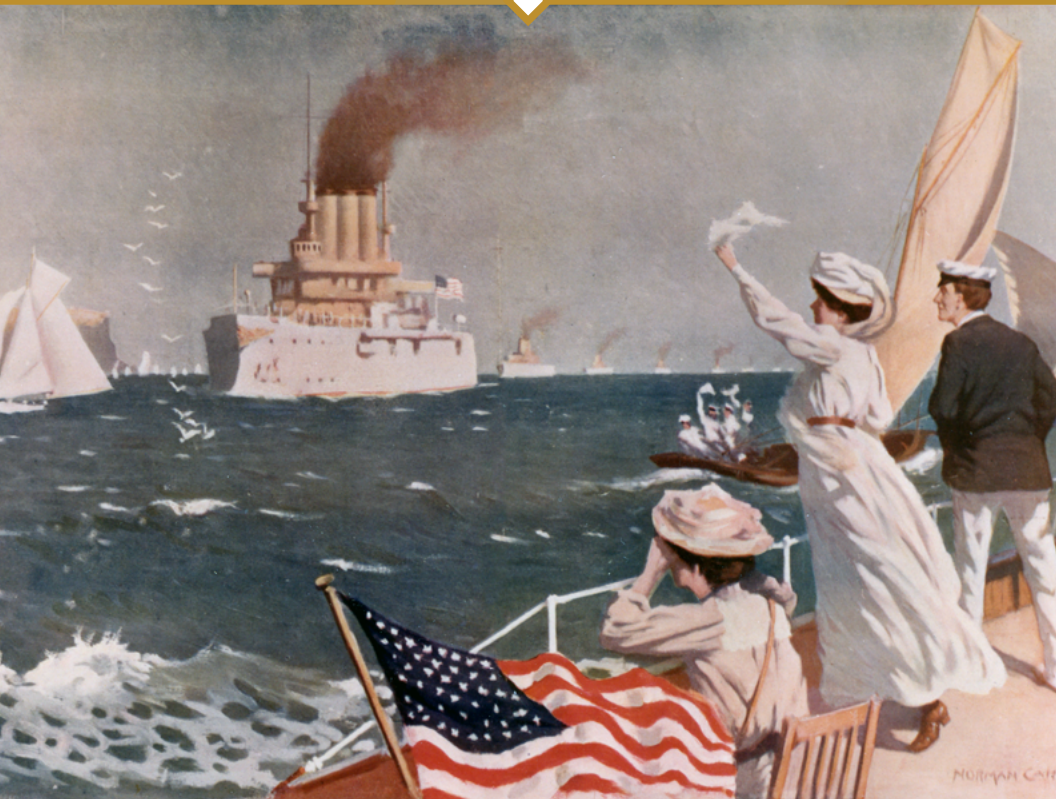


NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

# "A PACIFIC EFFECT"

THE UNITED STATES NAVY,  
NAVAL ENGAGEMENT, AND  
THE WORLD CRUISE OF THE  
GREAT WHITE FLEET



DANIEL P. M. CURZON AND TYLER A. PITROF



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## FOREWORD

Steaming out of Hampton Roads, Virginia, in December 1907, the United States Navy's U.S. Atlantic Fleet began a multipurpose operation that would become the famed voyage of the Great White Fleet. For the relatively green American navy, the journey provided valuable experience in logistical planning, diplomatic presence operations and engagement, and deliberate operational planning of the most pressing naval warfare tasks. President Theodore Roosevelt used the fleet's passage to show our nation's maritime power and to send a global message of friendship.

While over a century has passed since the Great White Fleet returned from this unique operation, there is much to learn from it. The Navy's ships, sailors, and attachés gave the United States great versatility to operate in a multipolar "Great Power System" that at the time included Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Japan. Today the Navy still operates forward to secure our nation's interests and to provide a foundation for the international rules-based order that has helped so many nations to prosper.

As the OPNAV Director of Plans, Policy, and Integration (OPNAV N5), I am honored to lead a team that develops similar plans to those executed by the Great White Fleet—conducting international engagement and security cooperation; developing service integration policy and posture; leading strategic plans; and coordinating strategic deterrence policy.

In coordination with the Naval History and Heritage Command, we developed this book in a format that was meant to use the U.S. Navy's Great White Fleet as historical context for the important work that we do here at OPNAV N5 on a daily basis. The questions offered at the end of each chapter are meant to spark the reader to think about how their current activity may be comparable to those planners and operators who participated in one of the most historic peacetime U.S. naval operations in history.

I thank the talented historians who wrote this document and express my greatest appreciation to the outstanding OPNAV staff I am fortunate to work with each day.

Rear Admiral Thomas Patrick Moninger, USN  
Director of Plans, Policy and Integration, N5  
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations

# **"A PACIFIC EFFECT"**

**THE UNITED STATES NAVY,  
NAVAL ENGAGEMENT, AND  
THE WORLD CRUISE OF THE  
GREAT WHITE FLEET**



## INTRODUCTION

In my own judgment the most important service that I rendered to peace was the voyage of the battle fleet round the world.

President Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*<sup>1</sup>

From 16 December 1907 to 22 February 1909, the bulk of the United States Navy's battleships circumnavigated the globe on a journey that remains unparalleled in modern history. Although it occurred more than a century ago, the world cruise of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet remains relevant today because it demonstrated the need for close cooperation with allies in order to project power over long distances; the enduring importance of fleet readiness to combat effectiveness and diplomacy; the potential of forward deployment as a tool of deterrence; and the utility of operational experimentation for adapting to new methods of warfare. By analyzing the circumstances and actions of the Navy in an earlier great power system, this work therefore encourages present-day officers and officials to consider their current situation from a new perspective that offers potential insights.

In this pursuit, the authors have organized the following text into seven chapters, each analyzing a specific aspect of the world cruise in connection with present-day concerns. Chapter 1 establishes the basic geopolitical environment of the early twentieth century, placing the world cruise in the context of American foreign policy and international relations. Chapter 2 then investigates the state of the Navy in 1908 through an analysis of the development of its fleet, officer corps, and doctrinal thinking. Next, Chapter 3 follows on this by examining the role that the U.S. Navy played in American foreign policy in a multipolar world. How established activities like "show the flag" visits combined with events and the evolution of the naval attaché system to generate the idea of the world cruise is then the subject of Chapter 4, while Chapter 5 examines how

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913), 592, <https://www.loc.gov/item/13024840/>.

this concept was then aligned with doctrine to make it a reality, a process which demonstrated the many shortcomings of the Navy as a learning institution. Chapter 6 then examines the actual engagement activities of the Navy while the cruise was underway, which included an ad hoc response to a devastating earthquake in the Strait of Messina in December 1908. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes by examining how the Navy both succeeded and failed to learn from the world cruise, and suggests some lessons for the present day. As each of these chapters assumes a fundamental grasp of the context and the fleet's itinerary, we begin our dialogue by providing a brief background before following the fleet's voyage.

## THE GREAT POWER SYSTEM

By the beginning of the twentieth century, global politics were dominated by the great power system that had arisen following the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. Initially intended to preserve the political and territorial status quo of Europe in the face of nationalist revolutions, by 1907 the acknowledged great powers—Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary—were joined by two non-European powers: Japan and the United States. The characteristics of a great power in this era were not formally agreed upon and many competing definitions existed, ranging from economic resourcefulness to raw military strength.<sup>2</sup> In general, these states could project power beyond their own geographic regions and impose their political will upon any non-great power. As they possessed relatively equal military power, they usually avoided direct conflict, preferring to compete on the peripheries and through soft power contests like national exhibitions.<sup>3</sup>

A primary characteristic of the great power system by 1907 was the division of the globe through the establishment of spheres of influence, a concept with a similarly nebulous definition. A given country's sphere included both territories that it directly administered (the home/

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2 Nick Bisley, *Great Powers in the Changing International Order* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012), 7; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), xv–xxiv.

3 There were some exceptions to this rule, most notably the Crimean War (1853–56) between Russia on one side and Great Britain and France on the other. Even this war occurred chiefly to preserve the status quo: Great Britain and France sought to preserve the Ottoman Empire against Russian expansionism. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, xviii.

metropole and colonies), as well as regions beyond its formal borders but within an area defined by the internationally recognized right of that country to political, economic, and/or military predominance and foreign intervention. The basic concepts behind the sphere of influence are as old as diplomacy itself, but the term developed in late nineteenth-century diplomatic circles as a means of delineating national interests to limit conflict among the great powers as they competed abroad. That said, few boundaries among these spheres were clearly defined by treaties; for the most part a sphere of influence existed by general consensus.<sup>4</sup>

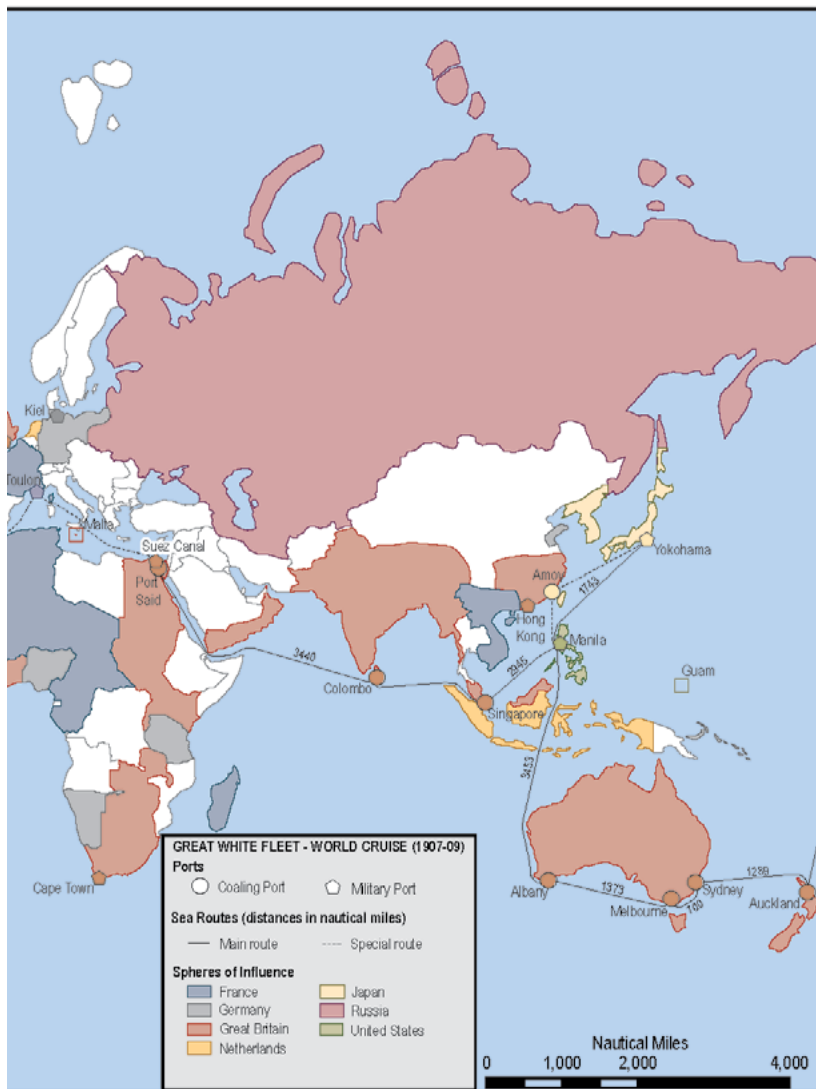
The great power system and spheres of influence were predicated on shared norms, particularly ideas of race. In the late nineteenth century, various Europeans (particularly Victorian-era British intellectuals) promoted ideas of racial hierarchy, which public figures and organizations then applied to international politics.<sup>5</sup> These were perhaps best exemplified by Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden": the civilized powers had a duty to uplift the lesser (non-white) barbarians of the world by forcing western culture, religion, and values upon them.<sup>6</sup> With the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany led the charge to revive the idea of a *yellow peril*: that Asian races represented an existential threat to the West. These efforts were paralleled by local ones as communities blamed different ethnicities for their problems, even forming organizations like the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League in San Francisco in 1905.<sup>7</sup>

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- 4 Aleš Skřivan Sr., and Aleš Skřivan Jr., "Great Britain, Russia and the German Occupation of Jiaozhou, 1897–1898," *Nuova Rivista Storica* 3 (Sep.–Dec. 2023): 943–65; David D. O'Dare, "The Open Door: Its History and Conflict with Spheres of Interest," *Advocate of Peace through Justice* 84, no. 7 (July 1922), 262–66, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20660053>; T.G. Otte, "Great Britain, Germany, and the Far-Eastern Crisis of 1897–8," *The English Historical Review* 110, no. 439 (Nov. 1995): 1157–79, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/577254>; William Smith Culbertson, "The 'Open Door' and Colonial Policy," *American Economic Review* 9, no. 1 (Mar. 1919): 325–40, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1814011>.
  - 5 Robert Knox, *The Races of Men: A Fragment* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1850), <https://archive.org/details/racesofmenfragme00knox/page/n7/mode/2up>.
  - 6 Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," *The Kipling Society*, 2024, [https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems\\_burden.htm](https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_burden.htm).
  - 7 Steven Ratuva, "The Politics of Imagery: Understanding the Historical Genesis of Sinophobia in Pacific Geopolitics," *East Asia: An International Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (Mar. 2022): 13–29; Stanford M. Lyman, "The 'Yellow Peril' Mystique: Origins and Vicissitudes of a Racist Discourse," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 13, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 683–747.



Approximate spheres of influence of France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Netherlands, and the United States in 1908, and the course of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet's world cruise. (Naval History and Heritage Command [NHH])





In such a complex world of geopolitical interactions, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt (1901–9) adopted a policy of status-quo influence balancing for Europe and Asia, which he called “square deals.” He did this primarily through diplomatic engagement, using the American notion of an Open Door for merchants and through his conflict mediations including the Treaty of Portsmouth (1905) that concluded the Russo-Japanese War. Like leaders in Great Britain, Japan, and Germany, Roosevelt embraced Alfred Thayer Mahan’s argument that commerce was key to a strong nation and that it required a powerful navy to protect and support it.<sup>8</sup> Thus, he consistently argued for more battleships, which were universally equated with a nation’s power.

### **THE WORLD CRUISE OF THE “GREAT WHITE FLEET,” 1907–9**

In 1906, a period of high tensions between the United States and Japan intensified after the segregating of Asian students from local schools in San Francisco.<sup>9</sup> The ensuing Japanese diplomatic outrage was then magnified by the publication of sensational stories in newspapers around the world that predicted war between Japan and the United States.<sup>10</sup> With his attention elsewhere, President Roosevelt tried to quench the media-induced tensions through public investigations and diplomacy. As the controversy persisted, Roosevelt and the U.S. Navy’s leadership contemplated a cruise by the U.S. Atlantic Fleet—which contained the majority of the Navy’s combat power in the form of battleships—from its East Coast moorings

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8 For overviews of this period, see Michael H. Hunt, *Frontier Defense and the Open Door Policy: Manchuria in Chinese-American Relations, 1895–1911* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973); S.C.M. Paine, *The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Daniel Curzon, “Pacific Triumvirate: Great Britain, the Empire of Japan, and the United States of America and the Geo-Strategic Environment around the Pacific Rim between 1900 and 1920,” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2020).

9 Walter LeFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations throughout History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 87–92.

10 “Japan’s Ambitions: A Russian Journal Asserts That It Seeks War with This Country,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 Nov. 1906, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/251357484/abstract/5A152C54BE9F4219PQ/>; “U.S. and Japan in danger of war? Nipponese in Hawaii Fear Clash Because of Alleged Insults by White, Paper Sounds Warning, Labor Issue Declared Responsible for Bitter Feeling Between the Races,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 Aug. 1906, 7, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/173263140/337A4C2A077F4663PQ/>.

to the West Coast. In Roosevelt's mind, the cruise would fulfill four purposes: prepare the Navy for war, signal American strength internationally through public diplomacy, raise the domestic profile of the Navy, and convince Congress to appropriate more funds for battleships. The government officially announced this exercise as a practice cruise from the East to the West Coast in July 1907. While the war scare in the American and Japanese presses had begun to wane by this point, the underlying issue of how the United States would fight a potential war in the Pacific remained.<sup>11</sup>

As envisioned, the trip, including coaling, would take about three months to travel nearly 13,000 nautical miles (NM) from Hampton Roads, Virginia, to Magdalena Bay, Mexico. After a month of gunnery exercises, the fleet would cruise slightly over 2,900 additional miles to visit nine West Coast localities. This alone was unprecedented in peacetime; as Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll, who was a midshipman on the cruise, noted later, "the Royal Navy had never attempted anything like [it]," and Americans greatly anticipated the display of martial pomp.<sup>12</sup>

The sixteen first-rate battleships and six escorting torpedo boat destroyers (often referred to simply as destroyers) comprising most of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet left Hampton Roads on 16 December 1907 to the cheers of President Roosevelt and onlookers.<sup>13</sup> Their first stop was British-controlled Trinidad; the Atlantic Fleet visited Port of Spain on 23 December to coal, and received a polite, but distant, welcome from British officials. U.S. sailors then enjoyed rousing New Year's and "crossing the line" ceremonies on their way farther south. The fleet lost two days due to problems with coal, and reached Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 12 January 1908. There, Brazilians exuberantly greeted the arriving U.S. fleet from

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11 James R. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 9–14.

12 Folder 1, box 1, Coll/547, Papers of EM1 Roy W. Davis, 1906–1970, Archives Branch, Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHHC) (hereafter Davis Papers); Royal E. Ingersoll, "The Reminiscences of Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll," *Naval History Project*, Columbia Center for Oral History, 1965, transcript, p. 20; Robert A. Hart, "The Voyage of the Great White Fleet, 1907–1909" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1964), 1, 3, 14–18; Franklin Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1909), 88.

13 Folder 4, box 1 of 3, Coll/474, Diaries of Surgeon Eugene Potter Stone, 1875–1915, Archives Branch, NHHHC (hereafter Stone Diaries).

land and sea, even presenting a 15-gun salute to Rear Admiral Robley D. Evans, while an Italian and a German cruiser greeted them from the harbor. In Rio, the Brazilian government fêted the fleet and its personnel, who experienced a whirlwind week of hospitality. High government officials hosted numerous parties for the officers and the city of Rio offered a series of entertainments for the sailors.<sup>14</sup>

The fleet next anchored at Punta Arenas within the Straits of Magellan on 1 February to coal. There, it was met by the Chilean cruiser *Chacabuco*, which was there to guide them, as well as by the British cruiser *HMS Sappho*, which was there to gather intelligence.<sup>15</sup> The battleships and their escorts then proceeded southwest before turning north, reaching Callao, Peru, on 20 February where they coaled for the next nine days. The Peruvian government had declared the arrival day a national holiday and hosted excursions for the officers and men, including a bullfight.<sup>16</sup> When the Atlantic Fleet ultimately arrived in Magdalena Bay, Mexico, on 12 March for a month of gunnery practice, Rear Admiral Evans, incapacitated by poor health since Trinidad, asked to be relieved of command. Rear Admiral Charles Stillman Sperry succeeded him on 6 May in San Diego for the second half of the world cruise.<sup>17</sup>

During the second leg of the cruise, the Atlantic Fleet entered other powers' spheres of influence, and therefore primarily focused on maritime diplomacy. This phase began with the fleet's departure from San Francisco in two separate groups on 7 July 1908. The capital ships reached Honolulu on the 16th, dispersing to recoal due to the limited facilities. After another boisterous port visit, the battleships departed for Auckland, New Zealand, on the 22nd, while the destroyers sailed for their final destination of the Philippines by way of Samoa. After 3,850 miles, the longest uninter-

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14 Franklin Matthews, *With the Battle Fleet: Cruise of the Sixteen Battleships of the United States Atlantic Fleet from Hampton Roads to the Golden Gate, December 1907–May 1908* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1909), 88, 127–29; Stone Diaries.

15 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 43–48; Matthews, *With the Battle Fleet*, 166–67; Henry Kent Hewitt, "The Reminiscences of Admiral H. Kent Hewitt," *Naval History Project*, Columbia Center for Oral History, 1962, oral history transcript, 45–46.

