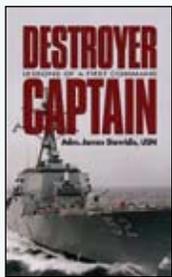


Off the Shelf

By ROBERT E. HENSTRAND

A *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, the first post-Cold War revision of U.S. naval strategy, reminds us of the criticality of the Navy's mission to national security: "70% of the world is water, 80% of the world lives on or near the coastline and 90% of our commerce sails across it." Secure seas and free-flowing maritime commerce are enduring, vital national security interests. As we enter the seventh year of the war on terror, the U.S. Navy now recognizes that conflict prevention is on par with warfighting and seeks to achieve conflict prevention "through collective maritime security efforts that focus on common threats (proliferation, smuggling, piracy, terrorism, etc.) and mutual interests." The following two books offer insight into what the Navy does daily and some of the challenges it faces now and will face in the near future as it endeavors to achieve "collective maritime security" among our allies and competitors in the Asia-Pacific region.



Destroyer Captain: Lessons of a First Command
by James Stavridis
Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008
224 pp. \$22.95
ISBN: 978-159-114-849-4

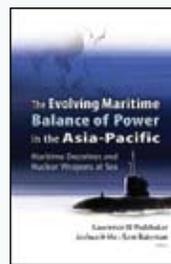
It is not often that we get the chance to delve into the personal diaries of our commanding officers, let alone a sitting U.S. combatant commander. Yet this is exactly the opportunity that Admiral James Stavridis has given us by publishing the journal he kept from 1993 to 1995, during his command of the USS *Barry*, an *Arleigh Burke*-class Aegis guided-missile destroyer. He commanded the ship on multiple training exercises and deployments in support of operations in Haiti, Bosnia, and the Persian Gulf.

This book is not your run-of-the-mill autobiography. Writing in first-person and present tense,

and offering introspective and sometimes self-deprecating insights, Stavridis shares his successes, challenges, concerns, and, best of all, personal stories and lessons of successful leadership. For example, in the opening pages, a jaunty Commander Stavridis recounts how after over 20 years of preparing to command his first ship, he approaches the *Barry* for the first time and suddenly feels "a curious shortness of breath, for my heart was beating high, and I had difficulty in swallowing. . . . Am I afraid?" (p. 9). Anyone who has taken command or begun a daunting assignment can identify with these feelings, and young officers can benefit from reading about how Commander Stavridis met his challenges and succeeded.

Despite being an account from 15 years ago, its lessons remain relevant to the contemporary operating environment. Admiral Stavridis commanded the *Barry* at a time when the Navy was downsizing, and the operational tempo was picking up. By his own account, he and his crew spent nearly 75 percent of the 27 months he was in command away from port. Officers in today's operating environment should thus be able to identify with such observations as, "To

sail in a modern ship of war is not unlike walking into a desert with a few companions. Everywhere around you is nothing but the sky and distant horizon. There is little outside input and an endless cycle of work and sleep" (p. 108). This window into the thoughts and feelings of one of the Navy's most successful officers of the era makes this a captivating read and is one of the most valuable aspects of the book. Every military officer and member of the joint and interagency warfighting team will gain precious insight into what it is really like commanding a U.S. Navy ship and leading Sailors. This book will surely become required reading in the Navy but should also be read by all joint warfighters. Unless you are one of the fortunate few non-Navy people to have served at sea aboard a Navy vessel, you may never come closer to learning what the Navy is really about.



The Evolving Maritime Balance of Power in the Asia-Pacific: Maritime Doctrines and Nuclear Weapons at Sea
edited by Lawrence W. Prabhakar, Joshua H. Ho, and Sam Bateman
Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2006
320 pp. \$75.00
ISBN: 978-981-256-828-1

The Asia-Pacific is an inherently maritime region that encompasses as many vital U.S. security interests today as ever—perhaps, in our globalized world, more. The interests of our allies and competitors, as well as challenges to them, will impact national security, and the U.S. Navy will most likely

find itself in the lead on these issues in the Asia-Pacific.

This volume is a collection of essays published by Singapore's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, which researches and develops comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking in areas related to Singapore's interests. The contributors are maritime security experts from such regional players as Australia, India, Japan, Singapore, and the United States. The fact that the essays are not written from a U.S. perspective recommends this work to national security planners and decisionmakers to inform and assist the implementation of the Navy's strategy of collective maritime security.

