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In My View

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IN MY VIEW . . .

Looking a Little Closer, Perhaps

Sir,

I agree with many of the points presented in Commander Mayer's "Looking Backward Into the Future of the Maritime Strategy" (Winter 1989). However, there is a significant factor he did not address that impacts on any assessment of the strategy's effectiveness: its role as a deterrent to conflict.

The Maritime Strategy is designed to function as a deterrent to war as well as a general blueprint for naval engagement if deterrence fails. This is apparent from the considerable—almost unprecedented—open discussion of the strategy by senior defense decision makers and the top naval leadership. While we are accustomed to having American defense policy debated in Congress, the press and academia, rarely have senior defense officials devoted so much time to explaining the *particulars* of an actual war-fighting strategy. The amount of official participation in this unofficial debate is a clear indication that the Reagan and Bush administrations want the Soviet leadership to know the exact naval consequences of a Soviet-Nato conflict in order to deter Soviet war planners from viewing a Central European conflict as a "no-lose" situation for the Soviets.

In assessing the impact of the Maritime Strategy on antisubmarine warfare in the Atlantic, Commander Mayer neglects the fact that repetitive statement of the Strategy's "seizing the initiative" principles—its intention to attack the Soviet fleet and naval establishments in Kola and Kamchatka—forces the Soviets to carefully consider retaining a considerable portion of the SSNs in northern waters in order to protect their ports and surface and SSBN forces. The probability that the U.S. Navy would attempt to execute its strategy even in the face of strong Soviet land-base defenses has considerable deterrent effect. Could the Soviets feel so confident of repelling such an assault that they would commit the major portion of the SSN force to the mid-Atlantic interdiction role? *Without* the perceived threat of a forward-pressing American Maritime Strategy, Soviet planners would be *less* likely

to retain SSNs in northern waters and *more* likely to sortie their SSNs for interdiction of Nato's sea lanes. In this respect, the current Maritime Strategy helps rather than hinders the anti-SSN "battle of the Atlantic" (and Central Front war) since it holds out the possibility that fewer Soviet SSNs would be committed to the interdiction role.

Commander Mayer uses many analogies (lessons learned) from the First and Second World Wars. An additional analogy is appropriate. As long as the German Navy possessed a "fleet in being," the Royal Navy could never withdraw all of its forces from the North Atlantic to use in critical theaters elsewhere such as the Pacific or Mediterranean. The inconclusiveness of the Battle of Jutland during the First World War and the threat of a German cross channel invasion during the Second World War tied up considerable British assets in home or adjacent waters. Similarly, as long as the Soviets perceive that the U.S. Navy can and will penetrate the northern seas, it is likely they will retain the bulk of their forces for fleet defense rather than gamble on whether their interdiction SSNs will have homeports to return to.

The Maritime Strategy possesses a deterrent effect that restricted alternatives do not. Its worth cannot be assessed without an analysis of its role in promoting conventional deterrence.

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Could the Soviet Subs Ever Do It?

Sir,

I found Commander Charles Mayer's article, "Looking Backward into the Future of the Maritime Strategy" (Winter 1989), enlightening. I wonder, however, if he has not overlooked one of the critical lessons of the submarine campaigns of World Wars I and II: submarine attrition rates and their implications for Soviet submarine deployment in a future war against Nato.

Submarine losses for the Germans in World War I were approximately 48 percent, while 67 percent were lost in World War II. Against these losses the Germans destroyed approximately 20 percent and 17.4 percent (respectively) of their opponents' merchant fleets. In comparison, the Americans lost 15.4 percent of their submarines in their campaign against the Japanese while destroying 48.5 percent of the Japanese merchant fleet. In light of these attrition rates, the size of the merchant fleets of the Western maritime nations and current ASW capabilities, one wonders if the Soviets will have enough subs to wage effective commerce warfare in the Atlantic, as Commander Mayer suggests. According to Karl Lautenschlager in "The Submarine in Naval Warfare 1901-2001" (*International Security*, Winter 1986-1987), the Soviets would have to deploy a submarine fleet twice as large as the one they currently possess to wage effective commerce warfare against Nato. This is before Soviet ballistic missile subs, escorts to protect them

against American SSNs, cruise-missile launching subs assigned to support theater strategic forces, and attack subs assigned to fleet engagement are subtracted from the total Soviet force. Accordingly, approximately 60 SSN and diesel-electric boats would be available to wage a campaign against either Nato ballistic missile subs or merchant shipping. Assuming an attrition rate of between 50 to 70 percent, the Soviets would find it difficult to wage an effective campaign in the Atlantic. True, production of attack subs would be stepped up as soon as war was evident; it would have to be. Soviet attack submarine production has dropped from 10 per year (1978-1982) to 7 per year (1983-1987). It is unlikely, however, that the Soviets would be able to produce enough new attack subs (or train enough new crews) to replace losses in a submarine campaign.

