

2007

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Recommended Citation

Baer, George W. (2007) "Notes toward a New Maritime Strategy," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 60 : No. 2 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol60/iss2/4>

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Naval War College Review, Spring 2007, Vol. 60, No. 2

NOTES TOWARD A NEW MARITIME STRATEGY

George W. Baer

Admiral Michael Mullen, the Chief of Naval Operations, has charged us with thinking about how to redefine sea power in this era of hyperglobalization. He asked us to think of a new vocabulary, a new frame of reference, to consider what will take our maritime strategy beyond sea combat *and* enable a sound public understanding of the Navy's value. Or, as Vice Admiral John G. Morgan, Jr., Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Information, Plans and Strategy, has said, the core question for us to answer at the end of this discussion is: "How will sea power influence history in our time?" Put another way: What is the role of the ocean, of American maritime armed forces, in securing American safety and prosperity?

A NEW MARITIME STRATEGY?

This is not new a question. One hundred fifteen years ago, faced with similar challenges of new technologies, globalization, and new naval threats, the founders of the Naval War College, admirals Stephen B. Luce and Alfred Thayer Mahan, answered the question with a new maritime strategy for the nation and the Navy. They called it "sea power," and it endured for a hundred years, a strategy of sea combat, of sea control, and of power projection. We are following in this tradition when we ask again today: What is the Navy for?

One goal of the new maritime strategy, then, is to establish and sustain public understanding of the role we expect sea power to play in our time, to demonstrate the link between American naval forces and the preservation of our way of life.

Of course, we have some general expectations of our naval policy. The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) has listed them: to adapt the service to the country's requirements in an era of hyperglobalization; to meet the threat of terrorism; to

stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction; to deter or control a future peer competitor on the sea; to support friends and allies; and to address maritime issues in an era that is both transnational and state-centric in nature. These are jobs the Navy must do to support our national policies.

Beyond these basic and essential naval requirements, is there anything more that the Navy, and a maritime strategy, may do to help the nation in this era of

Good order at sea will be an international construction.

hyperglobalization? Establishing our national maritime agenda is a shared responsibility, shared between the public and the military,

between officers and civilians. This is so because we want to give a national answer to the question of what the Navy is for.¹

That was Mahan's question, and it again is ours. Like his, our concerns mix old and new, traditional maritime services and future needs. Like his, our new maritime strategy has to have public as well as professional support. Sea power then and today must be socially construed.

We all agree that the Navy is a combat force and that its missions generally are to preserve free use of the sea, enhance global commerce, and secure our shores. The first requirement for our fleet, then, as the basic condition of our new maritime strategy, must be broad preparedness for sea combat. But more may be asked of it than sea combat.

The Navy must serve homeland defense, and it also must be ready to give humanitarian assistance around the globe. It must support armed interventions and also position itself for ballistic missile defense. It must deliver "fires" ashore and also conduct constabulary duties. It must protect fisheries and also be ready to fight an interstate war. It must enforce sanctions and also assist in sea-use management. It may be called upon for offshore command and control in case of a terrorist pandemic and also to monitor the cybersphere. I mention these many and varied functions—some traditional uses of navies, some new, hard- and soft-engagement missions—because all these are what the Navy *must prepare* for. For all that, for our maritime environment, do we need a new strategy? The answer is yes.

For starters, I think we should want to establish the widest possible national understanding of the values we assign to the ocean. A national maritime strategy will take into account more than just combat. The sea sustains our ecosphere. It is essential to life on earth. The ocean is a vital venue of our commerce and global culture, a source of essential protein, a domain of salutary recreation. Some forty thousand merchantmen of over three hundred gross tons ply the sea today. The U.S. Maritime Administration estimates that global maritime trade, travel, and commerce will double in the next twenty years. Entire societies are

dependent upon maritime commerce and upon food from the sea. More than a hundred marine reserves have been established worldwide as habitats, reflecting the need of a productive and resilient ocean. It is an ocean under stress. The phytoplankton mass is diminishing, acidification is increasing. The number of dead zones has increased by a third in just the last two years. The number of these anoxic zones is now two hundred. Public and official discussions must keep these facts in mind, for commerce and culture, ecology and food sources, as much as politics and naval power, shape the values we—and others—place upon the sea.