The book begins with an introduction (effectively an executive summary) provocatively entitled "Cooperation or Competition in the Maritime Asia-Pacific?" The author observes that "with the arrival of new powers [that is, India and China], traditional regional powers may need to reevaluate their strategies in light of the new environment." In answering the "cooperation or competition" question, the author concludes that a balance of *hard* and *soft* power might be the best prospect for enhancing stability in the region (pp. 13–14). The bulk of the book is organized into four sections dealing with "Issues, Trends, and Paradigms in Maritime Asia-Pacific"; "National Maritime Doctrines and Capabilities"; "The Maritime Aspects of Nuclear Weapons and Missile Defenses"; and a concluding section containing two essays. This book is particularly useful for its analysis of maritime strategy, emergent doctrines, naval orders of battle, the role of nuclear naval power in the Asia-Pacific, and the implications and impact of nuclear weapons.

The essays reinforce U.S. understanding of trends in the region, such as China's modernization and expansion of naval capabilities to eventually have a viable blue water force (chapter 4), and present new considerations about emerging naval powers such as India, which is

determined to “leapfrog capability development, challenge the status quo, and alter the relative balance of power to its favor” (p. 113). Timely and relevant, this thought-provoking volume will serve U.S. national security planners well.

Other recently published titles recommended for reading:

■ Bolt, Paul J., and Albert S. Willner, eds., *China's Nuclear Future*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006. 221 pp. \$52.00 (Hardcover).

■ Davis, Lance E., and Stanley L. Engerman, *Naval Blockades in Peace and War: An Economic History Since 1750*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 464 pp. \$91.00 (Hardcover).

■ Elleman, Bruce A., and S.C.M. Paine, eds., *Naval Blockades and Seapower: Strategies and Counter-Strategies, 1805–2005*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 319 pp. \$150.00 (Hardcover).

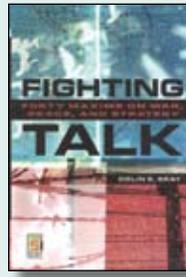
■ Erickson, Andrew S., et al., eds., *China's Future Nuclear Submarine Force*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007. 400 pp. \$45.00 (Hardcover).

■ Howarth, Peter, *China's Rising Sea Power: The PLA Navy's Submarine Challenge*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 208 pp. \$150.00 (Hardcover).

■ Swain, Michael D., et al., eds., *Assessing the Threat: The Chinese Military and Taiwan's Security*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007. 432 pp. \$22.50 (Paperback).

■ Winkler, David F., *Amirs, Admirals, and Desert Sailors: Bahrain, the U.S. Navy, and the Arabian Gulf*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007. 256 pp. \$34.95 (Hardcover).

—R. E. Henstrand



Fighting Talk: Forty Maxims on War, Peace, and Strategy
by Colin S. Gray
Westport, CT: Praeger
Security International, 2007
186 pp. \$39.95
ISBN: 0-275-99131-8

Reviewed by
TODD MANYX

At first glance, one might think that *Fighting Talk* could just as easily have been titled *Strategy for Dummies: Restatements of the Obvious*. However, that would be a mistake. Gray, a professional with over 40 years of experience in strategy and defense policy, has made a concerted effort to capture the basic truths that serve as an “invisible hand” in guiding strategists in their daily efforts and to distill those truths to their essence. One of Gray’s specific goals “is to make explicit the assumptions that . . . are hidden behind political rhetoric and the jargon of experts” (p. 17). Ultimately, he seeks to increase everyone’s “understanding of the nature of war, peace, and strategy” (pp. xiii). The study of strategy requires knowledge and consideration of a variety of topics that the author has gathered into five general sections: “War and Peace,” “Strategy,” “Military Power and Warfare,” “Security and Insecurity,” and “History and the Future.” Each section is composed of short essays that begin and end with quotations used to reinforce the topic at hand.

