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**LITTORAL WARFARE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF
U.S. NAVAL STRATEGY TO MEET THE 21ST CENTURY**

BY

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ABSTRACT

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The demise of the former Soviet Union, fiscal and personnel reductions within the Department of Defense, and the projection for future regional involvement of forces against uncertain threats precipitated a reevaluation of naval strategy. The result has been the emergence of an evolving maritime strategy that emphasizes littoral warfare. This project examines the transformation of naval strategic thought and the implications of a shift toward littoral warfare. It argues that in spite of recent changes in the geopolitical environment, the utility of naval forces will continue into the future. Tracing the historical significance of sea power, this paper explores factors that have shaped our maritime strategy and considers the implications of a littoral warfare emphasis. It examines the strategic significance of littoral regions and addresses challenges to the full implementation of a littoral oriented maritime strategy.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the transformation of our naval strategy and ongoing efforts to shift emphasis from a traditional maritime strategy based on command of the seas, toward operating and fighting in littoral areas. What factors have influenced the development of our naval strategy and why shift focus from an open sea or "blue-water" strategy to a littoral or "brown-water" strategy? These questions prompted my research and serve as the foundation of this paper.

I was intrigued by instruction provided at the U. S. Army War College on visioning and strategy. It caused me to wonder about littoral warfare and its ability to chart a future course for our naval forces. I initially felt that littoral warfare might be nothing more than a new packaging of old ideas -- an attempt by some to justify roles and missions in an era of competitive military posturing.

Advocating a new strategy requires certain shifts in priorities and traditional thought. This paper considers factors that have shaped and influenced our naval strategy. It examines the actions that have been undertaken, as well as areas where further work may be necessary, to facilitate a true transformation to a littoral oriented maritime strategy. This change has utility in that our ability to operate and fight in littoral regions around the globe is vital to the prosecution of national strategic objectives.

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF SEA POWER

"Whosoever can hold the sea has command of everything."¹

-- Themistocles, 524-460 B.C.

The role of sea power in the history of the United States is well documented and need not be repeated. It is sufficient to note that our nation's very foundation lies in the fact that early explorers were able to traverse vast oceans and make a pre-colonial landing at Plymouth Rock. Since those days, our national growth and development have been intricately linked to sea power. It is through sea power that industrialization, economic development, and national security are possible. A novelist offers some valuable insight into the significance of sea power:

"From time immemorial, the purpose of a navy has been to influence, and sometimes decide, issues on land. This was so with the Greeks of antiquity; the Romans, who created a navy to defeat Carthage; the Spanish, whose armada tried and failed to conquer England; and, most eminently, in the Atlantic and Pacific during two world wars. The sea has always given man inexpensive transport and ease of communication over long distances. It has also provided concealment, because being over the horizon meant being out of sight and effectively beyond reach. The sea has supplied mobility, capability, and support throughout Western history, and those failing in the sea-power test -- notably Alexander, Napoleon and Hitler -- also failed the longevity one."²

Recent events have dramatically reshaped today's geopolitical environment in which our national strategy must be executed. However, they have not altered the importance of sea power in achieving strategic objectives.

The value of sea power is best appreciated when considered in relation to our national, or grand, strategy, which is defined as:

"The art and science of developing and using the political, economic, and psychological powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and war, to secure national objectives."³

Sea power cuts across the spectrum of all elements of our national strategy -- political, economic, psychological, and, most importantly, military. B. H. Liddell Hart encapsulated the dynamic nature of grand strategy when he noted that:

"... fighting power is but one of the instruments of grand strategy -- which should take account of and apply the power of financial pressure, of diplomatic pressure, of commercial pressure, and, not least of ethical pressure, to weaken the opponent's will."⁴

During most of this century, our maritime strategy has been based primarily upon the tenets of naval theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan. Mahan's emphasis on command of the sea caused many strategists to focus on the size of the fleet and its role in waging a battle on the open ocean. Was this Mahan's intent or was his emphasis on command of the sea simply a validation of the importance of sea power?

