diplomatic History* 19:3 (1995): 385-405.

⁶¹⁷ Tilchin, "Theodore Roosevelt, Anglo-American Relations, and the Jamaica Incident of 1907," 388-90.

⁶¹⁸ Theodore Roosevelt described Swettenham as "an old-school tory with an old-school tory tendency to dislike everything American" in letter to George Trevelyn, November 23, 1906, Elting E. Morison, ed. *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt: The Big Stick, 1905-1909* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 5, 499. "London Waits for Reports ..." *New York Times*, January 22, 1907.

aboard his flagship, instead requesting a call at the governor's house in Port of Spain – a break with international naval protocols. The U.S. Navy repaid the muted reception and change of venue by only sending a small contingent of officers to a reception later that night that had been organized for hundreds of American sailors.⁶¹⁹

Matthews did not attempt to embellish the visit whatsoever, commenting on the status of re-coaling efforts and the sailors' boredom with cities and towns that "seemed closed."⁶²⁰ With a 3,300-plus mile journey to Brazil next on the schedule, refueling the ships was the top priority in Port of Spain. "Let the truth be known!" Matthews declared, noting that "Trinidad didn't warm up the fleet at all" and that the people regarded the sailors with "indifference." He also recalled seeing just "three American flags flying over stores" during in his time ashore.⁶²¹ Although Matthews did mention the horse racing season might have been a factor, the *Sun* reporter was quick to dispute that notion, arguing "that [horse racing] never interfered with enthusiasm over an American fleet before."⁶²²

In American newspapers, by contrast, the visit was depicted as a rousing success, which included parties, celebrations, and large crowds of local onlookers. The New York *Tribune*, for example, reported that the U.S. ships and sailors "were objects of special interest by the whole populace, who found time to make the occasion a gala one" and "pleasing decorations greeted the eye at every turn."⁶²³ By the end of the visit, however, both Matthews and American journalists reported that "thousands of residents climbed the surrounding hills" for one last look at the U.S. fleet as it departed.⁶²⁴

⁶¹⁹ Reckner, *Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 29.

⁶²⁰ Matthews, *With the Fleet*, 38.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Ibid., 38-9.

⁶²³ "Welcome to Warships: The Fleet in Trinidad," *New York Tribune*, December 25, 1907.

⁶²⁴ "Admiral Wants to Return Soon," *Democrat and Chronical* (Rochester, NY), December 30, 1907.

Although one could not tell from the press coverage, the Atlantic Fleet's receptions by the people of Brazil, Chile, and Peru proved vastly different from their counterparts in Trinidad. Visits to ports of call in South American countries included several multi-national displays of naval power, reviews by heads of state, lavish parties and dinners, and parade attendees that numbered in the hundreds-of-thousands.⁶²⁵ In South America, press accounts and Matthews' observations begin to echo one another, and would continue to do so for the rest of the journey.

The fleet arrived in the first of these countries, Brazil, on January 12th, 1908. In the port of Rio de Janeiro, it was greeted by three Brazilian Navy ships. As the fleet passed by another dozen other Brazilian vessels, the German cruiser *Bremen*, and the port's defensive fortification, all of them began to fire their guns in salute. Each day spent in Rio was filled with multiple venues of entertainment, food, and festivities, designed to appease the tastes of both officers and enlisted men. Evans and his highest-level commanders met with Brazilian leaders, diplomats, and fellow officers, while their sailors partied nightly with Rio locals.⁶²⁶

The festivities were momentarily tarnished on the second day of the visit, due to a fight between American sailors and Brazilian civilians, which led to one death and several injuries. When an investigation revealed it was not the fault of the visitors, however, apologies were made by locals and the "frolic" continued.⁶²⁷ Downplaying the incident, Matthews called it "merely a saloon brawl."⁶²⁸ Newspapers around the world later reported that the Brazilian police force had foiled an "anarchists' plot to destroy part of the American fleet," noting that thanks to the help of American officials, everything was "under control."⁶²⁹ Although Matthews made no mention of

⁶²⁵ "Welcome to Warships," New York *Tribune*, December 25, 1907.

⁶²⁶ "No Disorder Mars U.S. Jacks' Visit; Officers Guest at Feast," *The Standard Union* (Brooklyn, NY), January 14, 1908.

⁶²⁷ Matthews, *With the Fleet*, 106.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, 105-6.

⁶²⁹ "To Damage the Fleet," *The Jeffersonian Gazette* (Lawrence, KS), January 23, 1908.

incident, much of the American press spun these two negative stories into a narrative of Brazilian and American collaboration in the name of international goodwill.

In the end, the ten-day visit to Rio de Janeiro exceeded all expectations. On his final day in Rio, Matthews reported back to the New York *Sun* on the “great demonstration” of the Brazilian people. He noted that more than “300,000 Brazilians lined the waterfront,” with thousands more in boats in the harbor. These Brazilians, together with President Pena, bid farewell to the American sailors as they departed for Chile.⁶³⁰ In his recollections after the cruise, the *Sun* correspondent commented that “nothing could be more cordial and warmhearted, more lavish, than the entertainments given in the name of the Brazilian government.”⁶³¹ This was a reflection of strong U.S.-Brazil relations at the time, cultivated in part by Americans’ thirst for Brazilian coffee, the Latin American nation’s leading export to the United States.⁶³²

From there, the positive stories continued. Although the fleet’s commanders turned down Argentina’s invitation to dock in Buenos Aires, citing fueling concerns, the Argentine Navy nevertheless greeted the North Atlantic Fleet on its way out of Rio and escorted it through Argentine waters to the entrance to the Straits of Magellan. Argentine ship bands belted out “The Star-Spangled Banner” to honor the American ships. Despite the U.S. Navy’s perceived snub that briefly put strain on diplomatic relations between the two nations, tensions were defused when U.S. leaders agreed to steam the ships close enough to Buenos Aires for Argentinean crowds and newspaper photographers to catch a glimpse of the American battleship fleet.⁶³³

With another possible bit of negative press avoided, critics of Roosevelt’s cruise now aimed their sensationalist headlines towards an impending disaster for the Fleet in the dangerous

⁶³⁰ “300 Thousand to See Fleet Sail,” New York *Sun*, January 23, 1908.

⁶³¹ Matthews, *With the Fleet*, 107.

⁶³² Footnote this fact.

⁶³³ Reckner, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet*, 42.

Straits of Magellan. On January 22, 1908, in a three-line banner headline, the New York *Evening World* warned, “Pacific Fleet off on Perilous Stage of Voyage,” detailing every navigational challenge the fleet would face through the “narrow” and “treacherous” connection between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.⁶³⁴ Despite these grim predictions, the Atlantic Fleet proved the press wrong. Matthews and others celebrated the fleet’s successful navigation through the Straits, claiming it was a “supreme test of American seamanship.”⁶³⁵ The sensationalist headlines about the dangers of the Straits did serve the purpose of showcasing how important the Panama Canal would be to the U.S. Navy and international shipping concerns. It also enhanced the perception of the capabilities of U.S. sailors.

The small port of Punta Arenas, Chile was situated in the middle of the journey through the Straits and had the coaling facilities the fleet needed after the long journey from Rio. Although Punta Arenas did not have the capacity to grant full shore leave to the 14,000 sailors when they arrived on February 1st, the Chileans still provided a series of lavish state dinners for officers. Some of the best-disciplined enlisted sailors, moreover, enjoyed a reward of local food, music, and items discounted for American sailors. Matthews reported the sailors’ surprise to receive “such a fine welcome” in one of the most remote places in the world.⁶³⁶ While Evans thanked Chilean politicians and ambassadors for such a “splendid reception,” the ships of his fleet entertained Punta Arenas locals with a display of electric lights strung up on the masts of all sixteen battleships, which lit up the waters of the port on the final night of the visit.⁶³⁷ Matthews

⁶³⁴ “Pacific Fleet off on Perilous Stage of Voyage,” *Evening World* (NY), January 22, 1908.

⁶³⁵ Matthews, *With the Fleet*, 165.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, 149-50.