The ocean has value because it is an essential part of our common space. The opening words of the recent 2004 report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy express our position in the world: we are “a nation surrounded by and reliant on the oceans.” We are on a water planet. Seen from space, the earth is largely blue. The ocean is a single whole. The water of Narragansett Bay connects to the Sea of Japan. Our life and well-being are affected by this global connection. For that reason, our maritime policy must be holistic. A maritime strategy is America’s face to the sea.

We must now consider the ocean’s value from different perspectives. One is seeing the ocean as what Mahan called the “wide common,” a space for the movement of commerce, a place of food, of environmental health, and of recreation, for use by all. Another perspective is to see that same ocean as military water, either as a moat, a protective defensive barrier, or, alternatively, as a water highway for offensive use. The point is that ocean water can be crossed in all directions, so it can be a medium of trade, of military aggression, or of defense in depth. It can be a common, a moat, or a highway. Our maritime strategy will depend on what we want it to be.

IS THE OCEAN STILL A COMMON?

Yes. But it is an increasingly restricted and contested common.

It is a place of potential contest because sea space is not just geographical space. It is also political space. Many states today are developing their own maritime strategies, either for protection or for armed reach. Nations make local economic and security claims. Asian states seek stability near the Straits of Malacca. Sweden protects the environment of the Baltic. India advances its influence in the Indian Ocean. China wants to influence East Asian and perhaps western Pacific seas. Recently President Hu Jintao of the People’s Republic of China called for the building of a powerful navy prepared “at any time” for military struggle, a navy fit for what he called China’s “military’s historical mission in this new century and at this new stage.”² North Korea threatens ocean movement in the Sea of Japan. Australia and Spain worry about illegal immigration from the

sea. Chile and Iceland think about fisheries. New Zealand's exclusive economic zone is fifteen times the land area of that country. Norway and Nigeria, to say nothing of Iran and the Arab states, think about pumping and transporting oil. As part of its nation, the United States claims almost 11.5 million square kilometers of territorial waters.

Our claims are political as well as commercial: we project naval power across the sea, throughout the globe, and that power may be contested. Last October a Chinese submarine surfaced, undetected, within five miles of the carrier USS *Kitty Hawk* in waters near Okinawa. It is possible that some states might create formidable sea-denial capabilities and, perhaps, limited sea-control capabilities as well. If

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that is the case, America may need to continue to command the commons, as only strong maritime power can prevent such denial, and once in command, influence

how certain ocean-directed states may develop: encouraging them to cooperate or deterring their expansion. In the present world of many powers, and should our land and air forces be restricted in access or effect, such influence at sea as command of the common presents may be our best means of foreign policy leverage, and hence the key to a future maritime strategy. The sea is and will remain a political sphere.

But if the sea can be contested, it can also be a space for cooperation. Many laws and agreements already apply at sea, and all shape, or suggest, a common concern for the "wide common." There are environmental protocols, the International Seabed Authority, the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, the UN's Law of the Sea Convention. The United States is not a party to the Law of the Sea Convention, but we recognize the usefulness of cooperation and operate in ways consistent with its provisions of navigation and overflight. Admiral Mullen stated his policy on cooperation recently in Venice. It was, he said, "the maritime forces of many nations working together for global maritime security, while keeping the sovereignty of territorial waters secure as a core principle."

"Good order at sea," then, refers to a framework of agreements for living with the unitary world ocean.³ A secure global maritime environment is in America's interest. Good order at sea will be an international construction, an iterative process, a network shaped as much by agreement as by naval power. A cooperative attitude is there to develop. For instance, today twenty-two countries participate in the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, a group that is itself a direct outcome of a suggestion for regional associations made by the American CNO at an International Seapower Symposium held at the Naval War College twenty years ago. In the words of Admiral Mullen, "As we build upon ideas like Theater

Security Cooperation, the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Regional Maritime Security Initiative, we find that every nation has a stake in security, and a distinct, unique capability—as well as a great desire—to contribute.” If they have a stake in security, they should have a stake in broader ocean management as well.

IS THE OCEAN A MOAT OR A HIGHWAY?

Of course it is both. The ocean as a moat, a military space, gives security space. It offers defense in depth. But by the same token, as a body of water it permits offensive use, permits maritime power projection. One can move both ways across a moat. A moat can become a highway. Naval strategy is what determines how the Navy will use the ocean, both for defense in depth and for access to foreign ships and foreign shores.

