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"...From the Sea" and Back Again: Naval Power in the Second American Century

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Naval Power in the
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The necessity of a navy . . . springs . . . from the existence of peaceful shipping, and disappears with it, except in the case of a nation which has aggressive tendencies, and keeps up a navy merely as a branch of the military establishment.

Captain A. T. Mahan,
The Influence of Sea Power on History, 1660–1783, 1890

The primary purpose of forward-deployed naval forces is to project American power from the sea to influence events ashore in the littoral regions of the world across the operational spectrum of peace, crisis and war. This is what we do.

Admiral Jay L. Johnson,
"Forward . . . from the Sea: The Navy Operational Concept," March 1997

W HY DOES A LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of nearly continental size require a navy? How does naval power contribute to national security and the achievement of national objectives? What does this imply about the kinds of naval forces that a liberal democratic republic requires and about the peacetime and wartime naval strategies it must pursue?

In the 1990s, as at critical junctures in the past, long-standing answers to these questions about what necessitates the maintenance of naval power and what it is that a navy does that justifies the expenditure of national wealth on it have been

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called into question. This essay explores the efforts of the U.S. Navy to design a naval force posture and strategy consistent with the images of national purpose and international conflict that dominate fin de siècle American political discussion. Central to the Navy's efforts to link naval power to national security in the new century has been the rejection of Mahanian notions of naval power, with their emphasis on the control of the international commons, and the embrace of the assumption that to be relevant to American security objectives, naval power must be applied "from the sea" against sovereign transoceanic actors. Understanding the forces that led the Navy to this conclusion offers insight both into the difficulties the Navy is presently encountering in operationalizing its vision of naval power and into the range of alternatives available to the service as the nation moves into its second century of global politico-military preeminence.

Naval Power in National Strategy

Postwar military planning is notoriously difficult, and the synchronization of Navy strategy with national grand strategy has historically been problematic for the U.S. Navy. How to make naval power relevant to the concerns of national decision makers, given their particular conception of world politics, American national interest, and international violence has resurfaced as a critical issue with remarkable regularity: in the early 1890s, the early 1920s, the late 1940s, the late 1960s, and again today.

In the aftermath of World War I, for example, Navy and national leadership operated from sufficiently different assumptions that for roughly a decade the liberal isolationist Republicans who controlled the White House found it expedient essentially to exclude the Navy from the nation's naval planning. The "new order of sea power" that emerged from the Washington Treaties of 1922 was negotiated without significant input from the Navy; the resulting American fleet lacked capabilities that Navy leaders, operating within a very different intellectual framework for understanding national security, regarded as necessary for the effective protection of American national interests. After World War II, the disjuncture between Navy planning and national strategy reached such a magnitude that in 1949 the Navy's top leadership lined up to testify in Congress against the administration's policies, in the so-called "revolt of the admirals," and paid the predictable price. Two decades later, as the nation wrestled with the lessons of Vietnam, the Navy's force-posture and strategic accommodation to the national political currents was perhaps more successful, but the costs to the Navy as an institution, measured in morale and a protracted period of "hollow" forces, were enormously high.

By comparison, adaptation to post–Cold War structural and political realities appears to have proceeded remarkably smoothly: the Navy's difficulties in remaking its strategic concepts and force structure to adjust to post–Cold War

foreign and national security strategy appear to have been remarkably modest. Virtually overnight, the Navy redefined how it proposed to contribute to the national weal, shifting its justification for American naval power from a "Maritime Strategy" that emphasized the value of destroying the enemy's fleet and controlling the high seas to a littoral strategy that stressed employing Navy forces to project military power ashore. This shift was not simply rhetorical: it involved a substantial refocusing of naval capabilities and efforts, from forces designed and trained to seek out aggressively and give battle to an advanced and highly capable opponent, to forces designed and trained to exercise gunboat diplomacy across a spectrum of violence from peace to major war. Within the naval family, it also involved a redefinition of the always-sensitive relationship between the Navy and Marine Corps.

The apparent ease with which the Navy achieved internal consensus about the direction in which it needed to move and the dispatch with which it has proceeded should not obscure the magnitude of this achievement. Redefining the meaning of naval power and the Navy's central tasks was an enormous undertaking, both intellectually and bureaucratically. Intellectually, the new littoral strategy required writing off the substantial human investment that had gone into developing, elaborating, and institutionalizing the Maritime Strategy in the early and mid 1980s. The emotional, cognitive, and organizational costs associated with abandoning the monumental edifice of the Maritime Strategy and adopting a vision of naval warfare that had never, in the Navy's two-hundred-year history, dominated thinking or shaped actions should not be underestimated simply because they were paid. Nor were the bureaucratic obstacles small or painless: abandoning the high-seas focus of the post-Vietnam Navy and adopting a littoral one necessitated a significant shift in resources within the Navy itself, from the submariners (who had increasingly come to dominate the Navy in the 1980s) to aviators and surface sailors. This was a strategic shift with real human consequences, demanding that individuals make and endorse decisions that would put their own futures in the Navy, and the futures of their junior officers, in jeopardy.

For scholars who have speculated that absent intervention by political authorities, military services are extremely limited in their capacity to engage in nonevolutionary strategic adjustment, the Navy's development of its littoral strategy offers extraordinarily interesting disconfirming evidence.[1] Avoiding the errors of 1922 and 1949, the Navy recognized that new postwar conditions (domestic as well as international) would mean not only a change in the nation's grand strategy but a wider, more sweeping transformation of the national leadership's underlying assumptions about the nature of American foreign policy and international conflict—and that the Navy would have to adapt its vision of national security and war to match that of the political leadership if it was to remain relevant. Simultaneously avoiding the errors of 1968–1974, the Navy

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recognized that a broad reeducation process within the service, designed to cre-
ate an institutionalized consensus on the purpose of naval power, was necessary
if strategic adjustment was to occur without destroying the Navy as a function-
ing institution. Tailoring Navy force posture and strategy to new grand strategic
concepts was by itself insufficient: a broadly shared understanding of the new
role and missions of the Navy would be necessary if the process was to be suc-
cessful. (Indeed, the Navy has actively sought not only to build an intellectual
consensus within itself but to educate the other services and create a joint con-
sensus on the meaning and uses of naval power.) The Navy's approach to devel-
oping and institutionalizing its new strategic conception was thus a deliberately
self-conscious one.[2]