⁶³⁷ “Fleet on the Way Through the Straights,” *San Francisco Call*, February 8, 1908.

reported that the sailors “were practically unanimous in voting Punta Arenas all right and a tremendous surprise.”⁶³⁸

The reception in Port Callao, Peru, which marked the successful journey through the Straits on February 20th, mirrored the enthusiasm experienced in Rio and Punta Arenas, and included naval parades, celebrations, and dinner parties. Newspapers around world reported the sailors’ fascination with bullfighting, a popular Peruvian spectacle. Peru’s President, José Simón Pardo y Barreda, was welcomed aboard the *Connecticut* for a state dinner and “sent his thanks by wireless” directly to Theodore Roosevelt.⁶³⁹ Signaling a shift in his critical reportage, the shipboard correspondent Matthews noted a marked improvement in the morale of the sailors after emerging from the Straits and into the Pacific Ocean, and the visit to Peru confirmed it.

So far, the mission was going according to plan, with one major exception: the health of its Commander-in-Chief. By early 1908, it was clear that the aging “Fighting Bob” Evans was losing a painful battle with gout. Newspapers reported that the Admiral had missed several planned dinners and appointments in the final two stops. As the fleet sailed on toward California, discussions began among naval leaders about whether to relieve him of his command and when would be the most opportune moment to make the change if necessary.

Despite rumors of Evans’s declining health, most coverage of fleet’s first leg had been positive. The Atlantic Fleet had successfully navigated the Caribbean, the East Coast of South America, and the foreboding Straits of Magellan, proving critics wrong about the capability of the Navy’s ships and sailors. Moreover, the fleet’s series of successful official visits were

⁶³⁸ Matthews, *With the Fleet*, 163.

⁶³⁹ “Fleet Leaves Callao for Bay of Magellan: President Pardo Reviews American Battleships,” Brooklyn (NY) *Daily Eagle*, February 29, 1908.

considered diplomatic triumphs, demonstrating the Navy's capacity as an ambassador of goodwill for the United States and its popularity with many people in Latin America.

The Second Leg: The Atlantic Fleet reaches the U.S. Pacific Coast

Despite the relief of making it through the Straits and the celebrations enjoyed in Latin America, reports of "intense tension" and "a nervous condition among the sailors" began to surface as the ships approached Magdalena Bay in Mexico, the final stop on the first leg of the cruise.⁶⁴⁰ As Matthews noted, the men had started to dread the peacetime gunnery drills they had been conducting that were not only physically and mentally demanding but also dangerous. They were also concerned with the declining health of the Admiral. Evans's gout had become so painful that *Connecticut* wired Washington to inform the White House of his condition and to make arrangements for him to come ashore as soon as possible.⁶⁴¹ When the fleet arrived in Magdala Bay on March 12, Evans was shuttled off to San Diego by car for treatment. For the next three weeks, the Atlantic Fleet would be joined by ships from the Pacific Fleet for gunnery practice and a series of maneuvers designed to test both sailors and equipment on each coast.

The first stage of the cruise was now complete. Already by March 1908, the American fleet had validated both Roosevelt's commitment to the Monroe Doctrine and his decision to push for the Panama Canal. This point was not lost on Matthews, who commented that "the Monroe Doctrine is today more of a living, vital thing with the nations of South America because of the cruise of this fleet more than it has ever been since President Monroe penned its words."⁶⁴²

⁶⁴⁰ Matthews, *With the Fleet*, 229.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 228-9; "Evans due into San Diego Today," *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1908.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 197.

At this point, many sailors had assumed that the cruise would be wrapping up soon. While the fleet was in Mexico, however, news began to circulate that the ships would, in fact, be traveling to Asia and the South Pacific and through the Suez Canal to return home. Roosevelt notified the fleet of these changed plans on March 21st, and it was soon leaked to the press.⁶⁴³ Upon hearing this news, nations around the world began to send invitations for an official visit on this third and final leg of the cruise. Australia had issued its invitation several months earlier, after news of the cruise to San Francisco first broke back in October 1907. This invitation, therefore, was the first to be considered and approved. After the full itinerary of the cruise was revealed, New Zealand sent an invitation, too.

These invitations were followed by the one everyone was waiting for: Japan. On March 18th, Japanese ambassador Kogoro Takahira hand-delivered the Japanese invitation to Secretary of State Elihu Root, with a note that reaffirmed the relationship between the nations and that the visit would promote “good understanding and mutual sympathy.”⁶⁴⁴ All over the world, press accounts confirmed a general sense of relief by the public about this development. Included among them was the *New York Times*, which quoted Secretary of War William Taft’s critique of American jingoism the week after the invitation was accepted by Roosevelt: “There are jingoes in California, as there are jingoes in every country, but they are not our masters. The reception which our fleet will receive in Japan will be a surprise for the pessimists.”⁶⁴⁵

The second leg of the cruise, to the American Pacific Coast, was the shortest, at only 2,126 miles. By some measures, however, it was perhaps the most important stretch, particularly

⁶⁴³ Roosevelt to Charles S. Sperry, March 21, 1908. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o202062>. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

⁶⁴⁴ Kogoro Takahira to Elihu Root, March 18, 1908. Elihu Root Papers, 1863-1937. RG 59: Box 57, File 21. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁴⁵ “Taft Tells of His Policies,” *New York Times*, March 21, 1908.

as it pertained to future shipbuilding budgets and expanding coastal defenses and naval infrastructure in California, Oregon, and Washington. The extended month-long layover in Mexico allowed mission planners to finalize the agenda for the West Coast of the United States and to set the schedule for the trip to the Pacific. Their itinerary included stops in Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, and, most importantly, Japan. The final schedule was also set for extravagant receptions in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and through Puget Sound to Seattle, Washington, with numerous shoreline visits scheduled along the California coast.

Newspapers across the nation printed story after story of overjoyed citizens, sparing no expense to entertain the sailors and demonstrate their patriotism as individual communities. To many citizens and politicians on the U.S. West Coast, particularly who feared the rise in Japanese immigration and the Japanese War Scare of 1906-1907, the presence of American Navy ships in cities along the Pacific Coast was a welcome sight. This leg of the cruise was the navalists' most elaborate and meaningful pitch to the American people to date, and that included the Senators and Congressmen from the West Coast whose votes would be needed to increase the Navy's budget.

In San Diego, the ships arrived and dropped anchor just after noon on April 14, 1908. They were welcomed by tens of thousands of residents at Hotel del Coronado, where the officers would be feted with an extravagant dinner and entertainment. The Governor of California, James N. Gillett, was greeted aboard the flagship *Connecticut* that afternoon before hosting the festivities at the Coronado. "San Diego is celebrating!" the Pomona *Daily Review* proclaimed, adding that the city was full of thousands of patriotic onlookers who had no place to sleep. On all the ships, strings of electric lights spelled out each vessel's name in six-foot high letters, while a

search light display illuminated the city. Reporters called it a “fairy scene,” describing the whole effect as “wonderous.”⁶⁴⁶

In Los Angeles, city officials welcomed the sailors and officers in very much the same way, with parades, fireworks, spotlight displays, and entertainment at all hours of the day and night. The most advertised and anticipated event in L.A. was a series of boxing matches, scheduled for the first day of the ship’s arrival. A parade through the streets of Los Angeles proved popular as well, and newspapers reported that well over 100,000 people had attended.⁶⁴⁷

Despite the enthusiastic reception in southern California’s ports, the ships’ presence along the California coast had sparked a debate in Congress about the future of the cruise. Many legislators called for the Cruise of the Atlantic Fleet to cease and for the ships to stay on the West Coast permanently. During the final two days of the fleet’s visit to Los Angeles, a local editor repeated these sentiments multiple times. Writing in *The Herald*, he called for the Navy to “keep the fleet on the Pacific Coast” and proclaimed that California “citizens demand a Pacific Fleet” and that it was “necessary for public safety.”⁶⁴⁸ With the Pacific War Scare still fresh in the minds of Californians, the overwhelming public response to the presence of the American battleships showed West Coast politicians that national security was a major concern for their constituents.

The debate continued as the ships sailed north to San Francisco. There, hundreds of thousands of patriotic spectators once again lined the waterfronts and shoreline hillsides. Bay Area residents were also treated to naval maneuvers of a single, giant, 46-ship U.S. Navy armada, which included the sixteen battleships of the Atlantic fleet, their support ships, and over

⁶⁴⁶ “San Diego is Celebrating,” Pomona *Daily Record*, April 15, 1908.