For two hundred years America was favored by ocean space. We thought of the sea as our protection, as our safety zone, our natural strategic depth. A French ambassador many years ago observed, “America is blessed with fish on one side, and fish on the other.” But fish space is not enough: ocean space is again open to those who master the technology of sea control and have the will to use it.

We are not invulnerable. Attacks against us have happened before. The United States was founded in the face of the longest seaborne supply route before World War II, the greatest overseas expeditionary force yet seen by history, launched against us in the War of Independence. We won that one, thanks to our continental resolution and outside help, but our vulnerability to British sea power remained as long as we lacked sea control. Depth in itself was not enough. A few years after independence, in 1814, the British burned down Washington, D.C.—destroying the Capitol Building, the White House, the National Archives, and the departments of War, State, and Treasury—all, that is, destroyed by an amphibious invasion force from across the sea. The United States could not defend its own shoreline.

That is why, in 1890, searching for a new maritime strategy in a new technological age, Mahan said that the Navy had to reshape its force and its doctrine if it was to be the true shield of the republic. Passive coastal protection was not enough. We needed oceangoing battleships. The Navy had to become an offensive battle fleet prepared and able to defeat an approaching enemy fleet in blue water, away from American shores. Mahan’s strategy of sea combat and power projection dominated American naval policy for the next hundred years. Sea power meant we could fight our wars “over there” and beat anyone who challenged our use of the sea. The best defense of our coastline, Mahan said, was a good offense, out to sea.

That strategy of maritime power projection held through World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. The North Atlantic Treaty was named for an ocean,

befitting its maritime sponsor. The Cold War was for the United States based on a global maritime strategy meant to contain a continental opponent. The United States became the protector of the ocean's rimlands, a barrier against Soviet expansion to the sea. At the end of the Cold War we had total sea control. The rimlands of the world were open to trade and to liberal values—our national policy called for “enlargement and engagement.”

Then on 9/11 violent politics hit our shore with a stunning shock. The ocean's vastness and our prodigious military and intelligence forces had not safeguarded American soil. The meaning of security had changed. Now the national strategy proclaimed that protective actions abroad and at home were indistinguishable and might have to occur simultaneously. The strategic distinctions were blurred between offense and defense, between means and ends. Strategic depth had to be established, not just enjoyed. The moat that secured the United States from direct attack and the highway that secured our strategic access abroad came to be seen as one and the same, as indeed they have always been.

That is to say, the expanse of the ocean does not in itself guarantee either security or access. Its strategic dimensions must be created. Strategic value is something that must be imposed upon the sea. This is why our new maritime strategy must emphasize full maritime domain awareness. That is why the Navy will have a role in ballistic missile defense. That is why the Navy must operate in cyberspace. That is why the Navy will rely on the Global Information Grid, on new command-and-control capabilities, to confer strategic benefits, to use the sea's great capacity for maneuver to hit the foe before he hits us, to give us off-shore control. Mahan would have approved of forward deployment, forward presence to maintain strategic depth, to stop a threat before it materialized.

THAT BRINGS US TO: THE NAVY AND A NEW MARITIME STRATEGY

We can start by remembering the geostrategic values that are conferred upon a maritime state such as the United States, which is in a position that gives the great strategic advantage of global exterior maritime lines of communication.⁴

A recent workshop at the Naval War College gave us a useful sea power syllogism, emphasizing the value of a naval peripheral approach and what is strategically required.⁵ It was described as “the Periphery Syllogism”:

- Who commands the seas can exploit global maritime exterior lines.
- Who exploits global exterior maritime lines can attain the global exterior maritime position.
- Who exploits the exterior position can prevent anyone else from commanding the world.

To elucidate these issues, Robert Rubel, dean of the Naval War College's Center for Naval Warfare Studies, asked the College faculty members three questions.

Is the nation shifting from strategic defense to strategic offense? That is, which serves the nation better now: The ocean as moat or the ocean as highway? Strategic depth or power projection? Concentration or dispersion of force? The answers to these questions bring into play the main strategic features of ocean use: mobility, depth, influence, access. In one form or another the Navy will use these attributes to defend the homeland, secure its economic well-being, and promote a favorable world order.