16 Matthews, *With the Battle Fleet*, 202–03, 211–23; Hewitt, "The Reminiscences of Admiral H. Kent Hewitt," 46–47.

17 Davis Papers; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 52–53.

rupted run of the cruise, the battleships reached their destination on 9 August. About 10 percent of New Zealand's population turned out to see the American warships and treated the visit as a massive holiday. New Zealanders were particularly interested in the visit not only as a spectacle of naval power, but also as insurance against Japan's regional rise. As one New Zealand editorial put it, "Stars and Stripes, if you please, protect us from the Japanese."<sup>18</sup>

From New Zealand, the fleet made the short crossing to Australia, arriving to an audience of over 500,000 Australians in Sydney on the 21st. As Sperry himself noted, "the enthusiasm of the welcome accorded is almost beyond belief."<sup>19</sup> Six days later, the battleships departed and cruised to Melbourne, completing the short voyage on the 29th. Like Sydney, Melbourne was ecstatic over the fleet's arrival and the nearly partied-out sailors had to reach into their reserves to keep going. The majority of the fleet departed a week later on 5 September for Albany. It reached this last Australian stop on the 11th, where the Americans recoaled, gathered stragglers, and socialized with Royal Navy personnel.<sup>20</sup>

On the 19th, the Atlantic Fleet sailed northward to the Philippines. It reached Manila on 2 October, but the sailors were confined to their ships as the city was in the throes of a scarlet fever epidemic. They resumed their journey on the 10th and, despite encountering a typhoon that delayed them, safely arrived off Yokohama on the 18th. The Japanese had gone all out in their preparations including, per a request by Sperry, the provision of three decorated floating gangways and a pier so that the sailors could return to the boats in the evening without issues. The gracious welcome quickly overcame war scare-fueled trepidations with the eager hosts fêting the officers and sailors.<sup>21</sup>

Leaving Japan, the fleet split in half. Second Squadron sailed south by southwest under Rear Admiral William H. Emory, headed to the Chinese

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18 Quoted in James R. Reckner, "The Great White Fleet in New Zealand," *Proceedings* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1991).

19 James R. Reckner, "The World Cruise of the Atlantic Battleship Fleet: The Great White Fleet and the U.S. Navy, 1907-1909," (PhD diss., University of Auckland, 1985), 281.

20 Stone Diaries.

21 Davis Papers; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 118-19.

port of Amoy (modern Xiamen). Meanwhile, First Squadron under Sperry returned to the Philippines to start gunnery practice. It is likely that the Qing Dynasty read too much into the requested visit, expecting the entirety of the American fleet. It was disappointed with receiving only half and that issue impacted the event.<sup>22</sup>

After the battleships reconvened at Manila on 5 November, they carried out target practice before departing for Colombo, Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka), where they arrived on 13 December. There, they coaled before the fleet continued westward on the 20th, celebrating Christmas and New Year's at sea in between continuous drilling. Sailing up the Red Sea, they reached the Suez Canal two days ahead of schedule on 3 January 1909. Once again in touch with the U.S. government via telegraph, Sperry received word of the massive earthquake that had occurred at Messina on 28 December and orders to render assistance expeditiously. He responded by detaching fleet surgeons and supplies on board the auxiliaries and speeding their passage through the Suez. Sperry then took the flagship USS *Connecticut* (Battleship No. 18) to Naples to personally offer assistance and support.<sup>23</sup>

The battleships then dispersed throughout the Mediterranean for regular port calls. American officers attended a host of unofficial parties and balls, while various consuls made further diplomatic requests. Ships of the fleet visited the Ottoman Empire, Greece, Malta, Italy, France, and Algeria. They reunited on 1 February at Gibraltar, where the fleet exchanged salutes and visits with British, French, Dutch, and Russian warships. The Atlantic Fleet then left on the 6th and returned to Hampton Roads on 22 February 1909, arriving to a raucous crowd. Their task completed, the sailors set about repainting the battleships in "wartime gray."

The world cruise was an event unique to the pre-World War I era. In opening his seminal work on the Great White Fleet, historian James Reckner wrote, "a remarkable air of innocence surrounds contemporary attitudes toward the fleet and its cruise. This is understandable. The world would enjoy six more years of naval pageantry and splendor before the

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22 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 119–22.

23 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 143–46.

horrors of unrestricted submarine warfare and ever-mounting casualty lists from the trenches in France extinguished a generation's romantic conceptions and preoccupation with things military."<sup>24</sup> Although this world cruise belonged to a different age, it nevertheless shares many features of our current political world and therefore offers instructive lessons for the present day.

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<sup>24</sup> Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, x.





# 1

## THE GENESIS OF THE GREAT WHITE FLEET'S VOYAGE

Before the twentieth century, the United States was militarily a minor power, eschewing overseas commitments in favor of continental conquest and trade growth. When that attitude shifted and the U.S. embraced the idea of a maritime empire following the Spanish-American War (1898), it had to learn how to interact within a complex multipolar world. Despite lacking a coherent grand strategic vision, various factors led the United States to establish its own sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere and also to compete aggressively with other powers, especially in China, for economic gains. In competing, though, the United States aimed to stay within global norms of conduct, preferring diplomacy to armed conflict. Thus, when a plethora of domestic factors on both sides of the Pacific led to a war scare between Japan and the United States in 1907, American leaders framed the issue within the bounds of the global great power competition and embraced diplomacy, including maritime diplomacy, to resolve the trouble.<sup>1</sup>

### BRIEF SURVEY OF GEOSTRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS

Throughout the 1800s, the U.S. devoted its naval resources to commerce protection with limited ventures into overseas expansion. American commercial interests tended to be at the forefront of the expansionary impulse with the Navy protecting merchants who came under threat.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 Modern scholars have pulled the term “great powers” forward in time to describe the current situation due to the multiplicity of actors and their strength.
  - 2 For the economics and politics, see Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019); William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Ann Arbor, MI: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1962). For naval engagement, see David F. Long, *Gold Braid and Foreign Relations:*

In the 1840s, following Great Britain's victory in the First Opium War (1839–42), American diplomats secured access to Chinese trade ports for American businesses by pressuring China to grant it several concessions including most favored nation status. In the 1850s, Americans pushed for an isthmian canal treaty with the British (1850), opened Japanese trade ports (1853–54), and enacted the Guano Islands Act (1856).<sup>3</sup> Following the American Civil War, the U.S. further expanded, beginning negotiations to purchase the Virgin Islands (1866, resolved in 1917) and acquiring Midway Island and Alaska (1867). In the following decade, the U.S. gained a fueling station in Samoa (1878), which it maintained against German schemes including an induced civil war in the 1880s.<sup>4</sup> Also during that decade, American planters seized power from the Hawaiian monarchy, and eventually officially controlled the government of Hawaii in 1893. While the Navy had participated in the 1893 incident, the U.S. government declared those actions illegal, refusing to acknowledge the government of expatriate planters immediately.<sup>5</sup>

All of these examples highlight a United States creeping toward an overseas empire. American businesses, like the United Fruit Company which developed a near monopoly on bananas in Central America, lobbied to expand American spheres of influence with the Navy providing protection.<sup>6</sup> Of those spheres, the idea of a “China Market” loomed large with American businesses attempting to win a share away from the other powers. American interest grew over time, assisted by the acquisition of

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*Diplomatic Activities of U.S. Naval Officers, 1798–1883* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988).

- 3 The Guano Islands Act is a federal law that grants American citizens the right to claim islands containing guano deposits on behalf of the United States. Before the era of synthesized nitrogen, guano, bird droppings, etc., proved highly valuable as organic fertilizers and a source of nitrogen for chemical products including black powder.
- 4 Paul M. Kennedy, *The Samoan Tangle: A Study in Anglo-German-American Relations 1878–1900* (Kildare, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1974).
- 5 Tom Coffman, *Nation Within: The History of American Occupation of Hawaii* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 122–27, 142–44, 164–65.
- 6 The company controlled vast swathes of land in Central America—e.g., Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala—also in South American and the Caribbean. Its control over certain areas was so strong that people came to call them “banana republics” in line with the product United Fruit was nearly monopolizing. On United Fruit, see Jason Colby, *The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race, and U.S. Expansion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

Pacific islands, which provided convenient waystations that commercial shipping could more easily use.<sup>7</sup>

While the United States eschewed international competition, European states maintained a complicated balance. In the previous century, Europe created the “Concert of Europe” to manage great power relations and stability in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars with Great Britain balancing the scales among the great continental powers of Austria-Hungary, France, Prussia, and Russia through its preponderant maritime power. In 1870, Prussia unified Germany through a combination of diplomacy and conquest, fundamentally shifting the balance of power. Starting in the 1880s, the Germans sought colonial parity with their older neighbors, provoking a new wave of imperialism in Africa and Asia.<sup>8</sup>

With the renewed colonial push, established empires were forced to defend their possessions. Great Britain in particular protected its dominions and spheres (South Africa, Egypt/Sudan, India, the Malaysian straits, and Central China) through naval and diplomatic engagement. On the whole, the established empires succeeded in shielding their spheres, forcing rising powers such as Imperial Germany to look farther afield for territories. Consequently, German schemes to create their own spheres increased global tensions and led to naval arms races.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, American actions usually harmonized with global norms, including capitalizing on British actions to gain greater access to Chinese trade ports following the First Opium War (1839–42).<sup>10</sup>

The Japanese responded to the Chinese loss in the First Opium War by choosing to open more fully to the world, which contributed to the

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7 John K. Fairbank, “America and China: The Mid-Nineteenth Century,” in *American-East Asian Relations: A Survey*, ed. Ernest R. May and James C. Thompson Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 26–28; Kwang-Ching Liu, “America and China: The Late Nineteenth Century,” *American-East Asian Relations: A Survey*, ed. Ernest R. May and James C. Thompson Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 46–47.

8 Bernhard von Bulow, “Place in the Sun,” speech in the Reichstag (1897), translated excerpt available at [https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/607\\_Buelow\\_Place%20in%20the%20Sun\\_111.pdf](https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/607_Buelow_Place%20in%20the%20Sun_111.pdf).

9 Paul G. Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994), 2–5; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 205–22.

10 Fairbank, “America and China,” 31–33.

fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate (1868).<sup>11</sup> A more representative state subsequently emerged in Japan under the nominal rule of an emperor, but under the actual rule of a set of oligarchs. They looked outward, encouraging emigration in order to create a diaspora that would facilitate overseas trade, send home foreign currency, and most importantly, offshore their excess population. To modernize, they employed foreign advisors and practices, drawing inspiration from abroad including the German governmental system and British naval practices. They opened Korea to foreign commerce (1876), took de facto control of Formosa from Qing China (1878), and encouraged emigration to places like the Kingdom of Hawaii. As Japan was rebuffed from looking east by the U.S., the oligarchs focused attention on Korea, a larger share of the “China Market,” and southward toward the South Pacific and Southeast Asia.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1890s, both Japan and the United States won wars that altered the balance of power and forced the other world powers to re-evaluate their places in the international order. After a decade-long contest for influence over Korea with Qing China, the Meiji government decided it had no other recourse than war in 1894. In less than a year, the Japanese shattered Qing forces; in so doing, they upended how other powers considered them.<sup>13</sup> Meiji Japan supplanted Qing China in Western minds as the regional power, but France, Germany, and Russia intervened to prevent Japan from claiming the strategic Liaodong Peninsula in northeast China. That “Triple Intervention” drove Japanese policymakers to seek any means to reverse the outcome, particularly forming alliances.<sup>14</sup>

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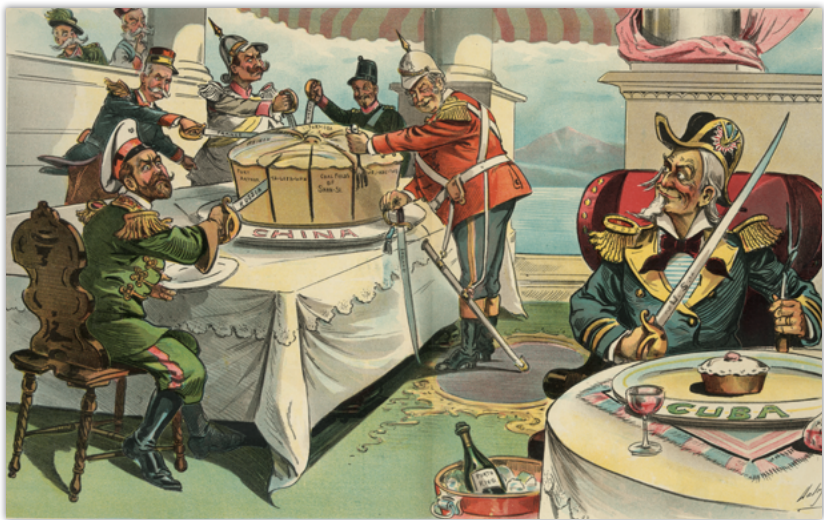
11 Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, “Opium, Expulsion, Sovereignty: China’s Lessons for Bakumatsu Japan,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 47, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 1–25; David L. Howell, “Foreign Encounters and Informal Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 295–327.

12 Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, 20–26; Mark R. Peattie, *Nanyo: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885–1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992).

13 S.C.M. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895: Perceptions, Power, and Primacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3–4, 112.

14 Mutsu Munemitsu, *Kenkenroku: A Diplomatic Record of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894–1895*, trans. Gordon Mark Berge (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1982), 250–54; Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894–1907* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1966), 35–36.

In 1898, the United States fought a war with Spain and, emerging victorious, acquired the Philippines and Guam as territories and liberated Cuba. American victory signaled a greater presence on the world stage, even as the American populace remained conflicted about pursuing colonial adventurism. Despite internal conflict and potential international challenges, a new generation of American politicians, like Theodore Roosevelt, touted the benefits of expansion and of new locations as strategic trade hubs. American proponents of expansion were equally interested in regional gains in the Western Hemisphere as well as around the Pacific Rim.<sup>15</sup>



Louis Dalrymple, “No Chance to Criticize,” chromolithograph, in *Puck* 43, no. 1107 (25 May 1898): On the left, Japan and the European powers of Russia, France, Germany, and Great Britain look on as the United States claims its own colonial possessions on the right. (Library of Congress [LC], 2012647567)

<sup>15</sup> John M. Thompson, *Great Power Rising: Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Edward J. Marolda, “A Tempest in the Navy Department: Theodore Roosevelt as Assistant Secretary of the Navy,” in John B. Hattendorf and William P. Leeman, ed., *Forging the Trident: Theodore Roosevelt and the United States Navy*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2020), 56–81.

These Americans embraced and then pushed for equal access and rights for all countries' merchants operating in China in response to exclusionary practices represented by some European states seeking strict spheres of influence. Secretary of State John Hay sent the Open Door Notes in September 1899 to Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan, and Russia,<sup>16</sup> in which he argued for equal access for all western merchants.<sup>17</sup> Hay intended the notes to foster stability through equal trade access, but the notes and their impacts were inherently limited by what each nation would accept. However, the idea grew in importance, becoming a cornerstone of Washington's efforts to counter spheres of interest.

While the balance of power in East Asia was resettling, Berlin sought other opportunities, causing unease in Washington. The German attempt to gain colonial benefits in Venezuela (1902–3) triggered a quiet crisis for now-President Theodore Roosevelt, who like the American public remembered German attempts to buy Manila out from under Commodore George Dewey's fleet in 1898. That crisis inspired the newly created Joint Board of the Army and Navy to create its first war plan, aimed at German adventurism in the Caribbean. The impetus for the plan's creation typified early American planning efforts, which tended to occur in response to specific crises. The German push into Morocco under cover of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) also ratcheted up concerns in Washington, while causing a colonial crisis in Europe between France and Germany. Roosevelt attempted to preserve a balance in Europe similar to what he had hoped to do in Asia by brokering peace between Japan and Russia in 1905. The Algeciras Conference (1906) resolved the First Moroccan Crisis, but convinced American policymakers that German actions would continue upsetting the status quo. In response, the U.S. Navy proposed a robust battleship building program and even cooperation with Great Britain against Germany.<sup>18</sup>

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16 For more information, see T. G. Otte, "Great Britain, Germany, and the Far-Eastern Crisis of 1897–8," *English Historical Review* 110, No. 439 (Nov. 1995): 1157–79; Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Routledge, 1985).

17 Office of the Historian of the Secretary of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 5, 1899* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 128–43.

18 George W. Baer, "U.S. Naval Strategy, 1890–1945," *Naval War College Review* 44, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 6–33; Raymond A. Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan* (Seattle: University

## THE WAR SCARE WITH JAPAN

On 18 April 1906, the day after the Algeiras convention concluded, a massive earthquake struck San Francisco. The physical destruction created a fertile environment for the discriminatory Japanese and Korean Exclusion League to convince the San Francisco School Board in October 1906 to enact a measure excluding “Asiatics” from the city’s general school population. The Japanese consul in San Francisco immediately protested this breach of the Japanese-American Treaty of 1894, while Japanese public figures deemed this equation with the Chinese a bitter insult and further proof that the United States was no friend of Japan.<sup>19</sup> American and Japanese presses roused feverish responses, generating a war scare.

In response to this crisis, President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Elihu Root took swift action. Roosevelt ordered the Department of Justice to investigate, and sent Secretary of Commerce and Labor Victor H. Metcalf, a Californian, to tackle the problem.<sup>20</sup> Roosevelt also inquired about Navy contingency plans, with Admiral Dewey assuring him that the



L.M. Glackens, “The War with Japan,” in *Puck* 62, no. 1599 (23 October 1907): President Roosevelt battles the newspapers to avert war with Japan. (LC, 2011647248)

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of Washington Press, 1966), 67–68; William R. Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897–1909* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 189–90.

19 Curzon, “Pacific Triumvirate,” 159–60.

20 Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific 1897–1909*, 192.

U.S. fleet could arrive in the Pacific within 90 days of hostilities. The Navy would then have the preponderance of force, but would lack significant naval bases. The General Board asked the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) and its naval attachés for information on the Imperial Japanese Navy, especially war preparations.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Roosevelt contacted opposition in Congress and attempted to convince them to appropriate funds for an additional battleship.<sup>22</sup>

While the federal government attempted a resolution, some Americans fanned the flames. Prominent politicians, businessmen, and California-based organizations continued their anti-Japanese rhetoric. Moreover, European newspapers prophesied a war, while conspiracy theories sprouted. The authors fantasized about how the Japanese would slip troops into Mexico or capture Hawaii with support from émigrés.<sup>23</sup> Roosevelt's attempts to douse the conflagration floundered throughout the end of the year in the face of intransigence and fear.<sup>24</sup>

As the rhetoric continued, Captain Raymond P. Rodgers, the new head of ONI, reached out to American officers abroad to ascertain if Japan was making war preparations. From the American naval attaché in Germany, Lieutenant Commander William L. Howard, Rodgers received word that the Germans believed war between Japan and the United States was inevitable. Rodgers concluded those comments were wishful thinking from a German court seeking to upset the status quo. From attachés in Tokyo, Rodgers received word that Japan had placed an order with Vickers in Great Britain for a couple of submarines.<sup>25</sup> Notwithstanding this contract, attachés in the Far East provided a series of reports throughout the crisis

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21 Vol. 19, General Correspondence of the Office of Naval Intelligence, 1899–1911, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Record Group (RG) 38, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

22 Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897–1909*, 192–93; Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan*, 140–41.

23 Curzon, “Pacific Triumvirate,” 160–62; See also Homer Lea, *The Valor of Ignorance* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1909).

24 For example, “President Will Scold California in Message,” *New York Times*, 1 Dec 1906, 2; “Roosevelt Bound to Protect Japs,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 Dec 1906, 6; “San Francisco Angry at Metcalf’s Report,” *New York Times*, 20 Dec 1906, 1; “Frisco Talks Fight,” *Washington Post*, 25 Dec 1906, 3.

25 Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897–1909*, 194; Brian T. Crumley, “The Naval Attaché System of the United States, 1882–1914” (PhD diss., Texas A&M University, 2002), 236–39.



indicating that Japan had no intentions toward war and was focused on its own problems.<sup>26</sup>

In February 1907, President Roosevelt reached a Gentlemen's Agreement with the Japanese government to limit immigration from Japan, which was perceived as the underlying cause.<sup>27</sup> The Meiji government wanted more, though, and reached out for formal discussions to resolve immigration and Pacific policy generally.<sup>28</sup> Those discussions continued into 1908, resulting in an exchange of notes between Secretary Root and Ambassador Takahira Kogoro after the successful visit by the American fleet. The Japanese agreed to limit the number of immigrants entering the United States and its territories and both sides agreed to formal wording acknowledging each countries' sphere of influence in East Asia.<sup>29</sup> Despite the Gentlemen's Agreement, the presses of both nations persistently revived the war scare over political intransigence, and conspiracy and immigration fears.

