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Introduction

Union Square, San Francisco, 1903. Theodore Roosevelt had the place packed. Thousands had come to witness his dedication of the new "Dewey Monument": a column celebrating the titular George Dewey's victory over the Spanish at Manila Bay (1898). Beyond its military result (a lopsided affair in which the US squadron suffered only one fatality), the battle, Roosevelt noted, "showed once and for all that America had taken our position on the Pacific." Atop the column, Nike, goddess of victory, carried both a wreath and a trident – the latter apparently on loan from Poseidon. For anyone missing the symbolism, Roosevelt made the connection between naval power and victory explicit. Dewey's success at Manila was possible because "those who went before us had the wisdom to make ready for the victory" by investing in the peacetime construction of a modern, industrial fleet: the aptly named United States "New Navy." "In 1882," Roosevelt continued, "our navy was a shame and disgrace to the country … the ships and guns were as antiquated as if they had been the galleys of Alcibiades."[1] That changed – dramatically – in the intervening decades. The Old Navy's wooden hulls were broken up and steel New Navy ships built from scratch. Armed with vessels such as USS *Olympia*, Dewey had the hardware to make real all that *fin-de-siècle* puffery about destinies, doors, and doctrines. More naval building was necessary and logical; just look at what the United States Navy (USN) had already achieved in the War of 1898! In this respect, Roosevelt's 1903 commemoration was a prolog to the Great White Fleet's world cruise (1907), the battleships at Tokyo Bay (1945), and the enduring US dominance over the global commons of the sea, air, space, and cyberspace – for now.

This book explores the origins of the steel, steam-powered "New Navy" Dewey took to Manila. Unlike existing accounts, it does so by stressing the interactive relationships between the US, its post-Civil War navy (indeed navies "Old" and "New"), and several industrial naval wars and races around the Pacific in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Generally, shifting our perspective to the Pacific World allows for a better understanding of how relatively weak militaries outside of

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the North Atlantic influenced maritime development during a period of technological flux and accelerating globalization. More particularly, "looking outward" from the edges of the US Empire in California suggests a new argument for a long-standing question.[2] In the absence of overt hostilities or new "great power" rivals, what sparked the transformation of the US "Old Navy" from an assortment of wooden ships so archaic they inspired ridicule (notably from Roosevelt) into the cruisers, torpedo boats, and battleships that defeated Spain in 1898?

Historians who study the New Navy have offered a diverse set of explanations about its origins – discussed in greater detail in Section I.4. Those who focus on the international environment have long cohered into two broad camps. Some, such as Roosevelt, portray the building of the New Navy as farsighted preparation for transoceanic war and empire c. 1898 (the "wisdom to make ready for the victory").[3] More recent scholars have framed US naval modernization as a defensive and competitive reorientation against European threats to the Atlantic Coast and Caribbean.[4] These are compelling but incomplete arguments.

By shifting regional perspective, this book presents the early years (c. 1882–1897) of the US New Navy as neither imperial *preparation*, nor a *defense* against "great power" fleets, but rather as a *reaction* to the Pacific and its "newly made navies": a general type of small, industrial fleet built from little or no existing inventory and leveraging technological innovations. The narrative charts a wave of technology and knowledge flowing out from the US after the Civil War (1861–1865), catalyzing naval development in Chile, Japan, Peru, and China, and then flowing back by the 1880s as something dangerously destabilizing: an anxious sense that the US "Old Navy" was falling behind industrial newly made navies in the Pacific. Observations of Pacific wars created a widespread sense of physical and cultural insecurity (above all in California) that US navalists – advocates of peacetime naval expansion – seized on as their first, best argument for funding; an insecurity that by the 1890s also motivated naval deployments against regional competitors like Chile and Japan. Before it was a battleship-dominated "great power" force, the US New Navy was a race with Pacific rivals – newly made navies in their own right – with nothing less than physical security and civilizational superiority on the line.

I.1 A New Navy, among the Pacific's Newly Made Navies

During what was supposedly a "century of peace," there are a surprising number of wars to investigate across an ocean that was anything but Pacific.[5] While in the Atlantic naval battles were "few and far between,"

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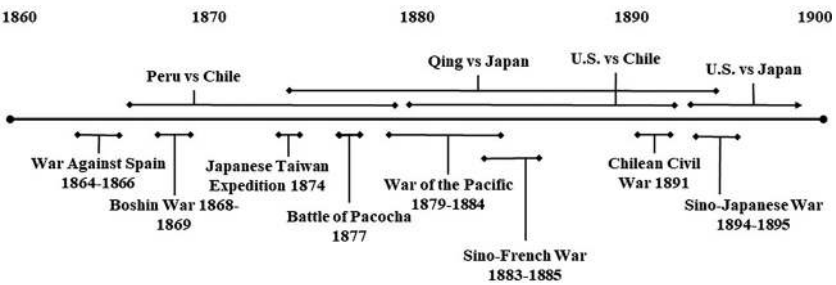

