

## Naval War College Review

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Volume 73  
Number 4 *Autumn 2020*

Article 14

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2020

### The Modernisation of the Republic of Korea Navy: Seapower, Strategy and Politics

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#### Recommended Citation

Hynd, Alexander M. and Bowers, Ian (2020) "The Modernisation of the Republic of Korea Navy: Seapower, Strategy and Politics," *Naval War College Review*. Vol. 73 : No. 4 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol73/iss4/14>

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well as the Marines' failure to ask for an additional twenty-four hours and more troops to prepare for the assault.

This is an enjoyable history and analysis of an interesting interlude in America's engagement with East Asia. One could argue that in the end Phnom Penh's rapid move toward releasing the crew ran up against Washington's perceived need to demonstrate resolve. Were that mind-set not so entrenched, it is possible that the attack on Koh Tang could have been either avoided or executed with appropriate force.

The ultimate measures of effectiveness of the U.S. response are whether Pyongyang was deterred from action it would have taken otherwise and whether our allies were meaningfully reassured. On these matters the evidence is mixed.

JOHN GAROFANO



*The Modernisation of the Republic of Korea Navy: Seapower, Strategy and Politics*, by Ian Bowers. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. 239 pages. \$79.99.

For a state frequently described as a “geostrategic island,” South Korea's maritime security remains a chronically understudied aspect of order in the Asia-Pacific. Ian Bowers's *The Modernisation of the Republic of Korea Navy* goes some way toward filling this gap, with a persuasive account of the forces that have facilitated and shaped the last three decades of expansion of the Republic of Korea (ROK) Navy (ROKN) into an actor of regional significance.

Bowers argues that a combination of material and ideational changes were pursued in the development of the modern

ROKN. In physical terms, the addition of around twenty new classes of naval vessels in the last thirty years—combined with construction of a new base on Jeju Island and changes to hardware, training, and operational structure—has reflected the desire for a comparatively small but potent force that can be wielded effectively in pursuit of the South's growing set of peninsular and regional maritime interests. Ideationally, Bowers sees post-1988 democratization in the South as a crucial underlying factor behind increased emphasis on the ROKN's role. As the South Korean army's political and cultural power waned during this period, the ROKN tapped into the peninsula's maritime history to foster a burgeoning naval identity among South Korean foreign policy elites and the public at large.

Bowers also describes a changing international context for ROKN development, highlighting the shifting role of the United States and China's own emerging status as a dominant naval power in the region. A particularly persuasive chapter of the book is devoted to an assessment of the strategic and financial logic behind Washington's shift from restricting ROKN development in favor of the South's land forces to its new role as a facilitator of an expanding ROKN.

Notably, *The Modernisation of the Republic of Korea Navy* challenges key aspects of a common narrative of ROKN naval development that pits blue-water ambitions against an obligation to defend peninsular waters from the existential North Korea threat. For Bowers, these tasks are not as contradictory as they may appear, given the multifunctionality of naval platforms that can be used in both local and regional contexts. Bowers cites the example of the ROKN's KDX-III destroyers having been fitted with the Aegis

system, enabling these larger platforms to play a key role in the South's management of the North Korean missile threat (p. 6).

The greatest strength of this book is to be found in Bowers's depiction of the overlapping layers of South Korea's strategic maritime environment. Challenges include Pyongyang's attempts to identify and exploit weaknesses in the ROKN's now-dominant capabilities in peninsular waters, increasing regional uncertainty caused by Chinese and Japanese expansion, and Seoul's wariness concerning the vulnerability of its sea lines of communication amid contestation in the South China Sea and beyond.

Bowers also offers an appraisal of each postdemocratization ROK administration's impact on naval development. However, this ends somewhat prematurely, in 2013, with but a single sentence allocated to former president Park Geun-hye and no mention of current president Moon Jae-in. Bowers explores the ROKN's embrace of a distinctively South Korean naval identity, but does not connect it clearly enough to larger shifts in national identity and policy, beyond the observation that the ROKN seeks to be a naval force "commensurate with an independent, responsible middle power" (p. 6).

*The Modernisation of the Republic of Korea Navy* ultimately succeeds in providing a holistic account of the factors driving that force's transformation. As a Royal Danish Defence College professor, Bowers offers considerable insight on this topic, marshaling an impressive array of evidence amassed over a decade of research (this book was based on his doctoral thesis, which might explain its more cursory treatment of the most recent political developments). It is necessary reading for academics and practitioners seeking to better understand the contemporary complexity—and likely

future trajectory—of maritime security around the Korean Peninsula, and in the broader Northeast Asian region.

ALEXANDER M. HYND



*From the Sea to the C-Suite: Lessons Learned from the Bridge to the Corner Office*, by Cutler Dawson, with Taylor Baldwin Kiland. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019. 132 pages. \$21.95.

Retired vice admiral Cutler Dawson brought lessons learned from a thirty-four-year naval career to his fourteen years of business-world success as president and CEO of the Navy Federal Credit Union. *From the Sea to the C-Suite* explores some of those lessons. This short book is as genuine and thoughtful as it is instructive for leaders at all career stages—and, frankly, in any profession. It illustrates why many businesses and nonprofits seek out former military leaders to advise and lead their organizations.

Each of *From the Sea to the C-Suite's* pithily titled eleven chapters develops a key leadership theme derived from Dawson's naval career. Using examples from his six sea commands, he explains leadership lessons first in their naval context before demonstrating their practical application in a civilian setting. True to his naval roots, Dawson then ends each chapter with a "foot stomper" summary—evoking a military practice signaling a concept that one will need to remember later.

Among the book's foot-stomping lessons are the following:

- *Go to the deckplates.* "As a leader you need to intimately understand your organization—its people, its products, its processes, its customers. To do so, you