The Soviets are much more likely to concentrate their attack subs on Nato ballistic missile subs and carriers rather than risk them against merchant shipping. The primacy in Soviet strategy of winning the land war in Europe, and Soviet desires for a short war, dictate the destruction of American naval forces. American aircraft carriers are held in high regard by the Soviets and are correctly recognized as the basis of the Maritime Strategy. Their destruction far outweighs any advantages that might be gained from a war against commerce. Additionally, the Soviets have the option of attacking the channel ports with bombers and intermediate range missiles, delaying the timely arrival of critically needed reinforcements and resupply to Nato. There is thus little need for the Soviets to resort to a costly submarine campaign against Nato.

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We Cannot Put it Off Any Longer

Sir,

I was arrested by William V. Kennedy's comments concerning the 2d Infantry Division in "Moving West: The New Theater of Decision" in the Winter 1989 issue of the *Naval War College Review* for I have just completed my tour as the S2 (Intelligence) officer, 1st (Armored) Brigade, 2d Infantry Division.

Mr. Kennedy has argued fervently, perhaps brilliantly, for a new strategy to replace our European orientation. He is absolutely correct in his assessment that Europe is moving toward neutral status, which American troops have no business defending. These "allies" are exploiting us economically, while shifting the burden of their own defense to us. How can a Europe which cannot agree to modernize nuclear weapons ever expect to use them? Without the use of these weapons, the continent may be overrun, and thousands of U.S. soldiers and dependents killed or captured. On the other hand, should the weapons themselves be employed, the results for Central Europe would certainly be catastrophic, and if uncontrolled escalation continued, would engulf the American heartland as well. This is a no-win situation from which we need to extricate ourselves as soon as possible.

The current U.S. Army presence in Nato makes less and less sense politically and militarily. It is the result of continued bureaucratic inertia and has very little to do with deterring any possible communist invasion.

The only thing I would add to his article is that he might extend the very same logic to the U.S. Army presence in Korea. In this theater, there is less concern with nuclear brinkmanship, and more concern with straightforward perceptions of conventional power. Also, to their infinite credit, the Republic of Korea has fielded a diverse, well-trained, and extraordinarily disciplined military which is Kim Il Sung's match any day. Nevertheless, we are still bearing a considerable economic burden by maintaining American ground forces there, while the ROK outstrips us economically.

Mr. Kennedy states that the presence of the 2d Infantry Division is key to understanding Soviet and Chinese perceptions of U.S. military power on this peninsula. I would suggest that their perceptions and even those of Kim Il Sung are probably influenced very little by this division. The latter especially knows that a single U.S. division will play only a small part in defending South Korea should he decide to push across the border. The larger part will be played by the ROK Army, and U.S. air and naval power, which has the potential of turning everything north of the DMZ into glass, a habitation fit for Peking Man.

My point is simple: U.S. air and naval commitments to Europe and Asia make sense. However, the utility of large, expensive, ground force commitments needs to be relooked at now. We can no longer afford to avoid the hard choices. Dr. Gray, in the same issue of the *Review*, has argued for the greater strategic versatility of just such a strategy, and perhaps this is the place to start the discussion.

We cannot put it off any longer. The discussion, of necessity, must be maintained on the level suggested by Dr. Gray, and it must not degenerate to the level of mindless military bureaucrats whose only concern is that they might "lose slots."

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Pacific Only is Not Good Enough

Sir,

In "Moving West: The New Theater of Decision," which appeared in the Winter 1989 issue of the *Review*, William V. Kennedy is entirely correct in noting that the United States no longer has the "resources, fiscal or otherwise, to meet the security requirements" that a "two-and-one-half-war" strategy" requires. Further, he is on equally solid footing in stating that the proper remedy for rectifying this untenable predicament is for the United States to "shift [its] strategic emphasis" from Europe and the Atlantic to Northeast Asia and the North Pacific. So far so good. However, on leaving the general realm of his proposition, and moving on to the specifics of why and how this new strategy should be accomplished, his footing becomes less sure.