The true utility of Mahanian theory does not lie solely in commanding the seas, but more importantly in our ability to control them in order to exert influence and to further the policy of our national strategy. Mahan recognized that sea power was but a tool by which military forces contributed to the overall national strategy when he wrote:

"The due use and control of the sea is but one link in the chain of exchange by which wealth accumulates; but it is the central link..."⁵

Mahan saw that the value found in a nation's ability to command the sea was the role of sea power upon commerce and economic survivability. Life, trade, and national prosperity were most closely related with the command of the sea.⁶

This view of the importance of sea power in implementing the strategy of a nation is not uniquely American. Our staunchest adversary, the former Soviet Union, understood the strategic

importance of sea power. Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, former Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union and Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy, observed:

"The essence of sea power of the state...is how far it is possible to make the most effective use of the World Ocean or, as is sometimes said, the hydrosphere of the earth, in the interests of the state as a whole. For the Soviet Union...sea power emerges as one of the important factors for strengthening its economy, accelerating scientific and technical development and consolidating the economic, political, cultural and scientific links of the Soviet people with the peoples and countries friendly to it. In this context the concept of sea power to a certain degree is identified with the concept of economic power of the state."⁷

We are a maritime nation with global interests that are inexorably linked to the economic and political aspects of national strategy. Our economic viability and our ability to influence the spread of democracy via establishment of free-market economies depend upon global trade. Thus our national interests, albeit national survival, rely heavily upon exercise of sea power through an effective maritime strategy.

Today, 90% of the world's trade and 99% of our import-export tonnage is transported on the sea. Our vast industrial base depends upon the flow of raw materials and finished products to and from our country. Ensuring that the world's sea lanes remain open is not only vital to our own economic survival, it is a global necessity.⁸

Although some ocean activities are gradually moving further out to sea with the advance of technology, the majority remain concentrated in littoral areas. Key trade routes lie primarily in coastal waters, often passing through strategic waterways and international straits. Maritime commerce accounts for over 80% of global trade and exceeds 3.5 billion tons per year.⁹ Such factors make littoral warfare relevant to today's strategic environment.

The role of the sea in prosecution of trade, movement of raw materials, and stimulation of foreign and domestic economies mandates a sound maritime strategy. Since economics and commerce are global in scope, we have a vital interest in ensuring seaborne access and maritime mobility. As the strategic value of the littoral areas has increased, so too have attempts by nations to control greater portions through expansion of territorial jurisdiction. A notable example can be found in Libya's 1986 challenge to maritime mobility and freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Sidra.¹⁰

This trend can be expected to continue as world population increases and demands for food and resources deplete land-based capabilities. As natural resources are depleted and new sources are discovered off-shore, the economic value of resources such as petroleum and minerals will entice nations to attempt to extend their littoral claims. Such action is currently taking place in the Asian-Pacific region where several nations are claiming littoral jurisdiction over the Spratly Islands.

"BLUE-WATER" STRATEGY -- FROM MAHAN TO LEHMAN

"...the United States is a naval power by necessity, critically dependent on the transoceanic import of vital strategic materials. Over 90 percent of our commerce between continents moves in ships. Freedom to use the seas is our nation's lifeblood. For that reason our navy is designed to keep the sea lanes open worldwide -- a far greater task than closing those sea lanes at strategic choke points. *Maritime superiority* for us is a necessity. We must be able in time of emergency to venture in harm's way, controlling air, surface, and subsurface areas to assure access to all the oceans of the world. Failure to do so will leave the credibility of our conventional defense forces in doubt. We are...building a six-hundred ship fleet..."¹¹

-- President Ronald Reagan, 1982

By its very nature as an enabling agent sea power is a strategic force that can make a very positive difference in support of high policy.¹² The underpinnings of naval strategy are rooted in a long history of attempts to analyze, define, justify, explain, and, in many cases sell, the important role which naval forces play in the overall strategy of a nation.

The basis of our naval strategy can be traced to military actions during the 17th century. Numerous engagements among the European powers highlighted the potential contribution of navies in achieving the strategic concepts of that era -- central position, interior lines, and communications. Navies offered an alternative to the traditional conduct of land-based military operations. The movement of forces and supplies by sea expanded the potential to rapidly assemble forces on two fronts. It was recognized that navies could attack at various points by sea faster than the enemy could respond with ground forces. New lines of communications were offered by the sea.¹³ The ship, albeit the navy, became an important factor in how nations waged war and pursued strategic objectives. As Oliver Cromwell noted in 1650, "A man-of-war is the best ambassador."¹⁴

American naval forces were created during the Revolutionary War when General George Washington initiated America's first sea-based offensive against the British. The initial continental fleet, assembled from converted merchant ships, provided significant support to colonial efforts and demonstrated the value of military operations at sea.¹⁵ In 1790 Congress authorized ten boats to thwart smugglers who were diverting tax money; four years later construction of six frigates was authorized to protect American merchantmen against the piracy of the Barbary corsairs. In 1798, in response to aggression by France during its war against Great Britain, Congress established the Department of the Navy, authorized the Marine Corps, and began the first build-up of naval forces.¹⁶ Our naval forces were established to further the economic and political aspects of our earliest national strategy and to protect vital interests -- defense of the nation, protection of commerce, and preservation of freedom of the sea.

