



<b>Title</b>	<b>Sadao Asada. (2006). From Mahan to Pearl Harbor: the Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States</b>
<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Schencking, JC</b>
<b>Citation</b>	<b>Pacific Historical Review, 2008, v. 77 n. 2, p. 357-358</b>
<b>Issued Date</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>URL</b>	<b><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10722/65483">http://hdl.handle.net/10722/65483</a></b>
<b>Rights</b>	<b>Creative Commons: Attribution 3.0 Hong Kong License</b>

*From Mahan to Pearl Harbor: The Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States.* By Sadao Asada. (Annapolis, Md., Naval Institute Press, 2006. xii + 387 pp. \$32.95)

For historians of Japan, Japanese-American relations, or the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), Sadao Asada is a scholar who needs no introduction. Over the past forty years Asada has presented bold hypotheses supported with meticulous research. In numerous publications, Asada has successfully woven together military history, diplomacy, politics, biography, ideology, and institutional behavior. In doing so, he has charted new directions for the study of the Japanese navy and other institutions on both sides of the Pacific that played a critical yet often oversimplified role in Japanese-American relations and World War II. His most recent publication is no exception. Drawing from forty years of research and also supplemented with the use of hitherto overlooked or previously unavailable source material, *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor* is a must-read for those interested in elite-level Japanese-American relations, naval history, the torturous road to Pearl Harbor, and the critical role that individuals and institutions can have on national policy and diplomacy. It is an excellent study that I recommend without reservation.

Asada first documents how various IJN leaders became entranced with Alfred Thayer Mahan's ideas of big ships, big guns, and the decisive fleet battle. Why? In part, Asada suggests that this ideology helped the navy justify itself and its grotesquely large appropriations requests. Along with this, however, Asada demonstrates that many IJN leaders were highly selective with Mahan's ideas. While they endorsed the decisive fleet battle ideology, they fundamentally overlooked key aspects of his theories, such as the importance of projecting and protecting trade and communications routes through naval power. This would have devastating consequences in World War II as Japan's merchant fleet was decimated by U.S. submarine operations.

Asada next explores the politics of naval limitation between 1921 and 1936. While Asada has written widely on the Washington Conference and the war between Admirals Katô Tomosaburô and Katô Kanji, he provides new analysis and far more biographical details of the participants. His chapters on the politics associated with the London Naval Conference, moreover, are the best account published in English to date. What becomes clear is that many IJN leaders failed to grasp the realities of (or turned a blind eye to) the exigencies associated with "total war." While navy planners had

developed intricate tactical battle plans, they often lost sight of the bigger picture, namely that war was not just about battles but about industrial production, mobilization, and logistics.

In the final sections of this book, Asada engages with *the* question of Japanese-American naval relations: Why did certain IJN leaders demand war with the United States in 1941 when they knew Japan had so little chance for victory? First, while many IJN officers believed that Japan had only a slight chance for victory if war was initiated in 1941, they were convinced that Japan would have no chance of victory if they delayed until 1943. He also argues convincingly that institutional inertia, a lack of responsible leadership, and fierce inter-service rivalry all contributed to the fateful decision to go to war. How, for instance, could navy leaders who had argued vociferously for the end of the naval limitation treaties and subsequent naval expansion admit before their army counterparts, civilian politicians, and the emperor that they had fundamentally misunderstood what constituted national defense in the age of total war? More to the point, how could navy leaders have admitted, after securing a series of extensive and wildly expensive naval expansion programs, that the IJN simply could not defeat the U.S. Navy or even protect Japan from America? Asada's work reminds us that inter-service rivalry was a critically important phenomenon that influenced virtually every aspect of defense politics, intra-governmental relations, and military spending in Japan.

In and of themselves, Asada's last chapters alone are worth the price of the book. Anyone interested in learning more about why Japan went to war with America would be well advised to read Asada's book. His work provides valuable insights into the motivations and behavior of Japan's key naval actors and the critical influence they had on elite-level decision making. More than that, Asada's entire book makes an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the Imperial Japanese Navy and Japanese-American relations. It is a great achievement from the doyen of naval history.

*University of Melbourne*

J. CHARLES SCHENCKING

*Modernizing the American War Department: Change and Continuity in a Turbulent Era, 1885–1920.* By Daniel R. Beaver. (Kent, Ohio, Kent University Press, 2006. xvi + 281 pp. \$49)

In his 1965 *Journal of American History* article on Newton D. Baker's role in World War I mobilization, followed by a volume on