The problem of strategic adjustment has not simply been one of overcoming
intellectual and bureaucratic inertia, however. Uncertainty made—and contin-
ues to make—the process of developing a Navy strategy consistent with na-
tional grand strategy a difficult one. The environment of the early 1990s was
ambiguous in two critical regards. First, the international strategic climate was
unclear. The kind of threat the Navy would face—the kind of war it would next
be called upon to fight, or the kinds of peacetime policies it would be called upon
to support—was, and indeed still remains, uncertain at best. Second, the internal
cognitive-political environment in which the Navy found itself was equally un-
clear. In the early 1990s the nation's vision of national security and of the nature
of international conflict was in transition, its ultimate content undetermined.
Thus both what the Navy would be called upon to do and the terms or intellec-
tual framework within which the service would have to justify itself to the
nation's political establishment were indeterminate.

To be sure, that the end of the Cold War logically demanded a change in
Navy strategy was abundantly clear. DESERT STORM brought this lesson home to
the Navy. As Admiral William Owens observes:

> Unlike our Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps comrades in arms, we left the first
> of the post–Cold War conflicts without the sense that our doctrine had been vin-
> dicated. Quite the contrary. We left knowing not only that the world had
> changed dramatically, but that our doctrine had failed to keep pace. Little in
> Desert Storm supported the Maritime Strategy's assumptions and implications.
> No opposing naval forces challenged us. No waves of enemy aircraft ever at-
> tacked the carriers. No submarines threatened the flow of men and materiel across
> the oceans. The fleet was never forced to fight the open-ocean battles the Navy
> had been preparing for during the preceding twenty years. Instead, the deadly
> skirmishing of littoral warfare dominated. . . . For the Navy, more than any other
> service, Desert Storm was the midwife of change.[3]

But what change would prove acceptable to the nation's political leadership
and would harmonize with national strategy was less clear. The end of the Cold

War and the cultural tensions associated with movement to a postindustrial economy and an explicitly multicultural society meant that the elite's conception of both American national security policy and naval power was malleable at best and fluid at worst.

National Security in the National Imagination

For roughly forty-five years, Navy strategy could safely be predicated on the assumption that the dominant national vision of national security was a Realist-internationalist one. By 1946 or 1947 a consensus had developed within the American political elite that the world was an inherently conflictual place—that security could not be guaranteed by cooperative international institutions but required active military measures to guarantee some sort of favorable international balance of power—that the American state's political essence and America's national interests demanded military engagement in world affairs—and that ultimately American political life was not purely an internal matter but rather derived its meaning and purpose through its interaction with the outside world. The American republic could not, in this conception, survive indefinitely as an island of liberal democracy in a hostile world, and the hostility of that world could neither be eliminated nor held in check through international institutions. Together the Realist vision of a violent world and the internationalist vision of a globally engaged America implied a national security policy aimed at vigorous maintenance of an international balance of power or, better, at a preponderance of power that would roll back forces inherently and unalterably hostile to the continued survival of the American republic.

For the Navy, this Realist-internationalist national vision, and the national security policy consensus in favor of global containment that derived from it, justified a major national investment in forward-deployed naval power. The familiarity and "normality" of this naval posture and strategy to the two generations of Americans who matured during the Cold War should not obscure its striking oddity: a liberal, democratic republic, basically self-sufficient in economic resources, possessing a competitive industrial base, and lacking any imperial pretensions or objectives, built and trained naval forces to exercise nothing less than global naval hegemony—and paid for this capability a price roughly equal to 2 percent of gross national product. This naval strategy made sense only in the context of a vision of national security that assumed the external world was populated by forces implacably hostile to America and that even if it secured its own borders, the American republic could not survive in a world dominated by such forces.

By the late 1980s, however, both of the underlying elements of this Realist-internationalist vision were in question. On the one hand, a mellowing image

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of communism (followed by the collapse of communism as a viable ideological alternative), in conjunction with a domestic social transformation that underscored the potential for tolerance and cooperation among disparate groups, challenged the conflictual foundation of the Realist perspective. Increasingly, liberal ideas, stressing the potential for such institutions as the market and law to provide satisfactory mechanisms for resolving conflicts—ideas redolent with the tradition of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt—reentered political discourse, suggesting the possibility that American security policy ought to be based on liberal institutions, not military power. Beginning with Nixonian détente, the notion that security might be achieved through institutions like arms control and trade began to burrow its way into American political consciousness, like a liberal worm in the comfortably solid reality of the Realist apple. Though the post-Afghanistan Cold War reprise froze such heretical ideas, pushing uncommitted thinkers such as Jimmy Carter back into Realist patterns of thought (and pushing such liberal heretics as Cyrus Vance out of government circles entirely), and though the Reagan administration's view of an inherently dangerous "evil empire" led it to doubt the efficacy of even such limited security institutions as Mutual Assured Destruction, Realism's hold on the American imagination was loosening for a variety of reasons, including long-postponed generational change in leadership circles. By the early 1990s even George Bush would speak openly of the potential for a new world order.

At the same time that Realist presumptions of an inevitably disordered and conflictual international system were being challenged, the internationalist vision of America—of an America whose essence was defined, or at least proved, by its active, positive role in the world—was also being called into question, though admittedly to a lesser degree. The integration of American society and economy into the larger world and the existence of improved means of mass communication (able to convey world events to American households with a heightened immediacy) worked strongly against a return of isolationism. Nonetheless, the social dislocations associated with movement to a postindustrial economy, coupled with the absence of any clearly identifiable external adversary to blame for internal distresses, resulted in increasing cognitive tensions in maintaining the old internationalist image and in a growing presumption that the principal focus of the American state's attentions ought to be internal, not external.[4]

The end of the Cold War thus coincided with and exacerbated an emerging cultural struggle over how to visualize national security. This struggle between four competing visions—Realist-internationalist, liberal-internationalist, Realist-isolationist, and liberal-isolationist—logically has an enormous impact on the type of naval power the United States requires.