Figure I.1 Pacific wars and naval races (1864–1895)

in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a nearly continuous series of industrial naval races and conflicts played out in waters from Patagonia to Guangdong (Figure I.1).[6]

Even before the conclusion of the US Civil War (1861–1865), there was conflict on the Pacific slope between Chile, Peru, and Spain (1864–1866). Two years later, in Japan, Meiji revolutionaries consolidated national authority through the Boshin War and a naval expedition to Hokkaido (1868–1869). In 1874, Japanese leaders ordered a punitive expedition against Taiwan, catalyzing a naval race with the Qing Empire. In 1877, a rebellion in Peru led to a clash with the Royal Navy at the Battle of Pacocha. Shortly thereafter, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile fought the War of the Pacific (1879–1884) over their mutual frontier. Contemporaneously, across the Pacific, China and France clashed in the Sino-French War (1883–1885). In 1891, Chile fought a civil war. Three years later, the Sino-Japanese War established a new regional order in Northeast Asia (1894–1895). Hot war fought with industrial naval weapons was a more or less constant feature of the late nineteenth century not-so Pacific World.

To date, the Pacific's wars and the small but sophisticated navies that waged them are usually seen as peripheral to US (and global) naval development.[7] The *real* engine(s) of the "American Naval Revolution" in the 1880s and 1890s, the consensus holds, were trends in the industrial North Atlantic: the unification of Germany, British threats to the Caribbean Basin, US congressional politics, increased domestic steel production, the pursuit of overseas markets, and so on. Far removed from the centers of economic productivity, it seemed unlikely that conflicts once dismissed as the "Pigtail War" (Sino-Japanese War, 1894–1895) or "Guano War" (War of the Pacific, 1879–1884) could explain something as fundamental as the US New Navy or the force of

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"navalism" – the belief in the necessity of a large, peacetime battlefleet – that underwrote it.[8] That said, as scholars and policymakers increasingly (re)emphasize the United States as no "mere Atlantic nation," events in the Pacific seem ripe for reassessment.[9] Stipulating the overall importance of US domestic forces and "great power" Atlantic politics, this book argues that wars across an ocean Herman Melville called the "tide-beating heart of earth" affected the case for US naval expansion in underappreciated but critical ways.[10]

In the case of the US "New Navy" there are at least three reasons to marginalize Europe and stress coincident developments in Asia and the Americas. For a start, in the 1870s and 1880s it did not take a "great power" to challenge the almost astonishingly weak USN; regional, newly made navies in the Pacific were more than enough. Today, most Americans have grown so accustomed to maintaining "a navy second to none" that it takes some effort to imagine the "Old Navy" and its post-Civil War "demobilization and decrepitude."[11] After 1865, USN ships literally rusted or rotted away as Congress slashed budgets and a sclerotic bureaucracy ate up resources (Figure I.2). As often as not, international rankings of "great power" navies simply omitted the United States.[12] In 1887, as US New Navy reforms got underway in earnest, writers at the Chilean *Revista de Marina* could still dismiss the

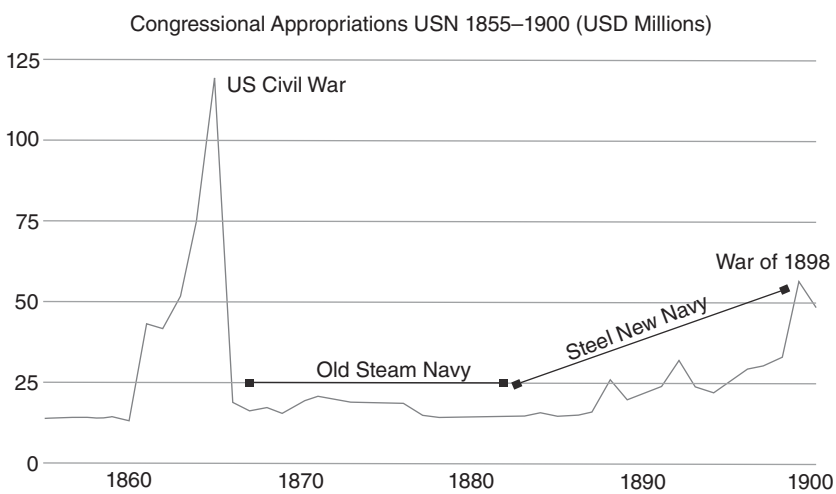

Figure I.2 US naval expenditures (1855–1900)
Source: "Naval Appropriation Laws," *Navy Yearbook* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 547. Also: *Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Navy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