“War and Peace” (maxims 1–10) examines the nature of war and its relationship with peace. Specifically, Gray notes the differences between the

practical perspectives (those of politicians and military members) and the theoretical perspectives (those of strategists) of war and peace. In Gray’s opinion, everyone, to include people who formulate and execute policy, seeks shortcuts. The role of the strategist is to help politicians understand why some shortcuts, or analytical leaps, should be taken with caution. Gray clearly states that culture influences a strategist’s perceptions and that the strategist is meant to emphasize the role of cultural matters in both analysis and decisionmaking. A particularly interesting lesson is drawn from maxim 2 (“War is about peace, and peace can be about war”) and its discussion on the cyclical nature of war. The lesson is that while it is admittedly irregular in nature, the proven cycle of war/peace/war/peace demonstrates that idealists are incorrect in believing war only creates more war. Likewise, those who posit that peace only generates more peace are advocating an ideal, not reality.

“Strategy” (maxims 11–21), the book’s lengthiest section, deals with the practical aspects of strategic power in which political will is converted to military action. It is within this section that the author emphasizes his belief that the works of Clausewitz (*On War*), Sun Tzu (*Art of War*), and Thucydides (*Peloponnesian War*) capture the essence of strategic thought and that “people cannot be regarded as educated in strategy unless they are familiar, and more, with these books” (p. 58). To wit, see maxim 14: “If Thucydides, Sun-tzu, and Clausewitz did not say it, it probably is not worth saying.” Gray’s point is not necessarily that the best way to get a new idea is to read an old book, but rather that the matters that most affect strategy have remained constant for centuries and that, ultimately, “strategy is all about correlating military means with political ends” (p. 87).

“Military Power and Warfare” (maxims 22–28) highlights the influence that the outcome of operational and tactical level military execution has on strategy. The concept behind this section is disarmingly simple: military actions influence strategy. However, the points covered delve into more profound concepts that can be uncomfortable to deal with. For example, one of Gray’s key points is that military excellence is relative, a simple truth at face value in that not everyone can be the best at everything. However, the ability to make an honest assessment of one’s available resources can have a sobering impact on formulating a realistic strategy. After all, what politician is likely to publicly declare that his military is not up to the task? The author uses a quotation from General Rupert Smith to point out how relative excellence is a constant concern for potential adversaries: “Armies do not prepare for the last war, they frequently prepare for the wrong one . . . [because] governments will usually fund only against the anticipated primary threat as opposed to risk, and the adversary will usually play to his opponents’ weakness rather than strength” (p. 103).

In “Security and Insecurity” (maxims 29–35), Gray reminds us that strategy is important because there is always someone out there who seeks to do us harm, and therefore it is necessary to have a plan for how to deal with the threat. The problem, as alluded to by General Smith, is anticipating who the next enemy will be. Fortunately, Thucydides provides assistance when he notes that wars tend to be about one of “three principal very broad reasons: fear, honor, and interest” (p. 122).

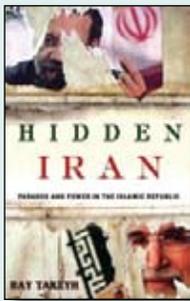
“History and the Future” (maxims 36–40) is directed toward helping strategists understand the process of change and how understanding the proper historical lessons

can aid their day-to-day focus. The most relevant points are examples of how historical lessons have been twisted to fit the political heat of the moment, often to the detriment of those required to execute policy.

In summary, Gray's attempt to shed light on the nature of war, peace, and strategy is a great success. *Fighting Talk* serves as a primer on topics relating to strategic policy that will help interested parties at all levels understand that behind political jargon and rhetoric, more than an invisible hand is guiding a strategist's counsel.

JFQ

Major Todd Manyx, USMC, is an Intelligence Officer with over 22 years of experience, most recently with a deployment to Anbar Province in Iraq.



Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic

by Ray Takeyh

New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006

272 pp. \$25.00

ISBN-13: 978-0-80507-976-0

Reviewed by
RIZWAN ALI

Iran is an ancient civilization full of stark paradoxes. It eschews the West at the same time that it seeks integration into the international system. It persists in sponsoring terrorist organizations such as Hizballah, while its foreign policy has been progressively more realpolitik than Islamist. These contradictions have complicated the

formulation of a foreign policy toward Iran for each President since Jimmy Carter. According to Ray Takeyh, Washington's strategy has been awkward at best and self-defeating at worst because American leaders and strategists have consistently misread the internal politics of Iran.

Takeyh, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, is one of the most pragmatic Middle East experts in America. His book sheds light on the inner political structure of Iran, its own perception of its role in the Middle East, and the forces that are driving it toward developing a nuclear bomb. He dismisses the portrayals of Iran by a succession of American leaders and the media as simplistic and often harmful to the cause of the progressives and reformers in the Iranian political system. Takeyh also asserts that contrary to U.S. popular opinion, Iran's government is remarkably stable and has elements that want to fully participate in the international system.