In the twenty-first century no less than during the Cold War, a Realist-internationalist vision of American security policy implies the need for a large,

forward military capability backed up by substantial mobilization potential. Given the Realist-internationalist framework for conceptualizing American security requirements, the U.S. military must be able to act unilaterally to contain or defeat the hostile powers—China, Russia, an Islamic world—that inevitably will emerge to challenge the United States and the balance of power that protects its interests. Clearly, this sort of Realist-internationalist vision of security policy, which drove the American pursuit of naval power from 1890 to 1922 and from 1946 to the end of the Cold War, has deep roots in the political culture of industrial America. The continued attractiveness of this model of world politics is reflected both in the popular appeal of "clash of cultures" theses and in the strenuous intellectual efforts in the Pentagon and elsewhere to envision China as a looming and inevitable adversary, demanding vigorous balancing action.[5]

By comparison, an America with a liberal-internationalist vision of its world might require marginally smaller forces. These forces, however, would still have to be substantial and quite possibly would require increased flexibility. (Indeed, the substantial scale of military capabilities implied by this vision is suggested by an examination of the programs of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt.) While in the Realist-internationalist model forward engagement is necessary to maintain the balance of power and to contain aggressors bent on world domination—that is, to prevent dominos from falling—in the liberal-internationalist conception forward engagement is needed to reassure more timid members of the international community of the security provided by emerging liberal, democratic institutions; to support the nation and state building that will provide the institutional building blocks of international order; and to deter atavistic "rogue" states, like Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, from lashing out before they finally succumb to the dialectic social and economic forces of liberal democracy. Where in the Realist-internationalist view military forces can be tailored for fighting war, possibly even for fighting the general war that represents the ultimate danger, in the liberal-internationalist understanding military forces need to be capable of a wider variety of activities and need to be able to act in concert with allies or within a coalition framework, even when such cooperation is not militarily necessary.

By contrast, a Realist-isolationist vision of America and its world would dictate military forces capable of shielding fortress America from the dangers outside—missiles, terrorists, refugees, and drugs—and of punishing aggressors who attempt to interfere in American affairs. If Realist internationalism represented the worldview of Teddy Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and John Kennedy, and if liberal internationalism reflected the vision of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, the American exemplars of a Realist-isolationist vision might be George Washington and John Adams. Essentially an updating and translation into modern, high-tech form of the kinds of military forces this nation possessed

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in its first century, a navy for a Realist-isolationist America would resemble a super–Coast Guard, enhanced with ballistic and cruise-missile defenses and an effective area-denial capacity, married to a specialized force able to conduct purely punitive operations against aggressors. While, depending on the magnitude of foreign military threats, Realist-isolationists may see the need for substantial American military efforts, they are unlikely to support efforts that would involve America overseas or provide the United States with the means of transforming other societies. Apart from immediate threats to American shores, they are unlikely to be concerned either about the maintenance of some sort of global balance of power (since developments elsewhere in the world are not viewed as matters appropriate for American intervention) or about the impact that American defense efforts might have on the behavior of others (since the hostility of others is assumed).

A liberal-isolationist vision of America, like that embraced by the Republicans of the 1920s, underscores the need to avoid military forces that would trigger security dilemmas, that would interfere with the organic growth of liberal democratic societies abroad, or that would enhance the power of militarist and antidemocratic ideologies and interest groups at home. Where Realist isolationists see the world as a dangerous place and attempt to protect American security by establishing a barrier against it, liberal isolationists see it as a potentially friendly place but find no reason to become deeply involved, at least militarily, in its affairs. International order is quite possible and highly desirable, but it develops naturally out of the interaction between liberal democratic societies. The contrast with liberal internationalism is revealing: where Wilsonians assumed that liberal democratic institutions might at least sometimes grow out of the barrel of a gun and that the emergence of liberal national politics could be helped along through timely outside intervention, and where FDR's liberal internationalism emphasized the need for policemen even in well ordered societies, the liberal-isolationist vision stresses that a peaceful international system requires that each national society focus on its own perfection, and concludes that external military interference is more likely to be a hindrance than a help.[6] While American forces might be called upon to participate in overseas humanitarian ventures, for liberal isolationists the central problem in designing forces is a negative one: how to avoid stimulating undesirable reactions abroad or a militarist culture at home. The difference between the internationalist and isolationist versions of liberalism thus hinges principally on the assumption of where the principal danger to liberal democratic polities lies: externally, from aggressive neighbors, or internally, from illiberal or undemocratic social forces.

Part of the problem facing the U.S. Navy in the early 1990s was thus to anticipate the framework within which national leadership would visualize American national security. It is unclear whether awareness of the lesson of the 1920s was widespread within the Navy, but that lesson was certainly there to be

learned: in the 1920s when Navy leadership tried to justify naval power in the Realist-internationalist terms that had shaped national thinking from 1890 to 1912 to a political elite that had come to view the world in liberal-isolationist terms, the result was disastrous. Because they made no sense in the intellectual framework employed by national leaders, Navy efforts to explain the national need for naval power were dismissed as parochial special pleading. This was clearly a danger again in the 1990s.

War in the National Imagination

At the same time, however, Navy leadership also had to pay close attention to a second set of competing visions, more specifically about the nature of war and the role of naval power in war. Across the nation's history, American thinking has shifted between two fundamentally opposed views of warfare. One, with roots in the colonial experience and linked to a construction of national identity that is largely independent of the state, has seen war as a struggle between competing national societies or ways of life—English versus Indian, American versus English, American versus Mexican, Northern versus Southern, democratic versus fascist/militarist, free/democratic versus enslaved/communist—that ultimately pits an entire people against another. The other has its roots in the European state tradition and is linked, in American history, first to Hamiltonian efforts at state building and, a century later, to the Progressive movement's efforts to transform the American state into an institution capable of dealing with such national social problems as industrialization and Reconstruction. This second vision has interpreted war as a clash between rival states and their professional military establishments.

These competing countersocietal and countermilitary visions of war obviously have very different implications with respect to the appropriate uses and targets of violence. In its extreme form, the first seeks the extirpation or transformation of an opposing society, and in its moderate form is willing to impose pain directly on an opposing society in order to gain political concessions; the second views war as a chivalrous clash between warriors, a competition between champions, to adjudicate a dispute between rival states. In the first, war is Hiroshima, the *Lusitania*, Sherman through Georgia, and the destruction of Indian villages' winter grain stocks; in the other it is Jutland, Ypres, or the charge up San Juan Hill. In one, the deliberate reduction of the Soviet Union to radioactive rubble is acceptable; in the other, the accidental death of a few hundred civilians in a Baghdad shelter is unacceptable.