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"offensive and defensive power" of the USN as inferior to the fleets of Japan, Chile, China, and Argentina.[13] That weakness meant that small wars waged by Pacific navies could (and did) have big consequences for the United States as it transitioned from a wooden "Old Navy" to a steel "New" one. Indeed, when seen regionally, the US New Navy becomes one variant competing for influence and security among several, newly made navies building industrial naval power on the fly. Comparisons and intersections between the particular (proper noun US New Navy) and this general type (newly made navies in Peru, China, Chile, and Japan) run throughout the book.

As importantly, the Pacific's wars occurred in and around the chief target of US expansion in the late nineteenth century – the leading edge of "Manifest Destiny" or the "New Empire" of Latin America and the western Pacific.[14] After incorporating the Oregon Territory and California, US commercial interests, military planners, and politicians increasingly saw the Pacific not as an annex to Atlantic developments but rather, in William H. Seward's words, "the chief theater of events in the world's great hereafter."[15] In much the same way the historian Matthew Karp detected a Southern variant of navalism in the antebellum United States – one designed to promote and protect slavery – concerns on the Pacific coast shaped a regionally specific case for US naval building in 1880s: An argument focused not on preparing for a "great power" conflict with Germany or Great Britain but rather soothing anxiety about the proliferation of industrial power across small, newly made navies in the Pacific.[16]

Finally, the comparative peripherality of the Pacific is incongruous with the experiences of many of the New Navy's intellectual leaders. After the US Civil War, a glut of ex-officers, inventors, and advisers traveled out into the Pacific World, bringing with them new technologies and tactics. Alfred Thayer Mahan – the lead protagonist of the global turn toward navalism – was actually in theater for portions of the Boshin War (1868–1869) and the War of the Pacific (1879–1884).[17] He hatched the idea for *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* in Lima while war still smoldered in the Andes.[18] Theodorus B. Mason, the future head of US naval intelligence, and William S. Sims, Mahan's chief rival among USN intellectuals, documented battle damage to Peruvian and Chinese warships, respectively. These men, and many like them, manifest on a personal level some of the entanglements between the Pacific's wars and US naval development. What follows is an argument about those entanglements: about how the diffusion and adaptation of naval technologies in the Pacific shaped the first years of the New Navy and with it the emergence of the United States as a world power.

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I.2 Major Themes

Four consistent themes emerge: demand, testing, threat, and opportunism. First, in the absence of major European wars, Pacific naval programs created demand for surplus and experimental weapons. As leaders from Peru to China attempted to build their own newly made navies, they drove production and innovation in the North Atlantic – above all the United States. The first impetus came immediately after the US Civil War as Confederate *materiel* and expertise spread across the Pacific. The torpedo boat commander Charles Read worked as an adviser in Chile; Japanese agents purchased the Confederate ironclad CSS *Stonewall*; the Chinese emissary Zhi Gang (志剛) studied US warships in Boston Harbor as a lesson for Qing naval reform.[19] These lessons and tools were employed in what Qing reformers called "self-strengthening" (自强) – building military and economic capacity to resist North Atlantic imperialism – in two overlapping patterns. Either a *symmetrical* acquisition of ships and artillery designed to compete ship-for-ship with the dominant state in the regional or international system (e.g., the Qing efforts to acquire or build "strong ships and powerful cannon" [船坚炮利]).[20] Or else *asymmetrically* by disrupting legacy platforms through the adoption or adaptation of new technologies (i.e., the torpedo as a means to sink armored warships). As one result of the latter pattern, many prototypical advances such as the torpedo boat and the protected cruiser were spearheaded by Pacific newly made navies hoping to capitalize on "disruptive" innovations during an era of "transcendental" and "unceasing" (日新月异) technological change.[21]

Second, war in the Pacific served as an operational laboratory for naval weapons such as ironclads, torpedoes, electrical apparatuses, and even submarines. Toward such empirical ends, the North Atlantic remained unhelpfully irenic.[22] Fortunately, if only for the navalist set, examples of "actual warfare" abounded across what the British historian (and United States Naval Institute honoree) William Laird Clowes called "hot and well-fought naval wars" from Callao (1866) to Weihaiwei (1895).[23] Even "scanty indications" from such engagements, Mahan contended, were "worth much more than the most carefully arranged programme" of study or war-gaming.[24] In 1879, no less than the first chief of the US Office of Naval Intelligence, Theodorus Mason, recorded a "careful and technical description" of battle damage to a Peruvian ironclad.[25] Fifteen years later, William Sims, one of the New Navy's key innovators, made similar observations of Chinese and Japanese vessels after the battle of Weihaiwei.[26] Like their counterparts in other federal departments, the "Progressives in Navy Blue" needed data with which to make policy and

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found a ready supply of natural experiments in the Pacific.[27] The results were often contradictory, or bent through existing biases, but the Pacific disproportionately provided the raw evidence for navalist debate in the United States.