⁶⁴⁷ “Keep the Fleet on the Pacific Coast,” Los Angeles *Herald*, April 23, 1908.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; “Citizens Demand a Pacific Fleet,” Los Angeles *Herald*, April 24, 1908.

thirty Pacific Fleet Navy ships.⁶⁴⁹ “The arrival of the fleet in San Francisco,” Matthews observed, “was characterized by such a demonstration of enthusiasm and an outpouring of the people as the country has ever seen.”⁶⁵⁰ The parade on May 7th included 15,000 sailors and legions of marching bands, police officers, and fire fighters. It also drew more than half a million spectators. Sailors were offered free entertainment sponsored by local businesses, including 4,000 theater tickets thanks to the San Francisco *Examiner*.⁶⁵¹

The reception in Oakland was just as extravagant and well-attended as the San Francisco celebrations. On May 9th, the Fleet steamed along the shorelines of the bay. Crowds cheered as sailors came ashore in downtown Oakland, where they were greeted to a “royal” and “rousing welcome by the multitudes along Broadway and Washington streets.”⁶⁵² Each city along the Pacific Coast competed for attention from the Navy with each celebration becoming more and more elaborate. The biggest story during the Oakland welcoming ceremonies, however, was the public announcement that Admiral Evans was going to be relieved of command for health reasons. Replacing him was Rear Admiral Charles Sperry, former President of the Naval War College and a former delegate for the United States at the Geneva Convention and Second Hague Conference. Though he was stepping down, Evans was cheered by the crowds and glorified for his service in newspapers nationwide.⁶⁵³

In San Francisco, the grand fleet separated, with half of the ships steaming north to Puget Sound, Washington. This included all the vessels that needed any major maintenance before proceeding across the Pacific Ocean. The Puget Sound Navy shipyard, large enough to accept

⁶⁴⁹ Reckner, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet*, 84-5; Matthews, *With the Fleet*, 318.

⁶⁵⁰ Matthews, *With the Fleet*, 319.

⁶⁵¹ “Official Programme of Entertainments for the Fleets,” San Francisco *Examiner*, May 6, 1908.

⁶⁵² “Enthusiasm Marks Parade in Oakland,” San Francisco *Chronicle*, May 10, 1908.

⁶⁵³ “The Easter Day for Armada’s Admiral,” Los Angeles Times, April 20, 1908.

modern battleships into her dry dock, was the only facility on the West Coast with the capacity to maintain these ships. Although this proved to be a challenge for fleet managers, this deficiency was the very reason why the fleet was sent to the West Coast as part of the cruise: to highlight the need for spending on national security by building naval infrastructure along the Pacific.

As they steamed through the Sound, the ships maintained a path that kept them close enough to the shoreline so that the residents of smaller towns could easily view the fleet. Thousands lined the waterfront in Bellingham, Port Angeles, and Port Townsend as the ships passed by. Tens of thousands more welcomed the sailors in Bremerton, home of the Puget Sound Navy yard, and the cities of Seattle and Tacoma. In Seattle, the ships were welcomed by a fleet of local boats, bands playing, and well over 400,000 residents on the shoreline waving American flags in an “enthusiastic” display of patriotism.⁶⁵⁴ Calling it “the most powerful Navy fleet every assembled,” newspapers proclaimed that its presence “astonishes the world.”⁶⁵⁵ After a short visit to Tacoma, the fleet headed back to San Francisco for one final farewell to the West Coast.

The Atlantic Fleet rejoined in San Francisco without USS *Maine* and USS *Alabama*, which stayed behind in Bremerton for repairs. The poorly performing ships were replaced by the newly constructed Pacific Fleet battleships *Nebraska* and *Wisconsin* before steaming to Honolulu, Hawaii, the start of the third and final leg of the cruise.

With battleships from the Atlantic and Pacific fleets, including the eleven ships built during the Roosevelt Administration, this was truly the two-ocean navy that Mahan had written about in his famous 1890 treatise on the influence of sea power.⁶⁵⁶ When the remaining ships of the Pacific Fleet fell into formation to escort the sixteen white battleships out of San Francisco, it

⁶⁵⁴ “Most Powerful Fleet Every Assembled,” Tacoma (WA) *Daily Ledger*, May 24, 1908; *New York Times*, May 27, 1908.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁶ Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1890).

was the largest accumulation of American ships since the Venezuela Crisis of 1902. With the West Coast public relations campaign complete, the longest part of the cruise – and arguably the most important aspect – was next to come.

Now dubbed “the Great White Fleet” by newspapers across the nation, Roosevelt’s fleet became a marketable commodity for American consumers, particularly on the U.S. West Coast. Many publishers, newspaper editors, and manufacturers seized on the popularity of the sixteen ships, marketing the fleet in the same way in which they made First Admiral George Dewey into “America’s Hero Admiral.” The most popular consumer goods were China and silverware sets adorned with lithographs of the battleships, postcards showing the various visits of the cruise, and displayable art with images of the fleet depicted in original paintings, tapestries, and posters. In the May 6, 1908 edition of *Puck Magazine*, the cover cartoon depicts Uncle Sam with a magnifying glass on the ships of the Great White Fleet; his focus: “national security.”⁶⁵⁷ Similar to the way in which publishers and manufacturers profited off the image of Admiral Dewey after the Spanish-American War, many of these same magazines, newspapers, and advertisers saw the cruise of the Atlantic Fleet as another opportunity to make money.

The two-month West Coast tour was intended to raise the awareness of naval preparedness among the American public, to convince West Coast politicians to support increased Navy budgets, and to select locations for naval infrastructure that made the most sense for the Navy Department. It proved successful on all three accounts. In the ten years after the cruise, the Puget Sound Navy Yard became the second-largest ship producer on the West Coast; it remained one of the busiest ship producers throughout both World Wars and is still in operation today. After major renovations in the years after the visit of the fleet, San Francisco’s

⁶⁵⁷ “Magnified Security,” *Puck Magazine*, May 6, 1908.

Mare Island Navy Yard became the West Coast's largest, and one of the most productive shipbuilders for the Navy through both World Wars. It was the first West Coast shipyard to build an American dreadnought, commissioning USS *California* in 1921. In 1922, continuing this early 20th century trend of development, the U.S. Navy opened the 32nd Street Navy Station in San Diego. It eventually grew into Naval Base San Diego, the second largest surface ship navy base in the United States. Building on these foundations, the naval shipbuilding industry continued to develop in California during both World Wars. During the Cold War, it continued to evolve with the development of the aerospace industry. Eventually, California became the centerpiece of the military-industrial-complex on the West Coast, referred to by historian Roger W. Lotchin in 2002 as "Fortress California" for its role in national war production.⁶⁵⁸

The Third and Fourth Legs: Into the Pacific

From California, the Fleet steamed westward for the third leg of its tour. The first stop on the itinerary was the U.S. territory of Hawaii, for a much needed refueling at the islands' coaling facilities. Despite Queen Liliuokalani's protest of the fleet's visit, some Hawaiian locals and many American residents celebrated the sailors' arrival.⁶⁵⁹ Matthews commented that the visit from the Fleet "brought Hawaii, again, into the public eye" and that he thanked "God devoutly that the American flag flies over these islands, for it means national safety to the republic from possible enemies on the western seas."⁶⁶⁰ This visit, and Hawaii's location between California and the Philippines, became part of President Roosevelt's talking points to convince Congress that year to renovate and expand the naval facilities at Pearl Harbor, which was to become

⁶⁵⁸ Roger T. Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910-1960: From Welfare to Warfare* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 4.

⁶⁵⁹ Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 89.

⁶⁶⁰ Matthews, *With the Fleet*, 3, 27.

increasingly essential to U.S. policy in the Pacific going forward.⁶⁶¹ The written descriptions, lithographs, and photos of this “untouched” tropical possession, which served as the backdrop for the fleet, also served to educate future tourists and adventurers in the potential of Hawaii as a national resource for recreation.

By the time the fleet arrived in Hawaii, the rest of the journey was mapped out, and all international invitations had been addressed. One location that was not selected, mainly for logistical reasons was Great Britain. However, Roosevelt decided that the ships would visit several British colonies and protectorates on their way home, including New Zealand, Australia, and Port Said in Egypt. This schedule served two objectives. First, it gave the appearance of diplomatic outreach to the British through their colonial governments. Second, it enabled the respective populations of these locations under English rule – places previously dominated by the Royal Navy for centuries – to witness the strength and power of the U.S. Navy in the Pacific. Some of those peoples, particularly in Australia and New Zealand, saw the United States as a possible alternative to the British in protecting them from Japan or Germany should the Royal Navy reduce its Pacific forces even further.⁶⁶²

The scheduled visits to the first of these British entrepôts, New Zealand and Australia, saw similar levels of public enthusiasm and patterns of activity as had characterized visits in Latin America and California. They included naval reviews and parades in the streets. Concurrent to the arrival of the fleet, however, several articles also began to circulate about the Royal Navy’s retreat from the Pacific Ocean – a retreat, according to these articles, that was being hastened by the emergences of Japan and the United States as naval powers. One of these

⁶⁶¹ Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet*, 119.