Two classical maritime strategists, Sir Julian Corbett and Alfred Thayer Mahan developed the basic principles of naval strategy as we have come to know it during this century.¹⁷ A study of each offers certain constructs to be considered in the formulation of naval strategy; however, it is important to note differences in their philosophical views of maritime strategy.

Corbett's theory had greater influence upon British naval strategy than upon our naval strategy; accordingly, his work is mentioned merely to point out that his principles and research into maritime strategy had some limited influence in shaping our naval strategic views. Corbett defined maritime strategy as "...the principles which govern a war in which the sea is a substantial factor."¹⁸ Corbett's views are Clausewitzian in nature. Clausewitz expressed strategy from a land warfare perspective, focusing on the offensive and defensive implications of seizing or denying

ground. Similarly, in Corbettian theory, the main object of naval warfare must always be to secure command of the sea or to prevent the enemy from doing so.¹⁹

For the most of this century, our naval strategy has been shaped by the teachings of Alfred Thayer Mahan. Mahan was from the Jominian school of strategic thought which steered him toward a historical study of naval campaigns. Mahan read and, by analogy, sought to develop a systematic study of naval war.²⁰ Some would argue that Mahan's influence upon our naval strategy was no more significant than that of Corbett or any number of theorists. There may be some validity in this assertion for the constructs of Mahan, along with Theodore Roosevelt's classic *History of the War of 1812*, had considerably more influence on Great Britain's Royal Navy than on the U.S. Navy.²¹ Nonetheless, no single person has had as much impact upon our maritime, albeit naval, strategy as has Mahan who wrote 44 books and 137 articles detailing the principles of naval strategy and the importance of sea power during the period 1880 to 1914.²² His principles have been studied in classrooms and on the battlefields of the high seas, withstanding both the test of time and recent debate as to their relevancy.

Mahan's relationship with President Theodore Roosevelt facilitated the construction of a fleet of surface ships that were destined to become the mainstay of our naval operations. It was this action that shaped the "blue-water" naval strategy which has endured throughout this century. Mahan, along with the bulk of his contemporaries, was exhilarated by the idea of the U.S. flexing its economic and political muscles in the world arena.²³ In this perspective, Mahan seems to retain his strategic relevance.

Regarding history as the key to the future conduct of war, Mahan sought to discover common threads within victories, or universal tenets, that could be applied to contemporary strategy.²⁴ A major problem in applying Mahan's principles today lies in the fact that many tend to cite only portions of his theory to justify their particular position. This method of selectively applying Mahan was best expressed by former Secretary of War Henry Stimson in his assertion that "...the Navy frequently seems to retire from the realm of logic into a dim religious world where Neptune is God, Mahan his prophet, and the U.S. Navy the only true church."²⁵ It was with such a mindset that strategists focused on those common threads of naval victory in World War II to define the naval strategy that has existed since the mid-1940's.

"Our World War II experience had been to take the battle to the enemy's shores and there control his land. In the decades that followed the war, we have continued to use, as the essential elements of our naval power, those same forces that worked for us then: (1) aircraft carrier battle groups capable of striking both at sea and the enemy's homeland; (2) amphibious forces to project power onto the land; and (3) surface combatant and submarine forces to "ride shotgun" while doing their utmost to deny the seas to the opposition."²⁶

The two world wars pointed out that sea power, a necessary part of any nation's arsenal if it wishes to project military power globally, is insufficient on its own to assure victory in war.²⁷

Pervasiveness of a maritime cast to national strategic culture can promote serious missassessments of the threat that one power ultimately poses to the other.²⁸ Such a mentality encouraged a build-up of our Navy to counter the Soviet fleet. The Soviet Union began a massive naval building program in 1962 which continued throughout our involvement in Vietnam. In the 1970s we undertook a unilateral naval disarmament which led to a perceived loss of U.S. naval superiority.²⁹ This changed dramatically in the 1980s.

The author of our Cold War maritime strategy, then Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, believed that as a maritime nation we must command the seas "... to restore stability to the international environment and return again to an environment in which freedom can flourish and totalitarianism decline."³⁰ Concerned with the continual expansion of the Soviet navy, he reasoned that our national survival depended upon unquestioned maritime superiority which could best be achieved by building a 600-ship navy. In testimony before Congress, Lehman emphasized his central theme of maritime superiority:

"Maritime superiority means that we must be capable -- and be seen as capable -- of keeping our sea lines of commerce and communications secure in those areas of the world where our vital interests depend on them. If we are to survive as a free nation our access to our allies, our energy sources, and our trading partners cannot be hostage to the offensive power of any combination of adversaries."³¹

Lehman led the "Reagan naval recovery program"³² and began to institutionalize the process by which our naval strategy was formulated. He became personally involved in functions that had previously been relegated to the Navy staff and laid out fundamental principles necessary to guide the Navy. The maritime strategy process developed during the Lehman-era is depicted in figure 1.