In the same way that it has shifted between countersocietal and countermilitary visions of war, American political culture has also shifted between oceanic and cis- or transoceanic visions. Oceanic visions assume that the political objectives of war can be accomplished by controlling the international commons and

thereby dominating participation in international society: while invasion may follow, control of the ocean is by itself determinative of outcome. The economic, military, political, and social value of using the commons or engaging in international interaction is regarded as sufficiently high to decide the fate of states and nations. Control of the oceans implies control not simply of the world economy but, through the capability to support coalitions and alliances, of the global balance of power.

Cis- and transoceanic visions, by contrast, assume that war requires the destruction or occupation of the adversary's territory to achieve its purpose. Protection of one's own homeland (the cisoceanic vision) assures political stalemate; successful assault on the adversary's sovereign domain (the transoceanic vision) is necessary for decisive political victory. In this view, actions on the international commons merely facilitate action in this decisive theater of terrestrial sovereignty.

In the period from 1949 to 1968, the Navy harmonized its strategy with national strategy by accepting the political leadership's view of war as essentially a transoceanic countersocietal exercise. That is, the dominant view in political circles, which (after the revolt of the admirals) the Navy under Admiral Forrest Sherman and his successors accepted, was that to achieve its political effect war would need to be brought to the sovereign territory of the adversary to seize control over that territory, and that the appropriate target of military action was the adversary's society, not simply his military forces. For the Navy this meant that the principal justification for naval power was its ability to bring strategic war to the adversary's homeland and to facilitate a war of occupation that would bring the adversary's society under American military control. The Navy's 1946–1949 efforts to justify its program in alternative, more traditional terms— in terms of the Navy's ability to defeat an opposing fleet and control the oceans—had met with increasing incomprehension and, in 1949, with the public rejection of the Navy program in favor of the Air Force's plans for strategic bombardment. In the post-1949 period, therefore, the Navy pursued a "balanced fleet" whose mission in general war was to seize and support forward bases for strategic bombing and, ultimately, for the invasion of the Soviet Union. In more limited conflicts, this "balanced fleet" would support force projection into the Third World. Consistent with this vision of warfare, as the Cold War progressed the Navy vigorously sought a capability to conduct carrier-based and later ballistic missile attacks on the Soviet Union, to control sea lanes of communication to critical theaters, and to project strike air and significant Marine power into the Third World.

For a variety of reasons, the American elite and attentive public abandoned this vision of war in the late 1960s, and by the early 1970s a new vision, an oceanic countermilitary one, was firmly fixed.[7] Americans would fight war by controlling the commons and by using this systemic dominance to shift the military

balance of power in favor of allies and proxies. The Navy, or at least its top echelons, moved lockstep with national leadership in this transition. Between 1968 and 1974 the Navy dramatically reconfigured itself, slashing forces for amphibious warfare and for maintaining the defensive sea control needed to protect the convoys required for transoceanic operations. Initially, this transformation required no justification, since it meshed with national thinking (most clearly expressed in the Nixon Doctrine, regarding the potential for winning wars at a distance by using control of the commons to empower proxies) and with popular disillusionment with any image of war that suggested the necessity of actually occupying or transforming a hostile society. The post-1968 Navy was thus reoptimized for aggressive operations against enemy fleets aimed at seizing control of the oceanic commons. As a practical matter, this meant redesigning the fleet to take the war into Soviet home waters and destroying Soviet naval power, root and branch.

During the Carter administration, Navy policy moved too far in the direction of an oceanic countermilitary strategy for the comfort of some political leaders. Figures in the Carter administration, most notably Robert Komer, who clung to a transoceanic countersocietal image of war, were openly critical of the Navy, arguing that the key pillar of American security was protecting Western society along the central front in Europe and that the essential Navy contribution to national security was the protection of sea lanes of communication to this terrestrial front.[8] In response, the Navy began to develop and articulate its oceanic countermilitary vision and to explicate the ways in which the reoptimized Navy could be used to generate the desired political outcomes. In the 1980s, these efforts came to fruition in the Maritime Strategy.[9]

As with alternative visions of national security, alternative visions of war imply the need for different types of naval power as well as suggest different frameworks for justifying the acquisition of the tools of naval power. As noted, transoceanic countersocietal images of war imply a navy designed to launch strategic blows and to support the Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force as they bring war to the homes and workplaces of an enemy society. The enemy's military establishment represents a target only to the extent that it possesses a capacity to interpose itself between American military power and the target society; the enemy's navy needs to be neutralized if it threatens to interfere with forward operations, but its destruction has no value in itself; while sea lanes of communication must be protected, a task requiring broadly dispersed forces and sustained effort, enemy bastions need not be invaded. Unless the war can be won quickly with strategic bombardment, victory will require the occupation of the adversary's homeland and the subjugation of his society, and this implies the need for a substantial mobilization base for a protracted war. While the Navy plays a generally supporting, rather than independently decisive, role in this conception of war, the requirements for naval power may still be enormous, as Forrest

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Sherman and his successors as Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) in the 1950s and 1960s were able to argue. In addition to ballistic missile submarines and nuclear-armed carrier aviation, the Navy could make the case for substantial amphibious lift, extensive antisubmarine warfare capability to protect the flow of forces to the transoceanic theater and raw materials to the homeland, and sufficient battle fleet superiority to deter a concentrated sortie by enemy units.