There are, however, very substantial economic costs to global influence. Forces "poised" in continuous forward deployment are immensely expensive.⁶ An effective strategy must be sustained by an appropriate budget—hence our need for public support and for cooperative allies. As Mahan and Theodore Roosevelt knew, the public had to want to buy those battleships. Preparedness was a shared responsibility.

The Navy cannot write a sustainable national maritime strategy alone. Admiral Mullen has noted that the Coast Guard and the Marine Corps are direct participants in forming the new maritime strategy. He has called the Coast Guard's Evergreen Project the equivalent of the Navy's maritime strategy. The recent publication of *The U.S. Coast Guard Strategy for Maritime Safety, Security, and Stewardship* stresses the Coast Guard contribution to developing regimes supporting American ocean policy, developing maritime domain awareness, and close integration with the Department of Defense. The subtitle of *Sea Power 21* is *Projecting Decisive Joint Capabilities*.

The nature of war at sea may also change. What kind of force, what kind of strategy, what kind of friends, and what cost will be required remain open questions. The most recent report of the CNO's Strategic Study Group 24, located in Newport, gave a look thirty years ahead and concluded, "Future operations will more resemble a pick-up game with neighborhood partners, or a street fight that spontaneously erupts, than a well-planned operation conducted under conditions of the U.S.'s choosing."

What is the value of navies in preserving economic order? That is, how can the Navy best protect the benefits we gain from use of the sea in the age of hyperglobalization? This again suggests the value of creating good order at sea—a strategy that includes naval force but also the creation of a cooperative framework of like-minded maritime states. Our purpose here is to permit access to materials and markets, to encourage prosperity and the favoring of political values through trade and social interchange, and to protect the position in the global economy of our friends and allies. We can use our influence in two ways. We can help friends—and we can hurt opponents. We can open commerce, and

we can cut it off. We can seal off another's moat by blockade, to take away the value of his seaward protection. We seek to preserve economic order; we may also be called to disrupt it. Sanctions are under way this very moment against several states. These sanctions could get stronger. Blockade and interdiction are traditional naval missions, and they are very serious: blockade is a belligerent act under international law and may be considered an act of war.

A new maritime strategy must be ready for whatever the government commands: sea control, sea denial, assurance, deterrence, or disruption. Or more: recently the CNO instructed the newly convened Strategic Studies Group 26 to take as its theme for the year "Fighting in Cyberspace in 2030." He told the SSG to "seek an appreciation of the relationship between cyberspace and the traditional maritime domains, including warfare and naval competition."

This is the new world: naval presence in cyberspace, in the new "wide common" of our time. U.S. policy seeks an unimpeded flow of information commodities, of the goods and services of cyberspace. That recollects traditional Navy functions. There must be free navigation through the sea of ether as well as on the sea of water. In financial markets, for instance, over 95 percent of all wealth is digitally repre-

sented. Information warriors, terrorists, and pirate hackers threaten this, and thus also the security of military communications. A great deal of information power, over 90 percent, flows under the ocean,

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through fiber-optic cables. Protection is required to ensure reliable movement of electrons along the seafloor as well as of bulk cargo on the surface. Information moves as commerce; movement adds value. The Navy is movement, and commercial movement is something navies have always protected, or attacked.

So the Navy of a trading nation might well position itself to protect and monitor bandwidths as well as merchant ships. A mobile, present Navy could grasp a new form of sea control, guaranteeing free navigation of—if necessary, escorting—the transmission mechanisms of the modern world.⁷

Also, for all-important national defense, the need to track an enemy in cyberspace, to deprive him of this medium of action, is a top national priority that the globally deployed and electronically endowed Navy is well equipped to support. This again is a function of full maritime domain awareness, the basis of effective sea power.

How can we encourage naval investment by friends and allies? Here the Department of State could well become an active partner. The proposed Global Maritime Cooperation Initiative, an international network of navies that cooperate in flexible ways on the missions suggested above, will be as much a diplomatic

project as one just among navies. In short, and for greatest value, all our maritime considerations must be fit together. Our national maritime strategy expresses the whole, not just the parts. We must see maritime strategy whole.