⁶⁶² “Armada’s Departure: Fleet Leaves Sydney Harbor; Thanks from the Admiral,” Sydney (Australia) *Morning Herald*, August 28, 1908.

articles was written by Alfred Thayer Mahan, who had used several British journals to argue that the Royal Navy would be focusing its attention back to Europe in response to rising tensions with Germany.⁶⁶³ These developments, together with the emergence of Japan as an industrial power in the Pacific, caused some people in New Zealand and Australia to see the U.S. Navy – not the British – as the best protection against possible Japanese aggression in the future.

Although Australian Prime Minister Deakin considered the U.S. Navy as a replacement to the Royal Navy a ridiculous notion, several British and Australian publications confirmed that many British subjects in the Pacific felt this way. The overwhelmingly enthusiastic receptions in Auckland, Sydney, and Melbourne, many believed, demonstrated an affinity for the U.S. Navy.⁶⁶⁴ As in California, hundreds of thousands of spectators, many waving American flags, greeted the ships at every stop. The fleet arrived in New Zealand on August 6th and did not depart Western Australia until September 18th. Matthews, touched by the warm reception in Sydney, stated that “it was almost impossible to put into cold print anything that would fittingly tell the story of this enthusiasm and sentiment ... which simply overwhelmed not only those who received it, but those who gave it.”⁶⁶⁵ He joked that everyone in Australia suffered from a new disease, an affliction of love for the American sailors called “fleetitis.”⁶⁶⁶

After departing Australia, the fleet steamed north to the Philippines. Although the fleet had a week’s worth of shore leave planned for the sailors in Manila in the weeks between visits to Australia and Japan, all excursions to the Philippines were cancelled due to a cholera

⁶⁶³ Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The Value of the Pacific Cruise of the United States Fleet,” *Naval Administration and Warfare: Some General Principles and Other Essays*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1908), 310.

⁶⁶⁴ Werner Levi, *American-Australian Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1947), 90-91.

⁶⁶⁵ Franklin Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads: Cruise of the United States Atlantic Fleet from San Francisco to Hampton Roads, July 7, 1908, to February 22, 1909* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1909), 57.

⁶⁶⁶ Matthews, *Back to Hampton*, 29. This term became popular, used by several literary magazines. See *Literary Digest*, February 27, 1909, 327; *Harper's Weekly*, February 20, 1909, 9.

outbreak. Given this precarious health crisis, the fleet continued north to Japan. On the 1,800-mile cruise from Manila Bay to Yokohama, Japan, the North Atlantic Fleet steamed through a powerful typhoon, suffering only minor damage and a few injuries. Matthews confirmed that even though the ships took a pounding, “they weathered the terrific gale beautifully. Good ships and good seamanship did the trick ... but it was not pleasure yachting.”⁶⁶⁷ The newspapers dispatched news of the harrowing journey, with these reports reaching cities across the United States and around the globe.

On October 18, 1908, after a journey of 30,892 miles and stops to ten different nations on three continents, the North Atlantic Fleet finally reached its intended destination, the port city of Yokohama, Japan. For nearly a full year, people around the world wondered about Roosevelt’s primary reasons for sending out the fleet, and whether this action was guided by military or diplomatic calculations. For many observers, the visit seemed to confirm the latter goal. Japanese people and the 14,000 sailors of the fleet celebrated each other that week. According to Matthews, they did so in the spirit of “genuine friendship ... not a man in the fleet came away doubting Japan’s true sincerity.”⁶⁶⁸

The Japanese battle fleet greeted the American ships at the mouth of Yokohama’s harbor; accompanying the Japanese navy were dozens of civilian vessels with men, women, and children aboard. They waved U.S. flags while singing “the Star-Spangled Banner” and other patriotic American songs in English. The word “welcome” was spelled out in large letters across many of those civilian boats. Back in the United States, newspaper accounts called the visit “epochal,” confirming Matthews’ observations that this was the most patriotic display that he or the other

⁶⁶⁷ Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads*, 181-2.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 184.

sailors had seen yet.⁶⁶⁹ It was merely a glimpse of the weeks' worth of parades, lavish state dinners, mass celebrations of hundreds of thousands of people, and displays of diplomacy and mutual admiration. Matthews was particularly impressed with how many Japanese children were involved in the festivities, singing American songs in English, and dressing in elaborate colorful costumes to greet the U.S. sailors.⁶⁷⁰ He noted that "the public decorations were more elaborate than others we have seen on the cruise. For every Japanese flag put out there was an American flag. Every highway, every byway, every alley was decorated."⁶⁷¹

One of Roosevelt's main concerns about the trip to Japan was the behavior of his enlisted sailors. He expressed those concerns to Sperry in no uncertain terms, making recommendations about who would be allowed to go ashore. The President instructed Sperry to selected only "first-class" sailors who did not drink and who "could be absolutely depended upon," emphasizing that "there be no suspicion of insolence or rudeness on our part."⁶⁷² T.R. wanted officers and enlisted sailors to approach the visit to Tokyo as a "military duty" and subject to the same "military discipline" they would expect if they were under fire.⁶⁷³ For the President, this was the moment that he had built-up to for the past three years. He would be damned if a simple bar fight like the ones experienced in Valparaiso long ago or more recently in Rio would derail his foreign policy designs. Much to Roosevelt's satisfaction, his rules appeared to be followed to the letter and no incidents were reported by the press.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid. 183-4; "Epochal Visit: Japan's Welcome Impresses Fleet," *Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 1908.

⁶⁷⁰ Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads.*, 187.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 189.

⁶⁷² Roosevelt to Charles S. Sperry, March 21, 1908. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o202062>. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

Celebrations and parades continued all week, culminating in a farewell sendoff on October 24th, which topped even the elaborate first day's events. Every civilian, merchant, and military vessel formed up around the Atlantic Fleet, including ships with Japanese dignitaries, ambassadors, and military leaders, which the USS *Connecticut* saluted with 12-inch guns as it exited the harbor. In an interview with the Associated Press, Sperry commented that, "I am deeply impressed with the sincerity of the Japanese government and its people." The only thing better than the "lavish hospitality," he added was "the attitude of the whole people of Japan to the United States."⁶⁷⁴ On that final day, Roosevelt thanked the Emperor of Japan by telegram, noting that "the people of the United States have been deeply touched by the fresh and striking proof of friendship and regard."⁶⁷⁵

The visit to Japan had clear diplomatic dividends. In its aftermath, Secretary of State Taft and Japanese ambassador Takahira Kogorō negotiated an agreement that affirmed the "Open Door" policy for U.S. entry into Chinese markets, called for free trade and fair economic competition in those markets, and established spheres of influence for each nation in the Pacific. Japan agreed to recognize U.S. claims to Hawaii and the Philippines, while the U.S. government recognized Japan's annexation of Korea and surrounding lands in Southern Manchuria. This was a direct reversal of the Treaty of Portsmouth and, by many critics' estimation, paved the road to Japanese dominance of the region leading up to World War II.⁶⁷⁶ The Root-Takahira Agreement, signed in Washington on November 30th, also stipulated that the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 should continue, meaning that no new U.S. passports could be issued to laborers in Japan.

⁶⁷⁴ "Japan Gives Fleet a Parting Salute," San Francisco *Call*, October 25, 1908.

⁶⁷⁵ "Japan's Farewell to Fleet Fine Tribute," Los Angeles *Times*, October 25, 1908.

⁶⁷⁶ Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise*, 3-4; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 117-8.

Roosevelt's ambition that the Great White Fleet would catalyze a new era of U.S.-Japan relations had been largely realized in its wake.