Third, the news these observers brought back created a great deal of anxiety, nowhere more so than on the comparatively isolated coast of California. Technological proliferation enabled Pacific newly made navies to threaten US territory and ambition; what the Chilean diplomat Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna called "the continual and little equitable division of the Pacific."[28] That sounds as incredible today as it was obvious to contemporaries. The onetime Secretary of the Navy John Long went so far as to rue that in 1882, the warships of "Little Chile" could have attacked San Francisco "and the United States would have been unable to repel them."[29] A decade later, warnings about Japan's threat to Hawaii echoed Long's concerns about Chile nearly word for word.

Material threats, while real enough, were probably most dangerous to assumptions about "Anglo-Saxonism" or what Mahan approvingly referred to as "race patriotism": the belief in the innate superiority of white, Anglophone peoples.[30] Most historians have dismissed all this as cynical threat exaggeration by naval officers, but in a period that reified power into "civilizational" standing, unfavorable comparisons between the Old Navy and Pacific newly made navies stung keenly and sincerely.[31] After all, as the founder of the US Naval War College Stephen Luce argued in 1883, "war led the way to civilization."[32] In his foundational study of arms racing, Samuel Huntington argued that the US "New Navy" was "apparently unrelated to the actions of any other power."[33] In fact, the first phase of expansion – building a handful of small, steel warships – was an explicit race to match power and prestige in the Pacific.

Lastly, these challenges were a crisis *and* opportunity for US navalists – especially on the West Coast. Real threats were sensationalized by men such as Mahan, Henry Cabot Lodge, and Theodore Roosevelt into a cultural force that in the 1880s first shook loose the inertia of Old Navy demobilization. Long before twentieth-century municipalities recruited military bases to spur economic development in "Fortress California," Pacific politicians and newspapers saw regional threats as a rationale for federally financed defenses.[34] The "Yankees" of South America (Chile) and Asia (Japan) may never have been existential dangers to the United States, but the relative standing of the Chilean and Japanese (and to a lesser extent Peruvian and Chinese) newly made navies vis-à-vis the US Old Navy provided an argument for peacetime military investment.[35] Novels forecasted the invasion of the United States by Chinese,

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Japanese, and Chilean warships.[36] Congressmen browbeat their opponents with examples of US inferiority. Californian journalists savaged San Francisco's vulnerability to "little" Chile and Japan. In this sense, Pacific wars had an unusual influence: the ability to shame US institutions and politicians into action. Violence in the Pacific would, as Mahan wrote, "tickle the national vanity" of a nation in which "army and navy affairs are little regarded."[37] Ironically, then, the public campaign to sell the peacetime US New Navy hinged on the creative mobilization of actual war in the Pacific.

I.3 Sources and Methods: A *Transwar* History of the Pacific

The Pacific's wars were far-flung; so too are the sources. National archives in the US, UK, Chile, and Peru figure prominently, as documents from military institutions such as the US Naval War College and the Chilean Museo Marítimo Nacional. Corporate records and personal papers offer insights as well. For the Qing Empire, I have relied on published multivolume compilations of government documents as well as digital reproductions of vernacular newspapers, most notably *Shenbao* (申报): a periodical owned by British residents in Shanghai but nonetheless a useful window onto late Qing China.[38] Official records are supplemented by novels, memoirs, and pieces of visual culture.

It is a diverse collection. To make sense of it, I have applied the tools of international and new military history. Adjacent to "transimperial" history, these methods make for what might be called a *transwar* approach: an analysis linking together discrete conflicts, spilling past the conventional thematic, spatial, and temporal framings of war.[39] The term transwar is usually applied to Japan (or more recently Asia) to look for trends across the dividing line of 1945, but its potential ranges further afield.[40] For example, the US Civil War, in traditional accounts, was fought primarily within the continental United States between 1861 and 1865. A transwar perspective would (for a start) follow that conflict's transnational articulations with European shipyards and foreign cotton markets, as well as its postwar (or trans-temporal) connections with South American plantation economies, militaries, and eventually wars. For their part, Californians tended to lump the Pacific's wars together into a generation-long transwar experience, tracing developments from one conflict to another.