A strategy, then, will show the maritime services what they are to protect, what they are to pursue, and for what they are to prepare. It will give a common purpose that will serve to overcome the community-based differences within the Navy. A new maritime strategy will be an integrated naval combined-arms concept, envisioning a force ready to fight in integrated space. A new maritime strategy will express the way we see ourselves in respect to the world ocean and declare what the fleet can do about it.

These purposes must be clear, and they must be realistic. In the last analysis, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard cannot decline to act, but they must be able to do what they are asked to do. A strategy is worthless if it cannot deliver on its promise, if it sets goals without effects. That is why setting policy and strategy is iterative, an interaction of ends and means, between the goal setters and the men and women at sea. Officers must state the requirements of the maritime services to officials who must set the nation's expectations. Political officials must listen to the military officers, who must act. Both in turn depend on the support of the American public. Naval effectiveness means getting the right mix of resources and need. Naval readiness is about a national obligation to pay for and support the force. Again: the new maritime strategy is, and must be, a shared responsibility.

A FINAL WORD ON EDUCATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

They say the Naval War College is about "Clausewitz and salt water." To me, that equals maritime security and, more broadly, maritime strategy. Let me conclude with a brief word on the College's historical role in shaping our understanding of the sea and the sea services, the importance of ideas and of education in establishing the terms of maritime and national security, the importance of the education of professional naval officers and of creating a broader public awareness of maritime values.

I mentioned Mahan's contribution. Eighty years after Mahan, in 1972, Vice Admiral Stansfield Turner restated the College's academic purpose in his convocation address to its officer-students. "We must be able to produce military men who are a match for the best of the civilian strategists, or we will abdicate control of our profession. Our profession can only retain its vitality so long as we ourselves are pushing the frontiers of knowledge in our field." That is the mission of the schoolhouse.

I end with a story about the power of ideas. In 1893 Secretary of the Navy Hilary Herbert decided to close the Naval War College. His assistant said the College

was “really only a dancing school” for Newport debutants. The head of the Bureau of Personnel said about Mahan, “It is not the business of a naval officer to write books,” and ordered him to sea. As Secretary Herbert boarded a dispatch boat to go to Newport and personally close the school, his aide handed him a copy of Mahan’s second sea power book, *The Influence of Sea Power on the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1793–1812*. Herbert did not close the institution, and on his return to Washington, he said, “This book alone is worth all the money that has been spent on the Naval War College. When I embarked on this cruise, I had fully intended to abolish the college; I now intend to do all in my power to sustain it.”⁸ Such is the power of strategic analysis. If you look at Mahan’s book, you will see in the preface: “Whatever success the book has is wholly and exclusively due to the Naval War College, which was instituted to promote such studies.” That is why—to advance such studies—we are in conversation today.

NOTES

This article is adapted from remarks given on 6 February 2007 at the Naval War College during the first “Conversation with the Country,” public sessions subsequently held in major cities throughout the nation on behalf of the Chief of Naval Operations to elicit inputs to the formulation of a new maritime strategy.

1. For a development of the notion of shared responsibility, see Douglas L. Bland, “A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations,” *Armed Forces and Society* 26, no. 1 (Fall 1999), pp. 7–26.
2. *New York Times*, 29 December 2006.
3. See a discussion of “good order at sea” in Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), chap. 10.
4. See also Barry R. Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,” *International Security* 28, no. 1 (Summer 2003), pp. 5–46.
5. Briefing of the Options Development Workshop, Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, 13–15 December 2006, by Professor “Barney” Rubel, Dean of Naval Warfare Studies and head of the College’s Maritime Strategy project.
6. The Royal Navy defined “poise” as: “An attribute of a maritime force which permits it to remain in international waters for long periods while retaining the ability to become engaged in events ashore or withdraw without risk of embroilment.” The British also have defined forward deployment as “naval loitering with variable menace.”
7. For ideas on a naval role in information protection I thank Dr. Joseph Rosen. Whether, or how, the United States would permit its military to stand between a civilian information society and a (potential) information enemy, at least in peacetime, is an open question. It is a matter of constitutionality, function, and capability. The uses of force for this purpose, however, can be indirect, the support of cooperative politically and commercially critical regions—which is what naval forces can do.
8. John B. Hattendorf et al., *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the U.S. Naval War College* (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, 1984), pp. 34–35.