Why institutionalize the maritime strategy? Lehman had a two-fold purpose. First, he saw an opportunity to bolster the stature of the Navy. His concepts of maritime strategy had been carefully crafted and were known to political leaders. President Reagan had specifically called for maritime superiority in his principal national security campaign speech in March 1980 and the six-hundred-ship objective was a plank in the Republican platform.³⁴

THE MARITIME STRATEGY PROCESS³³

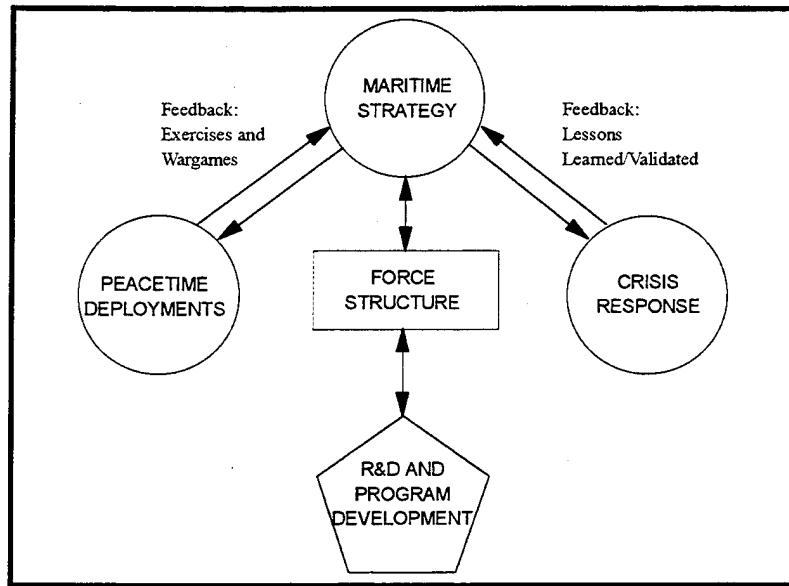


Figure 1

SOURCE: The 600-Ship Navy and the Maritime Strategy (Washington, DC: GPO, 1986), 63. From Command of the Seas, John F. Lehman, Jr. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1988), 444.

Lehman believed the maritime strategy which he envisioned was based on sound principles known to most in the Navy; unfortunately, they had not been heard them for some time, and they sparked controversy in a town where systems analysis was often mistaken for strategy itself.³⁵ The decision-making process for service policy had been consumed by bureaucracy. Lehman broke traditional paradigms and convened a Navy Policy Board directly under his chairmanship. The first policy addressed by this board was strategy.³⁶

To understand Lehman's intent, one should consider the different contexts in which strategies may be viewed. If the strategy is originated by a warfighting commander, you have a capabilities plan -- a warfighting strategy that bridges current objectives and forces or capabilities.³⁷ A reserve aviator, Lehman possessed an understanding of the capabilities necessary to wage war. Some strategies are articulated by those responsible for equipping, maintaining, and

training the armed forces. If the strategy is articulated by one in such a position in order to persuade those who distribute funds to appropriate money for two carriers in one year, then that strategy has served its purpose.³⁸ Lehman succeeded in selling decision-makers on the utility of funding a massive naval building program. From yet another perspective, a political leader may advocate a certain strategy for the purpose of persuading either an ally or an adversary to do something or to stop doing something.³⁹ The maritime strategy developed by Lehman, and endorsed by President Reagan, reaffirmed our commitment to ensuring freedom of the seas and reiterated to the Soviet Union our resolve to achieve maritime superiority vice naval parity.

The second intent underlying Lehman's maritime strategy was to restore the confidence and sense of mission of the Navy itself.⁴⁰ While this must be acknowledged, it should not detract from Lehman's contributions. His overarching consideration was always centered on national security and the protection of vital interests, not on service posturing. In articulating our maritime strategy he stated "...This is not a debatable strategy. It is a national objective -- a security imperative."⁴¹

LITTORAL WARFARE: THE TRANSFORMATION

"The size, composition, roles and missions of the Navy have never been determined in a political vacuum or by means of an orderly process in which strategy follows from national objectives, naval strategy from overall military strategy, and naval forces from naval strategy, but always in the real world where relationships are much more complicated, and in which naval policy is both a product of and a reaction to the competition, interaction, and ambiguities of broader conceptual, technological, fiscal, political and organizational factors."⁴²