After leaving Japan, the fleet headed south and west for planned visits to China and back to the Philippines. To accomplish these visits in a timely fashion, the Great White Fleet split into two squadrons. The Second Squadron of eight ships, led by USS *Louisiana*, steamed to the port city of Amoy in China, while the other eight, led by flagship *Connecticut*, continued to Manila Bay for mock battles. Matthews, who was stationed on *Louisiana* for the entire cruise, noted that although the visit to China seemed more "official" and "formal" than some of the other destinations, they were welcomed by Chinese officials and the people "just as warmly" and in a "lavish style" as the rest, including entertainment and sports. American and Chinese sailors played several baseball games throughout the week.⁶⁷⁷

Although Matthews's statements line up with press accounts of the visit, stories from the sailors themselves sometimes painted a darker picture. According to letters sent home by one of the enlisted sailors, Louis Maxfield, U.S. servicemen were limited to where they could take shore leave based on security concerns and fears of disease. Chinese officials became visibly upset that only half of the fleet made the trip, leaving newly built entertainment venues half-full.⁶⁷⁸ In what could have been an apocryphal accounting of the events, the *New York Times* reported that Chinese leaders, in an attempt to save face to their citizens, told them that half of the U.S. fleet was destroyed by the recent typhoon, and that "the fate of the other eight ships was unknown."⁶⁷⁹

Despite these issues that revealed the impossibility of pleasing hosts along the way, during the third leg of the cruise, Roosevelt's primary foreign relations goal had largely been

⁶⁷⁷ Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads*, 209-210.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁹ *New York Times*, November 12, 1908.

met. This outcome was demonstrated, in particular, by the overwhelming amount of support the U.S. fleet received in Japan. The subsequent signing of the Root-Takahira Agreement would also temper diplomatic tensions between the two nations, while also addressing Japanese immigration issues back home. As historian Oreste Foppiani has argued, peace with Japan was important to Roosevelt because it allowed naval planners to refocus on Germany, and to a lesser extent, Great Britain.⁶⁸⁰ While the United States celebrated peace with Japan, the U.S. Navy also formed unofficial alliances in New Zealand and Australia to counteract Japanese militarism in the Pacific. This was in accordance with Roosevelt's peace through strength mentality. On the other hand, Roosevelt was aware of the Japanese bushido code, and, combined with his own similar notions of Christian honor, he gambled on the notion that mutual respect was a diplomatic strategy of its own.⁶⁸¹

The Final Leg: The Diplomacy of Humanitarian Aid

By the time that all sixteen ships rejoined in Manila Bay and readied themselves for the trip home on December 1st, an itinerary had been set for their journey into the Mediterranean Sea. It included a visit by the entire fleet to Port Said, Egypt, followed by visits by parts of the fleet to half a dozen ports of call in the region, including in Greece, Italy, and Spain. During the extended visit in the Philippines, a U.S. territory, the sailors were not treated to the type of grand parades, entertainment venues, and luxury dinners that greeted them in Yokohama, San Francisco, or Rio. Only a select few officers and "first-class" enlisted sailors were given shore leave and treated to "fine entertainment ... of the Wild West variety," according to Matthews'

⁶⁸⁰ Oreste Foppiani, "The World Cruise of the U.S. Navy, 1907-1909," *Il Politico*, Vol. LXXI (2006): 127-8.

⁶⁸¹ Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise*, 222, 234.

account.⁶⁸² In his account of his month in the Philippines, Matthews took the opportunity to note the progress that had been made through American nation-building, citing as examples a new prison, system of schools, and “public works improvements,” – all established by the U.S. Army.⁶⁸³ In a chapter he titled “Remaking the Philippines,” Matthews commented that “the making of men is going on there. The making of a nation must be subservient to that.”⁶⁸⁴ The racism and paternalism in this message was clear: for Filipinos to rule themselves, they would need to learn the virtues of Western masculinity through lessons taught by American men.

Before the fleet could steam straight across the Indian Ocean to the Suez Canal, it had to stop in Columbo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) for a supply of coal and one last week of shore leave before the Mediterranean. The ships arrived there on December 13, 1908. The 3,448-mile journey from the Philippines to Columbo was to be followed by a 2,443-mile trip to Suez. Before departing for this lengthy voyage, the sailors enjoyed their time in Ceylon, “one of the world’s delights for travelers.” Matthews noted that many of the sailors who had traveled to this part of the world before regarded Ceylon “like visiting an old friend.”⁶⁸⁵ Although press accounts of the visit to the British protectorate were limited, news of the “royal treatment of the officers” and well-wishes from Governor Sir Henry Edward McCallum were documented in American newspapers, albeit not proclaimed in banner headlines.⁶⁸⁶ On the final night there, the sailors celebrated Christmas a few days early before departing on December 20 for the Middle East. The lack of fanfare did not reflect the significance of Ceylon to the Navy’s global network of coaling stations, which made this visit crucial to the cruise and to American maritime interests going

⁶⁸² Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads*, 240.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, 253-4.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁶⁸⁶ “Sailors Drink Tea,” *The Hutchinson Gazette* (Hutchinson, KS), December 22, 1908.

forward. Although coaling stations would be less and less important to shipping with the advent of the oil-fueled, steam turbine engines, the U.S. Navy maintained relationships with many of the nations and empires where these stations were located for years to come.

Eight days after the fleet pulled out of Ceylon, the world received news that would change the itinerary of Great White Fleet and American foreign relations more broadly. On December 28 just before sunrise, an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale struck the sea floor at the Strait of Messina causing massive destruction and an even more deadly tsunami. Estimates at the time set the death toll between 82,000 and 100,000, making it the most destructive earthquake to ever hit Europe. The quake also left between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Sicilians and Calabrians homeless. According to Matthews, the fleet did not learn about the Messina disaster until it reached Port Said on January 3. By that date, Roosevelt had approved nearly a million dollars in supplies and cash. The Navy Secretary Truman H. Newberry, appointed in early December 1908, had also ordered two Navy ships into Italian waters to begin relief efforts-USS *Scorpion*, already stationed in Constantinople, and USS *Celtic*, a supply ship loaded with foodstuffs stationed in New York.⁶⁸⁷ Once the Great White Fleet reached the Mediterranean Sea, Rear Admiral Sperry assigned several support ships to provide help, including the transportation of the fleet's 700 tons of reserve food and all medical supplies from all sixteen battleships. He also mustered all six fleet surgeons and sent them to Sicily on USS *Yankton* to help the wounded.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁷ For a detailed examination of the Messina relief effort, see Julia F. Irwin, draft of chapter 3, from *Catastrophic Diplomacy: U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance in the American Century*, forthcoming; "Give Additional \$500,000 in Food," *New York Times*, January 4, 1909.

⁶⁸⁸ Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 145.

Initially, Sperry was concerned that the presence of sixteen U.S. battleships in Italian waters without an official invitation would make the Italian Navy uneasy.⁶⁸⁹ Roosevelt therefore ordered only a limited contingent of ships from the Atlantic Fleet to assist in the relief effort. While the rest of the fleet continued with its diplomatic mission in the Mediterranean, albeit in a much less extravagant manner out of respect to the Messina crisis, Sperry took *Connecticut* to Messina to attempt to recover the bodies of the American consul and his wife, who died during the earthquake. When their first efforts failed, he ordered in USS *Illinois* to continue this recovery mission; on January 13, a team of sailors, including Louis Maxfield, successfully recovered the bodies.⁶⁹⁰

Due to the massive scale of the disaster, Sperry would recollect in a letter to his wife that their efforts were somewhat in vain, reasoning and that Italy accepted the supplies mainly as a courtesy to the United States.⁶⁹¹ Despite his uneasy feeling about the fleet's efforts at Messina, Sperry and his men were roundly praised by and received personal thanks from King Victor Emmanuel, Naples' mayor Marquis del Carretto, and U.S. Navy Secretary Newberry. In March, the government of Italy attempted to decorate the sailors and doctors who lent their services during the relief efforts. However, Navy regulations did not allow servicemen to receive awards from other countries, so they politely refused.