Takeyh's main argument in *Hidden Iran* is that in order to understand the country, one must study its internal factions and their political debates. Only by deciphering this "hidden Iran" can we see the real challenges the country poses. To offer a full appreciation of the political struggles there, Takeyh begins with a thorough analysis of the legacy of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who took control after the Iranian revolution in 1979. Takeyh's brilliant portrayal sheds new light on Khomeini's legacy and shows how his worldview continues to shape political debates and decisions in Iran.

Among the many unique aspects that Takeyh identifies about Iran is that it has always had multiple political movements. Despite Khomeini's attempts to eliminate dissent, the internal political and theocratic divisions survived and have found ways to operate within the framework of the Islamic Republic. These factions

have taken turns at leading Iran since the revolution. Regardless of who has been in power in Washington or Tehran, however, the United States and Iran have been unable to mend strained relations. Takeyh notes pointedly that the confrontational rhetoric employed by not only the current American administration but also previous ones works to strengthen the power base of the Iranian conservatives at the expense of reform-minded politicians. But because these more pragmatic politicians have not been squelched and continue to operate in the legislature and through other government bodies, Takeyh holds out hope for change.

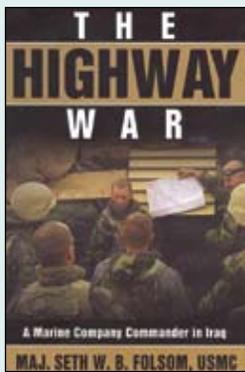
The two timeliest sections of *Hidden Iran* explain how the United States can deal with Iran on the issues of its nuclear ambitions and stability in Iraq. Takeyh observes that the public debate in Iran about nuclear weapons mirrors the discussions in China, India, and Israel before those nations developed their nuclear weapons. These exchanges revolve around nuclear prestige, great power hypocrisy, and the need for a viable deterrent. Takeyh peels back the layers to show that this internal debate has not reached the point of no return and that the United States can still effect change in Iran's nuclear path by decoupling the nuclear issue from other points of contention. Takeyh also tackles the thorny issue of Iran's involvement in Iraq, noting that Tehran knows a stable Iraq is the best route to ending the American occupation. Therefore, Iran's clerics are pushing for a united Iraq with a weak federal system and strong provinces. On both the nuclear and Iraq issues, Takeyh points out that despite the revolutionary rhetoric employed by Iran's leaders, at its core, Iran's strategy is very much oriented toward realpolitik.

Hidden Iran focuses closely on internal politics and how Iran views itself in the Middle East and the greater interna-

tional system. Though this is not a history of the country, Takeyh does an admirable job of explaining the historical context of key events and decisions in a moving, engaging style that will hold the interest of the novice as well as the expert. One area he does not address is how the various ethnic and religious minorities play into the political process. In addition to the Persian majority, Azeris, Kurds, Baluchis, and Arabs constitute small but strategically important minorities. They have played a role in helping Iran influence and build partnerships with neighbors who have the same minorities.

All military and national security strategists should read *Hidden Iran* and keep it on their bookshelves for reference. The complexities of Iranian politics are not always apparent to Western observers since even the pragmatic and reform elements in Iran continue to pay homage to Khomeini's legacy. It takes a thoughtful observer such as Takeyh to help us understand how the country's factions and personalities are relevant to its ambitions in the international system. Takeyh is optimistic that the United States and Iran can reach agreement on a variety of issues, including nuclear weapons and Iraq, as long as Washington makes the right diplomatic moves to help ease the tension. JFQ

Lieutenant Colonel Rizwan Ali, USAF, is a career officer with extensive deployments and travels in Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, Far East Asia, and Africa. He wrote this review while attending the National War College.



The Highway War: A Marine Company Commander in Iraq

by Seth W.B. Folsom

Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2006

424 pp. \$29.95

ISBN-13: 978-1574889888

Reviewed by

ANDREW MARVIN

War is by nature a social activity. Its success depends on the collective actions of small groups working in concert in rifle squads, on gun crews, and in armored vehicles. Yet command is a solitary endeavor, and command in war is particularly lonely, especially when leaders have time to reflect on the decisions they made, the orders they gave, the men they lost, and the enemies they killed. Major Seth Folsom, USMC, does a thorough job describing this loneliness in *The Highway War*, a memoir of the invasion of Iraq during Operation *Iraqi Freedom*.