Regarding the why, the United States should shift its military force toward Northeast Asia not only because the “enormous engine of economic development . . . has been operating for more than two decades around the entire rim of the Pacific,” but more significantly because the nature of the Soviet threat has gravitated towards this region. Furthermore, it is wishful thinking to believe that the Soviet Union’s dramatic military growth in Northeast Asia has come solely because “China . . . is perceived as the long-term threat to the Soviet state.” While the Chinese threat at the Soviet underside *partially* explains the air and land buildup in the Far Eastern TVD, this threat alone does not explain the massive increase in the Soviet Pacific Fleet, which now consists of 73 surface combatants (including two of the Soviet Navy’s four *Kiev*-class VTOL carriers), 112 submarines (including 24 nuclear-powered ballistic-missile subs), and a formidable naval air strike component (including scores of Backfire and Badger bombers), making this fleet the largest of the Soviet Navy’s four fleets. This lavish naval increase in the North Pacific during the last two decades would have never occurred if the Russians had only China on their minds. We should also note what Admiral David E. Jeremiah, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet recently said about Soviet naval activity in the Pacific: “while the scope of out-of-area operations by Soviet combatants has been less extensive since 1985, the . . . presence [of] Soviet intelligence collection ships . . . [near] the Hawaiian Islands has grown from 60 ship days in 1986 to more than 250 ship days in 1987 and 1988.” How does a Soviet “China strategy” tie in with this eye-opening observation? In addition, the Soviets are presently constructing three large nuclear aircraft carriers; and I doubt very much that these are intended for use against China or Western Europe.

Further, with the Soviets meeting nearly all of China’s three prerequisites for restoring a Sino-Soviet relationship, and with Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev and Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping talking, how is it that Mr. Kennedy can still propose that if “war were thrust upon us, the U.S. North Pacific offensive would be the hammer . . . [and] on a North-South axis, *China . . . would be the anvil*”? While it is easy to see why the Soviets would want an accommodation with the Chinese (without their backside secure, the Soviets can do little, West or East), it is not as clear why the Chinese are increasingly eager to mend fences too. I would suggest that there is more than meets the eye in Chinese-Soviet reconciliation, and that if we really want to gauge Chinese feelings toward the free world and international peace, we should watch which way the wind blows in Cambodia. If the Chinese continue to provide political and military support to the infamous Khmer Rouge, do not count on China for much.

Now, coming to the how of Mr. Kennedy’s proposition, it is one thing to haggle over modernizing Nato’s short range nuclear weapons, but entirely another to submit that America’s five Army divisions be completely withdrawn from Europe. Are we to believe that the Europeans are to be responsible for security in the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa in addition to their own continent? And suggesting moving the Second Marine Division from Camp Lejeune on the east coast to Camp Pendleton in California only compounds the problem. Containing the Soviet Union should not mean transforming the United States into a Pacific-only power; we must

maintain our resolve to handle contingencies elsewhere. It simply means better utilization of men and dollars.

Instead of moving all of the U.S. Army's assets from Europe, I suggest that we leave there nearly a corps (the heavy stuff, a mechanized division and armored brigade), deactivate two divisions, and put the remainder in Alaska. Then, move the First Marine Division to Alaska as Mr. Kennedy recommends, and reposition there cold weather clothing and equipment for the Second Marine Division. Next, train all of them, including elements of the II MEF from Camp Lejeune and the Army's 6th Light Infantry Division currently in Alaska, in conducting amphibious operations in the North Pacific. This is necessary because if we are going to talk about an invasion of Soviet Asia, it is going to take more than two Marine divisions, even as the assault echelon of a larger force, to make a forceful entry against the 27 Soviet divisions in the Far Eastern Military District of the Far East TVD—especially if the Chinese "anvil" is not there, or worse, is even part of the problem! Moreover, should we have to leave the Philippines, upgrade the Thirteenth Air Force and move it to Alaska; likewise relocate *some* of the U.S. Air Force's men and planes stationed in Europe to Alaska when the Army reduces its force in Europe. In addition, allocate more carrier and surface action groups to the Pacific as Mr. Kennedy advocates; but this still leaves us short on amphibious, sea, and air lift!

However, none of the above may be required. With glasnost and perestroika flourishing, and 20 McDonalds slated for operation in Moscow, it is not completely unimaginable that there could be such an animal as democratic communism. But this is not a possibility that I would care to wager my sons on. And since the primary aim of our strategy should be to prevent war, I would hope that the United States and its allies continue a policy of stringent containment until military reality suggests otherwise.

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