Although the ships arrived almost a week after the earthquake and provided (in Sperry's estimation, at least) only minimal help, this unintentional humanitarian mission proved a clear public relations success. Although the timing of the earthquake and the cruise of the Atlantic Fleet was obviously a coincidence, its presence in Italy demonstrated the capabilities of how a

⁶⁸⁹ "Battleships May Go to Italy's Rescue," *New York Times*, January 1, 1909.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶⁹¹ Sperry to Edith Sperry, January 22, 1909, Folder 1, Box 6, Charles S. Sperry Correspondence, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

global U.S. Navy could be deployed anywhere in the world to respond to exactly these types of calamities. Throughout his entire academic and political career, Roosevelt had preached about the virtues of naval preparedness; years before becoming President, he had joined Mahan and Luce in supporting the idea of a strong peacetime navy. Now, thanks to the Messina Earthquake and the subsequent relief and rebuilding effort, the mission of this peacetime navy would expand to include humanitarian operations.⁶⁹²

The Great White Fleet departed Italian waters on January 19th, with Sperry's flagship *Connecticut* leaving the following day. However, members of the U.S. Navy and U.S. diplomats remained in Sicily and Calabria to organize a massive five-month-long rebuilding effort in Messina and Reggio. It was financed by the U.S. government and international community, including millions of dollars in private donations. The American response was spearheaded by the American Red Cross's International Relief Board, the U.S. ambassador to Italy Lloyd Griscom, and USN Lieutenant Commander Reginald R. Belknap, the Navy Attaché to the Italian embassy; it was the largest coordinated international disaster assistance effort in the nation's history to that point. This rebuilding project also included the construction of a new town, Villaggio Regina Elena, named after the Queen of Italy.⁶⁹³ Support for this project came from multiple sources: voluntary organizations, led by the American Red Cross; non-federal municipalities, politicians, and business owners, led by J.P. Morgan; wealthy private contributors, led by the Queen of Italy herself. Together, they contributed well over \$1.5 million worth of food, materials, and cash to the relief effort on top of the multiple contributions by the

⁶⁹² Irwin, draft of chapter 3, from *Catastrophic Diplomacy: U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance in the American Century*, forthcoming.

⁶⁹³ Reginald R. Belknap, *American House Building in Messina and Reggio: An Account of the American Naval and Red Cross Combined Expedition, to Provide Shelter for the Survivors of the Great Earthquake of December 28, 1908* (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1910), 216-7.

Roosevelt Administration and Congress.⁶⁹⁴ The initial rush of food and building materials were also joined by a contingent of U.S. Navy personnel with expertise in construction, logistics, and international relations.

Despite labor issues, tight budgets, and aftershocks, the American Red Cross and the U.S. Navy oversaw the construction of a total of 1,900 cottage homes, in Messina, Reggio, and Villaggio Regina Elena, from early January through mid-June 1909. In addition, the American construction team built 1,271 multi-purpose structures for shops, schools and churches, a hotel, and a hospital.⁶⁹⁵ Although Italian officials initially fought the idea of a hotel as part of the rebuilding efforts, Griscom and Belknap convinced locals of its logistical and economic benefits. After construction was complete, Belknap and his Navy carpenters donated their operations buildings to the Little Sisters of the Poor, which would use it as a church and orphanage.⁶⁹⁶ This accomplishment garnered international accolades for all involved, including the U.S. Navy. Belknap received congratulatory letters from the Crown, Italian military leaders, and mayors of the cities most affected by the quake. Many of these letters and their responses by Belknap were printed in local newspapers to demonstrate the goodwill felt for Navy personnel and their mutual appreciation to Italian officials and residents, although mistreatment of local laborers by the Navy was reported.⁶⁹⁷

In his first trip out of the country after leaving office, ex-President Roosevelt visited Italy from April 5th to 8th, 1909. He used the visit to tour Messina and to see the results of the

⁶⁹⁴ American Relief Committee (Rome), *Report of the American Relief Committee, Rome: Funds Administered for Relief of Earthquake Sufferers in Sicily and Calabria* (Roma: Cooperativa Tip. Manuzio, 1909), 163-4.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 211, 244-5.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁶⁹⁷ To read these letters and their responses, see Belknap, *American House Building in Messina and Reggio*, 1910. Some animosity for the Italian people, particularly for hired laborers, was documented by local officials and newspapers, see Irwin's work on the relief effort.

American construction projects in Messina, Reggio, and Villaggio Regina Elena. Although Italian law-enforcement agencies worried about Roosevelt's safety during the visit, he was greeted in Naples to a hero's welcome before continuing to the quake-affected region in Sicily.⁶⁹⁸ King Victor Emmanuel ordered the Italian battleship *Re Umberto* to meet the former President at sea, and the King himself would accompany Roosevelt to Messina.⁶⁹⁹ Newspapers in the United States reported mutual "enthusiastic appreciation" between the Italian people and Roosevelt.⁷⁰⁰ The former President agreed to write a short introduction to Belknap's official documentation of the relief efforts, published in 1910, in which he personally thanked Navy personnel for their roles in the U.S. disaster response. He thanked Griscom for his leadership, Belknap for the organization he "created and perfected," several Navy officers by name, and the "forty enlisted men of our Navy" who were essential to the cause.⁷⁰¹ He continued, "I cannot exaggerate how much pleasure it gave me to see the officers and enlisted men of our Navy adapting themselves to strange and unexpected circumstances and successfully performing with ability and thorough good-will a most difficult task."⁷⁰²

Though the initial intent of the cruise had been a military exercise, President Roosevelt had thus expanded its mission to include international diplomacy and goodwill – a mission that continued even after Roosevelt left office. The fleet's ability to reach any part of the world and provide non-military assistance, in this case humanitarian relief, would become a permanent part of the U.S. military's mission, and remains a signature of American foreign policy to this day. The Navy was roundly celebrated by the American and European press for its response to the

⁶⁹⁸ "Former President will visit Messina Ruins," *Press and Sun-Bulletin* (Binghamton, NY), April 5, 1909.

⁶⁹⁹ "Take Roosevelt to Messina," *Buffalo (NY) Times*, April 2, 1909.

⁷⁰⁰ "Roosevelt Now on Last Leg of Journey," *Elmira (NY) Star-Gazette*, April 6, 1909.

⁷⁰¹ Belknap, *American House Building in Messina and Reggio*, xi.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, xii.

Messina disaster, further bolstering Roosevelt's narrative of American exceptionalism. T.R. believed that the United States was destined to be the world's policeman. However, the Navy's actions in Italy also demonstrated the President's dedication to building goodwill with his fleet through humanitarian relief efforts. Navy ships were used since the 1812 earthquake in Venezuela to transport privately donated goods to disaster-stricken areas.⁷⁰³ In the late-1890s, early-1900s, the Navy expanded this mission to include the role of early-responder, providing emergency supplies to people in Panama, the Philippines, and other U.S. overseas territories as well as many foreign nations and empires, like Italy.

The initial earthquake response of the Great White Fleet led to a five-month joint mission by the Navy and the American Red Cross to rebuild thousands of homes and buildings in Italy.⁷⁰⁴ The ships of the Great White Fleet, and Navy personnel like Lt Commander Belknap who worked in Sicily until June to help restore Messina, left an indelible mark on the Italian people.⁷⁰⁵

Conclusion – “Stay-at-homes” Welcome Back the Fleet

After brief stops in Malta and Gibraltar, the sixteen ships of the American fleet plotted a course back to Hampton Roads and a homecoming party hosted by the President of the United States himself during his final month in office. On February 23rd, 1909, repeating a scene that had occurred in ports around the world for the past fifteen months, the ships of the Atlantic Fleet were greeted at Hampton Roads by thousands of screaming fans along the Virginia shoreline and in a parade of private boats and warships, including the Presidential yacht *Mayflower*. At the end

⁷⁰³ Irwin, *Catastrophic Diplomacy*, forthcoming.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

of Theodore Roosevelt's review of the fleet and the naval parade that followed, the President raised a glass to the Atlantic Fleet. "Not until some American fleet returns victorious from a great sea battle will there be such a homecoming, another site such as this," he declared. Continuing his toast, Roosevelt exclaimed, "I drink to the American Navy! We stay-at-homes drink to the men who have made us prouder than ever of this country."⁷⁰⁶

Four years after the cruise was completed, Roosevelt took full credit for its implementation and for understanding the historical context of its significance, despite its origin as a General Board plan. "In my own judgment," he proclaimed, "the most important service that I rendered to peace was the voyage of the battle fleet around the world."⁷⁰⁷ Continuing his remarks, he explained that the cruise and the addition of the U.S.-controlled Panama Canal were interconnected in their significance to American progress:

My prime purpose was to impress the American people and in this purpose was fully achieved. The cruise did make a very deep impression abroad boasting about what we have done does not impress foreign nations at all except unfavorably, but positive achievement does and the two American achievements that really impressed foreign people's during the first dozen years of this century were the digging of the Panama Canal and the cruise of the battlefleet around the world.⁷⁰⁸

While Roosevelt's claims about the fleet may have been hyperbole, it is nevertheless true that the Roosevelt Presidency left an indelible mark on the U.S. Navy and American foreign policy. Because T.R. had embraced the navalist vision articulated by Mahan, Luce, the Naval War College, and the General Board, his Great White Fleet was the capstone on a long record of navalist accomplishment. Roosevelt sought to elevate the navy to become the embodiment of American identity, a beacon of progress, a protagonist in peaceful international affairs, a surety

⁷⁰⁶ "Homecoming Fleet Salutes President," *The News-Journal* (Lancaster, PA), February 23, 1909.