-- James L. Lacy, 1983

The end of the Cold War required revision of our overall national defense strategy and three important developments precipitated a transformation of Navy strategy. First, the absence of a single dominant seaborne threat prompted a reevaluation of missions and objectives. Second, Operation Desert Storm highlighted the type of regional warfare that could be expected in the future, resulting in a full-scale review of naval strategy, tactics, and weapons systems. Finally, the 1990 Base Force concept indicated that the Navy would share in budget reductions. Accordingly, the effect of declining resources had to be addressed by naval doctrine.⁴³

In 1992, the Navy and Marine Corps published "*...From the Sea*" which defined the strategic concept intended to carry the naval service beyond the Cold War and into the 21st century. It signaled a change in focus and priorities away from operations on the sea toward power projection and the employment of forces from the sea to influence events in the littoral regions of the world.⁴⁴ This fundamental shift was a result of the changing strategic landscape away from dealing with a global maritime threat toward projecting power and influence across the seas in response to regional challenges.⁴⁵

Subsequent publication of "*Forward...From The Sea*" expanded the strategic concept to address the contributions of naval expeditionary forces in peacetime operations and in responding to crises and regional conflicts.⁴⁶ Further, it restated support of national strategic objectives through strategic deterrence, sea control and maritime supremacy, and strategic sealift.⁴⁷

The concepts in "...*From The Sea*" and "*Forward...From The Sea*" set the stage for a shift in focus from a strictly blue-water strategy toward a balanced warfighting capability that embraced littoral operations.⁴⁸ A common understanding of "littoral" is helpful in assessing the significance of this new focus which emphasizes not only operations in coastal waters, but also the ability to influence events ashore in support of the land component commander. Doctrinally, the littoral encompasses two areas: (1) the seaward area from the open ocean to the shore which must be controlled to support operations ashore, and (2) the landward area inland from the shore that can be supported and defended directly from the sea.⁴⁹ Thus, the littoral includes those areas adjacent to the oceans and seas that are within direct control of and vulnerable to the striking power of sea-based forces.⁵⁰

Previously, littoral operations have not been emphasized. Our naval strategy was geared toward a single objective -- to defeat the Soviet navy. Transformation of our naval strategy stresses the importance of littorals and the utility of naval forces in implementing our national strategy. What makes littoral regions so important as to warrant a revision of traditional naval strategy?

Key navigation routes and international straits within littoral areas are economically and

strategically significant.⁵¹ Nations depend upon freedom of navigation, maritime mobility, and port access for economic development and prosperity. As global population increases, so too will demand for food, energy and mineral resources. Nations will turn to their 200 mile exclusive economic zones and beyond to acquire and transport the resources necessary to maintain existence.⁵² As world-leader among maritime nations, we must have a viable naval strategy that ensures our ability to operate in, and if necessary dominate, the littorals. Failure to do so will result in our inability to adequately responding to future conflicts arising from disputes over fishing rights, artificial borders, and access to sea lines of communications.⁵³ The prospect that nations will attempt to expand territorial claims to commonly shared littorals is attested to by the fact that since 1979, our military ships and aircraft have asserted navigational rights against excessive claims of more than thirty-five countries at a rate of thirty to forty incidents per year.⁵⁴

Littoral areas have increased in military importance. Our reduction in the number of forward-based forces has decreased our access to, and influence in, overseas areas.⁵⁵ This degrades our immediate initial response to potential regional crises. In the past four years, some 867 overseas bases have been closed, replaced, or reduced.⁵⁶ Accordingly, naval forces operating from forward-deployed platforms will play an even greater role in the achievement of our future national strategic objectives. Likewise, foreign nations will see greater utility in the use of naval forces as the principal force of choice to guard against encroachments in littoral areas and to provide forward defense against seaborne attack.⁵⁷ Even without direct military threats, nations with littoral interests can be expected to enhance their naval capabilities in order to address concerns such as the control of pollution, piracy, drug smuggling, and refugee flow.⁵⁸

"*Forward...From the Sea*" was the catalyst for change and provided the foundation for the transformation of our naval strategy toward littoral operations. Absent a global naval adversary and faced with budget reductions and reduced manning levels, Cold War assumptions became invalid. Naval leaders recognized the need to revise methods for allocating resources and training forces. In 1993 a new decision process resulted in a revised target force structure, Force 2001. Force 2001 linked the operational concept of littoral warfare to the size and shape of naval forces.⁵⁹ As a result, the naval service was able to strike a balance between the size of the force and its readiness to meet national strategic objectives. Naval strategy became linked to national strategy in that all Navy and Marine Corps plans were based on the defining naval tasks of forward presence and power projection, tasks which were formally endorsed in the *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*.⁶⁰