This project is "international" in that, like all studies of interstate conflict or oceans, it requires the researcher to transcend national boundaries and with them the blinders of the "logo-map."[41] Describing a war

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involving a border (and most do) as "transnational" is redundant, hence my preference for the term transwar. By viewing the Pacific as a coherent unit of analysis, I have also emphasized the erasure of geographic containers erected by area studies programs and military bureaucracies which divide the Pacific into Latin America, East Asia, North America, etc. In the same way Fernand Braudel saw the Mediterranean as an integral whole, the nineteenth-century Pacific was less a barrier between continents than a "freeway" connecting them.[42] That said, having opened the lens of analysis onto the Pacific one is left with the largest geographic feature on earth. To manage it, I have elected to focus on regional states and (mostly) exclude European warships or the growing colonial empires they supported. Stories of "great power" navies, the carving up of China, and the scramble for the Pacific are available elsewhere. The protagonists here are small or medium-sized states – what Immanuel Wallerstein described as "semi-peripheral" – that are too often obscured by interest in big powers and the big navies they wielded.[43] In the 1880s and 1890s these were the relevant peers against which the US New Navy had to measure up.

For an analysis of nineteenth-century naval war this level of oceanic and intermediate analysis has two clear advantages. First, it encourages engagement with a set of middle powers which are poorly captured by the dominant "Age of Empire" narratives.[44] Historians of the period typically describe a "great divergence" of industrial and military power in the late nineteenth century between a set of colonizing "haves" and colonized "have-nots."[45] "The West and the Rest," as Niall Ferguson put it.[46] The Japanese Empire has always been an anomaly because of how uneasily it fits into this division, but it was hardly unique.[47] At different points, Chile, the Qing Empire, Peru, and even the Confederacy occupied similar positions as "semi-peripheral" states and empires outside of the North Atlantic with considerable administrative and naval forces but without robust industrial economies.[48] Falling outside the clean bifurcation of "weak" or "strong" this sort of intermediate power – what US officials sometimes labeled as "semi-barbarian," "half-civilized," or "semi-civilized" – was the norm among newly made navies in the Pacific.[49] Second, and by close association, economic and geographic similarities between these states shaped their ability to organize naval forces, making them a compelling subject for comparative and transnational study. In much the same way the "imperial turn" has shed light on the United States as an empire "among empires" so too does a transwar history of the Pacific suggest that the US New Navy was one among several (inter)related examples of newly made navies.[50]

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Most often, the actors who engaged with these developments were government officials from the US and Pacific states. It is a familiar set of diplomats and bureaucrats, but when staged in transwar context surprises abound. Among many intrigues, one finds the USN officer Robert Shufeldt loaning out his advice to the Chinese reformer Li Hongzhang and the Peruvian naval diplomat Aurelio Garcia y Garcia saber-rattling in Liverpool and Tokyo.[51] Arms-makers and innovators are common figures as well, be they corporations such as Armstrong or individual engineers, for example John Lay, peddling torpedoes from Lima to Tianjin. US domestic views are accessed primarily through congressional records and press reports, alongside the artists and propagandists who worked to market the New Navy to the public.

I.4 Implications

Most directly, this project engages the history of the US New Navy and its origins. The past hundred years have generated a small library of causal interpretations for nineteenth-century US naval expansion. There have been realists (emphasizing German unification and/or the British threat to a future Panama Canal) and economic historians (interested in the navy as a tool to absorb surplus domestic steel and secure markets overseas) as well as scholars of domestic (Congress) and institutional politics (most pointing to the advocacy of the US Naval Institute and Naval War College).[52] Accounts of specific individuals, squadrons, or weapons are common as well.[53] In the wake of the cultural turn, historians have favored ideological (navalism and progressivism) and social (sentiments about technologies and gendered anxieties, among others) forces.[54] In the aggregate, it makes for a convincing set of explanations, albeit one that lists toward the North Atlantic.

This project rejects none of these approaches and instead hopes to expand on them by more fully considering the Pacific. It is less "revision" than a geographic and temporal "reframing" of the New Navy. For instance, the defense of Panama against European competitors clearly mattered a great deal to US navalists, but the canal was valuable to the United States only inasmuch as it linked the Mississippi to the Pacific.[55] For another example, Dirk Bonker's *Militarism in a Global Age* ably traced strands of navalist ideology in the United States, Britain, and Germany.[56] A global perspective on this globalizing age, however, would have to account for the theorists in Chile, China, Peru, Japan, and beyond who produced their own ideas about naval war. Five years before Mahan published *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, the inaugural issue of the Chilean *Revista de Marina* proclaimed, "*He who controls the*

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