Though on first blush a transoceanic countermilitary image of war would seem to have many of the same implications for the Navy as a transoceanic countersocietal one, this proves not to be correct. Most obviously, strategic bombardment recedes in importance. More broadly, since victory is seen as requiring the destruction of the adversary's military capacity rather than control over his society, a transoceanic countermilitary image of war keeps open the door for an independently decisive navy: by projecting precise, focused power into the littoral, destroying the military establishment of an adversary with air strikes or Marine operations, an optimally designed navy can defeat small adversaries or create conditions for victory by regional allies. In larger conflicts, the Navy would play a key role in joint efforts, taking timely actions to shape the battlespace, protect allies from politically or militarily devastating initial blows, and hold or open beachheads and lanes of communication for intervention by U.S. Army and Air Force units. More than any other vision of war, this one implies the importance of a navy designed and trained for routine forward presence and precision strike. The four obvious force elements suggested by this vision are carriers able both to strike and provide air superiority; cruise missile– armed warships; advanced air and ballistic missile defenses able, at a minimum, to protect fleet units and preferably to protect critical political and military targets ashore; and highly capable, highly mobile Marine units, able to carry out high-value precision attacks.

By contrast, oceanic countermilitary images of war like those popularized by Mahan in the 1890s and which gained currency in the post-Vietnam period imply a navy optimized to destroy an adversary's fleet. This activity is, in itself, expected to convey decisive political advantage by isolating the adversary, cutting his contact with clients and allies, and eliminating his ability to use the oceans for military purposes, such as deploying ballistic missiles. In this vision of war, a rational adversary will seek political terms when the destruction of his fleet deprives him of the ability to control or use the oceanic commons. The Navy for this kind of war would have to be prepared to go deep into harm's way to impose a Trafalgar or Copenhagen on an unwilling adversary. While such a force would need to be extraordinarily capable, it would not have to deploy forward routinely in peacetime, nor would it have to be capable of broadly dispersed, protracted sea-control activities. Nuclear-powered attack submarines, armed with strike as well as antiship and antisubmarine weapons, would play a key role in this vision of war, disrupting enemy defenses and opening an

opportunity for the battle fleet to advance; the main naval force, presumably organized around carriers, would require extremely capable air-defense and missile-defense escorts.

While sharing the view of the ocean as the decisive theater, oceanic counter-societal visions of war assume that the critical target of both one's own and the enemy's action is commerce, not military forces, and that decisive pressure can be applied without destroying the adversary's naval forces. Such a vision implies the kind of naval capabilities endorsed by the French *jeune école* or embodied in the German U-boat fleets. While American political culture never fully embraced this "raider" vision of war, the countersocietal elements of this thinking were clearly present in the naval strategy of the early republic. Prior to 1890, commerce raiding by privateers and cruisers occupied an important place in American strategy: while their activities were not expected to be decisive, they were expected to make the stalemate created by the effective militia-based defense of American society ultimately unacceptable to an imperial aggressor. The implications of this image for a twenty-first-century fleet are intriguing. For offensive action, improved intelligence and reconnaissance, presumably space based, would be a high priority, as would be the ability to protect such systems. Long-range aviation and missiles might provide the means of destroying commerce once detected, reducing the need for more traditional surface and subsurface raiders. Alternatively, the Navy could seek to close down oceanic commerce at its end points, through aggressive mining of harbors or forward submarine patrols, or through the destruction of critical port facilities. To defend one's own maritime commerce, a substantial investment in convoy escorts would likely be required; aggressive action to negate the opponent's intelligence and detection systems would also be highly attractive. In any case, an American fleet prepared to engage in war thus conceived would be highly specialized.

"... From the Sea"

Obviously, given this range of possible visions and naval forces, the question facing the Navy in the early 1990s was how to think about national security and war. What was an appropriate vision on which to base Navy post–Cold War planning? What was it that the Navy would do in the post–Cold War world?

The DESERT STORM experience provided some indication about how the nation and its leaders viewed these questions. That George Bush ultimately found it useful to justify action in terms of international norms and principles—for example, the violation of Kuwaiti sovereignty, human rights abuses, and world order—rather than in terms of national interest—the price of oil—spoke tellingly about the emerging liberal consensus in America. Similarly, that the American people concluded that their nation's obligations extended to

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Kuwait spoke to the continuing power of an internationalist vision of America. That, after debate, Congress and the administration failed to buy the argument in favor of a long-run, oceanic approach to dealing with the situation—to wait for sanctions and Iraq's isolation to bite—and instead concluded that satisfactory resolution of the crisis would require action on the ground provided evidence that transoceanic images of war, culturally problematic since Vietnam, were again not only conceivable but conceived. And that the American public recoiled so violently from civilian casualties suggested the strength of a counter-military image of war: even if Americans were willing to conceive of war as an invasion of a foreign country, they were still unwilling to view that invasion as being aimed against a foreign people.

Clearly, however, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the experience of the Gulf War, and perhaps most importantly the obvious budgetary implications of a peace dividend suggested the need for more careful examination of the future. Between October 1991 and April 1992 the Navy and Marine Corps undertook what they titled the "Naval Forces Capabilities Planning Effort" (NFCPE).[10] The NFCPE was explicitly aimed at developing a new strategic concept for the Navy and Marine Corps, assessing the naval capabilities the nation required and the appropriate roles and missions for U.S. naval forces. The NFCPE concluded that the collapse of the Soviet Union meant that deterrence of regional crisis and conflict would move to the forefront of the political-military agenda and that U.S. security would increasingly be based on informal coalitions, which would require greater peacetime presence and partnership building, rather than on formal alliances. Further, expanding economic interdependence underscored, on the one hand, the need for a continuous global peacetime presence to ensure stability and, on the other hand, the potentially growing role of naval actions to enforce trade sanctions. Finally, the NFCPE worried about the accelerating pace of technological change and the impact of real-time mass media coverage of military actions. Though this analysis of the changing realities of world politics logically suggested strategic movement in potentially conflicting directions (the emphasis on trade sanctions, for example, logically suggested an oceanic vision of war), the NFCPE analysis emphasized the role of the Navy in creating stability, supporting international "law enforcement," and preventing and controlling crises. To accomplish these aims, the NFCPE concluded, it was necessary to exploit the freedom provided by American control over the international commons to project power and influence ashore—to threaten or undertake actions against the sovereign territory of adversaries to shape their behavior. More broadly, the Navy appears to have emerged from the NFCPE process convinced that it needed to think about naval strategy within the framework of a liberal-internationalist vision of national security and within the framework of a transoceanic countermilitary image of war.