Folsom felt the loneliness of command for nearly 2 years as he held the guidon of Delta Company, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion. During this time, he trained his Marines hard and led them during the long journey from the Kuwaiti border to Saddam Hussein's birthplace of Tikrit. He describes both the war and its lead-up in detailed prose free of exaggeration and self-importance.

Folsom writes with such bluntness that he occasionally gives the impression of describing something that happened

to someone else. The author is unflinching in his description of himself; for example, he acknowledges that he graduated near the bottom of his class in the Basic School. He admits to worrying constantly about his company's readiness despite a grueling train-up. He does not hesitate to address occasional differences with his fellow Marines; he endured more than one dressing down from the battalion operations officer and was the subject of several graffiti slurs at camp in Kuwait. Folsom sticks to this matter-of-fact approach during his successes as well. He describes all of Delta Company's engagements (which resulted in zero friendly casualties) in stunning detail, although he neglects to mention that his leadership earned him a Bronze Star.

This style makes *The Highway War* extremely valuable for Marines and other warfighters who might soon be engaged in combat. Folsom expounds on topics as varied as counseling subordinates, the advantages of Marine close air support, and the importance of training, discussing them all without seeming didactic. Anyone who has been to war or even on a training exercise will identify with Folsom's steadfast belief in the importance of sleep during operations.

The retelling of the invasion itself is true to life and therefore occasionally uninteresting. Following the dictum that war is 99 percent waiting for something to happen followed by 1 percent pure terror, Delta Company spent much of the war in trail behind 3^d Battalion, 5th Marines and other lead elements of the invasion, snaking down highways in an endless column headed for Baghdad. In describing this period, Folsom captures the uncertainty and detachment that modern warfare produces. Often, the fighting is apparent to Folsom's Marines only through the radio calls of engaged units, the report of friendly artillery batteries, and smoke on the

horizon. Denied a stand-up fight or the expected starring role of walking point for the regiment, Delta Company endured the fatigue of endless road marches, the discomfort of an unrelenting environment, and the dangers of unexploded ordnance.

Folsom's descriptions of the engagements that occurred when Delta eventually met the enemy are masterful. The battles are great examples of fire and maneuver and illustrate the devastating effects of a properly employed combined arms team. The book abounds with lessons for junior leaders as the author showcases the effectiveness of simple maneuvers and battle drills executed to standard. The star of the book is the company itself, well trained by Folsom, his lieutenants, and noncommissioned officers. The fact that so much of what the company did went well, from routine logistics operations to frequent artillery calls for fire, speaks much of the technical competence of individual Marines and junior leaders in Folsom's company.

Folsom concludes by relating what he did following command. He worked on a battalion staff, redeployed, and attended the Naval Postgraduate School. While in school, he made a brief trip to Iraq to assist with a research project. This is the weakest part of the book, but the author uses it to explain how he came to grips with all he experienced and learned during the invasion.

The rawness of Folsom's recollections, which range from prosaic descriptions of desert garrisons to his coming to terms with killing in combat, makes *The Highway War* a worthy successor to a series of memoirs that have sought to capture war as an experience, as opposed to war as a series of battles strung together. His approach calls to mind Charles McDonald's description of World War II in Europe in *Company Commander* (Infantry Journal Press, 1947). The parallels are striking, though the conflicts

differed greatly. Both authors show war as it is, stripped of its moonshine glories. Both felt the stress of leading. McDonald once calmed his nerves during an engagement by ordering himself to "act like a soldier, goddamnit! At least you can impersonate an officer!" During a similar moment of self-doubt, Folsom summarized his ability to lead with the assessment: "They wouldn't follow me into a bathroom right now, even if they had diarrhea."

The Highway War is a great read for those interested in Operation *Iraqi Freedom* or looking for an unpolished war story. Readers seeking nonstop action will find the book slow. With maneuver warfare long gone in *Iraqi Freedom*, it is a pity that no memoir of equal caliber describes the difficulties of the counterinsurgency fight, for our young leaders need lessons distilled from those battles as well. Perhaps Major Folsom will supply a sequel. **JFQ**

Andrew Marvin is a Senior Intelligence Analyst for Science Applications International Corporation.