

Title: “‘Forced into the Shade’: Winston Churchill and the American Naval Challenge”

Speaker: Dr. John Maurer

Date: 27 February 2023

Time: 1200 - 1315

Where: C-138

POC: Dr. Evan Wilson

## **SYNOPSIS:**

The United States emerged as a naval competitor of Great Britain after the First World War. American naval ambitions exasperated the British statesman Winston Churchill, who saw this challenge as threatening Britain’s position as the world’s leading sea power. Faced by America’s growing economy and navy, Churchill lamented Britain’s decline as a world power. He confided to his wife Clementine: “Poor old England — she is being slowly but surely forced into the shade.” Despite America’s undoubted economic strength, Churchill was determined that Britain stay ahead of the United States in the naval arms race.

This lecture examines Churchill’s views about America’s growing naval power and Britain’s ability to compete against the United States. Examining Churchill’s views in this period provides an opportunity to explore questions about how the leading world power responded to a rising international challenger. How did Churchill assess American foreign policy aims and power to achieve them? How did he think Britain could win a naval arms race with the United States when it possessed a stronger economy? Did he consider war “unthinkable” between Britain and the United States? Or did Churchill fear that the international ambitions of the two countries make them destined for war?

## **BIOS:**

Dr. John H. Maurer serves as the Alfred Thayer Mahan Distinguished Professor of Sea Power and Grand Strategy at the Naval War College. He is a graduate of Yale College and holds a MALD and PhD in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. His most recent book is an edited volume of essays published by the Naval Institute Press, *The Road to Pearl Harbor: Great Power War in Asia and the Pacific*. At the College, he served for eight years as Chairman of the Strategy and Policy Department. Before coming to the College, he held the positions of research fellow and executive editor of *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs* at the Foreign Policy Research Institute. Secretary of the Navy John Lehman appointed him to serve on a special advisory committee on naval history. In recognition of his contribution to professional military education, he has received the U.S. Navy’s Meritorious Civilian Service Award and Superior Civilian Service Award.