The Navy's new strategic vision was spelled out in ". . . From the Sea," a white paper signed jointly by the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps in September 1992. ". . . From the Sea" envisioned naval power being used to help create a stable global environment, deterring dissatisfied regional powers from challenging the emerging international order. "While the prospect of global war has receded," the authors observed, "we are entering a period of enormous uncertainty in regions critical to our national interests. Our forces can help to shape the future in ways favorable to our interests by underpinning our alliances, precluding threats, and helping to preserve the strategic position we won with the end of the Cold War."[11]

Backing away from the centrality of warfighting as the justification for naval power, ". . . From the Sea" established the line that naval power was uniquely valuable in the nation's political-military tool kit for what it could contribute to peacetime stability, deterrence, and crisis control. Naval power could be used flexibly and precisely across a range of missions, "from port visits and humanitarian relief to major operations." Implicitly endorsing fully the liberal-internationalist view of world politics and the notion that American military power, forward deployed, could play an important role in the construction and maintenance of institutions of cooperation, the authors of ". . . From the Sea" argued that

> the Navy and Marine Corps operate forward to project a positive American image, build foundations for viable coalitions, enhance diplomatic contacts, reassure friends, and demonstrate U.S. power and resolve. Naval Forces will be prepared to fight promptly and effectively, but they will serve in an equally valuable way by engaging day-to-day as peacekeepers in the defense of American interests. Naval Forces are unique in offering this form of international cooperation.[12]

The shift in emphasis here is important to note. "Presence" had long been identified as a Navy mission. Admiral Elmo Zumwalt's widely cited fourfold classification of Navy duties—sea control, power projection, deterrence, and presence—for example, explicitly noted the value of presence. But in the post–World War II American navy, "presence" was always the last and least justification of naval power, the residual category. ". . . From the Sea" reversed that prioritization: "presence" was the Navy's unique contribution. This shift was not of simply rhetorical significance. It meant that while the other services, in making their cases for the minimum force size required, would base their claims on what would be required to fight and win a war, the Navy would base its claim on what was required to shape the peacetime environment and control crises—and, given the Navy's widely dispersed areas of operation and the multiplier required to keep

rotational forces forward, this was significantly more than would be required to win any of the anticipated conflicts.

In addition to centering the Navy's responsibilities on presence, ". . . From the Sea" unequivocally endorsed a littoral approach:

> Our ability to command the seas in areas where we anticipate future operations allows us to resize our Naval Forces and to concentrate more on capabilities required in the complex operating environment of the "littoral" or coastlines of the earth. . . . This strategic direction, derived from the National Security Strategy, represents a fundamental shift away from open-ocean warfighting *on* the sea— toward joint operations conducted *from* the sea. The Navy and Marine Corps will now respond to crises and can provide the initial, "enabling" capability for joint operations in conflict—as well as continued participation in any sustained effort.[13]

The strategic conception of ". . . From the Sea" centered on four principles. First, naval forces would operate in an expeditionary role. "Expeditionary" was taken to mean that naval forces would be able to respond swiftly and on short notice, undertake a wide range of actions across the full spectrum of conflict while forward deployed, operate forward for protracted periods and unconstrained by foreign governments, and thus be able to act to shape the environment "in ambiguous situations before a crisis erupts."

Second, the Navy would be designed for joint operations with the Marine Corps: "The Navy and Marine Corps are full partners in joint operations." In one sense this is simply a logical corollary of the basic conception of a littoral strategy: if the point of naval power is to project force ashore, Marines are a critical element. It is, however, remarkable in two regards. In the first place, this marriage gave unprecedented prestige and power to the Marine Corps; the Navy was acknowledging the Corps as at least an equal partner, and possibly as the critical partner, in naval operations. The Marines represented the point of the Navy's spear. In the second place, this conception of "joint" operations ignored the Army and Air Force. The Navy was thus essentially making the claim that the Navy–Marine Corps team, without any involvement of the other services, was capable of undertaking the joint operations, or at least the joint operations in the world's littoral, that would be demanded by national decision makers. Thus while the Navy conceded a remarkable degree of its autonomy, it conceded it only to the Corps.

Third, ". . . From the Sea" reiterated the Navy's position that the Navy must operate *forward*. Forward operation was seen as necessary to demonstrate American commitment, to deter regional conflict, and to manage crises. Stressing the diplomatic side of naval power rather than its military character, ". . . From the Sea" underscored the importance of naval power in peacetime and crisis.[14] Ironically, however, the argument that the United States needed to operate its

navy forward in peacetime represented a strong argument for increased invest-
ment in high-technology naval warfare systems. Essentially, by linking its future
to the littoral the Navy was laying the groundwork for an "all-high mix" of
naval combatants. While with the demise of the Soviet Navy the United States
faced only limited challenges to its operations on the high seas, the coastal
environment was highly threatening: "Mastery of the littoral should not be
presumed."

Finally, abandoning a one-size-fits-all approach to operations, ". . . From the
Sea" concluded that naval forces would have to be precisely tailored to meet na-
tional tasking. Enhanced responsiveness of the Navy to the political-military
needs of national leadership during crisis was seen as critical: "Responding to
crises in the future will require great flexibility and new ways to employ our
forces. . . . The answer to every situation may not be a carrier battle group."

". . . From the Sea" also highlighted several qualities of naval power that it
regarded as particularly valuable, given its understanding of the nation's grand
strategy. First, the maneuverability of naval power meant that naval forces
would be able to "mass forces rapidly and generate high-intensity, precise offen-
sive power at the time and location of their choosing under any weather condi-
tions, day or night." In other words, naval power would permit American
leaders to gain the political and military advantage of seizing the strategic or tac-
tical initiative. Second, naval power would permit national leaders to take
forceful action without obtaining consent from friends or allies and without
putting American servicemen at risk: "Our carrier and cruise missile firepower
can also operate independently to provide quick, retaliatory strike capability
short of putting forces ashore." Third, naval power would permit the United
States to sustain its pressure and influence indefinitely: "The military options
available can be extended indefinitely because sea-based forces can remain on
station as long as required."[15]

"Forward . . . from the Sea"

". . . From the Sea" thus clearly outlined the Navy's new conception of itself
and of its contribution to national security. The principal impact of a follow-up
white paper issued in 1994, "Forward . . . from the Sea," was not to revise this
conception in any significant way but to underscore and clarify certain elements
of it and to edge away tactfully from one position that was controversial in joint
arenas and from one that was controversial within the Navy.