The summer became the turning point for the revived war scare. In mid-June, Roosevelt inquired if the Joint Army and Navy Board, an organization established after the Spanish-American War to plan for joint operations, had relevant war plans. In response, the Board provided contingency plans and a series of recommendations: concentrating a fleet of at least 16 battleships; dispatching it on a Pacific cruise; fortifying Subic Bay; and improving the San Francisco navy yard. Intrigued, but believing conflict unlikely, Roosevelt agreed to the cruise at a 27 June conference. He also recalled the aging protected cruisers stationed in the Far East to

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26 "Japanese Naval Budget, W - 9 Jan. 19, 1907. W 20 Feb 18, 1907," D-11-a, Register No. 07/91, box 638, Naval Attache Reports, 1886-1939, Intelligence Division, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, RG 38, National Archives Building, Washington, DC; Jeffery M. Dorwart, *Dorwart's History of the Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's First Intelligence Agency, 1865-1918* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 84-85; Crumley, "The Naval Attaché System of the United States," 236-40, 246, 249.

27 For a detailed description, see Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan*, 146-66.

28 Mitziko Sawada, "Culprits and Gentlemen: Meiji Japan's Restrictions of Emigrants to the United States, 1891-1909," *Pacific Historical Review* 60, no. 3 (Aug. 1991): 339-59.

29 Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 8, 1908* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1912), 487-88 (hereafter *FRUS 1908*).

join with a new cruiser squadron forming on the West Coast.<sup>30</sup> Finally, he called on Congress to increase the Army's size from 30,000 to 100,000 and continued pushing for new battleship appropriations from Congress.<sup>31</sup>

Word of Roosevelt's decision to send a fleet of battleships to the West Coast leaked in early July, and newspapers quickly speculated that the cruise was aimed at the Japanese. The U.S. government denied the rumor, but Roosevelt quietly grew increasingly determined to dispatch the fleet. After meeting Admiral Baron Yamamoto "Gonnohyoe" Gonbee and Ambassador Shuzo Aoki in early July, he noted to Root, "Thank Heaven we have the navy in good shape. It is high time, however, that it should go on a cruise around the world. In the first place I think it will have a pacific effect to show that it can be done."<sup>32</sup> Former Japanese minister of the navy and future prime minister Admiral Yamamoto visited navy yards in New York and Boston, per an ONI arrangement, as a side trip from the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition to which the Japanese had sent a squadron to participate in the naval review.<sup>33</sup> Roosevelt used Yamamoto's visit to make another public statement of friendship.<sup>34</sup>

In the face of the ongoing public furor, Roosevelt and Navy leadership continued to calmly plan the cruise. The Navy reviewed three proposed routes focusing on a quick transit to the Pacific. It eventually recom-

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30 The cruisers would complete their annual training off the Chinese coast before resupplying in the Philippines and then conducting the usual visit to Yokohama in August. They would reach California two months after being ordered to return. As Braisted commented, by sticking to its normal regime the Asiatic Squadron demonstrated a business as usual attitude. Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1909*, 207-8.

31 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 9-11; Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1909*, 207; Jerry Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 146-47.

32 Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Elihu Root, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, available online through Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University.

33 American politicians and business people organized a world fair to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown in 1607. They intended for the fair to showcase the history, products, and culture of each of the states and for the fair as a whole to demonstrate the naval, military, and industrial might of the United States. The exposition included an international naval review presented to President Roosevelt that included the participation of most of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet battleships.

34 The admiral was unrelated to later Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, planner of the Pearl Harbor attack. "Yamamoto Bids New York Farewell," *New York Times*, 15 July 1907; and Vol. 45 (Case Files 8321-8486), General Correspondence, 1899-1912, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, RG 38, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

mended a return via the Suez Canal. The Navy did not consult the State Department on the route and the diplomats had little ability to alter the fleet's cruise between the coasts. This was because the first part of the cruise would determine the length of time it would take reinforcements to steam to the West Coast and their condition upon arrival. The second part, a cruise up and down the West Coast, would reassure American citizens that they were protected. Roosevelt also envisioned it as a way to drum up support for naval investments. The final part, the cruise from the West Coast back to the East via the Suez Canal, would focus more on politics with diplomats having a greater say in requesting visits by battleships. Roosevelt refused to publicly acknowledge that the fleet would perform a world cruise until March 1908.<sup>35</sup>

The Meiji government reacted with outward calm, but inward concern. The Japanese naval attaché in Washington, Commander Taniguchi Naomi, reported to Chief of the Naval General Staff Admiral Togo Heihachiro that the U.S. intended it as war practice and diplomatic intimidation. As the situation developed, Commander Taniguchi pointed to articles, including Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan's "The True Significance of the Pacific Cruise" (Dec. 1907), which discussed a war and linked American Pacific sea power with Japanese immigration.<sup>36</sup> In March 1908, the Meiji government responded by inviting the American battleship fleet to Japan to mend relations through excellent hosting. Japanese efforts eventually proved fruitful with the two again sharing toasts, imbibing the spirit of friendship.<sup>37</sup>

The cruise's announcement also impacted other hosts. Countries throughout South America, friendly since Root's 1906 visit, competed to have the fleet visit. Brazil, in particular, was anxious to host a visit to strengthen ties between the two colossi of the Western Hemisphere. Other

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35 He also posits that the timing was likely influenced by battleship construction as Roosevelt may have delayed a long- range cruise for a few years until workers had finished constructing a sufficient number. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 13–14.

36 Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The True Significance of the Pacific Cruise," *Scientific American* 97, no. 23 (December 1907): 407, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-true-significance-of-the-pacifi/>.

37 Sadao Asada, *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 19–20.

countries like Uruguay were disappointed that the published itinerary skipped them. They would have their pride salvaged by the Special Service Squadron of cruisers under Rear Admiral Uriel Sebree, which steamed a month ahead of the battleship fleet to the Pacific and made key visits per State Department recommendations.<sup>38</sup>

By the time that the U.S. Atlantic Fleet departed in December 1907, the United States had found a place among the great powers. It had successfully competed for a sphere of influence in Latin America through a combination of maritime diplomacy and statecraft. In the Pacific, it had expanded into the gaps left by the declining Spanish Empire and then embraced the concept of an Open Door as a means of gaining the economic benefits of a sphere of influence.

Despite pacific intentions, the United States could now be more drawn into conflicts around its new possessions abroad. Recognizing this possibility, President Roosevelt and many of his contemporaries advocated for a large and powerful navy that could bring others to the negotiating table, could deter competitors like Germany, and could protect American interests. Such a force allowed Roosevelt to complete simultaneous objectives with the world cruise, demonstrating the versatility of the U.S. Navy in a multipolar world.

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38 For example, Secretary of State Elihu Root to Charles S. Wilson, Esquire, 28 December 1907, Numerical File: 8235-8258, microcopy 862, roll 597, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, National Archives, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/19871576?objectPage=1084>.

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. How does one make sense of the plethora of people and events constantly colliding in a multipolar world?
2. How does the world's geostrategic situation in 1907 compare to today's?
3. Place yourself in the perspective of Captain Raymond Rodgers, head of ONI in 1907. Now ask yourself, what information do you need from your subordinates to inform policy, and how do you couch that information when presenting it to superiors?



## 2

### THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORY ON SEA POWER

The operational imperatives that led to the world cruise were not invented from whole cloth by naval planners. In 1890, Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan published *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, propelling him to worldwide acclaim as the foremost naval thinker of his day. While originally intended to help young officers compensate for the lack of command experience in the steam age, in the years leading up to World War I the world's navies instead distilled Mahan's book down to a set of strategic, operational, and tactical principles.<sup>1</sup> Conforming to this doctrine and the distribution of existing support facilities, U.S. Navy leadership had concentrated all available battleships on the East Coast in response to the perceived threat posed by Imperial Germany, creating significant hurdles for planners in the event of a war in the Pacific. The world cruise of the Atlantic Fleet was initially conceived as a Mahanian response to this very possibility: a naval war with Japan.

#### A TIME OF TRANSITION

At the time of the world cruise, the U.S. Navy was 20 years into a self-transformation known as the “New Navy” period. Although the United States had pioneered impressive naval designs such as the turreted ironclad concept originating with USS *Monitor* during the Civil War, the Navy returned postbellum to its prewar dependence on wooden-hulled

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1 The popular perception of Mahan solely as a prophet of naval principles became so dominant in the twentieth century that the fact that he was brought to the Naval War College and commissioned to write *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* to aid in teaching command was all but forgotten. Study of the origins of Mahan's work and his more complex ideas only came to the fore in the 1990s, particularly with the work of Jon Sumida. For more information, see Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997).

sailing ships with rarely used auxiliary steam engines. Beginning in 1882, that trend dramatically reversed as a new wave of engineer-officers climbed the promotion ladder, fostering organizational and technological change by forcing the Navy to reexamine itself and its potential enemies.<sup>2</sup> The result was that by the time the United States went to war with Spain in 1898, the U.S. Navy was more than capable of fighting a second-rate opponent against which it would have had no chance only 15 years earlier.

Despite the experience gained from the overwhelming American victory in the Spanish-American War, however, many questions remained unanswered. These ranged from how to effectively supply and train a fleet deployed overseas to what formations and tactics might best defend against torpedo attack. Complicating matters was that Spain's navy was small and inadequately trained, and the U.S. Navy's gunnery in combat proved quite poor.<sup>3</sup> There was no certain way to know if American warship design, tactics, operational approaches, or logistical means were sufficient against a first-class opponent. In the absence of recent practical experience, the Navy's leadership looked instead to history and a previous era of full-on fleet engagements to help guide it.

The New Navy encompassed force, organizational, and training transformations. Since 1842, the Navy had been structured around the bureau system, an administrative division of semi-independent bodies each responsible for a specific aspect of the sea service. These bureaus—Yards and Docks, Provisions and Clothing, Ordnance, Equipment and Recruiting, Construction and Repair, Engineering, Navigation, and Medicine and Surgery—each had a rear admiral as chief who nominally reported to the Secretary of the Navy. This system quickly devolved into a continual series of turf wars, magnified by secretaries hesitant to exercise their authority.

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2 As changes in naval technology accelerated during this same period, a lack of modernization left the Navy at a severe disadvantage against the vast majority of other powers. 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), 46–47, 72–73, 213–17.

3 Norman Friedman, *U.S. Battleships: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1985), 41.



While the bureaus could carry out day-to-day tasks in this environment, no broad strategic vision underpinned their activities.<sup>4</sup>

The numerous logistical and planning problems encountered by the Navy during the Spanish-American War laid the strategic shortcomings of the Navy bare for all to see. This ultimately provided the impetus for the administration of William McKinley to establish the General Board of the Navy in 1900. The board was essentially a council of senior officers, albeit one that held only the incredibly vague mission to “advise” the Secretary of the Navy. Nevertheless, the decision to make the board a regular rotational billet for promising and high-ranking officers, as well as the inclusion of the illustrious Dewey as president until 1917, quickly lent a gravitas to the publicized opinions of the board on a wide variety of subjects. In this way, the General Board rapidly became the “authority without authority” on both strategic planning and naval design.<sup>5</sup>

As the Navy grappled with its shortcomings, it additionally worked to unify and professionalize its officer corps. After a long run of separated ranks for engineers and deck officers dating to the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, friction between these two led to the creation of a single unified curriculum at the U.S. Naval Academy in 1882 and the formal amalgamation of the engineering officers into the line in 1899, thereby creating the concept of the “general line officer.” These actions did not eliminate the relatively common dislike of engineering duty and specialized engineers by the officer corps. Nevertheless, the men who were educated and trained in this new system had grown up in the accelerating industrial revolution, and were thus not only younger but also generally far more scientifically minded than their forebears.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Letter from the President of the General Board of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy, May 17, 1909, p. 8–10, Volume 6; March 25, 1907–June 22, 1910, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC; 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, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017), 26–71.

5 The General Board was effectively a permanent version of an ad hoc advisory board that Secretary of the Navy John Davis Long established during the Spanish-American War. Its mandate to advise the Secretary was a compromise to effectively create a general staff for the Navy without the warmongering overtones that accompanied such a title. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 62; Kuehn, *America's First General Staff*, 11–24, 34–47.

6 Donald Chisholm, *Waiting for Dead Men's Shoes: Origins and Development of the U.S. Navy's Officer Personnel System, 1793–1941* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 5–6, 419–36, 700; Letter from the President of the General Board of the Navy, “General Order

In 1885, the dean of the newly established Naval War College recruited the like-minded Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan to help this new generation of officers master the art of command. Although technology had changed radically since the last great naval battles of the Napoleonic Wars, Mahan proposed historical study as a means of replicating the intensities of combat command.<sup>7</sup> Rules in this system existed more for understanding and recreating combat circumstances rather than devising and applying solutions. By immersing young officers in a simulation of decision-making during combat, Mahan hoped that these future leaders would find *actual* combat conditions far less intimidating and learn to judge situations more accurately. Young officers could thereby develop their instincts—that far more difficult-to-define genius of command as highlighted by Clausewitz.<sup>8</sup>



Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan. (NHHC, NH 48056-KN)

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No. 49: Lieutenant Commander W.T. Cluverius, U.S.N., comments on the condition of the commissioned personnel,” February 15, 1909, Volume 5: March 4, 1907–March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC: 1–4; Mobley, *Progressives in Navy Blue*, 46–47, 72–73, 213–17.

7 Mahan was not the first person to propose or use historical study as a means of training officers, but in laying out a system to do so in *The Influence of Sea Power on History, 1660–1783*, he rapidly became one of the most famous.

8 Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command*, xiii.

This more heuristic aspect of Mahan's work was immediately overshadowed and confused by his last-minute addition of arguments for a larger Navy to *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*. The insertion of an introductory chapter on this topic led the majority of readers to conclude Mahan sought to distill history into a set of inviolable maxims to govern naval warfare. Observing the first era of globalization (1870–1914), the resulting Mahanian theory posited that national greatness rested upon the furtherance and protection of overseas trade. This task could be most effectively executed by a capital ship–heavy fleet. Such a force should never be divided, as the wars portrayed in Mahan's initial study were often decided by a single, climactic clash of fleets.<sup>9</sup>

Although adherents to Mahanian doctrine (which included Theodore Roosevelt himself) dominated naval thinking and the highest ranks of the U.S. Navy at the beginning of the twentieth century, they did not go unchallenged. The development of the self-propelled torpedo in the latter half of the nineteenth century gave birth to a competing mindset built around small platforms carrying this weapon. Developed primarily by French naval thinkers, the *Jeune École* (“Young School”) concept posited that large, slow, and expensive battleships were highly vulnerable to fast and cheap torpedo boats of one to two hundred tons deployed in large numbers. Commerce, on the other hand, was best attacked or defended with a handful of fast armored cruisers operating singly.<sup>10</sup> As a relative newcomer to the naval arms race in the late 1890s, the United States Navy followed the mainstream by investing heavily in battleships, but hedged its bets with a handful of armored cruisers and a robust torpedo development program that it saw as a potential equalizer against larger naval powers. The competition between the Mahanian and *Jeune École* schools therefore defined this period of naval design; while battleships received most of the public's attention and were considered the primary metric of naval power, the concept of the torpedo-boat destroyer—designed to

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9 Letter from the President of the General Board of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy, April 25, 1907, p. 6–10, Volume 5: March 4, 1907–March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

10 Katherine C. Epstein, *Torpedo: Inventing the Military-Industrial Complex in the United States and Great Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 3–11, 18–38.

## Torpedo Boats and Destroyers

The locomotive torpedo was invented in the late 1860s by Robert Whitehead but did not become a practical weapon until the 1880s following the integration of a gyroscope and advances in propulsion. Although battleships of the day could and did carry torpedoes of their own, two light, fast, and cheap craft were developed to take full advantage of this weapon: the torpedo boat of 100–200 tons, and the slightly larger torpedo-boat destroyer (TBD). Although the latter type was originally dedicated to protecting battleships from the former, it quickly proved to be an effective torpedo platform in its own right.<sup>1</sup>

The largest single drawback to both torpedo boats and destroyers was their limited range, as the platforms were often designed for calm water speed. Due to the universality of this philosophy, the U.S. Navy was surprised by the appearance of three Spanish destroyers at Santiago Bay during the Spanish-American War. Although their being towed across the Atlantic did not change the outcome of the conflict, this created a desire on the part of the U.S. to find out how its own destroyers might also move long distances so as to defend against the recurrence of just such a surprise. Early exercises such as a deployment from San Francisco to Panama in 1903 confirmed that these ships—never designed for long-distance travel—handled it much better than expected. Vice Admiral Samuel M. Robinson later remarked that this persuaded the Navy that “the destroyer was a reliable seagoing vessel and had a cruising radius that compared favorably with other types of ships. The fuel economy at low speed was the greatest surprise of all.”<sup>2</sup>

Historian Norman Friedman asserts that by 1908 the General Board “considered destroyers second in value only to battleships.”<sup>3</sup> The inclusion of a flotilla of six TBDs for a portion of the world cruise was therefore the next major test of these ships. The flotilla accompanied the fleet around South America and closely escorted the force through the narrow Straits of Magellan—an ideal location for a surprise torpedo attack. After reaching San Francisco, the armored cruisers of the Pacific Fleet then towed the flotilla to Manila by way of Honolulu and Samoa. This, carried out while the battleships sailed for Australia, was the first practice of a procedure that would be needed to deploy the TBDs across the Pacific with the battle fleet in the event of war. The valuable experience also demonstrated the need for larger, longer-ranged vessels.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Norman Friedman, *U.S. Destroyers: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 7–11.

2 Friedman, *U.S. Destroyers*, 11–14, 19–24.

3 Friedman, *U.S. Destroyers*, 21.

4 James R. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 84–85.

protect battleships from torpedo boats, while also carrying its own torpedoes—matured rapidly.<sup>11</sup>

The Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), the only major combat between modern naval powers between the 1880s and World War I, seemingly vindicated the Mahanian school. In that conflict, circumstances forced the Russian Baltic fleet to travel the long way around Africa to Russia's Pacific coast. This seven-month saga had been necessary, strategists of the day argued, because the Russians had divided their forces between the Baltic and the Pacific to counter regional rivals. Conversely, the Japanese had the advantage of a consolidated geographic position and set of interests, allowing them to concentrate their numerically inferior battleships and destroy the Russians in detail—first at Port Arthur and then at the decisive Battle of Tsushima.<sup>12</sup> With naval supremacy established, the Japanese could freely move men and supplies from the home islands to the front lines in Manchuria, vastly improving their chances of victory.<sup>13</sup>

The Russian journey to defeat at Tsushima intrigued President Roosevelt and the General Board.<sup>14</sup> As a nation with similarly split interests and coastlines, the U.S. Navy perceived in these events an important reinforcing of Mahanian doctrine, particularly as Tsushima had been the quintessential clash of battleships in which the torpedo had played a negligible role. Accordingly, all American battleships constructed between 1903 and 1907 were stationed at ports on the East Coast, ready to concen-

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11 Norman Friedman, *U.S. Destroyers: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 7–11.

12 Naval combat in which one side completely destroys the other has historically been a highly unusual occurrence. In the case of Tsushima, while the Russian Navy was larger overall than that of the Japanese, the latter were able to achieve local numerical superiority at both Port Arthur and Tsushima by attacking elements of the Russian fleet before they were able to combine.

13 While Japanese naval victories obviously did not win the land war by themselves, the popular perception was that they made victory merely a matter of time. David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887–1941* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 129–32; Dorwart, *Dorwart's History of the Office of Naval Intelligence*, 78–79. Newton A. McCully, *The McCully Report: The Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1977), 243–56.

