

Naval War College Review

Volume 73
Number 4 *Autumn 2020*

Article 15

2020

From the Sea to the C-Suite: Lessons Learned from the Bridge to the Corner Office

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Recommended Citation

Gillen, Ed; Dawson, Cutler; and Kiland, Taylor Baldwin (2020) "From the Sea to the C-Suite: Lessons Learned from the Bridge to the Corner Office," *Naval War College Review*. Vol. 73 : No. 4 , Article 15. Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol73/iss4/15>

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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

have to ‘go to the deckplates’” (p. 12). Good leaders lead and learn from the front lines. For Dawson, learning a new assignment on a ship entailed learning from enlisted sailors. Similarly, when he was chief executive officer of Navy Federal, this entailed visiting branches and asking probing questions.

- *Create a safe harbor.* Good leaders want to hear the unvarnished truth so they can make the best-informed decisions. Sailors and employees both need a culture in which they feel comfortable speaking candidly; they need a safe harbor where they can offer leadership the full story. And good leaders want to know not only the good but also the bad.
- *If you don’t risk, you can’t win.* A willingness to evaluate hazards and then take risks is an American naval tradition harking back to John Paul Jones. Dawson advises risk taking “if it benefits other people” (p. 27). Moreover, leaders who know their crews’ strengths and weaknesses are better able to evaluate risks.
- *Listen like a sonar tech.* Good leaders are curious and carefully attend to their business, so they listen to understand. This is how leaders begin truly to understand the requirements of the ship or the needs of the business.
- *Get in the bosun’s chair.* A leadership concept related to listening like a sonar tech and going to the deckplates, getting in the bosun’s chair entails understanding the perspective of the other person. This can provide the proper frame of reference needed when giving an order or introducing a new product to market. Dawson describes several instances in which researching the impact on customers improved Navy Federal’s service to them.

Finally, *From the Sea to the C-Suite* encourages leaders to follow their North Star—those “immovable principles” and “unwavering values” that guide proper behavior. Dawson’s North Star is “all about the people”: “taking care of them, setting an example for them, and being the type of leader whom you would want to emulate” (p. 126).

Readers familiar with leadership theory will recognize several leadership- and character-development frameworks used in this book. Dawson demonstrates how effective leaders value and empower employees, creating relationships that support both mission success and personal development. Indeed, Dawson states that young “professionals need to go through the process of arriving at the right answers on their own” (p. 93). This is the process of coaching followers to become leaders themselves. “If you have carefully chosen and trained your crew members for the task at hand, you should trust them to do the job well—to do the right thing” (p. 79). The leadership-development process empowers others.

Dawson’s examples are easily understood, and his foot stompers summarize each well. As an extrovert, his examples are heavy on interpersonal relationships. While those are important, Dawson could have devoted more time to the intrapersonal realm, exploring and relating those inner attributes that allowed him to operate so successfully on the relational side. Nonetheless, this little book is recommended for current and prospective leaders, especially military members transitioning to civilian leadership roles.

ED GILLEN