

The United Nations conservatively estimates that there are now 300,000 active child combatants worldwide, including an unknown number of girls. More than 50 states recruit children.

Singer cites two reasons for the rise of the child soldier. The vast numbers of children living in poverty provide an ample supply of recruits and candidates for forced service. And a worldwide glut of powerful small arms in the wake of the Cold War—perhaps 550 million—makes it easy to equip these children. In Uganda, an AK-47 costs no more than a chicken.

The use of children in war is not only a violation of international law in itself but tends to lead to more violations. “Experience has shown that [children] are among the most vicious combatants,” Singer reports, in part because they are

often brutalized as part of their training. Children also suffer greater casualties than adults. Commanders often use them as shields or cannon fodder in order to spare their more valuable adult fighters.

U.S. troops must be prepared to confront children, Singer warns. Six British soldiers were taken hostage in Sierra Leone in 2000 when they refused to fire on child soldiers. An obvious alternative is to target their adult leaders. Another tactic is to “fire for shock” rather than for “effect.” That means “heavy use of smoke and demonstrative air, arms and artillery fire” in order to scare an enemy into flight or surrender. The sad irony, says Singer, is that the highly mobile, lightly armed forces that the United States increasingly relies on for far-flung missions “may be the most ill-equipped of all to respond.”

How Britannia Lost the Waves

“The Continuing Argument over Jutland” by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Autumn 2001), Univ. of Virginia, One West Range, P.O. Box 400223, Charlottesville, Va. 22904-4223.

The Battle of Jutland, one of the great naval battles in modern history, fascinates British sea historians the way Gettysburg fires the Southern imagination, each spawning a steady stream of critical studies. Both battles held out the tantalizing promise of total victory—yet each ended in a measure of failure.

According to Rubin, an emeritus professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, a cataclysm such as Jutland seemed predestined once Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm II decided in the early 1900s to build a navy capable of challenging Great Britain’s domination of the seas. It may have been the greatest mistake the Kaiser (who was a grandson of Queen Victoria) made, since it ensured that Britain would not ally itself with Germany in case of a European war.

Both navies were constructing a new class of superbattleships patterned after the HMS *Dreadnought* (launched in 1906), an 18,000-ton warship bristling with ten 12-inch guns, capable of 21 knots. By the time World War I broke out in 1914, the British navy had 20 such

ships, while Germany had 13.

By May 1916, frustrated by a British blockade, the German navy tried to lure the superior British Grand Fleet into a trap in the North Sea along the Danish coast. But the British, privy to German wireless communications, were already steaming eastward as the Germans headed north. The ensuing sea battle would pit 150 British vessels against 100 German ships.

What should have been a decisive victory for the British never materialized. Their force, under the overall command of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, blundered several times, and its officers showed little initiative. Miscommunication and bad luck cost the British several chances to wreak havoc on the German fleet. At one point, Admiral Hugh Thomas-Evans led his dreadnoughts straight at the Germans, apparently because he was awaiting orders from Jellicoe’s flagship to turn away. The British lost several battle cruisers when advanced German armor-piercing shells penetrated their magazines.



British ships under heavy fire in Robert Smith's The Battle of Jutland (1916).

In the end, the German fleet was able to slip away, leaving the British in control but badly bloodied. They lost 115,000 tons of ships and more than 6,000 men, as opposed to 61,000 tons and just over 2,500 men on the German side.

Rubin places much of the blame for this unachieved victory on Jellicoe, whose over-meticulous rules of engagement filled 200 pages. In striving for “centralized control,” Jellicoe produced subordinates unwilling to think for themselves, a weakness exposed by poor communications during the battle. But in a larger sense, the real culprit may have been the culture of the British navy. According to Andrew Gordon’s *Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (2000), ever since the great victory by Horatio Nelson at Trafalgar in 1805, the navy had been suffused by what Gordon calls “the

social religion of deference.” It had always been the realm of gentlemen, but peacetime and the Victorian emphasis on structuring and ordering behavior made it even more inflexible. At the same time, technological change—steam power, iron and steel ships, and long-range guns—made the need for innovation in naval thinking much greater.

After Jutland, Jellicoe gave way to a more innovative successor who encouraged the kind of initiative that would allow the British to sink the *Bismarck* in 1941. But it was too late. After World War I, Britain ceded its primacy over the waves to the United States. And the Kaiser’s navy? Although he claimed victory at Jutland, Wilhelm became convinced that Germany’s surface fleet would never alter the course of the war and turned instead to unrestricted submarine warfare.

China’s Rap Sheet

“China’s Use of Force, 1950–1996, and Taiwan” by Allen S. Whiting, in *International Security* (Fall 2001), MIT Press Journals, 5 Cambridge Center, 4th Flr., Cambridge, Mass. 02142–1493,

Before September 11, the conflict between China and Taiwan stood near the top of U.S. foreign policy concerns. Whiting’s essay suggests it should be there still.

He looked at eight cases in which China resorted to military force for deterrence or coercion, including the 1950–53 Korean War, the conflicts over small Taiwanese