⁷⁰⁷ Roosevelt. *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*, 593.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 592-3.

in a dangerous world. As the previous chapter showed, the General Board advised the President on prioritizing international threats based on naval power, where to establish bases overseas, and the decision to focus U.S. shipbuilding on dreadnoughts. From 1907 to 1909, a strategic proposal by the General Board gave rise to the historic cruise of the Great White Fleet.

Together, Roosevelt and the Board turned the North Atlantic Fleet into a global public relations campaign to promote American exceptionalism abroad. Roosevelt could not have been prouder of the effort. Reflecting on the importance of the cruise, Alfred Thayer Mahan said, “the movement of an American fleet of sixteen battleships to the Pacific ... is not only important from the professional and national point of view but striking to the imagination. But the effect upon the imagination of some journals has been such to approach the borderline of insanity.”⁷⁰⁹ Publishers, editors, and advertisers who made First Admiral Dewey into a consumer commodity just after the Spanish-American War attempted to utilize the cruise of the Atlantic Fleet in a similar fashion.

It was arguably the ongoing media coverage of the two-year worldwide mission, however, that really propelled this Navy advertising campaign beyond the “Dewey Mania” detailed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. The cruise functioned as a traveling exposition of American power and diplomacy, giving publishers around the world enough drama, celebration, and spectacle to keep the U.S. Navy in the headlines for two years. Although Mahan criticized the cruise of the Great White Fleet in its early stages, calling it provocative, the circumnavigation of the globe by sixteen obsolete American battleships from December 1907 to February 1909 eventually changed his mind. Not only did the cruise accomplish practical military and diplomatic goals, but it also served as a two-year public relations campaign for the U.S. Navy.

⁷⁰⁹ Mahan, “The Value of the Pacific Cruise of the United States Fleet,” 309.

This was even more than the “two-ocean navy” Mahan had written about in the 1880s and 1890s. America’s navy had truly demonstrated its global reach. The dreams of Mahan and many other navalists had finally come true.

Epilogue: American Navalism's Legacy Continues:

During the last two decades of the 19th century, naval advocates like Alfred Thayer Mahan, his mentor Stephen B. Luce, Theodore Roosevelt, and others argued passionately and ardently for a stronger navy. Their appeals appeared in academic books and other forms of popular literature that were read worldwide. In turn, Congress, several U.S. Presidents, local politicians, and industrialists utilized those arguments to justify building the modern navy that those navalist advocates championed. After this New Steel Navy achieved an overwhelming victory against Spain in 1898, the American people increasingly accepted the Navy as an essential federal institution and a source of national pride.

By the turn of the 20th century, the Navy had come to symbolize many things to many different groups. Through it, Americans celebrated themselves, their technological achievements, their ascension to becoming one of the Great Powers. Publishers, marketers, and politicians, meanwhile, used this new fascination to sell goods, make heroes, and lobby Congress to increase naval spending. This popularity, in turn, further emboldened American navalists as the early 20th century progressed. George Dewey became a household name internationally because of a six-hour naval battle in Manila Bay. In 1901, Henry Clay Taylor parlayed that fame into the formation of the General Board of the U.S. Navy, which helped formulate naval policy for four decades. The popularity of the Navy only increased under President Roosevelt, who focused on reforming and strengthening it further still, acting many times as his own Secretary of the Navy when it served the expansion of American navalism.

Roosevelt's Cruise of the Great White Fleet, from December 1907 to February 1909, was a testament to the arrival of the United States as a world power. In accordance with Mahan's veneration of British naval ascendancy, the United States' generational achievement to transition its navy from sail to steam showed the nation's ability to project modern naval power anywhere in the world, revealed weaknesses ripe for institutional reform, and provided a platform to demonstrate the usefulness of a large peacetime Navy. Among Roosevelt's armored leviathans were the first six all-big gun U.S. dreadnoughts that were under construction when he left the White House; his Panama Canal was only five years from completion. By 1909, moreover, the United States had attained a new national identity as naval power, joining Great Britain, Germany, Japan, and Russia among the world's top five navies.

The rise of American naval power from 1883 to 1909 represented one of the more popular reforms to the U.S. armed forces that Congress had ever enacted and was lavishly supported on a bipartisan basis through five presidential administrations; despite its enduring association with T.R., the modern U.S. Navy was not purely his creation. Other politicians, particularly in the industrial Northeast and the West Coast, also recognized that a majority their constituents – among them wealthy donors, laborers, industrialists, citizens with national security concerns, pro-imperialists, business interests with a thirst for global markets, and patriots who just wanted to see the United States become a great power – had an affinity for the U.S. Navy. Through this time, the American people displayed their appreciation for the Navy through the books and magazines that they read, consumer goods they bought, literature and games they gave to their children, and by lining America's coastlines to celebrate the spectacle of the modern American Navy. Although anti-imperialist thinkers had some influence before and after the Wars of 1898, the viability of a consumer market for Navy-themed books and products demonstrated

Americans' general approval of how the fleet was being utilized even if its use had imperial overtones. Undeniably, the Navy now represented in the American mind Progress, modernity, and had become the embodiment of American civilizing virtues. Of course, these grand ideals subsumed the complexities of building a Navy in a Gilded Age rife with political and industrial corruption, the ongoing dilemmas of corporate monopolization, the yearnings of organized labor, and the imponderable risks of extending America's grasp over foreign markets and peoples.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, the popularization of the new U.S. Navy did not happen quickly, nor was it simply a nationalist response to the United States' military victory against Spain, an aging European power. Rather, it was a multi-decade process. The Navy's evolution paralleled the changes in the nation's other major institutions and was shaped by such trends as the rise of higher education, industrialization, mass media and consumerism, empire-building, and globalization. The way American people thought of the Navy mirrored the way they looked at themselves, their accomplishments as a nation, and the United States' perceptions by the global community. The modernization of the U.S. Navy in the transition from the Gilded Age into the Progressive Era highlighted what could be accomplished when a cause for the common good was supported by politicians of both parties, the people, industry, the press, and the message-makers who profited from this new societal reform.

The reformation of the U.S. Navy at the turn of the century served as a preamble to the Progressive era of the early 1900s, wherein even the most conservative of institutions, federal or private, underwent fundamental transformations to better serve a modernizing United States. In dealing with the transition from sail-and-wood ships to steam-and-steel vessels, navalists recognized the aspects of the Navy that needed change. At the same time, however, they strove to keep intact the various institutional identities and codifications that are considered universal to

the Navy in any era. This included, but was not limited to, seamanship, duties as a sailor, and the responsibility to defend and uphold the values of the U.S. Constitution. The institutional evolution in the Navy, like the federal government more broadly, required that traditionalists and progressives work together to eliminate antiquated aspects of their organizations and introduce change, while still retaining the Navy's core identity and original intent.

One progressive politician who understood this institutional dynamic, particularly within the Navy, was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He would go on to use his experiences as Assistant Secretary of the Navy during the First World War to build the largest navy in modern history as President. He utilized many of these same strategies in the attempt to pull the nation out of the Great Depression and then mobilized the nation for war in 1941; some historians argue it also influenced his foreign policy goals during the conflict.⁷¹⁰ Even before taking this position with the Navy Department, Roosevelt had a familiarity with maritime culture. As an adolescent of privilege, he often sailed the waters of the Hudson River with his family and made several trans-Atlantic journeys to Europe to attend school. Although schooled in law, Franklin was well-versed in naval scholarship, most significantly Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power* series and his fifth cousin Theodore Roosevelt's book *The Naval War of 1812*, which he read before attending college. FDR is said to have collected thousands of naval books through his life. His first high-profile job after passing the New York bar exam in 1907 was a job as an attorney with Carter, Ledyard, and Milburn in maritime law.⁷¹¹

⁷¹⁰ Joseph Sweeney, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt as Lord of the Admiralty 1913-1920," *Journal of Maritime Law and Commerce*, Vol. 48, No. 4, October 2017, 403-4; David F. Schmitz, *The Sailor: Franklin Roosevelt and the Transformation of American Foreign Policy* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2021), 1-2; David McKean, *Watching Darkness Fall: FDR, His Ambassadors, and the Rise of Adolph Hitler* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2021), 2-3.

