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The Mask of Command

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that describe the boundaries between initial conditions or states leading to chaotically different outcomes. Fractals often have an ethereal beauty of their own as Gleick illustrates with some elegant computer generated pictures in his book.

The significance of fractals lies in their repetitiveness at smaller and smaller scales—as the resolution increases, the same pattern appears again and again, albeit in smaller size. In mammals, blood vessels, nerves, and bronchi branch and branch again in fractal like ways. Some geneticists have speculated that the DNA code may contain a simple fractal key for these rather than a specific guide for each branch and junction.

Another intriguing fractal that may have some naval application is the Cantor set. Imagine a line of fixed length, remove the middle third, and then remove the middle third of each of the remaining thirds. If this process is continued infinitely, it will generate “a strange dust of points, arranged in clusters, infinitely many yet infinitely sparse.” As it happens, study of this fractal set has revealed some important insights into the occurrence and behavior of errors in the transmission of digital information.

Turbulence has frustrated mathematicians, physicists, and engineers for centuries. Why should the orderly flow of air over a wing or water in a pipe suddenly change to swirling, turbulent instability? Why does a flag flap continuously rather than holding a steady position in the breeze? On his

deathbed, the great physicist Heisenberg is supposed to have said that he would have two questions for God: “Why relativity and why turbulence? He then said: “I really think He will have an answer only to the first question.”

Gleick describes some simple but immaculate experiments by Libchaber and his colleagues to examine the onset of turbulent flow. The mathematics of chaos gave them new insight into the problem and can be expected to lead to more efficient designs for such practical things as wings and hydraulic systems.

The mathematics of chaos is an unusual subject for students, alumni and friends of the Naval War College to pursue, but it is well worth the reading. The subject has fascinating potential for research in international and military affairs. Certainly the impact of the mathematics of chaos on turbulent flow and weather will be of eventual use to planners of naval warfare. One could happily speculate on the parallels between the green and white earth solutions and the fragility of the difference between peace and war or even the difference between winning and losing a battle!

FRANK C. MAHNCKE
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Keegan, John. *The Mask of Command*.
New York: Viking, 1987. 368pp.
\$18.95

John Keegan's *Mask of Command*, a study of Alexander, Wellington,

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Grant, and Hitler, is enlightening but not as captivating as his earlier work, *The Face of Battle*. In *The Mask of Command* Keegan describes the background, nature, and "routine" of each man in the context of his battles. He then analyzes in depth how each one succeeded or failed, and sums up with five "imperatives" necessary for successful command: kinship; prescription (or inspiration); sanction; action (that is, recognizing or knowing what to do and doing it); and personal example.

Of the four commanders, Grant emerges remarkably well. This is surprising because he rose from the discouraging circumstances of being penniless and unemployed just prior to the war, to become a remarkable commander. He also had a well-developed democratic philosophy and a remarkable respect for the Constitution. He was a compelling writer as well; his *Personal Memoirs* are still in print. His democratic philosophy was appealing and may have been the source of his leadership: "Grant fought for his country not because birth made him its subject, but because he judged its cause just."

The other three fare less well. Hitler, while morbidly fascinating, lost his war and, therefore, is difficult to compare with the others who were successful. Alexander and Wellington, while enormous historical figures, have already been surveyed at length by others.

The book examines various aspects of war. The movement of generals farther and farther from the

forward edge of the battle area is chronicled in each commander's case until it reaches its apotheosis in Hitler, who centralized command in a bunker far from the front and far from his people. Keegan also summarizes the change in weapons from edged to musket to rifle to artillery to tank. "War is progressive," as Grant said. This evolution of weapons is depicted as the cause of the increasing remoteness and the diminishing "heroism" of the commanders involved.

One may quarrel with the choice of persons selected, but, except for Hitler, who is a negative example, they are representative for the purposes of Keegan's survey. Hitler fought for an unjust cause and either failed to realize that his war could not be won, or realized it but failed to act accordingly. It might be interesting to compare Nelson or Nimitz with the others. Naval commanders generally have not been looked upon as heroic or even charismatic. Understatements such as "there seems to be something wrong with our bloody ships today" is their currency. The results of poor preparation, tactics, or timing, however, are catastrophic, as attested at Trafalgar, Tsushima, and Midway. Indeed, monumental naval engagements tend to be like the Alexandrian battles: decisive and short.

This is a readable book; an introduction to the subject. It is not, nor does it purport to be, a thorough text on the analysis, intuition, or motivation of leadership. Indeed,

after reading it, one is left with the impression that current generals might learn more from Japanese business leaders than from the commanders of history. Perhaps that disconnection with the past is what Mr. Keegan best points out.

Finally, a bit of Wellingtonian attention to detail would have been helpful in the preparation of this book. Correction of the many typographical errors and the inclusion of publishers in the bibliography would enhance the utility of a second edition.

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Kagan, Donald. *The Fall of the Athenian Empire*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987. 456pp. \$39.50

Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* has been core reading at the Naval War College for many years. As a study of the relationship between policy and strategy, the work is invaluable. Readers, however, have had to contend with the realization that many of the events described are colored by Thucydides' view of the world. Donald Kagan's previous three volumes on the war have gone a long way in clarifying the events of the battle between Athens and Sparta. In this fourth and final volume of his narrative history of the war, Professor Kagan has continued his analysis of the events chronicled by Thucydides. By balancing Thucydides'

account with those written by ancient observers such as Xenophon and Diodorus, the author has greatly augmented our understanding of the events in the war. Professor Kagan picks up his narrative following the disastrous defeat of the Athenians in Sicily and takes the reader through to the final defeat of Athens at the hands of Sparta and her allies in 404 B.C. He contends that, and provides sufficient evidence to support his view, after Sicily the extent and length of the war were less a result of Athenian efforts than the failure of the Spartans to capitalize on the Athenian disaster.

Although the defeat at Sicily was viewed with great alarm in Athens, its effect on the empire and the subsequent reaction of the Persians resulted in the final defeat of Athens. The revolt of the empire, and the extensive financial support of Sparta by the Persians created serious financial constraints on Athens. As Kagan points out, the failure of the Athenian commander to engage the Spartan Fleet at Miletus in 412 B.C. cost Athens the opportunity to crush the revolt of the empire before it could spread. As the revolt expanded, the Athenian economy was less and less able to sustain the economic demands of the war. Once the Persians committed themselves to the financial support of Sparta, the weakness of the Athenian economic position became apparent. The Spartan strategy of depriving Athens of the Ukraine grain traffic and collection of tribute from members of her empire left Athens with few