Leaders continued efforts to transform naval strategy. Endorsing a concept they termed "rightsizing," they took steps to reduce overhead, restructure support infrastructure, complete decommissioning schedules, and stabilize personnel end-strength. Emphasis has been placed upon streamlining and modernizing the force in order to shape systems capable of conducting future joint and combined operations in the littorals.⁶¹ The final significant action aiding transformation efforts occurred in 1993 with the establishment of the Navy Doctrine Command to formalize the processes that will chart the future operational course of the naval service.⁶²

MEETING THE 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGE

"The bottom line is that our Navy today cannot afford to fail when it comes to innovation. We cannot afford to be viewed as a 'closed corporation' unresponsive to new inventions -- both in new technology and in strategic thought."⁶³

-- Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton, 1994

Positive actions have been taken to facilitate the transformation of our naval strategy. However, many challenges are yet to be confronted. It would be impractical to attempt to address all remaining challenges within the scope of this project. For that reason, I have chosen to address those that I consider of significance.

One challenge ahead is to change the way the Navy thinks about warfare in general and littoral operations in specific. An apparent informal division exists in the Navy based primarily upon occupational specialty -- pilots are pilots, submariners are submariners, and then there is everyone else. Specialization is essential; however, when it seems there is a distinction between "real sailors" and those on shore duty or it is implied that two navies -- the 'Gator (amphibious) navy and the real navy -- exist, then education may be needed on littoral warfare. It is not my intent to be critical, but simply to emphasize that littoral operations will require an integrated effort. Emphasis on distinct warfare communities and fighting the fleet must give way to a mindset that optimizes the capabilities of occupational skills, ships, and weapons systems.

The revamping of our naval strategy reflects more than a mere change in mission. Constraints posed by littoral operations are very different from those that have previously shaped development of our current naval force structure. The threat against surface ships has increased

dramatically due to the introduction of guided missiles into the maritime battlefield.⁶⁴ Littoral areas present a different spatial picture characterized by relatively narrow, often shallow waters, wherein lie major population centers and commercial shipping routes. Such factors will restrict maneuverability, methods of operation, and the types of ships and weapons that we employ.⁶⁵

Nations possessing coastal defense systems that employ radar and electronic surveillance, missiles, high-speed surface combatants, and aviation can deny us littoral dominance. The restrictive size of the littoral battlespace, coupled with technological advances in range detection and engagement, affords our adversaries the opportunity to present an integrated coastal defense that capitalizes on his various options -- missiles, mines, special forces, and gunnery.⁶⁶ These aspects must be considered in shaping our future naval force.

An important step in educating the force about littoral warfare occurred with establishment of the Naval Doctrine Command. The Navy now has, for the first time, a single agency responsible for the publication of doctrine.⁶⁷ Doctrine spells out "the fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives."⁶⁸ Complete doctrine addresses how the service thinks about warfare and how it acts; it represents a codification of how one fights, trains, exercises, and plans, and it organizes what one buys.⁶⁹ Since a degree of linkage exists between doctrine and strategy in that both shape the ends, ways, and means for future operations, the challenge for the Naval Doctrine Command is to ensure that the strategic concepts of littoral warfare contained in "*Forward...From The Sea*" are institutionalized in operational guidelines and fleet training programs.

A second challenge is to foster change in traditional Navy decision processes. The linkage

of littoral concepts with force structure found in Force 2001 illustrates the type of innovative thinking required. This may require leaders to go against the norm; however, a major shift in strategic focus necessitates a move toward new problem-solving approaches. We must adapt old methods and solutions to new ideas and problems -- not vice versa. Leaders need to think creatively and must be willing to embrace risk management as opposed to risk aversion. Force 2001 is one example of creative thinking and the willingness to try alternative processes. Figure 2 presents an alternative view of strategy and force planning relationships and may have applicability in transitioning to a littoral oriented strategy.