14 Roosevelt himself had particularly strong opinions regarding the concentration of the U.S. fleet so as to avoid a comparable disaster. John H. Maurer, "Mahan on World Politics and Strategy: The Approach of the First World War, 1904–1914," chap. 13 in *The Influence of History on Mahan*, ed. John B. Hattendorf (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College Press, 1991), 168–70.

trate against the biggest perceived threat to the United States: European powers.<sup>15</sup> However, this left the West Coast and U.S. Pacific possessions correspondingly vulnerable, with the U.S. Asiatic Fleet composed of only a few armored cruisers and a single old battleship. Although some alternatives were briefly considered in response to the renewed threat of war with Japan in 1907, the Joint Army and Navy Board ultimately proposed moving as many battleships as possible to the West Coast until the crisis had passed.<sup>16</sup>

### MAIN FLEET TO MAGDALENA BAY

War planning against Japan was the first real test for the New Navy's changed way of doing business. While the sea service had operated overseas before, that activity had been limited to commerce protection and nonbelligerent diplomacy (effectively anti-piracy patrols and general diplomatic support), as well as the occasional intervention. When naval thinkers *had* planned, it had been limited to single-ship *guerre de course* against the major navies. With ships built of wood and dependent on the wind, such missions were limited by food and water, with victualling and many repairs possible anywhere supplies existed. With the coming of steam and steel, few, if any, repairs of significance could be attempted outside a friendly dry dock, and steam engines were eternally hungry for coal. The price of breaking free of the wind, therefore, was a need for a chain of friendly bases with coal stockpiles and logistics vessels (particularly colliers) to accompany a fleet on any extended cruise.

To reach the West Coast before the completion of the Panama Canal in 1914, the U.S. Atlantic Fleet had to transit around South America by way of the treacherous Strait of Magellan, a trip in excess of 12,900 miles. Without bases beyond those newly won in the Caribbean, and a severely limited number of colliers, U.S. ships had no choice but to visit foreign

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15 McCully, *The McCully Report*, 160–62, 183–85; Letter from the President of the General Board of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy, February 24, 1909, p. 6–10, Volume 5: March 4, 1907–March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC: 1–5; President of the General Board of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy, April 25, 1907; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 6–8, 61.

16 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 9–11.

ports for coaling, either purchasing coal on-site or replenishing from U.S. or foreign contracted vessels. This, the General Board asserted, was the only way to move the fleet to the Pacific for potential war with Japan, and doing it as swiftly as possible required practice.<sup>17</sup>

Prior to 1908, this practice had not been forthcoming. The U.S. Navy's building programs had only accelerated around the turn of the century, with the service expanding from 3 to 16 first-class battleships in the 10 years since the war with Spain. It also added 16 destroyers between 1899 and 1903 to protect those ships, and planned to double that number despite the lackluster performance of the torpedo in the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>18</sup> These ships all needed to be crewed, and the vast majority of the personnel tapped for this task were raw recruits, who (unlike many of their pre-1880 forebears) were from the American interior and possessed no seagoing experience. These "green" sailors were led by a mix of elderly officers like Rear Admiral Evans (who was a veteran of the American Civil War) and recent graduates of the United States Naval Academy like future Vice Admiral Samuel M. Robinson and Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey. Neither of these groups had any experience that might prepare them for a war deployment against Japan.<sup>19</sup> Although only a real conflict could offer the ultimate test of combat, a general assessment of the combat readiness of the fleet on reaching Magdalena Bay could be gleaned from the planned gunnery practice. Getting there in the best possible shape (and staying sharp while doing so) was, ultimately, the objective of the General Board in proposing the cruise. It was nothing less than a Mahan-inspired simulation on a grand scale—one that would not only test the people and material involved, but the very idea of a long-range deployment through potentially torpedo-infested waters.<sup>20</sup>

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17 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 12–14.

18 Friedman, *U.S. Destroyers*, 21.

19 The pace of expansion was so great that Robinson actually skipped the rank of lieutenant (junior grade), entirely during this period. S. M. Robinson, "The Reminiscences of Samuel Murray Robinson," interview by William J. Cromie, *Naval History Project*, Columbia Digital Library Collections, 30 September–1 October 1963, oral history transcript, 7.

20 Letter from the General Board of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy, September 26, 1907, p. 1–4, Vol. 5: March 4, 1907 – March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 26–32; Ingersoll, "The Reminiscences of Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll," 19–20.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What doctrinal thinking affects how the Navy addresses long-range deployments today?
2. What logistical concerns are new to our age compared to our body of World War II experience (the Navy's last experience with major fleet actions), and how might we test them?
3. What set of interests principally guides the Navy's behavior toward its allies?



## 3

### **THE NAVY'S ROLE IN GREAT POWER COMPETITION**

During the years prior to the world cruise, the U.S. Navy experienced a transformative era in which the fleet's size and the scale of its activities greatly increased. A naval arms race was brewing in Europe and soon expanded to the rest of the powers as each competed via the construction of battleships. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States transitioned from the Monroe Doctrine as passive policy to its active enforcement. President Theodore Roosevelt combined a large naval display with considerable diplomatic engagement to limit foreign depredations of the Western Hemisphere. He deployed similar strategies to shore up U.S. economic and geopolitical interests abroad. While the Navy took protective actions such as operations during the Boxer War, much of its focus abroad was diplomatic, with port visits and international naval reviews spreading goodwill and presenting a positive impression of America. The World Cruise was emblematic of these grand strategic, diplomatic, and technological trends, aimed at reinforcing the U.S. spheres of influence and interest both within the Western Hemisphere and abroad. While the cruise itself proved too transient to alter any sphere of influence, the sheer size and scope of this maritime demonstration left a lasting impression.

#### **A GLOBAL NAVAL ARMS RACE**

In the 1890s, the British public perceived naval expansion programs in France and Russia to be real threats to the superiority of the Royal Navy, touching off a naval crisis in that country. This set the tone for a global

naval arms race that characterized the years leading up to World War I.<sup>1</sup> The British government was not alone in revising its naval considerations during that time with other countries, including Germany, Japan, and the United States, initiating new building programs as they jostled for regional power. The competition slowly gained momentum as each state added new building programs to increase its tally of battleships, the national measuring stick of its power, and debated the best designs and technology.

In that vein, a series of American presidents began expanding the Navy from the 1880s forward with the process accelerating through the Spanish-American War. In the war's aftermath, President Roosevelt consistently advocated for newer, technologically advanced battleships in response to the global naval arms race. He succeeded in getting Congress to approve construction of two battleships a year between 1901 and 1905, setting the Navy on a trajectory to contest British maritime dominance,



J.S. Puge, "Peace," in *Puck* 57, no. 1465 (29 March 1905): Columbia rides forth into the world aboard the new U.S. Navy, which bears the face of President Roosevelt, its primary sponsor, as a figurehead. (LC, 2011645688)

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1 The two-power standard was one that existed throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras and was constantly in debate. At its core, it proposed for the Royal Navy to be the size of the next two navies combined plus 10 percent, such that the Royal Navy could win a naval war against a combined enemy force and thus maintain maritime dominance.

and providing him with the tools to conduct maritime diplomacy like the demonstration off Venezuela or the world cruise.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of this construction program, a large debate among naval officers and public intellectuals developed over armament, focused on whether the battleship should become an all-big gun ship or maintain the traditional mixed battery. Although the British beat everyone by constructing the first all-big gun warship, *Dreadnought*, in 1905-6, the United States was not far behind. Proponents like Admiral of the Navy Dewey, Lieutenant Commander William S. Sims, and their patron Roosevelt, successfully pushed for the construction of the *South Carolina* class of all-big gun battleships authorized in March 1905 (although they would not be commissioned until 1910).<sup>3</sup> The battleships of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet that conducted the world cruise were therefore all rapidly obsolescing as combat ships as navies embraced all-big gun platforms, but their handling characteristics and logistical needs still provided necessary real world data and experience for the General Board and naval planners.

As part of this naval arms race, observers, especially naval attachés, monitored and reacted to other great powers' ideas and innovations. The American naval attachés in London throughout the 1890s and 1900s sent reams of reports describing potential technical advances as well as presenting opportunities for the American government to buy advanced equipment or hire innovators. They gathered information across a wide spectrum ranging from gunnery and torpedoes to face-hardened steel armor, fuel oil, and turbines.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, all of these efforts were aimed at making the Navy a competitive force in the global arena.

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2 Friedman, *U.S. Battleships*, 5-6; Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 134-54; and Paul E. Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy: Politics, Economics, and the Rise of American Naval Power, 1881-1921* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press 2016), 145, 153-54.

3 Friedman, *U.S. Battleships*, 51.

4 For an example of how closely they followed, see Capt. R.P. Rodgers, USN, "Memorandum for the General Board, et al." 6 October 1907, General Correspondence ("Cases"), 1899-1912, vol. 14, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, RG 38, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

## MARITIME DIPLOMACY AND LATIN AMERICA

As the Navy was always on a tentative war footing, the missions it pursued reflected that reality; a captain on foreign station might be the only official U.S. government representative for miles in an era lacking widespread instant communications, and thus naval officers were often expected to conduct diplomacy. This meant that a captain and crew could within a few days: conduct diplomatic talks with locals; launch an armed intervention to protect American lives and property; engage in maritime diplomacy with other powers; offer humanitarian assistance; and perform consular services for American citizens.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, American sailors and officers could find themselves performing as many diplomatic missions and governmental functions as the diplomats themselves.

During the nineteenth century, the United States was a minor power with few overseas territorial ambitions, leaving the Navy broadly ambiguous missions and responsibilities. Although instances of American power projection beyond its immediate coastline came along in fits and starts—such as the Barbary Wars, purchase of Alaska, and the annexation of Hawaii—most imperial activity was limited to adjacent territory in North America. However, the United States at times lacked either the power or will to enforce the Monroe Doctrine that had proclaimed that country the defender of the Western Hemisphere from European interests since 1823; Great Britain with its vast navy did not. The British usually limited the ability of other European states to establish spheres of influence in the Western Hemisphere as well as actively policing the maritime commons in line with their notions of law.<sup>6</sup> This level of enforcement only began to diminish in 1895 when they agreed for the Americans to arbitrate a dispute of theirs against the Venezuelans. As the Americans had begun looking outward and were in the process of modernizing their Navy, London decided to let Washington uphold its doctrine, beginning to

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5 For instance, Commodore George C. Read within a few days hit four of the activities while in Sumatra in 1838–39: “protection and enhancement of commerce,” “nonbelligerent diplomacy,” “peacetime aggression,” and “treaty making or negotiating.” David Foster Long, *Gold Braid and Foreign Relations* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 413.

6 Mark T. Gilderhus, “The Monroe Doctrine: Meanings and Implications,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (Mar. 2006): 5–16; Alfred P. Rubin, “British Practice in the Nineteenth Century,” *International Law Studies* 63 (1993): 201–91.

redeploy units to handle growing competition elsewhere, particularly in response to the incipient naval arms race against Germany. Consequently, the Royal Navy had a drastically reduced presence in the region by 1906.<sup>7</sup>

In 1898, the United States drove Spain out of Cuba and established a firmer presence in the Caribbean with its acquisition of Puerto Rico. The United States now possessed a comparably powerful, and growing, navy as Congress had authorized new battleships during the war. Congress continued the building program, eventually resulting in a fleet among the top five. Europeans still had regional interests, ranging from territorial like French Guiana to shipping like the White Star Line to investments like the Chilean nitrate fields, and would act to protect those; however, they eschewed pursuing new territorial gains. Thus, the new American enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine remained untried as the United States was beginning to develop the naval might and skills to enforce a defined sphere of influence.<sup>8</sup>

The blockade of Venezuela in 1902–3, instigated by Germany, but carried out by the British, German, and Italian navies to persuade Venezuela to repay its foreign loans, served as the first meaningful test of the new American regional prominence and naval power. Previous German actions had caused American officials concern, especially as they concluded that the Venezuelans would be forced to offer territory as an indemnity and knew that Germany possessed war plans against the United States.<sup>9</sup> Those

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7 The British parliament came to regret those circumstances after the breakdown of government in Cuba in 1906, even eventually offering to fund additional British warships. The diplomatists wanted to dispatch British warships to protect their subjects, but the nearest vessels were a couple of gunboats in Bermuda. “Confidential Memorandum: British State Relations and Naval Issues,” no. 22, 25 October 1906, Cabinet Files (CAB) 37/84, National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew Gardens, Surrey, Richmond, England. For more on the British slow drawdown of the region and its tie into continental politics, see Chapters 12 and 14 of Kennedy, *Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914*.

8 Henry J. Hendrix, “Overwhelming Force and the Venezuelan Crisis of 1902–1903,” in Bruce A. Elleman, and S.C.M. Paine, ed., *Navies and Soft Power: Historical Case Studies of Naval Power and the Nonuse of Military Force* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2015), 21–46; Louis A. Perez Jr., “Intervention, Hegemony, and Dependency: The United States in the Circum-Caribbean, 1898–1980,” *Pacific Historical Review* 51, no. 2 (May 1982): 165–94; Nancy Mitchell, “The Height of the German Challenge: The Venezuelan Blockade, 1902–3,” *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 185–209.

9 *Memorandum on Venezuelan Revenue*, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, 30 May 1902, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University, <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library>

fears caused the situation to escalate in May 1902 as Roosevelt reacted, deciding to use the annual Winter Exercise in November and December as a cover to assemble 53 warships under Dewey's command near the blockade. Dewey readied the fleet for action, while Roosevelt sent back-channel ultimatums to the Europeans to accept dispute arbitration. They agreed, but the crisis lingered in American memory.<sup>10</sup>

The events off Venezuela presaged similar actions that reoccurred during the world cruise; the war scare with Japan led to similar planning activities. The Caribbean demonstration was a massive shift in scale from previous ones that might have featured a squadron as opposed to a fleet composed of warships from three stations. The world cruise by a fleet of first-rate battleships surpassed even this Caribbean concentration, this time in the Pacific Rim. Next, the success of Dewey's demonstration during the Venezuelan Crisis also provided Roosevelt with a touchstone for how to combine naval maneuvers with diplomacy to achieve strategic aims with limited violence. The later world cruise reflected this balanced use of statecraft's tools. Finally, Roosevelt also used it to propose expanding the fleet, similarly to how he used the war scare with Japan in 1907 to the Navy's advantage.

With the successful resolution of the Venezuela Crisis, the Roosevelt administration had unveiled a strategy to defend the Monroe Doctrine via maritime might, reinforcing Roosevelt's intertwined notions of naval power's necessity for creating and maintaining spheres of influence. From there, Roosevelt issued his Roosevelt Corollary, an expansion of the Monroe Doctrine for the United States to act as regional police, in 1904.<sup>11</sup>

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/Record?libID=o38113; Holger Herwig and David F. Trask, "Naval Operations Plans between Germany and the USA, 1898–1913: A Study of Strategic Planning in the Age of Imperialism," *Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift* 8, no. 2 (1970): 52–53.

- 10 Hendrix, "Overwhelming Force and the Venezuelan Crisis of 1902–1903," 21–46; Perez, "Intervention, Hegemony, and Dependency: The United States in the circum-Caribbean, 1898–1980," 165–94; Mitchell, "The Height of the German Challenge: The Venezuelan Blockade, 1902–3," 185–209; and, Herwig and Trask, "Naval Operations Plans between Germany and the USA, 1898–1913," 55.
- 11 In his December 1904 State of the Union Address, Roosevelt stated the following: "Chronic wrongdoing . . . may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power." Roosevelt had thusly expanded the Monroe Doctrine to include an American responsibility to preserve

The Roosevelt Corollary made plain that the United States was aiming to manage the region. Actions like the world cruise reflected this priority. The voyage was not only shaped by the need to identify the challenges involved with transiting the fleet to the Pacific, but also to provide a visible symbol of America's important regional role.

## AMERICAN ACTIONS IN THE FAR EAST

Although President Roosevelt aimed for American commerce to dominate the Caribbean basin, American actions farther afield, like the Far East, encountered the more strongly entrenched interests of other powers. The new commander of the U.S. Asiatic Squadron in 1898, Commodore Dewey, grew concerned about Europeans claiming the best sites for naval bases in China following the German seizure of Qingdao (1897–98). He worried that their actions would cut the U.S. out through limiting its influence as regional bases allowed other states to project power more effectively. He expressed those concerns up the chain of command. Secretary of the Navy John Davis Long sent an inquiry in February 1898 about the best obtainable ports remaining in China, but the project disappeared as the McKinley administration (with the exception of Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt) increasingly focused on troubles with Spain. By the end of 1898, the European powers had spheres of influence dividing Qing China, causing each sea service in China to view their opposites with greater suspicion than the Chinese. American governmental lethargy had resulted in them missing an opportunity.<sup>12</sup> However, the outcome of the Spanish-American War placed the United States in control of an archipelago, the Philippines, with strong historical trading ties to South China, and its location encouraged American politicians like Philander C. Knox and companies like Standard Oil to continue fantasizing.<sup>13</sup> It was in that

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order and protect life and property in Central and South America. For a fuller excerpt see, "Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (1905)," National Archives, 8 Feb. 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/roosevelt-corollary>.

12 Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897–1909*, 19–20.

13 Most of the silver that the Spanish mined in the New World throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries went west to the Philippines for trade with China. There were many consequences of that situation including Chinese merchants setting up a community in Manila, which they would come to financially dominate. Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Sextants*

environment that Secretary of State John Hay responded by proposing an Open Door policy.

The western powers in Qing China were primarily interested in their own economic benefits, uniting to garner greater access to China's market without undue conflict amongst themselves. However, they also realized that the Qing government was weak and sought a means to keep it functional while pursuing their aims. They primarily relied on their naval forces to protect those interests and their citizens abroad. The Open Door idea presented a means of achieving that with less overt hard power coercion toward the Qing government and competition among the powers. While discussions percolated, though, an internal crisis in China, the Boxer Rebellion and War (1899–1901) threatened to disrupt the balance. That rebellion expanded into a brief war among Qing China, the Boxers,



Udo J. Keppler, “The Tug of War in the Far East,” in *Puck* 44, no. 1123 (14 September 1898): The struggle between the great powers for trade supremacy in China. (LC, 2012647471)

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*of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

For those interested in a discussion of the realities of the fantasy, see Michael H. Hunt, “Americans in the China Market: Economic Opportunities and Economic Nationalism, 1890s–1931,” *The Business History Review* 51, no. 3 (Autumn, 1977), 277–307, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3113634>.



and a multinational coalition of western powers, resulting in a massive indemnity that beggared the Qing government and prompted a reshuffling of geo-strategic balances. In the aftermath, the powers accepted a caveated Open Door proposal to maintain their economic benefits, while re-balancing. Unlike the other powers, the United States eventually used their share of the indemnity to benefit China; Roosevelt opted to remit the Boxer Indemnity to the Qing government to fund scholarships in May 1908 as a diplomatic gesture designed to promote amity and goodwill in time for the battleship fleet's arrival in late October.<sup>14</sup>

### THE WORLD CRUISE

The voyage of the Great White Fleet was not solely a response to military necessity, but also an outgrowth of earlier efforts to establish and maintain spheres of influence both within the Caribbean and the Far East. Critically, however, its actions were decidedly more pacific, with the primary aim to spread goodwill and enhance the image of the U.S. abroad, rather than demonstrate force and protect its geopolitical and commercial interests. In that vein, President Roosevelt sent Secretary Root to garner goodwill across Central and South America in 1906. Roosevelt's goal was for Root to assuage fears that his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine meant trading a coercive European imperial regime for an American one. Root's tour, as one captain on the cruise remarked, "smoothed" the path and "won for us the love of those who were to be our hosts."<sup>15</sup> In fact, there was consternation in places left off the itinerary, which led to some interesting solutions including the Argentinian fleet steaming out to exchange salutes with the Americans at sea.<sup>16</sup> In essence, the world cruise was able to reinforce the good impression and connections Root had generated through his diplomatic tour of South America.

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14 Curzon, "Pacific Triumvirate," 159–60.

15 Seaton Schroeder, *A Half Century of Naval Service* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1922), 311.

16 Microcopy 862, roll 597, Numerical File: 8235–8258/147, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, National Archives at College Park, MD, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/19871576?objectPage=848>; Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 156–58; Schroeder, *A Half Century of Naval Service* (1922), 318–19.