⁷¹¹ Robert Dallek, *Franklin Roosevelt: A Political Life* (New York: Viking Publishing, 2017), 38-9.

Although Theodore Roosevelt was very influential in Franklin's election as a New York State Senator, FDR backed New Jersey governor Woodrow Wilson in the 1912 Presidential election, which led to his appointment as Assistant Secretary of the Navy after Wilson's victory.⁷¹² Aside from the transition to the Navy Department from a Harvard education and New York politics, the two Roosevelts had very similar experiences while serving as Assistant Secretaries. Each had extensive knowledge of naval history and served under Navy Secretaries (John Davis Long and Josephus Daniels, respectively) who had little to no experience in naval matters.⁷¹³ Each Roosevelt was charged with wartime planning for the Navy Department. Theodore allocated naval assets for two theaters of operation during the war with Spain, while Franklin organized the building of both a supply fleet and the warships to protect them during the First World War.⁷¹⁴

Both Roosevelts also overstepped their authority as assistants in implementing naval policy when their bosses were on extended leave – and both were almost fired for their worst offenses. Secretary Long officially reprimanded Theodore in April 1898 for sending the Asiatic Fleet to the Philippines a month before the Battle of Manila Bay without his permission. Eighteen years later, in early 1916, Secretary Daniels considered dismissing Franklin for his testimony to Congressional Naval Committees and speeches to the Navy League on preparedness while the Wilson re-election campaign was still pitching “he kept us out of war” to the American

⁷¹² Conrad Black, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Champion of Freedom* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003), 62-3.

⁷¹³ Gardner Weld Allen, *Papers of John Davis Long, 1897-1904*. (Norwood, MA: Plimpton Press, 1939). John Davis Long was the Governor of Massachusetts and longtime Congressman before his appointment as Navy Secretary, while Josephus Daniels was a newspaper editor from North Carolina and a private donor to Woodrow Wilson's campaign before his appointment.

⁷¹⁴ Sweeney, “Franklin Delano Roosevelt as Lord of the Admiralty 1913-1920,” 439-40.

people.⁷¹⁵ Their similar experiences as Assistants served as previews of how the two men would implement naval policy after they became Presidents.

The major difference between the two Assistant Secretary Roosevelts was that Franklin remained in his position throughout the entire Wilson Presidency, while Theodore resigned after only a year to fight with his Rough Riders in Cuba. In fact, Franklin was largely responsible for saving Theodore's naval building program after the Taft Administration gutted the naval budget during Taft's term.⁷¹⁶ This was one of the many failures of T.R.'s successor, Taft, that drove Roosevelt into running as the third-party Bull-Moose Party candidate in the Election of 1916. By this time, the General Board had reached the pinnacle of its influence on naval policy. George Dewey's death in 1917, accelerated the shift of power back to the civilian leadership in the Navy Department even as the imminent entry of the United States in the First World War encouraged the formation of a naval general staff to coordinate operations against Germany.⁷¹⁷

Franklin D. Roosevelt was an exemplary Assistant Secretary who faced three separate challenges during his stint: rebuilding the Navy after Taft, managing a complex wartime bureaucracy, and dealing with the aftereffects of the disarmament process after the First World War. He was also an innovator. In his review of the Surface Fleet in 1915, FDR suggested that the Navy begin focusing on submarine warfare, naval air power, and radio communication – all of which were to become essential aspects of the Navy for both world wars.⁷¹⁸ Roosevelt was also an early proponent of the convoy system, which proved to be the lifeblood of the war effort providing supplies to England and France. FDR was of course not the first to suggest these

⁷¹⁵ Ibid., 456-7.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 414-5.

⁷¹⁷ John T. Kuehn, *America's First General Staff: A Short History of the Rise and Fall of the General Board of the Navy, 1900-1950* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2017), 106-7, 115.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., 421, 441.

technologies, but he kept his superiors informed on the latest developments according to his own enlarging navalist expertise. Roosevelt handled the paperwork and budgeting approvals for the Navy throughout the First World War and set up several *ad hoc* organizations, such as the Arsenals and Navy Yards Adjustment Committee, which was set up to protect civilian maritime jobs after the war. This eventually became a model for his National Labor Board in the 1930s, which was set up as part of the New Deal to help protect laborers from economic downturns.⁷¹⁹

Some of the most spectacular moments in U.S. Navy history happened while Franklin D. Roosevelt was an impressionable young man. He was sixteen years old when First Admiral Dewey became a national hero. He was attending Harvard when his fifth cousin Theodore Roosevelt, his navalist role model, became President. And he was an attorney of maritime law when the Great White Fleet circumnavigated the globe.

As a disciple of Mahan and his cousin Theodore, FDR believed in the power of a peacetime Navy. However, through his experiences as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, he also learned what was required to fight and win a war. Franklin learned, literally by the numbers, that war meant resources, manpower, innovation, sacrifice, and reflection. Responsible for the hundreds of requisitions made by fleet commanders, he was also aware of the different strategies used by the Navy during the First World War that were considered failures. As President, he welcomed that process in his New Deal reforms, famously proclaiming that “it is common sense to take a method and try it: if it fails, admit it frankly, and try another.”⁷²⁰

Franklin D. Roosevelt also learned about the brutality of war, both on paper and in person. Although he was encouraged by Theodore to resign his post and join the military during

⁷¹⁹ Ibid. 440.

⁷²⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “The New Deal,” Oglethorpe University Address, May 22, 1932. Pepperdine School of Public Policy Digital Archive. <https://publicpolicy.pepperdine.edu/academics/research/faculty-research/new-deal/roosevelt-speeches/fr052232.htm>. Accessed January 25, 2022.

the Great War, just as T.R. had done in the Spanish-American War, Wilson and Daniels considered FDR too valuable in his current position as Assistant Secretary and convinced him to remain in that role.⁷²¹ In the summer of 1918, however, Franklin crossed the Atlantic to inspect naval installations in England and France, among other official duties for the Navy. There, he had a chance to tour several battlefields and destroyed towns in France, where he witnessed conflict, destruction, and death first-hand and on a massive scale. The experience left an indelible mark that remained on his conscience until his Presidency. More than five years before Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt recounted the story telling a crowd in Chautauqua, New York:

I have seen war on land and sea. I have seen blood running from the wounded. I have seen men coughing out their gassed lungs. I have seen the dead in the mud. I have seen cities destroyed. I have seen two hundred limping, exhausted men come out of line—the survivors of a regiment of one thousand that went forward forty-eight hours before. I have seen children starving. I have seen the agony of mothers and wives. I hate war.⁷²²

Twenty-three years later, the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the video footage of ships burning and news reports of thousands of deaths, and President Roosevelt’s “A date that will live in infamy” speech acted as an impromptu, yet grim, public relations campaign for the Navy that not even Theodore Roosevelt could have imagined. A half century after the first navalist moment began, the attack on Pearl Harbor led to a new upsurge in navalist enthusiasm, with Franklin serving as one of its prime disciples. As a result, between the attack on Pearl Harbor and end of World War II in 1945, the U.S. Navy grew to become the largest and most powerful fleet ever built. Even with post-war demilitarization and a shift to Cold War technologies after the 1940s, American naval power remained unmatched worldwide – a title it still holds today. In World

⁷²¹ Wilson is said to have told Franklin Roosevelt that no one could “select his (own) place of service,” McKean, title 280.

⁷²² Franklin D. Roosevelt, Speech at Chautauqua, N.Y., August 14, 1936. N.Y. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/208921>. Accessed January 25, 2022.

War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt transformed turn-of-the-century American navalism from Theodore Roosevelt's "surest guaranty of peace" into the nation's last great hope for victory.

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Indiana (PA) *Progress*
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Louisville (KY) *Courier-Journal*
Minnesota *Star Tribune*
Milwaukee (WI) *Journal*
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