BARTLETT MODEL⁷⁰

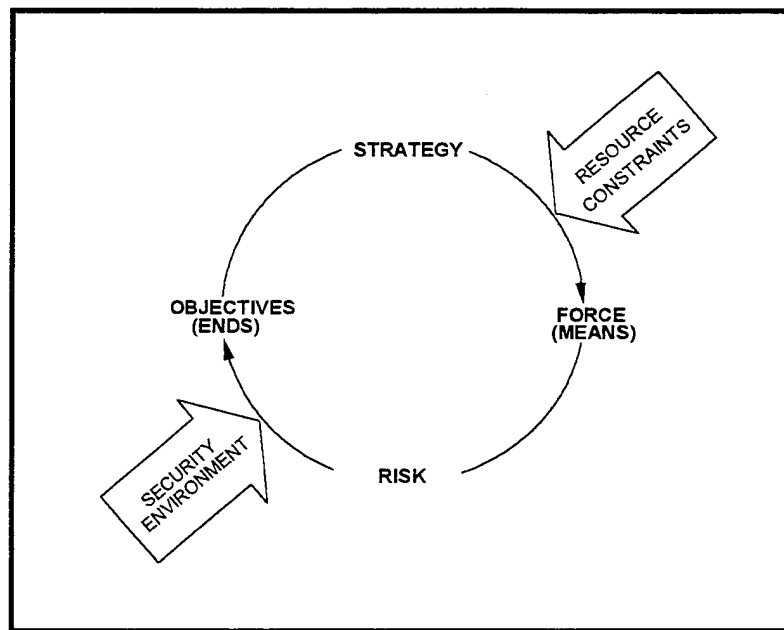


Figure 2

SOURCE: Model developed by Professor Henry C. Bartlett, Faculty, Naval War College, Newport, RI, and published in Naval War College Review XLVIII (Spring 1995).

Probably the single greatest challenge to lies within the area of modernizing or equipping the force such that it can operate in and dominate the littorals. This challenge is compounded by constrained budgets, technological changes, and an uncertain threat environment. Preliminary measures focus on fielding a force that can counter littoral threats, such as those posed by mines, missiles, and the expansion of foreign naval capabilities, while simultaneously considering amphibious lift and power projection requirements.

Reversing past trends, the Navy will commission more ships than it decommissions in 1996.⁷¹ However, the size of our post-Cold War fleet has declined and is projected to continue a downward trend. Planning figures indicate that the total number of ships in the battle force will decrease from a 1992 baseline of 465 to 416 by the end of the century.⁷² Given this, the task that leaders now face is to determine future requirements that will shape the complexion of the fleet of the future. Creative concepts, such as introduction of multi-purpose vessels, represent a shift from construction of many single-function ships toward fewer ships capable of executing a variety of maritime missions -- a prudent move given that littoral maneuverability constraints and regional threats can significantly influence ship design and employment.

A notable development in enhancement of ship design is the planned introduction of the LPD-17, lead ship of an eventual 12-ship buy designed to maintain amphibious lift capability. Concurrent with the 1993 decision to build the LPD-17, the Navy began improving the overall ship design, acquisition, and construction process by adopting principles of Navy Sea Systems Command's Affordability Through Commonality (ATC) Program that advocate equipment standardization and modular construction where possible to reduce costs and production time.⁷³

Planned introduction of the Arleigh Burke (DDG 51)-class ships is also indicative of positive efforts. The fielding of this ship will reshape the surface-combatant fleet with fewer, yet more capable multipurpose platforms.⁷⁴

Innovation in future ship construction may yield positive results by combining the capabilities of existing ships. For example, taking the proven capability of the Aegis cruiser's integrated combat system with long-range, accurate missiles and combining it with the hull, mechanical, and electrical systems of the LSD-41 and LSD-49-ship classes offers the potential to field a littoral supremacy ship for the 21st century.⁷⁵

The challenge will be to avoid adding unnecessary bells and whistles while, at the same time, fielding of ships that are capable of performing multiple maritime missions within future fiscal constraints. Optimizing commonality of shipborne sub-systems and ensuring system interoperability for joint or combined operations should be the driving factors.

Mines pose a serious threat to littoral operations. Iraq's use of mines during the Gulf War confirmed that an inferior navy may mount a credible littoral threat. Conducting a well-planned, although poorly executed, mining operation, Iraq turned its mining campaign into a strategic advantage by effectively negating our use of the littoral for an amphibious assault and won a victory of sorts by damaging two of our combatants.⁷⁶ In November 1991, then Secretary of the Navy H. Lawrence Garrett stated:

"...The Persian Gulf taught us more than a couple of lessons recently about our neglect. As we operate more and more in confined, coastal waters, and as scenarios requiring over-the-horizon amphibious assaults become more probable, we will be confronted increasingly with cheap and widely available mines. I, for one, have no intention of seeing the Navy someday forced to tell the President that we can't do the job because we're unable to defeat the enemy's mines".⁷⁷

The significance of the mining issue lies not in its tactical advantage, but in its ability to influence and shape our operational and strategic planning. The mere threat of loss of ships and casualties can alter our battle plans. In addressing the value of mine warfare during the Gulf War, General H. Norman Schwarzkoph told the Senate Armed Services Committee:

"It had a serious impact on our capability to conduct certain types of operations, and that's the capability that we just must have in the future if we are going to conduct amphibious operations".⁷⁸