While carrying out the cruise, the American fleet behaved similarly to when visiting countries for naval reviews or parades. The fleet's visits were martial spectacle in an age that glamorized such displays. The occasion was accompanied by official diplomatic activities, including addresses, parades, and entertainments exchanged between host and guest. Through such exchanges, the United States spread goodwill and presented itself as a state that adhered to international socio-cultural norms and values. Other navies responded to this display in a manner consistent with the naval review model, with partner warships typically meeting the fleet to gather intelligence and serve as hosts. For instance, even though Great Britain was drawing its fleets into home waters, British warships still met the American fleet in far-flung Chile, New Zealand, and Australia. Compared to the British, the Japanese went all out, matching each American warship with a suitable battleship or cruiser host. In fact, the Japanese and American fleets steamed in and out of Tokyo Bay in a grand parade for the watching masses.<sup>17</sup>

While there were some political intimations of building closer connections during the cruise to the Antipodes, attempts to lure the United States out of its neutral and pacific stance failed. For instance, without waiting for British Foreign Office approval, the dominion governments of Australia and New Zealand reached out to volunteer to host the battleship fleet. Their speeches and discourse made it clear that they wanted the United States to act as a counterbalance to Japan, even as the British government tried to assure them that the recently modified alliance treaty (1905) ensured that Japan would help them. Australian attempts to garner American security commitments to protect "White Australia" did not succeed with the naval officers and Roosevelt provided answers that could only be interpreted as noncommittal expressions of goodwill. Thus, within short order, the dominions again looked to Great Britain for their defense and to maintain their "racial purity."<sup>18</sup>

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17 Hart, "The Voyage of the Great White Fleet," 172–74, 177; Reckner, "The World Cruise of the Atlantic Battleship Fleet," 321; Stone Diaries.

18 Hart, "The Voyage of the Great White Fleet," 179–80; Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy*, 160; Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific*, 229–30; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 91–93, 157–64.

At the turn of the century, the United States was transitioning toward maritime expansion and power. Although a latecomer to the European imperial game, it played by international norms. It relied on diplomacy where possible and used force when necessary, as it expanded the Navy's fleet and capabilities. The United States finally enforced its own sphere of influence, while carefully trying to infiltrate other markets. In comparison with German interventions that specifically sought to undermine British dominance, the United States' pursuits, even its maritime demonstrations, usually sought to maintain balance among the great powers.

The Navy served as Washington's primary tool in all those endeavors, simultaneously combining military and diplomatic missions. It projected hard power through naval maneuvers and interventions; it displayed soft power through naval reviews and presence operations while promoting Roosevelt's policy goals of keeping America as an unaligned, friendly power to everyone that sought to engage in trade. No matter what approach was chosen, the versatile power the Navy represented protected American lives and interests; it was exemplified by the largest display by the Americans during that period—the world cruise of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Do Navy efforts in forming our sphere of influence resonate with current practices?
2. When contemplating limited deployments and their impacts, how would one evaluate the Navy of then vis-à-vis the Navy of now?
3. Has the art of deterrence using naval power changed between the start of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first century? If so, how? If not, how not? How does the Navy's role in diplomacy and international affairs at the turn of the twentieth century compare to today?

## 4

### THE U.S. NAVY AND ENGAGEMENT THROUGH ATTACHÉS

While the Navy adhered to international norms, it began to develop a more systematic approach to international maritime engagement, especially through a new naval attaché corps. Established in the 1880s, the corps evolved throughout the period before World War I into a professional, structured organization with robust professional and global diplomatic networks. As Rear Admiral Albert Gleaves remarked of attachés from the period: “Necessarily much of an attaché’s activities—if he is a good one—must remain unwritten. He is expected to obtain information but he must never jeopardize his position or comprise the government.”<sup>1</sup> Even if unremarked, the attachés themselves played a critical role in establishing those norms that guided the U.S. Navy in conducting formal engagements. Although they did not play a direct role in coordinating the Atlantic Fleet’s visits, their influence was reflected in how the fleet approached its diplomatic engagements, especially as a number of the fleet’s officers were former attachés.

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1 Gleaves’s comment occurs while discussing then-Lieutenant W. H. Emory’s time as an attaché in London. Albert Gleaves, ed., *The Life of an American Sailor: Rear Admiral William Hemsley Emory, United States Navy, from His Letters and Memoirs* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), 123.

## THE ATTACHÉ SYSTEM

Fearing that the Navy had precipitously declined, President Chester A. Arthur supported a plethora of modernization efforts in 1881, including identifying what future developments to pursue. On 23 March 1882, Secretary of the Navy William H. Hunt established the Office of Naval Intelligence to collect and record “naval information as may be useful to the department in time of war, as well as in peace,” an activity that naval officers had previously carried out only in an ad hoc nature. He then founded the naval attaché system as an appendage of ONI to acquire that information. The Navy Department dispatched the first official attaché, Lieutenant Commander French E. Chadwick, to London in late 1882 to gather intelligence on the Royal Navy, especially technical developments. In 1885, the Navy assigned an attaché to France to cover Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg. Three years later, the attaché service again expanded, dispatching an attaché to Austria-Hungary to gather intelligence from Vienna and Rome.<sup>2</sup>

Those initial American naval attachés filled a wide range of roles. For instance, Chadwick received information requests from the Navy, the Revenue Cutter Service, the Coast Survey, the Hospital Service, the Lighthouse Service administration, the Meteorological Service, and sundry boards of trade. He also considered all of Europe his operational area and travelled widely. Lacking dedicated funds or a stipend before limited congressional funding began in 1888, the initial attachés had to gather information through diplomatic and observational skills alone, relying on technical prowess to analyze what they gathered and recommended to superiors.<sup>3</sup> In another example, the first attaché sent to Korea, Ensign George C. Foulk, wound up serving as charge d'affaires *ad interim* and then *de facto* minister (late 1884 to early 1887) after the civilian diplomat departed early. Another attaché even extended an invitation to a German

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2 Dorwart, *Dorwart's History of the Office of Naval Intelligence*, 12; Crumley, “The Naval Attaché System of the United States, 1882–1914,” 22–23, 37, 48; Wyman H. Packard, *A Century of U.S. Naval Intelligence* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1996), 2.

3 Crumley, “The Naval Attaché System of the United States,” 36–37.

field marshal on behalf of the Tsar to take a vacation at one of the Tsar's Black Sea resorts.<sup>4</sup>

As naval attachés began providing larger amounts of useful data, the Navy put them to greater use. Information on technical advancements, especially armaments, was highly sought with attachés diligently working to garner information as part of the global naval arms race. To that end, the Navy determined what information it was willing to trade with other navies, such as entertaining a Japanese offer to trade information on battleships in early 1906.<sup>5</sup> This practice became the most common means of gathering intelligence, second only to open sources like foreign newspapers or personal observations.<sup>6</sup> The Navy also assigned more specific responsibilities to each posting as the European alliance structure shifted, such as the attaché in Vienna gaining responsibility for Berlin. Likewise, ONI received more billets, going from three postings to five, adding an attaché to cover Tokyo and Beijing (1895) and another in Madrid (1897), and ONI headquarters increased by another eight staff members in 1906. Furthermore, the Navy expanded attachés' stipends and funding to complete tasks, changing the position from a perceived sinecure for rich officers. Simultaneously, they gradually formalized and improved protocols for gathering information, creating pathways for trading knowledge as opposed to reconnoitering or translating open sources. For instance, Lieutenant Commander William Hemsley Emory Jr. kept his London residence as a generous and lavish "open house," resulting in it becoming the "rendezvous of the foreign attachés, and it was often spoken of as the Naval Attachés' Club," which facilitated exchanging information. American naval attachés' actions proved successful enough that they provoked counterintelligence actions by other navies, including a British secret service bill to limit naval attachés obtaining information.<sup>7</sup>

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4 Packard, *A Century of U.S. Naval Intelligence*, 58–59; John F. Proust, "The First US Naval Attaché to Korea: George Foulk, HUMINT Pioneer," *Studies in Intelligence* 49, no. 1 (2005); Crumley, "The Naval Attaché System of the United States," 28–29, 45–46.

5 Vol. 39 (case files), General Correspondence of the Office of Naval Intelligence, 1899–1912, RG 38, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

6 Vol. 15 (case files), General Correspondence of the Office of Naval Intelligence, 1899–1912, RG 38, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

7 Crumley, "The Naval Attaché System of the United States," 48, 327; Gleaves, *The Life of an American Sailor*, 123–24.



American and Japanese officers at a garden party in Tokyo, c. October 1908. (NHHC, NH 1562)

Attachés, and naval officers more generally, were part of the higher stratum of society and participated in that class's engagements. For instance, attachés in London attended formal and informal high society functions and visits by foreign leaders like that of the Kaiser to London in 1891. Those events simultaneously kept the Americans as part of the international diplomatic scene and provided additional observational intelligence. Moreover, the norms of that stratum deeply informed diplomatic engagement practices, ranging from exchanging speeches at dinners to duels. For example, while USS *Petrel* was visiting Petropavlovsk and its officers were reciprocating courtesies with their Russian hosts in 1894, a Russian officer perceived a slight and challenged the ship's paymaster to a duel. The U.S. Navy had forbidden dueling since the early 1800s, but the paymaster and then-Captain Emory accepted the challenge in order to preserve the Navy's reputation and adhere to international customs.<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> Exchanging courtesies could be as simple as calling on the other military ships in the vicinity, starting with the highest ranked commander, to hosting meals or events, including



two officers knew that breaking the rule would result in their expulsion from the Navy. Thankfully, the young Russian extended an apology and retracted the challenge the following morning.<sup>9</sup>

Interactions on foreign station frequently trended into diplomatic territory. For instance, when war erupted between China and Japan over Korea in 1894, the Americans and British were sufficiently concerned to assign various navy vessels to protect their citizens and other westerners in treaty ports in and near the war zone. The Asiatic Squadron's commander, Commodore Charles C. Carpenter, ordered the gunboat *Petrel*, and its former attaché commanding officer, to steam upriver to Newchwang (modern Yingkou), Manchuria, to protect the foreign nationals. Emory and *Petrel* remained throughout the winter working in concert with the sailors of the smaller HMS *Firebrand*, the international residents, and the local community. His swift responses and tact served to protect them from looters and deserters. Moreover, when the Japanese army arrived, he was able to mitigate the risk of conflict, eventually handing over protection responsibilities to the Japanese.<sup>10</sup>

Due to the still-evolving nature of the attaché assignment, intelligence, initiative, and intuition had a correspondingly higher importance. Having tact like Emory's or technical prowess like Chadwick's was as important as the ability to discern the truth. During the 1906–7 war scare between Japan and the United States, the Chief Intelligence Officer, Captain Raymond P. Rodgers, received numerous reports from his European attachés that Japan was preparing for war. One of his attachés in Italy even requested \$10,000 to hire spies to confirm rumors.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, his attachés in Tokyo, first Lieutenant Frank Marble (April 1905–April 1907) and then Commander John A. Dougherty (April 1907–January

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entertainments like rowing competitions. For the custom of dueling see, Christopher McKee, *Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession: The Creation of the U.S. Naval Officer Corps, 1794–1815* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 403–6; Charles Oscar Paullin, "Dueling in the Old Navy," *Proceedings* 35, no.4 (Dec. 1909).

9 Gleaves, *The Life of an American Sailor*, 181–83; Packard, *A Century of U.S. Naval Intelligence*, 11.

10 Gleaves, *The Life of an American Sailor*, 196–99, 203–4.

11 Crumley, "The Naval Attaché System of the United States," 249; Dorwart, *Dorwart's History of the Office of Naval Intelligence*, 84.

1909), proved voices of reason, backed by hard facts. Drawing intelligence from open sources and Japanese contacts, they reported that the Japanese were not actively preparing for war, nor buying materiel. For instance, Marble provided information requested in October 1906 concerning which warships Japan had ready and which would be ready in three years. That information likely formed the basis of the January/February 1907 war planning. Rodgers also shared Marble's letters with leaders as high as the President, contributing to the lessening of tension at key points during the war scare.<sup>12</sup>

## THE WORLD CRUISE AND BEYOND

Although the Navy did not assign any naval attachés to the world cruise, a few members of the cruise had completed tours as attachés or with ONI. The highest ranked among them was now-Rear Admiral Emory, who started the cruise as commander of 2nd Division, and then dual-hatted in command of 2nd Squadron and 3rd Division for the Pacific swing.<sup>13</sup> His friend, Captain Seaton Schroeder, who commanded 4th Division under Emory and then succeeded him in command of 2nd Squadron as a rear admiral in November 1908, had even recently served as head of ONI from May 1903 to April 1906.<sup>14</sup> Their experience served them well in performing the diplomatic duties that the world cruise imposed, namely interfacing with local officials and high society to provide excellent personal examples of Americans.

The primary aspects of foreign engagement throughout the world cruise were diplomatic contact and showmanship, similar in nature to how navies behaved at international expositions. In fact, Rear Admiral Evans ordered the creation of the Fleet Naval Brigade to give precise, showman-like parades, reviews, and other displays to the public during the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition, placing Captain Schroeder in

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12 Vol. 39 (case files), Vol. 40 (case files 7501–7650), Vol. 41 (case files 7651–7825), and Vol. 42 (case files 7826–8000) General Correspondence, 1899–1912, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, RG 38, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

13 Command divided the U.S. Atlantic Battleship Fleet into two squadrons composed of two divisions apiece with 1st Squadron containing the 1st and 2nd Divisions and 2nd Squadron containing the 3rd and 4th Divisions.

14 Packard, *A Century of U.S. Naval Intelligence*, 11.

charge. Schroeder as its first commander established its operating parameters to create a good impression, especially governing parade marching and appearance.<sup>15</sup> The fleet used that organization for its parades during the world cruise with processions on the West Coast drawing large crowds. Aside from parades and in accord with common practice, the fleet also exchanged hosting visits with the high-ranking officials of the countries it visited. For instance, partially due to Emory's excellent hosting at a cheaper price in Auckland, Sperry assigned his subordinate all responsibilities for the Amoy trip and Emory worked "with our Consul at Amoy [over] almost every detail."<sup>16</sup>

Those activities left room for personal touches and renewing acquaintances. To prepare for the Tokyo visit while in California, Emory had asked his wife to find an engraving of Roosevelt for his room to go along with the pictures of the Meiji Emperor he had received from the emperor's brother at the end of Emory's stint in Manchuria. He intended to display them as a symbol of goodwill and community. Also, while in Tokyo, he caught up with friends he had made in Manchuria, who were now lieutenant generals, and the now-Prime Minister Katsura Taro, who had commanded the immediate Japanese troops that took Newchwang.<sup>17</sup>

Showmanship was also a key part of foreign engagement during the world cruise. As the fleet constantly encountered vessels from great powers in various ports, such as a German and an Italian vessel in Rio, how well the fleet performed activities would reflect how other navies perceived their potential effectiveness. Complex coordinated maneuvers and simultaneity in actions could bring glee from commanders. Emory noted of arriving in Auckland:

When we came in it was a very proud day. We came to anchor by Squadrons. This in the presence of the English Fleet, who have not yet stopped praising it. Sperry was enthusiastic in his compliments. Schroeder who has the 4th Division seconded me in fine style.<sup>18</sup>

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15 Schroeder, *A Half Century of Naval Service*, 302–3.

16 Gleaves, *The Life of an American Sailor*, 321–22.

17 Gleaves, *The Life of an American Sailor*, 314–15, 327–28.

18 Gleaves, *The Life of an American Sailor*, 321.

The quality of showmanship also pointed to better-educated recruits entering naval service. Schroeder “was struck with the appearance of the crew which seemed to show more maturity than had been observable during the earlier development of the new type of seaman.” Throughout the cruise, those enlisted sailors proved well-mannered, with their discipline impressing the locals and even British naval observers, who anticipated that the new sailors would improve the efficiency and capability of American warships.<sup>19</sup>

Following the world cruise, ONI and its attaché corps continued to grow in size and effectiveness. In December of 1909, Secretary of the Navy George von Lengerke Meyer placed ONI under the new “Aide for Operations,” an *ex officio* member of the General Board with daily access to the Secretary. In 1910, the Navy began assigning attachés in training to learn Japanese in Tokyo, beginning formal language-training regimes, and, by the end of 1913, leadership assigned ONI the responsibility to censor articles and photographs for public release. Finally in 1915 with the creation of the Chief of Naval Operations, the Secretary elevated ONI to one of the nine founding divisions of OPNAV. Thus, by the time the United States entered the Great War, ONI and its naval attaché corps had evolved into a professional service with defined responsibilities and capabilities, and sufficient funding to achieve success.<sup>20</sup> The Navy had proved competent at the different levels of naval engagement while adhering to international cultural norms, despite being a rising power.

In that way, the world cruise proved emblematic of the growing reach of the United States and its more systematic approach to engagement. The fleet was happily received by its various hosts and the conduct of its members remained above reproach, leaving a good impression from all its port

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19 Schroeder, *A Half Century of Naval Service*, 335–36; Michael J. Crawford, ed., *The World Cruise of the Great White Fleet: Honoring 100 Years of Global Partnerships and Security* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 2008), 28–30; Stone Diaries; “United States–Pacific Coast (Report dated 25 January 1905),” Reports of Naval Affairs, no. 757, 1905, vol. 1, ADM 231/43, The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew Gardens, London, England.

20 Packard, *A Century of U.S. Naval Intelligence*, 11–12; Crumley, “The Naval Attaché System of the United States,” 299–303, 307–8; Thomas C. Hone and Curtis A. Utz, *History of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1915–2015* (NHHC, 2020), 15–16.

calls. Although the attaché corps was not actively engaged in coordinating with the fleet, former members of ONI used skills gained during those tours every time they engaged with the local populaces and high societies, impressing both with the quality of the American Navy and by extension the American people.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What worth do personal connections have in naval engagement?
2. How do modern cultural diplomatic norms compare with those practiced during the world cruise?
3. You have been tasked with a multi-level and multivariate event. What aspects of naval engagement are likely to occur, and how do you prep yourself and your team to handle them?

# 5

## LOGISTICS BY DIPLOMACY

The world cruise of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet featured immense logistical and operational challenges.<sup>1</sup> American warships were not designed to operate at long range, and their ability to do so as a fleet in wartime with an adequate anti-torpedo escort was unclear before 1908. Ultimately, it was not the battleships or destroyers that proved problematic, but the Navy's own small collection of colliers. Their inability to keep the fleet supplied forced the service to rely upon ad-hoc contracting of foreign ships and stockpiles throughout the world cruise. This lack of Navy-owned logistical ships was a critical vulnerability, one that was noted by elements within the service, but not actually rectified until well after the transition from coal to fuel oil in the following decades. It also demonstrated a lack of both doctrine and strategic understanding of the importance of logistics, with the Navy's conception of logistics largely revolving around how best to supply a single ship. The realities of World War II would force the Navy to consider logistics on a far grander scale, but as similar challenges even to this day demonstrate, not all lessons learned from the world cruise translated to any real corrective action.<sup>2</sup>

### AN UGLY, DIRTY BUSINESS: THE CHALLENGES OF COALING

Despite the integration of engineering and deck officer roles at the beginning of the twentieth century, the majority of general line officers intensely disliked engineering duties. This was usually due to the simple

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- 1 Both phases also contained elements of all four of Roosevelt's objectives. Namely, the cruise prepared the Navy for conflict; it served as a diplomatic vehicle; it boosted the image of naval power in the minds of the American public; and it allowed Roosevelt to plug for more battleships on the Hill. Ingersoll, "The Reminiscences of Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll," 20.
  - 2 Peter C. Luebke, Timothy L. Francis, and Heather M. Haley, *Contested Logistics: Sustaining the Pacific War* (Washington, DC: NHHC, 2023), ix, 1–13, 78–81.

fact that being a shipboard engineer was a dangerous and uncomfortable job. Warships were powered by either fire-tube or water-tube boilers in pressurized firerooms that were unbearably hot under operating conditions. Additionally, coal-burning boilers continually needed to be filled with fresh fuel by shovel, and the coal already inside them manipulated with a rake for different speeds. In the words of Water Tender Frederick T. Wilson:

When on watch, his duties consist of getting out, or passing, coal to his firemen, and in some ships it is no snap to handle 40 or 45 buckets of coal, each weighing about 145 or 150 pounds, in a temperature of perhaps 150° to 175°[F], & has to haul the ashes from the ash pans and load and send up buckets of ashes. He is put to work also at cleaning bilge strainers when they become clogged up with coal dirt and ashes. At times he is put on the fires when a fireman plays out. He has to stow coal in the bunkers when they coal ship. [He] has to go in the boilers and knock off scale and scrape out mud and scale and clean out bilges in port. [He has to] scrub paintwork and paint, clean off pumps, polish bright work, and do any work he may be put at. [He] goes in the back connections of the boilers and cleans out the soot and ashes from there and also in the smoke pipe, [and] any old place that is hard to get at and is dirty. It is hard and awful dirty work and it is work that is never done.