Even more plainly than ". . . From the Sea," "Forward . . . from the Sea" em-
phasized the liberal-internationalist, transoceanic-countermilitary vision en-
dorsed by the Navy. Far from stressing the inevitability of conflict, "Forward . . .
from the Sea" argued that the essential contribution of naval power to national
security was the support it provided to global regional stability, reassuring

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liberal-democratic friends, assisting the emergence of democratic societies, and supporting international institutions.

> Most fundamentally, our naval forces are designed to fight and win wars. Our most recent experiences, however, underscore the premise that the most important role of naval forces in situations short of war is to be engaged in forward areas, with the objectives of preventing conflicts and controlling crises.[16]

Underscoring the globality of American interests, and by implication attacking any notion of isolationism, "Forward . . . from the Sea" reiterated the position that the Navy was the handmaiden of American diplomacy:

> Naval forces are an indispensable and exceptional instrument of American foreign policy. From conducting routine port visits to nations and regions that are of special interest, to sustaining larger demonstrations of support to long-standing regional security interests, such as with UNITAS exercises in South America, U.S. naval forces underscore U.S. diplomatic initiatives overseas.[17]

Though reaffirming the partnership between the Navy and the Marine Corps, "Forward . . . from the Sea" edged back from the narrow definition of "jointness" suggested by the earlier document. While still maintaining that "the enhanced combat power produced by the integration of all supporting arms, which we seek to attain through joint operations, is inherent in naval expeditionary forces," the white paper conceded that "no single military service embodies all of the capabilities needed to respond to every situation and threat" and that "just as the complementary capabilities of Navy and Marine Corps forces add to our overall strength, combining the capabilities and resources of other services and those of our allies will yield decisive military power."[18] The new formulation, making the case that naval power was necessary though not sufficient to win transoceanic engagements, was that

> focusing on the littoral area, Navy and Marine Corps forces can seize and defend advanced bases—ports and airfields—to enable the flow of land-based air and ground forces, while providing the necessary command and control for joint and allied forces. The power-projection capabilities of specifically tailored naval expeditionary forces can contribute to blunting an initial attack and, ultimately, assuring victory. The keys to our enabling mission are effective means in place to dominate and exploit littoral battlespace during the earliest phases of hostilities.[19]

Similarly, while still arguing that naval forces could be deployed in flexible, tailored packages, "Forward . . . from the Sea" moved away from a position that might be interpreted as suggesting that something less than aircraft carriers and fully-capable Marine Expeditionary Units might be satisfactory for peacetime presence:

Our basic presence "building blocks" remain Aircraft Carrier Battle Groups—with versatile, multipurpose, naval tactical aviation wings—and Amphibious Ready Groups—with special operations–capable Marine Expeditionary Units. These highly flexible naval formations are valued by theater commanders precisely because they provide the necessary capabilities forward. They are ready and positioned to respond to the wide range of contingencies and are available to participate in allied exercises, which are the bedrock of interoperability.[20]

Although the Navy remains committed to the littoral strategy articulated in ". . . From the Sea" and "Forward . . . from the Sea," pressure to redefine or refine this conception of naval power has come from the joint arena as well as from within the Navy. Budgetary realities, of course, have served as the immediate stimulus for debate. But it would be wrong to dismiss the resulting discussion as mere bureaucratic politics or budgetary gamesmanship. Rather, what has emerged has been a profoundly interesting analysis of what a liberal-internationalist transoceanic–countermilitary navy looks like, whether this makes any sense in today's world, and whether the nation is likely to support this kind of force for very long.

Forward . . . into the Future?

By any measure, ". . . From the Sea," "Forward . . . from the Sea," and the littoral strategy they articulated represent a highly successful effort to adapt to the end of the Cold War and to chart a Navy course through the dangerous currents of strategic adjustment in the early 1990s. In remarkable contrast to earlier postwar experiences, the Navy successfully developed, explicated, and institutionalized a strategy that accommodated to the national leadership's liberal-internationalist vision of security and transoceanic–countermilitary image of war, linking naval power to national grand strategy and offering a convincing justification for Navy budgets and programs.

This success, however, should not obscure the problems looming for the Navy as it attempts to move into the coming century. As the 1990s draw to a close, the Navy needs to carefully consider whether a strategy of employing naval power "from the sea" represents an appropriate basis and vision for long-run policy or whether another abrupt change of course is demanded. Events of the last several years have already made clear that at least three dangers lie ahead if the Navy continues to steer by its littoral strategy.

The first and most immediate danger is from competitors to the littoral strategy: there are, as Army and Air Force voices have noted, a variety of ways besides projecting power "from the sea" to support a liberal-internationalist foreign policy and to fight a transoceanic–countermilitary war. While budgetary realities have stimulated this strategic competition between the services and are likely to continue to serve as the spur, it would be wrong to dismiss this

challenge to the littoral strategy as mere interservice rivalry or budgetary games-
manship. Rather, what has developed is a serious, if admittedly parochially
grounded, intellectual debate over alternative national military strategies—over
alternative ways to use America's military potential in support of "engagement
and enlargement." While a littoral naval strategy is consistent with a liberal-
internationalist vision of national security and a transoceanic-countermilitary
image of war, it is not the only military strategy of which that can be said, and
the Army and Air Force have successfully articulated alternative military strate-
gies that call into question the need for significant naval effort in the littorals.

