

## Re: big ships (was Re: Cos-B: 30 Years On...)

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*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.space.history/2005-08/msg01273.html>

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- *From:* "William C. Keel" <[keel@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:keel@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* 19 Aug 2005 09:54:56 -0500
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Neil Gerace <[geracen@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:geracen@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

> "Henry Spencer" <[henry@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:henry@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote in message  
> [news:ILGFsG.F8q@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:ILGFsG.F8q@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

>> Alternatively, it was a shining example of what happens when curiosity (be  
>> it scientific or otherwise) and rulers' pride are deemed the *\*only\** proper  
>> motives for exploration.

> Did someone say Apollo?

Jared Diamond has an interesting take on this very issue near the end of *\_Guns, Germs, and Steel\_*, one which may also apply to the space context. China was stunningly unified – what was effectively a palace coup could order the fleets home and the shipyards closed, and that was that. Europe has consistently included several comparably-strong cultures, none of which was in a position to conquer all the others (the identities of these entities changing with time, and several attempts at such conquest being stipulated). This meant that all of these cultures were unlikely to make the same mistaken judgment at the same time, especially if it had military or commercial consequences. Comparison with pre-Raj India led Diamond to suspect that there might be an optimum level of competition before it, too, becomes a sea anchor.

Short form – in China, one group not only made policy but could define what was acceptable behavior for everyone else. Whereas in Europe in its age of exploration, the English, French, Italians, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch... didn't much care what the others thought they should be doing. Contemporary application is left as an exercise.

Bill Keel

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- *Follow-Ups:*
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Re: big ships (was Re: Cos-B: 30 Years On...)

◇ *From:* Pat Flannery

• **References:**

- ◆ **Cos-B: 30 Years On (Forwarded)**  
◇ *From:* Andrew Yee
- ◆ **Re: Cos-B: 30 Years On (Forwarded)**  
◇ *From:* Dale
- ◆ **Re: Cos-B: 30 Years On (Forwarded)**  
◇ *From:* Pat Flannery
- ◆ **Re: Cos-B: 30 Years On (Forwarded)**  
◇ *From:* Derek Lyons
- ◆ **big ships (was Re: Cos-B: 30 Years On...)**  
◇ *From:* Henry Spencer
- ◆ **Re: big ships (was Re: Cos-B: 30 Years On...)**  
◇ *From:* Neil Gerace

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