In short, this was not a task for the fainthearted.<sup>3</sup>

Even those working outside engineering could not escape handling coal. Although working in engineering was hard enough, the refueling process was a grueling task that required the entirety of a ship's crew. Fuel bunkers in this day were generally only accessible through the engineering spaces, meaning fresh coal had to be hauled into the coal bunkers lining the ship's sides by large bags or buckets. To make matters worse, refueling

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3 Frederick T. Wilson, *A Sailor's Log: Water-Tender Frederick T. Wilson, USN, on Asiatic Station, 1899-1901*, ed. James R. Reckner (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2004), xxii-xxiv, 9-10, 12-13.





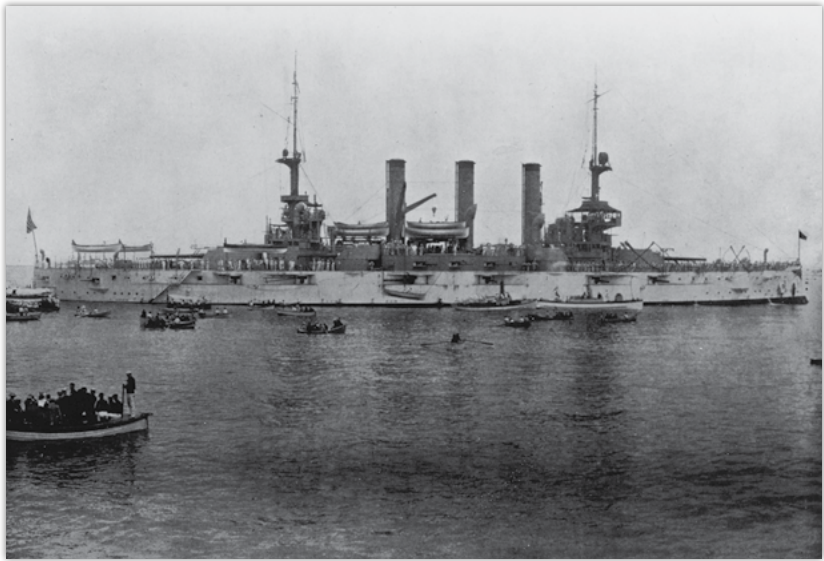
Coaling a battleship, c. 1908. Note the coal dust scattered across the deck. (NHHC, NH 106071)

from colliers rather than shore stockpiles required manpower to dig coal out of the holds before winching it across to waiting ships. This process was frequently conducted in round-the-clock shifts in order to finish quickly, and could only be conducted in a sheltered harbor. Additionally, as the transport of coal created a fine (and highly explosive) black dust that permeated nearly every part of a ship, a thorough cleaning of the entire vessel was always the final item on the coaling checklist.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Atlantic Fleet's battleships each carried out this grueling process a minimum of 18 times on the world cruise, and usually began coaling immediately after arriving at a port of call and before any liberty was allowed. This was primarily because quick and efficient refueling would be critical in the event of an actual war deployment. Thus, despite the festivities often hosted ashore for some of the fleet's officers, coaling took up a substantial amount of time in port for enlisted sailors.<sup>5</sup>

4 Keeping the "Great White Fleet" actually white was a grueling task where coaling was involved.

5 Hewitt, "The Reminiscences of Admiral H. Kent Hewitt," 43–44; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 12–18, 30; Letter from the General Board of the Navy to the Secretary of

The U.S. Atlantic Fleet sent on the world cruise was primarily composed of what we now call pre-dreadnought battleships, with maximum endurance ranging from about 4,200 nautical miles for the *Illinois* class to more than 6,600 miles for the *Connecticut* class at about 10 knots.<sup>6</sup> These predicted ranges did not take into account factors like hull fouling and bad weather, or even the quality of the coal being used, and as a result often overshot the actual distances achieved. Complicating planning further was the variety of machinery designs and ages; USS *Alabama* (Battleship No. 8) and USS *Maine* (Battleship No. 10) in particular had problematic machinery that both broke down more often than their siblings and never produced the same fuel economy even when functioning correctly. All of these factors combined to increase the rate at which the fleet consumed coal and needed to refuel.<sup>7</sup>



USS *Connecticut* (Battleship No. 18), flagship of the world cruise, anchored at Callao, Peru, c. 20 February 1908. (NHHHC, NH 1571)

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the Navy, June 22, 1907, Volume 5: March 4, 1907–March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

6 Friedman, *U.S. Battleships*, 427–30.

7 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 12–18, 32.

Additionally, a squadron of torpedo-boat destroyers (TBDs) led by USS *Whipple* (Torpedo Boat Destroyer No. 15) accompanied the battleships on the first phase of the world cruise. These were point-defense vessels that displaced around 430 tons and had short ranges of 2,700 miles or less. This meant that they required a separate itinerary that only occasionally found them in company with the main fleet, impairing their ability to execute their designated mission. Although the inclusion of these destroyers might seem superfluous to a goodwill exercise, it must be remembered that the cruise's first goal was to test the fleet's capabilities under simulated wartime conditions. American planners still had one eye on *Jeune École* theory, which posited that inlets and choke points like the Strait of Magellan were ideal places for surprise attacks by torpedo boats (as the Japanese had demonstrated against the Russians at Port Arthur to open the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904).<sup>8</sup> The TBDs' presence during the South American transit was therefore an important safeguard against a notional Japanese ambush. Even crossing the Pacific, which the destroyers performed separately from the battleships, was an important test for divining the challenges that would accompany moving such diminutive vessels (or their even smaller torpedo boat cousins) from one ocean to another. It would also reveal their impact on the fleet's speed. As planners swiftly learned, it was not just the composition of the fleet that impacted its speed, but also its maintenance and the availability of fuel.<sup>9</sup>

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8 McCully, *The McCully Report*, 243–56.

9 At the time, there were also rampant rumors emanating from Germany that Japanese torpedo boats had been hidden along the fleet's course. A similar situation had led the Russian Second Pacific Squadron to attack British fishing trawlers in the Dogger Bank Incident of 1904. Epstein, *Torpedo*, 18–28; Friedman, *U.S. Destroyers*, 11, 452–54.



U.S. Navy torpedo boats maneuver with a destroyer, c. 1903 (NHHC, NH 45794)

(Division) Name	Type	Class	Coal Capacity (Tons)	Range (NM)	Notes
(1) <i>Connecticut</i>	Battleship	<i>Connecticut</i>	2,200	6,620	
(1) <i>Kansas</i>	Battleship	<i>Connecticut</i>	2,200	6,620	
(1) <i>Louisiana</i>	Battleship	<i>Connecticut</i>	2,200	6,620	
(1) <i>Vermont</i>	Battleship	<i>Connecticut</i>	2,200	6,620	
(2) <i>Georgia</i>	Battleship	<i>Virginia</i>	1,955	4,860	
(2) <i>New Jersey</i>	Battleship	<i>Virginia</i>	1,955	4,860	
(2) <i>Rhode Island</i>	Battleship	<i>Virginia</i>	1,955	4,860	
(2) <i>Virginia</i>	Battleship	<i>Virginia</i>	1,995	4,860	
(3) <i>Maine</i>	Battleship	<i>Maine</i>	1,887	5,660	Detached at San Francisco
(3) <i>Wisconsin</i>	Battleship	<i>Illinois</i>	1,270	4,190	Joined at San Francisco
(3) <i>Minnesota</i>	Battleship	<i>Connecticut</i>	2,200	6,620	
(3) <i>Missouri</i>	Battleship	<i>Maine</i>	1,887	5,660	
(3) <i>Ohio</i>	Battleship	<i>Maine</i>	2,215	6,560	
(4) <i>Alabama</i>	Battleship	<i>Illinois</i>	1,270	4,190	Detached at San Francisco
(4) <i>Nebraska</i>	Battleship	<i>Virginia</i>	1,995	5,950	Joined at San Francisco
(4) <i>Illinois</i>	Battleship	<i>Illinois</i>	1,270	4,190	

(Division) Name	Type	Class	Coal Capacity (Tons)	Range (NM)	Notes
(4) <i>Kearsarge</i>	Battleship	<i>Kearsarge</i>	1,500	5,070	
(4) <i>Kentucky</i>	Battleship	<i>Kearsarge</i>	1,500	5,070	
(TBDF) <i>Hopkins</i>	Torpedo Boat Destroyer	<i>Bainbridge</i>	150	2,700	Detached at San Francisco
(TBDF) <i>Hull</i>	Torpedo Boat Destroyer	<i>Bainbridge</i>	150	2,700	Detached at San Francisco
(TBDF) <i>Lawrence</i>	Torpedo Boat Destroyer	<i>Bainbridge</i>	115	2,700	Detached at San Francisco
(TBDF) <i>Stewart</i>	Torpedo Boat Destroyer	<i>Bainbridge</i>	180	2,700	Detached at San Francisco
(TBDF) <i>Truxtun</i>	Torpedo Boat Destroyer	<i>Truxtun</i>	232	2,700	Detached at San Francisco
(TBDF) <i>Whipple</i>	Torpedo Boat Destroyer	<i>Truxtun</i>	232	2,700	Detached at San Francisco
<i>Arethusa</i>	Water Tanker	N/A	Unknown		Detached at Honolulu
<i>Culgoa</i>	Refrigerator	N/A	Unknown		
<i>Glacier</i>	Store Ship	N/A	Unknown		Detached at Manila
<i>Panther</i>	Rapair Ship	N/A	Unknown		
<i>Relief</i>	Hospital Ship	N/A	Unknown		Joined at Magdalena Bay Detached at Manila
<i>Yankton</i>	Fleet Tender	N/A	Unknown		

Sources: Friedman, *U.S. Battleships*, 427–30, Friedman, *U.S. Destroyers*, 452–54, Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 12–18, 32.

## THE WAR EXERCISE: HAMPTON ROADS TO MAGDALENA BAY AND SAN FRANCISCO

When the Atlantic Fleet departed Hampton Roads on 16 December 1907 on what was officially a practice cruise to the West Coast, its objective was to put the Navy to the test. The fleet's core was its 16 battleships, which were divided into two 8-ship squadrons, themselves made up of two 4-ship divisions each. The destroyers, on the other hand, acted as a single-group flotilla. Each day, battle drills were conducted in the morning, and maneuver drills (by signal flag) were conducted in the afternoon.

The intent was to improve fleet cohesion and put on a creditable performance at the official gunnery practice that would take place once the fleet reached Magdalena Bay. As discussed in Chapter 2, American naval planners worried that such skills would atrophy during an extended cruise. Conversely, if these skills could be maintained—or even refined—it would radically improve confidence in the U.S. ability to defend itself against a surprise attack by Japan.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than combat prowess, this portion of the world cruise soon came to focus on questions arising about the ruggedness of the battleships' propulsion machinery and of the logistical value of the U.S. Navy's colliers. In general, the Atlantic Fleet cruised at a speed of about 10 knots. In doing so, the battleships consumed approximately 90 tons of coal per day (and the fleet as a whole about 1,500 tons). At this pace, vessels would need to refill their coal bunkers fairly frequently, requiring large, deep, and well-protected harbors to do so. It was therefore vital that American colliers be ready to meet the fleet at a set of large South American ports specifically chosen for this purpose: Port of Spain (Trinidad), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Punta Arenas (Chile), Callao (Peru), and Magdalena Bay (Mexico).<sup>11</sup>

This plan was complicated by rumors of threats to the fleet, most of which originated in Germany. Naval attachés in Europe and European newspapers alleged plots by Japan to attack the Atlantic Fleet with torpedo boats or sabotage en route to the West Coast. While these reports

Port	Arrival	Departure	Miles
Hampton Roads		16 December 1907	
Port of Spain, Trinidad	23 December 1907	29 December 1907	1,776
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	12 January 1908	22 January 1908	3,332
Punta Arenas, Chile	1 February 1908	7 February 1908	2,213
Callao, Peru	20 February 1908	29 February 1908	2,808
Magdalena Bay, Mexico	12 March 1908	11 April 1908	3,044

Source: Papers of EM1 Roy W. Davis.

10 Gunnery drills were already considered to be the true measure of a fleet's skill and readiness, and were routinely the subject of betting and competition—official and otherwise. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 26–32.

11 Papers of EM1 Roy W. Davis; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 28–29, 36, 43–45, 51–52.

clearly lacked credibility, they encouraged the fleet to remain on guard.<sup>12</sup> This vigilance proved justified early in the cruise when sailors discovered half a stick of dynamite within the coal supplied by a Norwegian collier at Port of Spain. This was not an unprecedented discovery; unexploded dynamite left over from mining had previously been discovered in the fleet's fuel, and the previous USS *Maine* had been lost to what was likely an explosion in a coal bunker in 1898.<sup>13</sup> But sabotage or not, this event nevertheless reinforced the need to carefully inspect all coal delivered to the fleet, thereby prolonging refueling time.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, additional logistical problems developed almost immediately thereafter. Propulsion breakdowns plagued the battleships throughout the early part of the cruise, increasing coal consumption and forcing decreases in speed to keep the fleet together. Once behind schedule, the limited bunker capacity of the *Illinois*-class battleships prevented compensating through increasing steaming speed. Complicating these difficulties was the discovery at Rio de Janeiro that the Navy's own colliers had gone against orders by depleting their own coal without topping off whenever possible. This meant that they had first used about 500 tons of their own cargo to reach Trinidad, and more than 3,200 tons to reach Rio de Janeiro. From this information, Rear Admiral Evans concluded that the fleet had reached the end of the Navy colliers' logistical tether, as any further travel would so deplete their cargo as to render them useless. From this point forward, the Navy would rely upon contracted foreign colliers directly dispatched to the fleet's planned coaling locations.<sup>15</sup>

Such a plan required quick and decisive action by the Bureau of Equipment to issue necessary coal contracts, and for the remainder of the cruise's first phase, they executed without problems.<sup>16</sup> That said, issuing

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12 Memo from the President of the General Board of the Navy to the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, April 7, 1908, Volume 5: March 4, 1907–March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

13 This likelihood had not prevented the American press from running with the theory that the Spanish had sabotaged the ship.

14 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 30.

15 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 36.

16 Issuing contracts on short notice meant that there was very little time for return cargoes to be secured, and thus the willingness of carriers to bid depended entirely on existing export contracts at the destination.

last-minute contracts for coal was risky, as the owners of any given civilian vessel were unlikely to send their ship somewhere if it could not be guaranteed a profitable return cargo. While one of the four contracted foreign colliers arrived two days late at Punta Arenas and thereby nearly forced the Navy to purchase coal directly from the local Chilean stockpile, all five were ready and waiting at Callao on 20 February when the fleet arrived.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, when the Atlantic Fleet reached Magdalena Bay, it was a well-drilled force that had witnessed a marked *decrease* in engineering breakdowns the farther it travelled. Engineering reliability remained a bright point for the rest of the cruise, but the late collier arrival was also a portent.<sup>18</sup>

### THE WORLD CRUISE: VIRGINIA VIA SUEZ

Following exercises in Magdalena Bay and a 2,900-mile goodwill tour of the West Coast, the Atlantic Fleet departed San Francisco for Honolulu on 7 July 1908. The fleet's westward journey back to Virginia posed the most strenuous logistical challenges of the entire world cruise, particularly after the decision had been made to rely solely upon foreign colliers. For this leg of the journey, two of the fleet's oldest and worst-performing battleships, USS *Alabama* (Battleship No. 8) and USS *Maine* (Battleship No. 10) were replaced by USS *Wisconsin* (Battleship No. 9) and USS *Nebraska* (Battleship No. 14). Additionally, the destroyers were detached and towed by armored cruisers to Manila by way of Honolulu and Samoa, a mission they completed without major incident. Other than these changes and the shift of command from Evans to Rear Admiral Charles S. Sperry, the fleet's structure was preserved for continued battle drills and maneuver practice. Despite the fact that the second phase of the world cruise was publicly billed as a diplomatic tour, it also remained an important endurance trial for the Navy.<sup>19</sup>

In this capacity, the Bureau of Equipment failed to live up to requirements. With the decision to rely on foreign colliers, the bureau had to issue contracts with enough time for these relatively slow ships to beat the fleet

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17 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 45, 51.

18 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 42.

19 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 83, 160–61.



to its planned destinations. While this had been a success closer to home, contracted colliers were routinely late as the fleet moved through the Pacific. The longest leg of the entire cruise was the journey from Honolulu to Auckland, New Zealand, a passage of greater than 3,800 miles and the very limit of what the older ships in the fleet could do.<sup>20</sup> Although the battleships were able to reach Auckland under their own power thanks to strict economy measures (like limited electric lighting), only three of the six contracted colliers—some 17,500 tons out of the expected 30,000—awaited it.<sup>21</sup> Without reliable knowledge of where the missing colliers were (as wireless telegraphy was not yet widespread among commercial shipping), the Navy coped by distributing the limited coal it *did* have and negotiating with local sources for whatever else they could. Regardless, “the non-appearance of the British colliers ‘caused great embarrassment,’ Sperry said, for it illustrated how easily Great Britain could control the fleet’s behavior, stranding it halfway around the world, if necessary, and causing it to be a ‘laughing stock.’”<sup>22</sup>

Port	Arrival	Departure	Miles
San Francisco		7 July 1908	
Honolulu	16 July 1908	22 July 1908	2,119
Auckland, New Zealand	9 August 1908	15 August 1908	3,875
Sydney, Australia	20 August 1908	27 August 1908	1,289
Melbourne, Australia	29 August 1908	10 September 1908	700
Albany, Australia	15 September 1908	19 September 1908	1,373
Manila, Philippines	2 October 1908	10 October 1908	3,453
Yokohama, Japan	18 October 1908	25 October 1908	1,743
Manila, Philippines	31 October 1908	1 December 1908	1,749
Colombo, Ceylon	13 December 1908	20 December 1908	2,945
Suez, Egypt	5 January 1909	Varied	3,440
Port Said, Egypt	Varied	Varied	72
Gibraltar, United Kingdom	3 February 1909	6 February 1909	Varied
Hampton Roads	21 February 1909		3,250

Source: Papers of EM1 Roy W. Davis.

<sup>20</sup> Papers of EM1 Roy W. Davis.

<sup>21</sup> Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet*, 103.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Hart, “The Voyage of the Great White Fleet, 1907–1909,” 187–88.

Unfortunately, dealing with this coal shortage proved difficult at best. Although both New Zealand and Australia had coal mines, neither British dominion tended to keep much locally as it was sold and shipped as it was mined. Additionally, the United States had previously asserted that no additional local stockpiles would be needed for the world cruise. As a result, only 350 tons were available at Auckland, and despite some warning to increase production, orders of 5,000 tons for immediate use in Sydney and 8,000 for Melbourne could not be quickly met. Instead, the American consul-general conducted marathon negotiations with coal companies and their associated unions to purchase coal already loaded onto other ships for transport or even divert it en route where possible.<sup>23</sup> To make matters worse, Rear Admiral Emory, the commander of the Second Division, recorded that, “the Australian coal which we have tried is bad [quality] and not suited to our grate bars. There is not enough coal here for the Fleet, and besides the price has been doubled because we want it.” This further reduced the fleet’s range and efficiency for its journey to the Philippines and Japan.<sup>24</sup>

Despite these severe logistical problems in the South Pacific, coaling arrangements throughout the rest of the cruise adequately met the Atlantic Fleet’s needs. While the fleet was delayed by an encounter with a typhoon on the way to Yokohama in October 1908, it gradually regained lost time throughout the remainder of its return to Hampton Roads thanks to superior engineering performance and accommodating seas. Combined with friendly ports for refueling, the Navy thereby demonstrated that an industrial-era, fuel-constrained war fleet could circumnavigate the globe without seriously degrading its combat potential.<sup>25</sup>

The decision to rely solely upon foreign contracted colliers after the fleet’s stop at Rio de Janeiro revealed a catastrophic weakness in American logistics. The handful of American colliers, all acquired in 1898 in response to the Spanish-American War, were simply too few and too

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23 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet*, 103–4.

24 Gleaves, *The Life of an American Sailor*, 324; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet*, 104.

25 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet*, 112–15.

small to properly supply the Navy on any extended cruise.<sup>26</sup> This meant that in the event of any conflict with Japan, the United States would be forced to rely on foreign suppliers. Well over 80 percent of merchant shipping sailed under the British flag in this period, meaning that in all likelihood American military success would hinge on the goodwill of the British government—at that time, a formal ally of Japan. This was nothing short of a critical problem that, in a major failure of the Navy as a learning organization, would nevertheless not be truly addressed until well after the full transition to fuel oil following World War I. Even then, a shortage of logistics ships would continue to bedevil the Navy through World War II and the Cold War, as congressional funding and the attention of service leadership consistently skewed toward combatants over support ships.<sup>27</sup>

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26 American war plans in the twentieth century have always envisioned acquiring additional logistics ships on the outbreak of war, so it can be hard to nail down what is “permanent” and what is not among the Navy’s logistical force at times. At the time of the world cruise, all eight of the Navy’s colliers were small and slow former merchant ships purchased during the Spanish-American War, not all of which were fit for service. Edward Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897–1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 89–91; Thomas Wildenberg, *Gray Steel and Black Oil: Fast Tankers and Replenishment at Sea in the U.S. Navy, 1912–1992* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 1–4.

