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William Reynolds Braisted, *Diplomats in Blue: U.S. Naval Officers in China, 1922–1933*. University Press of Florida, 2009. 407 pp. Foreword by James C. Bradford and Gene Allen Smith, illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index.

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Naval historian William Braisted is best known for his two magisterial volumes on the U.S. Navy's role in the Pacific Ocean during the early Twentieth Century—*The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897–1909* (1958) and *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1909–1922* (1971). The study under review, *Diplomats in Blue*, is identified by James Bradford as the concluding volume in Braisted's "trilogy" (p. 349). Yet, it is not really that since it lacks the narrative breadth of his earlier books. What it is instead is a detailed look at the role of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet in Chinese waters during the turbulent years from the early 1920s through the early 1930s, when Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang forces were attempting to unify China even as the Imperial Japanese Army was beginning to expand its sway in that country.

It is a subject that Braisted has long wished to explore, as the author makes evident in his fascinating Preface (pp. xi-xvii). Born into a Navy family, he first arrived in China as a four-year-old in the spring of 1923, staying on Hong Kong Island with his mother and a cousin, then in Chefoo, and finally in Shanghai, while his father's destroyer *Hulbert* was operating in Chinese waters for the summer. He next saw Shanghai nine years later, when the family moved back there at the time Braisted's father was serving as Executive Officer of the aging armored cruiser *Rochester*. In all, he recalls spending four of his first sixteen years in the Far East, following the annual movements of the Asiatic Fleet from the Philippines, north to China, and back again (p. xv).

Diplomats in Blue provides an extensive examination of the means by which successive Commanders in Chief of the Asiatic Fleet and other senior U.S. Navy and Marine officers serving in China during these years attempted to further American diplomacy there. One Asiatic Fleet commander whose actions Braisted analyzes in some detail is Admiral Mark Bristol, who was in command from September 1927 to September 1929. Bristol held unique qualifications for handling a diplomatic role in China, since in a previous assignment he had served almost eight years in the dual capacity as U.S. High Commissioner in Turkey and as commander of U.S. naval forces in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. Yet, Braisted shows the reader how little respect his State Department counterparts in China, Minister John MacMurray and his subordinate

Ferdinand Mayer, had for Bristol's diplomatic skills during his tour (p. 167, ff.). Indeed, it is by showing us the interplay of individual predilections and prejudices, and differing departmental perspectives, that the author enables us to see how American diplomacy actually played out in China during the years of upheaval that culminated in the Shanghai Incident of 1932.

For those with an interest in the broader aspects of the U.S. Navy's functioning during the Twentieth Century, this book will prove an absorbing read. Deeply researched and carefully written, *Diplomats in Blue* will serve as a vital part of the historiography on the U.S. Navy in the Far East for years to come. Moreover, the University Press of Florida has done well by the author. The book is well edited and attractively designed. It is illustrated with several dozen photographs (most taken from the holdings of the Naval History and Heritage Command, formerly the Naval Historical Center) and six maps. It is fascinating to see how well the research and writing effort that first began in the late 1980s—at a time when William Braisted was serving as a SecNav Visiting Scholar at the Naval Historical Center (and this reviewer was a recently-hired historian in the Center's new Contemporary History Branch)—ultimately turned out.



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