The shift toward littoral operations has placed increased emphasis on offensive mine countermeasures. Since Desert Storm much attention has been devoted to enhancing our shallow-water mine countermeasure capability. In addition to the post-war delivery of several mine countermeasure platforms, the Navy is adapting existing technology to help meet this deficiency. Plans call for conversion of twelve landing craft, air-cushioned (LCACs) to multi-purpose craft, air cushioned (MCACs) to support mine countermeasure missions. The MCAC incorporates skirt modifications and will be outfitted with the AN/AQS-14 side-scan sonar system which will afford added capability for mine detection, clearing and breaching within the littorals.⁷⁹

Similar initiatives are being undertaken to address a range of littoral threats extending from ballistic missiles to and submarines. Innovations sparked by technology and forward thinking, such as the planned introduction of the V-22 Osprey and procurement of the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle, reduce littoral vulnerability for landing forces by capitalizing on over-the-horizon operations. Actions being undertaken to modernize and equip the force are expansive in scope and must be continued if littoral dominance is to become a possibility.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

"Everything in strategy is very simple; but that does not mean that everything is very easy. Once it has been determined, for the political conditions, what a war is meant to achieve and what it can achieve, it is easy to chart the course. But great strength of character, as well as great lucidity and firmness of mind, is required in order to follow through steadily, to carry out the plan, and not to be thrown off course by thousands of diversions."⁸⁰

-- Carl von Clausewitz

The most difficult step in transforming naval strategy has already been taken. It was made when leaders recognized the need to revise long-standing strategic thought. However, this alone is not enough. The shift in strategic focus towards the littorals is only the genesis of a concept that must now be meshed into all aspects of daily operations.

In a sense, littoral warfare is nothing new as we have conducted naval operations in the littorals since our first naval ship set sail. What is new is the strategic importance of our ability to operate and fight in the littorals given the changing geopolitical environment. No longer must we be prepared to fight a global naval adversary. Rather, we must be capable of dealing with emerging regional navies who will concentrate their operations in the littorals.

Many nations are increasing their ability to influence regional events in the littorals. Recent media reports indicate a buildup of foreign naval forces. The proliferation of diesel submarines, ballistic and sea skimming missiles, fast patrol boats, and vast numbers of naval mines threaten the ability of our naval forces to effectively fight in this demanding environment.⁸¹ It is common knowledge that China, North Korea, and Iran have recently purchased Soviet submarines and other acquisitions are expected, to include frigates and aircraft carriers. While it is unlikely these countries will undertake "blue-water" activities, they could achieve great strategic

advantage if they controlled key waterways and straits that provide our access to commercial trade and military response routes into the western Pacific, Indian Ocean, and Persian Gulf. Such littoral navies can jeopardize freedom of navigation through international waters and must be considered. While we currently enjoy technological superiority, more countries are acquiring the capability to exert influence over vital littoral areas.

If naval strategy is to be reshaped and efforts reoriented toward training, equipping, and manning our Navy to fight and win in the littorals, then the strategic concepts outlined in *"Forward...From The Sea"* must be nurtured and developed. "Littoral" must become more than a word, it must become a mindset which guides daily operations and future planning efforts. Only in such a manner will the basic constructs of littoral warfare transcend into a truly viable naval strategy for the 21st century. In an atmosphere of fiscal uncertainty and changing threat, the transformation faces a formidable course.

ENDNOTES

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¹⁵*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹⁷Harold J. Kearsley, Maritime Power and the Twenty-first Century (Brookfield, VT: Dartmouth Publishing Co., 1992), 4.

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¹⁹*Ibid.*, 77, in Military Strategists: Past and Present, 61.

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²¹John F. Lehman, Jr., Command of the Seas, 274.

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²⁹Lehman, 117.

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³¹Ibid., 127.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., 444, citing The 600-Ship Navy and the Maritime Strategy (Washington, DC: GPO, 1986), 63.

³⁴Ibid., 115.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., 116.

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⁴⁰Lehman, 121.

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⁴²James L Lacy, Within Bounds: The Navy in Postwar American Security Strategy (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 1993), 529; quoted in Donald C. F. Daniel and Bradd C. Hayes, The Future of Sea Power with a Foreword by John W. Mountcastle (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, May 1993 [Paper originally presented at the U. S. Army War College 4th Annual Strategy Conference on 24-25 February 1993]), 19.

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⁵⁸Ibid., 5, citing Boothby, "Sailing Under New Colors," 50.

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⁶⁰John H. Dalton, Jeremy M. Boorda, and Carl E. Mundy, Jr., "Department of the Navy 1995 Posture Statement: Excerpts from a report by The Honorable John H. Dalton, et al.," Marine Corps Gazette, April 1995, 22.

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⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 8-9.

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⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 23-24, citing Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02: Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Washington, DC: GPO, 1994), n.p.

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⁷⁵William J. Marshall, III, "We Can Build A Better 'Gator," Proceedings, January 1995, 41-42.

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