27 Dorwart, *Dorwart’s History of the Office of Naval Intelligence*, 84; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet*, 32–33, 89, 104–5, 160–61; Wildenberg, *Gray Steel and Black Oil*, 83–97, 248–56.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the success of the world cruise overshadow the logistical problems that it revealed?
2. How might potential logistical weaknesses be identified in the planning phase?
3. What general contingencies exist for Navy logistics today, and who is responsible for them?

## 6

### PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Although the modern concept of public diplomacy—that is, actions intended to strengthen the relationship between citizens of the United States and those of other countries—did not emerge until the 1960s, it had existed in a less codified fashion. By the time of the world cruise, the U.S. government was creating an informal public diplomacy system through its support and protection of humanitarian actions undertaken by private organizations, such as the American Red Cross. It also embraced the phenomenon of world expositions as a means of enhancing American prestige to demonstrate its place among the world's powers. In this system, the Navy as an institution was often a first responder in providing aid as well as a diplomatically usable symbol of American power and influence. Therefore, Navy personnel frequently played a role as formal and informal emissaries around the globe, serving collectively and individually as goodwill ambassadors and advocates for U.S. national greatness on the world stage.<sup>1</sup>

#### WORLD'S FAIRS, THE NAVY, AND THE WORLD CRUISE

World's Fairs, International Expositions or Exhibitions functioned as a prevalent example of late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century public diplomacy. From technology presentations such as the *Exposition Universelle* (1900 in Paris, France), to national celebrations like the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition (1907 in Hampton Roads), to broad

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1 Nicholas J. Cull, “‘Public Diplomacy’ Before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase,” *CPD Blog*, USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 18 Apr. 2006, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/public-diplomacy-gullion-evolution-phrase>; Caitlin E. Schindle, *The Origins of Public Diplomacy in US Statecraft: Uncovering a Forgotten Tradition* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), x, 43, 46, 55–66, 111–25; Long, *Gold Braid and Foreign Relations*, 415.

messaging about commercial opportunities and political views including the National Export Exposition (1899 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), expositions were tools that nations used to signal their advancement and educate the public.<sup>2</sup> As a foreign former organizer noted of the 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia, “All these strangers will be enlightened; they will be cured of prejudice and they will become your very good friends and admirers hereafter . . . very many people will come from . . . [your] own country . . . [and] for the first time fully realize what are the productions of the United States.”<sup>3</sup>

Depending on location, such public displays could include naval reviews or parades that simultaneously evoked national pride while also showcasing a “brotherhood of nations.”<sup>4</sup> At naval reviews, the organizer assigned ships to act as hosts for their foreign counterparts, sometimes with the hope that discourse among the navies would serve as a force for future peace.<sup>5</sup> Offices inside the U.S. Navy helped to facilitate the visits, including arranging tours of navy yards for foreign officers, fuel, and



U.S. and foreign warships passing in review at the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition, c. June 1907. (NHHC, NH 105806)

- 2 John E. Findling, “Opening the Door to the World: International Expositions in the South, 1881–1907,” *Studies in Popular Culture* 19, no. 2 (Oct. 1996): 29–38; Robert Rydell, “Visions of Empire: International Expositions in Portland and Seattle, 1905–1909,” *Pacific Historical Review* 52, no. 1 (Feb. 1983): 37–65.
- 3 Baron Wilhelm von Schwarz-Senborn, “National Expositions, Schools for the People,” *New England Journal of Education* 2, no. 2 (July 1875): 21–22.
- 4 Hilary A. Herbert, “The Lesson of the Naval Review,” *The North American Review* 156, no. 439 (June 1893): 641–47.
- 5 “The Naval Parade,” *American Advocate of Peace* 55, no. 5 (May 1893): 99–100; Findling, “Opening the Door to the World,” 29–38.

the reviews.<sup>6</sup> Sailors and officers of the hosting fleet served as guides in attending festivities and organized varying entertainments from ward-room dinners to officers' rowing competitions.<sup>7</sup>

The world cruise by the U.S. Atlantic Fleet was public diplomacy in the above fashion. Governmental leadership did not give the Navy specific instructions apart from professing friendship, nor specific diplomatic guidance apart from demonstrating cordiality. Roosevelt, however, did send messages to the host country to correspond with the fleet's activities. Although the first part of the cruise was primarily a preparatory exercise with diplomacy as a sideline, the visits were still a diplomatic vehicle. As such, the Navy was supposed to conduct itself in a professional manner that would meaningfully reflect the country, and, hopefully, boost American prestige through personal contacts and positive engagements.<sup>8</sup>

As representatives of a great power, the U.S. Navy received primarily warm welcomes throughout the cruise.<sup>9</sup> During almost every reception, the hosts amiably, if not ecstatically, greeted the arriving fleet, fêting the sailors and officers in public ceremonies and offering a range of special services to commemorate the world cruise. Those events ranged from parades and state dinners to side trips for unique events like bull fighting or to local cultural sites like a Māori hot spring village. Some places even declared national holidays to facilitate their people viewing what one reporter dubbed "Uncle Sam's Greatest Show on Earth."<sup>10</sup>

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6 Vols. 38 and 42, General Correspondence of the Office of Naval Intelligence, 1899–1912, RG 38, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

7 Hewitt, "The Reminiscences of Admiral H. Kent Hewitt," 43–56; Stone Diaries.

8 Hart, "The Voyage of the Great White Fleet, 1907–1909," 9–30.

9 The sole exception to that was the somewhat chilly response received in Port of Spain, Trinidad. It was likely a combination of factors including the recent Swettenham-Davis Incident (Jan. 1907), a lack of Royal Navy presence in the region, and the arrival near a traditional holiday (Christmas). For more on the Swettenham Incident, see William N. Tilchin, "Theodore Roosevelt, Anglo-American Relations, and the Jamaica Incident of 1907," *Diplomatic History* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 385–404.

10 Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads*, 88.

## Planning and Perception

At the time of the world cruise, other powers had mixed views of the U.S. Navy and its capabilities. During this period, battleships were considered the primary metric of naval power. Yet while the U.S. possessed a considerable number of newly constructed ships of this type, British and German naval thinkers doubted the untried U.S. fleet could circumnavigate the world.<sup>1</sup> When making comparisons, Royal Navy officers saw the U.S. Navy as less capable, particularly in regard to gunnery. However, the former group also believed that their “American cousins” were improving, having initiated a building program intended to make the U.S. Navy among the world’s top-ranked fleets.<sup>2</sup> Imperial German Navy officers also had a poor opinion of the U.S. Navy, noting in 1906 that U.S. officers were too old and their sailors were of poor quality.<sup>3</sup>

Imperial Japanese Navy officers believed their own skills to be superior to those of the U.S. Navy. They, however, were gravely concerned by the massive disparity in resources and vessels. They responded by adopting interception as a counterstrategy, relying on distance-based attrition to even the odds. They calculated a U.S. fleet that had to steam at least 4,000 miles would suffer 10 percent attrition per 1,000 miles steamed. Thus, a Japanese fleet 60 percent the size of the U.S. force would be victorious. Based on these calculations, the Japanese naval staff developed the eight-eight-eight plan—eight battleships and eight armored cruisers all under eight years old which they proposed to the Diet for appropriations. This acquisition strategy, however, would be challenged by the U.S. completion of the Panama Canal in 1914.<sup>4</sup>

The other powers tracked U.S. naval technical developments, but were more focused on each other and their regional competitors. In the Mediterranean, France, Italy, and Austro-Hungary had entered a naval arms race among each other. In the Western Hemisphere, Argentina and Brazil had initiated their own naval arms race and bought a good portion of their capital ships from U.S. yards, a sign of the price and quality of U.S. technology.<sup>5</sup>

1 Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913), 592, <https://www.loc.gov/item/13024840>.

2 “Naval Progress—United States,” 1907–1908, Naval Intelligence Department, vol. 44, no. 772 to 785, ADM 231/44; Brian T. Crumley, “The Naval Attaché System of the United States, 1882–1914,” (PhD diss., Texas A&M University, 2002), 13; Seaton Schroeder, *A Half Century of Naval Service* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1922), 335–36.

3 Holger Herwig and David F. Trask, “Naval Operations Plans between Germany and the USA, 1898–1913: A Study of Strategic Planning in the Age of Imperialism,” *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 8, no. 2 (1970): 58–59.

4 Sadao Asada, *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 31–32; Daniel Curzon, “Pacific Triumvirate: Great Britain, the Empire of Japan, and the United States of America and the Geo-Strategic Environment around the Pacific Rim between 1900 and 1920,” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2020), 79, 172.

5 Paul G. Halpern, *The Mediterranean Naval Situation 1908–1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), vii–viii, 50–53, 158–60, 188, 296–97, 330–31; Naval Attaché Reports, Intelligence Division, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, RG 38, National Archives Building, Washington, DC; Vol. 23, General Correspondence, 1899–1912, Intelligence Division, Records of the Office of Naval Intelligence, RG 38, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.





U.S. Fleet Naval Brigade parading through Melbourne, Australia, on 31 August 1908. (NHHC, NH 106187-KN)

In each location, the officers attended official functions, exchanging courteous addresses and visits. Many of those addresses dwelt on attestations of friendship and compliments including ones to the “glorious American Navy.”<sup>11</sup> Local politicians also used the speeches to suggest the direction of future relations, proposing some type of closer relationship or their own political agenda. For instance, Prime Minister of New Zealand Sir Joseph Ward envisioned the United States and Australia standing together “to determine white or Oriental supremacy.”<sup>12</sup> In contrast, Baron Eiichi Shibusawa, speaking at the Navy Club in Tokyo, sought to remind his guests of their deep connection, “true neighborly feelings,” and a shared “duty to maintain peace on the Pacific Ocean.”<sup>13</sup>

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11 The line is from an address by Brazilian President Affonso Augusto Moreira Penna. Crawford, *The World Cruise of the Great White Fleet*, 43.

12 Speech quoted in Thomas A. Bailey, “The World Cruise of the American Battleship Fleet, 1907–1909,” *Pacific Historical Review* 1, no. 4 (Dec 1932): 389–423.

13 Baron Eiichi Shibusawa, “Address of Welcome,” public presentation at Kabukiza, Tokyo, 22 Oct. 1908, on *The Great White Fleet*, accessed 14 July 2023, [http://greatwhitefleet.us/home/world\\_cruise/yokohama\\_japan/](http://greatwhitefleet.us/home/world_cruise/yokohama_japan/).

American responses returned the cordiality, while eschewing commitments to various political agendas. For example, in Rear Admiral Charles S. Sperry's farewell luncheon speech in Melbourne, he praised the generous welcoming spirit and the chance for "us to come here before so intelligent a community, and speak for ourselves, as officers and men—to appeal to your intelligence as to what your kinsmen and friends really are."<sup>14</sup> President Roosevelt also participated in the exchange, sending official greetings and thanks to his fellow leaders. His official letter to Emperor Meiji was well regarded and timed, solving a diplomatic issue of etiquette as the emperor had decided to meet in person with a selection of American officers. It relayed how Roosevelt was "deeply touched by this fresh and striking proof of friendship and regard" bestowed on the officers and sailors of the American fleet.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from public presentations like 10,000 Japanese school children serenading the fleet with songs in English, the world cruise highlighted the personal aspect of public diplomacy. For example, while out in Yokohama on 22 October, a trio of sailors and a marine noticed a welcoming arch catching fire, with the blaze on the way toward a Japanese flag. The marine quickly scaled the arch and rescued the flag while the sailors extinguished the fire. Witnessing their visitors' bravery in saving the flag (and perhaps, the town as a whole), the Japanese populace hosted an impromptu street party in celebration.<sup>16</sup>

In another example, Ensign Thomas C. Kinkaid of USS *Nebraska*, later an admiral during World War II, witnessed the junior officers of his ship making friends with a Japanese man who had attended Yale. The Yale

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14 "Farewell Luncheon, Admiral Sperry's Last Speech," *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tasmania, Australia), 5 Sept. 1908, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12668991>.

15 A few historians have argued that the Meiji government used the event to sway American public opinion more thoroughly than the fleet's visit did Japan's to benefit their own foreign policy goals. In particular, they predicate the success in November of the Root-Takahira Notes on the cordiality the visit restored to the relationship. Hart, "The Voyage of the Great White Fleet, 1907–1909," 193–95; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 114–15; Theodore Roosevelt to Thomas J. O'Brien, telegram, 21 Oct. 1908, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, available online at Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University.

16 Reckner, "The World Cruise of the Atlantic Battleship Fleet," 324; Crawford, *The World Cruise of the Great White Fleet*, 78.



The welcome arch and street decorations in Yokohama, Japan, for the visit of the U.S. fleet. (NHHC, NH 106158)

alum was interested in the ships and visited them a few times. The junior officers had even invited him to lunch. After a few visits, the Yale alum asked if he could bring his father, who would also like to see the ships, but claimed he spoke no English. The junior officer mess agreed and arranged a dinner. The dinner went splendidly and at the end, the old man revealed that he had seen Perry and “his mechanical toys,” especially the miniature steam engine, when he was 17: “I watched it every day all day long. Today I am the head of all railroads in Japan,” and supposedly had been so for some time.<sup>17</sup> The junior officers had unexpectedly, yet successfully, hosted a high-level government official. As Admiral Kinkaid recalled, it “was a wonderful way to start a naval career, to see the world that way and to get some idea of what other countries were like.”<sup>18</sup>

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17 Note: It has not been possible to confirm who the gentleman was. Thomas C. Kinkaid, “Oral History Interview with Thomas C. Kinkaid 1961,” interview by John T. Mason, *Naval History Project*, Columbia Digital Library Collections, 1961, oral history transcript, pg. 4.

18 Kinkaid, “Oral History Interview with Thomas C. Kinkaid,” 3–4.

## THE NAVY, THE WORLD CRUISE, AND HUMANITARIAN AID

Apart from the general diplomatic activities, the world cruise also detoured to assist in a humanitarian operation in line with American public diplomatic practices. On 28 December 1908 around 0520, a 7+ magnitude earthquake, centered in the Strait of Messina, laid waste to Messina and Reggio Calabria, Italy. It triggered a trio of tsunamis that smashed buildings, washed away survivors, and set the stage for fires in the aftermath. Two sizable aftershocks on 2 and 7 January caused more destruction. The calamity devastated the area, with casualties estimated between 75,000 and nearly 200,000. The disaster also killed numerous diplomats and their families, including the American consul at Messina, Arthur S. Cheney, and his wife, Laura.<sup>19</sup> It remains the most grievous earthquake to strike anywhere in Europe and is considered, despite previous aid actions, a defining moment in the history of Navy humanitarian operations.<sup>20</sup>

Various governments dispatched warships to render aid and search for their people. The British arrived first, having vessels already at Malta. Others quickly followed, like the Russians who were on training maneuvers, providing manpower to perform search and rescue. The international fleets also transported refugees and their own people to safer locations. The British dispatched one battleship and three cruisers,

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19 "Earthquake Kills Hundred Thousand in Southern Italy," *The Norfolk Landmark*, 30 December 1908, Library of Virginia, <https://viriniachronicle.com/?a=d&d=TNL19081230>; W.H. Hobbs, "The Messina Earthquake," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 41, no. 7 (1909): 409–22; "Thousands of Quake Victims are Starving," *Los Angeles Herald*, 1 Jan. 1909, California Digital Newspaper Collection; <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=LAH19090101>; "Great White Fleet Assists Following Messina Earthquake," *The Sextant* (blog), NHHHC, last modified 3 Jan. 2015, <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/Recent/Article-View/Article/2686554/great-white-fleet-assists-following-messina-earthquake/>; "Rescue at Sea: Messina Earthquake," PBS, accessed 22 Feb. 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/rescue-messina-earthquake/>; *FRUS 1908*, 499.

20 As the Swettenham incident in January 1907 hints, the Navy had long provided relief where possible. Between 1798 and 1883, the Navy had conducted 62 relief actions. For more details on those actions see Long, *Gold Braid and Foreign Relations*, 420. For the seminal nature of the Navy's response to the Messina Earthquake, see John Darrell Sherwood, *A Global Force for Good: Sea Services Humanitarian Operations in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington, DC: NHHHC, 2023), 1.



Destroyed buildings in Messina, Italy, following the earthquake in January 1909. (NHHC, NH 1447)

the Russians two battleships and two cruisers, and the French two battleships and three torpedo boats.<sup>21</sup> The Americans sent warships and aid ships carrying extra doctors, hospital equipment, and other provisions.

On the 29th, the American Red Cross offered aid, appealing for funds and contributions from American citizens. Upon Italian acceptance, it cabled funds through the U.S. Department of State. It also chartered and dispatched a relief vessel on the 31st. All told, the American Red Cross contributed \$986,378.61 (~ \$32.4 million in 2023 dollars) in relief. Also, via the Department of State, the American *Christian Herald*, a private newspaper, sent \$35,000 (~ \$1.15 million in 2023 dollars).<sup>22</sup>

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21 "American Diplomat and His Wife Among Victims," *Los Angeles Herald*, 30 December 1908, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=LAH19081230.2.24>; "Great White Fleet Assists Following Messina Earthquake," NHHC, 3 Jan. 2015; *FRUS 1908*, 499–501.

22 *FRUS 1908*, 501; Wes Keat, "Italy Deeply Grateful for American Aid," *Los Angeles Herald*, 7 Jan. 1909, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=LAH19090107.2.8>; Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 7, 1909* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1914) 7–8.

Although some American monetary contributions arrived before the fleet, Navy contributions of supplies and medical assistance proved timely. The first American ship on the scene was USS *Scorpion* (PY-3), which arrived on 3 January 1909. Navy leadership also hurried the preparation of USS *Celtic* (AF-2), a supply ship that they had been readying to support the battleship fleet's return journey. They added a prefabricated hospital and then dispatched it on the 31st from New York. Moreover, President Roosevelt directed Rear Admiral Sperry to make haste to the scene of the disaster. Sperry discovered the orders when he reached the Suez Canal on 3 January. He then rushed two of his logistics vessels, the refrigerated supply ship USS *Culgoa* (AF-3) and the tender USS *Yankton* (a converted yacht), with extra medical personnel and supplies from the battleships, through the canal. *Culgoa* reached Messina on the 8th and *Yankton* the following day.<sup>23</sup> Among the rations, clothing, and other supplies on the two supply ships, Roosevelt effectively contributed \$300,000 (~ \$9.84 million in 2023 dollars) in government purchased materials. Fearing that those supplies would not be sufficient, nor arrive quickly enough, Roosevelt convinced Congress to authorize another \$500,000 (~ \$16.4 million in 2023 dollars) in relief funds and left their use completely at the discretion of the Italian government.<sup>24</sup> Other governments including the Japanese also contributed sizable funds.<sup>25</sup>

The Messina Earthquake presented Sperry with other issues. Originally, he had scheduled the First Division to visit Naples. However, with support from the American ambassador to Italy, Lloyd C. Griscom, he changed tack and rerouted the ships to Villefranche, France. Griscom had journeyed to Messina with the Italian prime minister to survey the crisis and to reorganize the devastated consulate. Sperry and the *Connecticut* arrived on the 9th and, having picked up Griscom, proceeded to Naples.

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23 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 146; "Atlantic Fleet Arrives Safely at Suez Canal," *Los Angeles Herald*, 4 Jan. 1909, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=LAH19090104.2.6>; Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads*, 279, 291.

24 Elting E. Morison ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, vol. 6 (Harvard University Press, 1952), 1459; Crawford, *The World Cruise of the Great White Fleet*, 81; Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads*, 251; Wes Keat, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=LAH19090103.2.19>.

25 Wes Keat, "Italy Deeply Grateful for American Aid," *Los Angeles Herald*, 7 Jan. 1909, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=LAH19090107.2.8>.

Sperry officially offered supplies to the mayor, Marquis Ferdinando del Carretto, to help with the refugees. Meanwhile, *Yankton* and fleet medical personnel continued assisting in Messina as *Culgoa* delivered supplies to impacted areas along the Calabrian Coast. *Celtic* completed the voyage from New York on the 19th and through coordination with the Italian Ministry of Marine established its prefabricated hospital quickly, having begun unloading a mere hour after arrival.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from supplies and medical support, the Navy also deployed personnel in search and rescue. *Scorpion* and *Yankton* sent parties ashore, but made little progress. The surviving vice consul Stuart D. Lupton estimated that it would take 200 men a week to reach the entombed American consul. On the 13th, Sperry rerouted USS *Illinois* (Battleship No. 7), which arrived on the 14th and sent sailors ashore to conduct the recovery. An enterprising party decided to tunnel through the debris and found the bodies quickly. With the mission accomplished, the *Illinois* rejoined its division mates in Malta for a diplomatic reception by the British.<sup>27</sup>

American relief efforts continued for greater than a month. *Celtic* remained on station and continued assisting the relief efforts. According to Marquis del Carretto, the American relief efforts eased the suffering of the populace and were greatly appreciated, including the tactful manner in which Sperry had offered supplies. Despite having received a personal thanks from King Victor Emmanuel III, Sperry thought the gift of stores something only accepted by the Italians to be polite. Nothing could be further from the truth as the Italian government in March 1909 sought to decorate the American officers and surgeons who rendered aid. Although Navy personnel were not able to accept those awards due to regulations, they were able to accept awards from the American Red Cross for their humanitarian assistance.<sup>28</sup>

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26 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 146–47; Ingersoll, “The Reminiscences of Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll,” 18–19.

27 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 147–48.

28 Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 148; Matthews, *Back to Hampton Roads*, 291; “Italian Red Cross Society Relief Ribbon for Earthquake Relief Efforts, Italy 1908,” NHHC, last modified 17 December 2018, <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/artifacts/uniforms-and-personal-equipment/awards/medals/red-cross-relief-ribbon-1909.html>.

The Messina relief expedition, like the overall public diplomacy of the world cruise, highlighted an expanded American role in the world and the image the United States wanted to foster. Americans knew they were a rising power at the time and were concerned with securing their place on the global stage. As a part of this trend, they were also very conscious of the nation's prestige.<sup>29</sup> Humanitarian acts that fit that national image were a distinct benefit and Americans gave generously. Italian Premier Giovanni Giolitti praised American relief actions as "outdistancing all others in sympathy and generosity."<sup>30</sup> In sequence, those events demonstrated an ongoing process begun in earnest with Roosevelt's mediation of the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905: a United States finding its place among the European system of powers and seeking to establish a reputation as a moral nation that sought to resolve tensions through diplomacy, while being unafraid of using force.

Although the Messina expedition had been an impromptu response, it was not a one-off. In the following years and decades, both the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy began undertaking humanitarian operations with growing frequency, notably, in the aftermath of World War I and the accompanying geopolitical tumult. It would not be until the Cold War, however, that the Navy finally developed an official doctrine in response to these repeated requests for disaster relief from higher authorities.<sup>31</sup> Even then, only in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terror attacks and the ensuing Global War on Terror did Navy thinkers begin to conceptualize humanitarian missions as another means of achieving strategic objectives. In essence, by practicing humanitarian activities, and even nation building, the Navy could produce stability in devastated regions, lessening direct threats to national security. Thus, in 2005 Navy leadership debated the worth of dedicated platforms and eventually elevated humanitarian assistance and disaster response to a core capability with attendant platforms to perform the mission. What had begun in 1908 as an extemporized response that was only possible due to the ongoing world cruise had evolved almost 100 years later into one of the six core capabilities of the Navy.<sup>32</sup>

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29 Hart, "The Voyage of the Great White Fleet, 1907–1909," i–v.

30 Keat, "Italy Deeply Grateful for American Aid," 1909, 1.

31 Sherwood, *A Global Force for Good*, 10–11.

32 Sherwood, *A Global Force for Good*, 9–12.



## QUESTIONS:

1. How has public diplomacy and Navy engagement changed since 1908–9?
2. How can one evaluate the impact of the various levels of naval engagement throughout the cruise?
3. Realizing that public messaging as we now practice it had not yet emerged, how would you have structured the various port visits to sell a message?



# 7

## LESSONS LEARNED

American leadership intended the world cruise to fulfill four functions: war preparation, diplomatic engagement, a boost for the Navy's reputation with the American public, and a justification for building more (all-big gun) battleships. The diplomatic, budgetary, and domestic aspects are the best known, as they are popularly remembered as the epitome of President Theodore Roosevelt's naval policy.<sup>1</sup> However, the war preparation angle was equally significant; it was a critical way for leadership to assess untested capabilities in an era of rapid and dramatic technological change. However, of the many potential lessons that could be drawn from the experience, leadership focused on a handful of technical ones, missing, misunderstanding, or even ignoring broader logistical problems. The reasons for this lie with contemporary debates over the design and utilization of American warships that the world cruise exposed to a popular audience.

Despite this failure of the Navy as an institution to learn from the world cruise, the fleet itself proved highly adaptable to events, keeping to its schedule despite logistical failures and meeting all of the humanitarian demands placed upon it. Additionally, officers on the cruise experienced a range of situations that broadened their skills and perspectives, impacting the direction of their later naval careers. Finally, the exercise highlighted timeless lessons for modern naval officers, including the need for close cooperation with allies, the enduring importance of fleet readiness, the significance of forward deployment as a tool of deterrence, and the usefulness of operational experimentation in learning how to deal with new ways of warfare.

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1 Ingersoll, "The Reminiscences of Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll," 18.

## FINALLY, TRUE EXPERIENCE?

Despite popular perceptions that the cruise was a diplomatic exercise, policymakers and naval leadership additionally sought to test the fleet and gain valuable operational experience that was sorely lacking in the steam era. Prior to these events, the Navy could rely only on Mahan's and the Naval War College's theoretical conceptions of operations and command. Although the foreign experiences of the Russo-Japanese War offered some implications in the areas of naval weaponry, fleet concentration, and torpedo boat tactics, the Russian experience was a tutorial on what *not* to do when fighting a distant enemy at sea. Nevertheless, the Navy heeded the chief message of Admiral Zinovi Rojestvenski, the Russian commander at Tsushima. In a brief interview, he emphatically told the American naval attaché to Russia in early 1906 that inadequate training was the chief culprit in his crushing defeat. This reinforced the desire of Roosevelt and the General Board of the Navy to train the fleet through a realistic trial.<sup>2</sup>

Yet even before the fleet reached the West Coast, domestic events intervened to focus attention on the technical characteristics of the battleships themselves rather than the fleet's personnel or the cruise's logistics. Simmering discontent within the officer corps over unsafe turret designs and improperly mounted belt armor (which had been remarked upon by the General Board a number of years earlier but ignored by the relevant bureaus) kept comparisons with foreign warships in the news throughout the trip.<sup>3</sup> To make matters worse, the health problems encountered by Rear Admiral Evans that led to his replacement in California highlighted the excessive age of many of the Navy's senior officers. Together, these problems cast the Navy as a force that was struggling to keep pace in the ongoing naval arms race despite recently completing a major expansion effort.<sup>4</sup> When the Atlantic Fleet returned to Hampton Roads in early 1909,

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2 Crumley, "The Naval Attaché System of the United States," 222–23; McCully, *The McCully Report*, 243–56.

3 Memo from the President of the General Board of the Navy to the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, "Pennsylvania: Forwards Lists of Suggested Improvements," October 7, 1907, Volume 5: March 4, 1907–March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

4 Letter from the President of the General Board of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy, April 19, 1907, Volume 5: March 4, 1907–March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board

the General Board responded to this poor publicity by orchestrating a series of highly publicized modifications to the vessels in question. This, combined with the broadly perceived success of the world cruise and an ongoing debate with the Army over the establishment of a naval base in the Philippines, overshadowed virtually all other problems.

To its credit, the General Board was not ignorant of this phenomenon, and it repeatedly attempted to capture the Secretary of the Navy's attention on the issue of the sea service's critical logistical deficiencies throughout 1908 and 1909.<sup>5</sup> But even with the highest-ranked American admiral ever—Admiral of the Navy Dewey—as president, the board could only offer advice to the Secretary of the Navy, who could freely accept or disregard what he received from them. Secretary of the Navy Victor H. Metcalf (in office December 1906 to November 1908) was ill for a significant portion of the world cruise, and his interim successor, Truman H. Newberry (November 1908 to March 1909), and permanent successor, George von Lengerke Meyer (March 1909 to March 1913), were more concerned with budgetary issues and the transition from the Roosevelt to Taft administrations. As a result, the board was able to encourage the construction of only a handful of colliers and other logistical ships before World War I, while the Secretary of the Navy remained firmly focused on the escalating dreadnought-based naval arms race. Logistics did receive *some* attention in the aftermath of that conflict, but major deficiencies remained all the way through 1938, with only the national defense tanker program of that year committing to fleet oilers capable of operating with Navy task forces at sea.<sup>6</sup> Like the original purchase of merchant colliers

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Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 62–66, 82–83, 160–63; Robinson, “The Reminiscences of Samuel Murray Robinson,” 6.

5 Letter from the President of the General Board of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy, October 1, 1908, Volume 5: March 4, 1907 – March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC; Letter from the President of the General Board of the Navy to the Chief Constructor of the Navy, “Changes in turrets, magazines, etc., of ships in commission, in accordance with recommendations contained in report of Special Turret Board, etc.,” February 3, 1909, Volume 5: March 4, 1907–March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC; Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, 161–63.

6 Wildenberg, *Gray Steel and Black Oil*, 74–82, 93–100.

in 1898 after the Spanish-American War had begun, this program was also created too late to prevent major logistical challenges for the first two years of the Navy's operations in the Pacific War. This cycle of belated attempts to expand the Navy's inventory of logistical vessels has continued unabated to the present day, and illustrates the shortcomings of the service as a learning organization.<sup>7</sup>

## INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES

Although the institutional lessons drawn from the world cruise were limited in scope, the experience made a significant and enduring impression upon the individuals who made the journey. This was not one of the objectives that Roosevelt or the General Board set out to achieve, but the experience nevertheless proved formative for some of the men who would go on to lead the Navy in World War II. One of the foremost examples is Samuel Murray Robinson, a passed midshipman (recent Naval Academy graduate) in 1907.<sup>8</sup>



Vice Admiral Samuel Murray Robinson.  
(National Archives and Records Administration, NHHHC 80-G-424359)

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7 Luebke, Francis, and Haley, *Contested Logistics*, ix, 1–13, 78–81.

8 Robinson, "The Reminiscences of Samuel Murray Robinson," 7.

When ordered aboard USS *Vermont* (Battleship No. 20) shortly before the journey, Robinson was nurturing an interest in the rapidly developing field of fire control. Adamant that the smoke from the various guns on his pre-dreadnought battleship was serving as a major detriment to accuracy, he both managed to increase the rate of fire of the six-inch battery and persuaded *Vermont's* gunnery officer to fire every gun of each caliber in unified salvos. Despite some opposition, his ideas produced results. By the time the fleet reached Manila, *Vermont* was consistently achieving high accuracy rates in gunnery exercises.<sup>9</sup>

Yet rather than anchoring Robinson's career as a gunnery expert, the prolonged and consistent experience with this practice—as well as *Vermont's* uncomfortable encounter with a typhoon while at anchor in Manila—led to his realization, six years after deciding to join the Navy, that he was fascinated by engineering. When the fleet returned to Hampton Roads, Robinson therefore decided to focus his career on propulsion engineering. As a result, he became one of the first students in the engineering postgraduate course at the U.S. Naval Academy, which eventually developed into the Naval Postgraduate School.<sup>10</sup>

Once Robinson had become a dedicated engineer, the interwar period saw him posted to a series of increasingly important positions in that field, many with the Bureau of Engineering. Eventually, he was promoted to rear admiral and became chief of that organization (and de facto chief engineer of the Navy) twice: 1931–35 and 1939–42.<sup>11</sup> At that point, Robinson was promoted to vice admiral and placed in charge of the new Office of Procurement and Materiel, a position that he occupied until the end of World War II. In that office, Robinson was entrusted with sorting out the Navy's tangled web of wartime needs by serving as the final adjudicator for all material demands by the various bureaus.<sup>12</sup> In this role, he was critical to the American war effort—and he landed there as a direct result of his time on the world cruise.

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9 Robinson, "The Reminiscences of Samuel Murray Robinson," 7–10.

10 Robinson, "The Reminiscences of Samuel Murray Robinson," 7–10.

11 Robinson, "The Reminiscences of Samuel Murray Robinson," 16–24.

12 Robinson, "The Reminiscences of Samuel Murray Robinson," 24–36.

Robinson's experience is an unusually powerful example of the cruise's influence, but not entirely unique. Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey served aboard USS *Kansas* (Battleship No. 21) as an ensign throughout the world cruise, during which he was charged with ensuring the good behavior of the enlisted while ashore and also rode out the same typhoon at sea that Robinson encountered at anchor in Manila. Admiral Henry Kent Hewitt, who eventually commanded U.S. amphibious forces in the Mediterranean during World War II, discovered aboard USS *Missouri* (Battleship No. 11) that he had a flair for navigation and signaling, which kept him on the bridge for most of the cruise. For his part, Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll, who served as Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet for the bulk of World War II, found from his perspective aboard USS *Connecticut* that the fleet gained critical experience in logistics even if these matters were not generally discussed by outside sources. The world cruise was a formative experience for an entire generation of naval officers and enlisted men, and it inevitably shaped their views of the world and their service's place within it.<sup>13</sup>

## **DOES THE WORLD CRUISE STILL MATTER?**

The political and cultural reality of the world cruise was radically different from ours. However, four topical areas and their implications remain relevant: the importance of inter- and intra-governmental communication, the necessity of "readiness," the interconnectedness of war preparations and peace, and the requisite need to confirm the theory behind new weapons and platforms through experimentation. Together, these subjects demonstrate the need for the Navy to be a learning organization. Exercises like the world cruise are important, but only if you learn from them—which the Navy clearly did not in the case of its logistical problems.

The first enduring lesson of the world cruise is that its successes and failures were predicated upon the Navy's coordination with regional powers in conjunction with the Department of State. The limited range of the Atlantic Fleet's warships and deficiencies of the Navy's colliers forced the service to

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<sup>13</sup> Hewitt, "The Reminiscences of Admiral H. Kent Hewitt," 42–54; Ingersoll, "The Reminiscences of Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll," 17–23.



contract civilian companies for fuel and supplies after the fleet departed Rio de Janeiro. When this system failed as well, continuing the cruise required the substantial efforts of naval leaders and diplomats to secure ad hoc access to foreign supplies. Although the scale of need was unprecedented in the American experience, the Navy had a long tradition of serving as de facto American envoys. This tradition, and coordination with the Department of State, lent the Navy a flexibility that allowed it to solve its logistical problems forward rather than await solutions from the continental United States. This has clear relevance to current Navy practice.

The second lesson of the world cruise is that the concept of fleet “readiness” was as important then as it is today. As Rear Admiral Albert P. Niblack stated in 1920, “we can not improvise a Navy,” and thus the Navy must always be ready to act.<sup>14</sup> While the war scare between the United States and Japan may have catalyzed their actions, President Roosevelt and Navy leaders intended the world cruise to uncover flaws and raise the Navy’s readiness to operate as a fleet. Roosevelt and the General Board feared, drawing from the example of the Battle of Tsushima, that the American fleet would be too inexperienced and too worn to fight a potential peer competitor after a long voyage. The rear admirals in command of the world cruise used constant formation maneuvers, mental exercises, and gunnery practice to hone their operating capabilities. Navy leaders designed the legs of the cruise to incorporate the annual gunnery practices as culminations and readiness tests in an era of untested and unprecedented technical change.

While readiness applies to all naval activities, fleet preparedness became a major policy objective under the Roosevelt administration, often identified with Roosevelt’s famous line, “speak softly and carry a big stick.”<sup>15</sup> This is the third takeaway from the Great White Fleet’s experience: that readiness and forward presence can serve as tools of deterrence. President Roosevelt and Navy leadership used the cruise’s first leg to prac-

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14 The full quote is: “A navy is not efficient unless it is always on a tentative war footing, for when war comes you can not improvise a navy. We have never done anything else than improvise an army.” A. P. Niblack, *The History and Aims of the Office of Naval Intelligence* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), 11.

15 This line was later shortened to “Big Stick” diplomacy, and was associated with Roosevelt beginning in 1900.

tice and to signal to other great powers that they were ready for war. By the time the fleet was to depart, the war scare between the United States and Japan had already ended. However, in many ports the fleet visited, foreign warships were present to gather intelligence, with the most conspicuous example being the presence of the British cruiser HMS *Sappho* in Punta Arenas, Chile. The fleet's good performance and appearance conveyed to those observers the American preparedness for war. Moreover, the interactions between sailors and hosts once the fleet reached Japan provided unique opportunities for public diplomacy to further deescalate tensions stemming from the ongoing discriminatory problems in California.

The employment of the Navy as a peacemaker was also furthered by the service's response to the December 1908 earthquake centered on the Strait of Messina. This was the largest humanitarian action conducted by the Navy up to that time. The goodwill diversion of the Atlantic Fleet's warships, the transfer of its supplies, and the landing of sailors to help in the search for survivors all furthered the cruise and the service's mission by protecting lives and engendering goodwill in the population of a foreign power. This is a valuable lesson that the Navy *has* clearly learned with time.

Finally, the world cruise displayed how the Navy can utilize practical experience to get a handle on new approaches to warfare like those heralded by *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* and the torpedo-boat destroyer. Prior to the world cruise, Mahan in the United States and the *Jeune École* in France had theorized how modern naval wars would be fought. But aside from the Battle of Tsushima in 1905, these opposing theories emphasizing expensive battleships or comparatively inexpensive commerce raiders and torpedo craft remain untried. Although the United States had leaned toward a Mahanian battleship fleet, in the wake of the surprise appearance of torpedo-armed Spanish destroyers in Cuba in 1898, it became clear that practical experience in dealing with both the battleship and torpedo threat was necessary.<sup>16</sup>

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16 McCully, *The McCully Report*, 245–47.



Battleships of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet being greeted and entering Sydney Harbor, Australia, 20 August 1908. (NHHC, NH 82985-KN).

The world cruise satisfied these needs. The battleship fleet and the destroyer flotilla that accompanied it around South America demonstrated the difficulties of moving both large and small vessels long distances. It also provided the Navy with valuable experience in doing so. Their separate itineraries emphasized the need for larger oceangoing escort vessels, whose designs had been hotly debated since 1903 and that were quickly built after 1908.<sup>17</sup> In the end, these exercises made it clear to the Navy that it had little to fear from surprise attacks by Japanese torpedo boats as far from their home ports as South America despite sensationalist warnings.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, such experience was critical to readiness; the Atlantic Fleet's battleships received a crash course in at-sea maintenance and repair, and the torpedo boat flotilla's cruise also helped the Navy understand how it

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17 The *Smith*-class destroyers commissioned beginning in 1909 displaced 700 long tons unloaded, possessed a raised forecastle, and had double the coal capacity of the *Truxtun* class, making them far better oceangoing vessels than their predecessors. Friedman, *U.S. Destroyers*, 21.

18 Epstein, *Torpedo*, 18–28; Memo from the President of the General Board of the Navy to the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, April 7, 1908, Volume 5: March 4, 1907–March 24, 1909, box 2, General Board Letterbooks, RG 80, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

might parry torpedo ambushes far from home. In short, the Navy best divines how to deal with new threats by being a learning organization; theory must be supported with both practice and simulation.

In the end, the world cruise was undertaken for several reasons, the motivations for many of which remain just as valid today. As the geopolitical landscape shifts back toward a bi- or multi-polar environment, the world cruise of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet only becomes more relevant to the modern-day Navy, as does the need for the service to be a learning organization. The Navy must not only theorize and practice, but learn from both what does and what does not work. Only then can it truly be prepared for the future.

## QUESTIONS:

1. How can the Navy avoid the problem of success obscuring failure?
2. What determines which “lessons learned” are heard and which are not?
3. How is naval diplomacy used today as compared to during the time of the world cruise?



## FURTHER READING

There is a considerable amount of scholarship concerning various aspects of the context of the world cruise. Those aspects range from works on war planning to maritime diplomacy to organizational history and so forth. The following list of books provides a starting point for more information:

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