The second danger, linked to the first, is that the Navy may be unable to de-
velop a workable operational concept for putting the littoral strategy into effect.
Indeed, the Navy has found it remarkably difficult to script a convincing story
about precisely how a littoral strategy works—that is, the Navy has had a hard
time identifying what it is about naval operations in the littorals that yields
political-military leverage and what forces and activities are therefore required.
The failure of "Forward . . . from the Sea" to address the issue of alternative
force packages is illustrative in this regard: continued insistence that carrier bat-
tle groups and amphibious ready groups are needed at all times in all theaters
reflects the conceptual and bureaucratic difficulty of determining the actual re-
quirements of a littoral strategy. Any decision to change deployment patterns,
mixes, or timetables would at least implicitly require a prioritization of peace-
time, crisis, and wartime duties; it would also represent a reallocation of re-
sources within the service. But without a clear understanding of the process by
which littoral operations generate the peacetime, crisis, and wartime outcomes
sought, the Navy will find it impossible to make the difficult tradeoffs de-
manded by budgetary pressures. Indeed, as budgetary pressures, the need to
moderate personnel and operational tempos, and the need to modernize be-
come greater, the imperative for a clearer understanding of the relative value of
(for example) forward peacetime presence, forward peacetime presence by car-
riers and amphibious forces, rapid crisis response, and massive wartime strike ca-
pacity will increase. Ultimately the danger is that a littoral strategy will become
unworkable through an inability of the Navy to make the required tradeoffs, in
which case it will find itself with forces that are too small, too overstretched, too
poorly maintained, too poorly trained or manned, too obsolescent, or simply
improperly configured to meet what prove to be the essential demands of a lit-
toral strategy.

The third danger, more basic and more beyond the control of the Navy than
the first two, is that the vision of warfare underlying the littoral strategy will be
abandoned by the nation. The DESERT STORM image of war as a transoceanic
countermilitary encounter is increasingly vulnerable, and as the elite and public
begin to imagine war in other, more traditional terms, the attractiveness and im-
portance of projecting power "from the sea" will become less apparent. To stay

in harmony with national leadership and national strategy, the Navy will be called upon to offer a revised account of the utility of naval power.

As the Navy tries to plan for the next century, it needs to take all three of these dangers into account. At the same time, it also needs to explore the underlying question of what it is that naval power can actually accomplish given the political, economic, and military realities of the twenty-first century. Across the spectrum of violence, from peace through crisis to war, how vulnerable or sensitive are opponents and friends to the various actions that navies can undertake?

Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force Views

By the mid-1990s the other military services, like the Navy, had come to view the nation's national security problem in primarily liberal-internationalist terms and to envision war in basically transoceanic countermilitary ones. Even operating within this generally shared intellectual framework, however, the four services reached strikingly different conclusions about the necessary direction of U.S. military policies and about how to employ military force to reach American aims. Not surprisingly, each service's conclusion underscored the value of its own contribution. But this predictable parochialism does not in any way negate the fact that each service's strategic conception was highly developed, sophisticated, intellectually nuanced, clearly articulated, and in at least three of the four cases, remarkably consistent internally.

While each service produced a variety of vision statements during the 1990s, perhaps the clearest opportunity for comparison of the services' alternative conceptions of American strategy came as part of the Joint Strategy Review process in 1996 and 1997. While the final output of the Joint Strategy Review was a consensus document, each service provided its own individual input, outlining the threat and the appropriate American response as it saw it. Comparison of these inputs offers a useful insight into the range of strategy and force posture alternatives conceivable, even given a broadly shared view of the world and war.

Fully endorsing the liberal-internationalist vision of American responsibilities ("As a responsible member of the international community and a prominent member of the world's most important intergovernmental institutions, the United States will continue to be bound to support international initiatives that establish or maintain stability in key areas of the world, to minimize human suffering, and to foster conditions that favor the growth of representative government and open economies"), the Army viewed the role of American military power in the construction of order as a broad one.[21] Like the Navy, the Army saw a critical peacetime and crisis role for American forces, stabilizing international politics and supporting peaceful solutions to or resolutions of international disagreements.

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> The U.S. Armed Forces will be required to engage across the range of military
> operations, and increasingly in military operations other than war. . . . Increas-
> ingly . . . conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacetime engagement will
> assume greater importance as the United States seeks to shape the future security
> environment. . . . There is a growing emphasis on the role that military force plays
> in facilitating diplomatic and political solutions to conflicts. The interconnected-
> ness of the emerging security system will lend greater weight to solving conflicts
> rather than simply defeating enemies.[22]

Similarly, the Army fully embraced and vigorously advanced the transoce-
anic conception of conflict. The Army's position was that overseas presence
represented the sine qua non of U.S. defense policy, necessary for deterrence of
aggression and reassurance of allies and to implement the National Security
Strategy of democratic "engagement and enlargement."

The Army's understanding of the transoceanic character of war, however,
led it to reach two further conclusions about this overseas presence—one that
placed it at odds with the Air Force and the other with the Navy and Marine
Corps. First, the Army argued against the notion of a "virtual" overseas pres-
ence, claiming that

> historical example indicates that authoritarian regimes are less frequently deterred
> or compelled by the threat of punishment from afar; thus a physical presence will
> be required for the most effective deterrent. . . . Given anticipated trends, a physi-
> cal and highly visible presence (vice some form of virtual, transient, or distant
> presence) will be required to deter or defeat aggression.[23]

Second, the Army reasoned that to be effective, overseas presence needed to
be ashore rather than offshore: "Because deterrence is based on perception and
because most potential U.S. adversaries are primarily land powers, a U.S. land
power presence may be the most effective deterrent."[24]

While, consistent with the liberal transoceanic character of its vision, the
Army emphasized the importance of coalitions—"coalition partners provide
political legitimacy, which is sometimes critical to facilitating access and support
for U.S. operations (and denying those to our adversaries)"—it cautioned
against overreliance on partners.[25] This caution derived from several concerns.
First, U.S. interest in maintaining the system as a whole might transcend the
particular interests of local partners, and the United States might therefore see
the need to act even when partners did not. Second, partners would be unwill-
ing to act if the United States provided only "high technology or unique capa-
bilities"—that is, if the United States slipped toward an oceanic vision of
conflict or relied too heavily on sea or air power. Finally, dependence on coali-
tion partners would have political costs:

If the United States continues to reduce its armed forces and instead relies on coa-
lition forces to provide a sizable portion of fighting forces, the United States may
be compelled to make substantial concessions to gain the cooperation of future
partners. . . . This may . . . require the United States to alter its objectives to con-
form to the desires of its partners, and which may led [*sic*] to unappealing compro-
mises.[26]

In other words, if the United States desired to retain control over the agenda
for creating a liberal international order, it would have to pay the price of sup-
porting an army. Liberal leadership could not be had at a bargain price, in either
blood or treasure. It would require not only a transoceanic capability but that
this capability be provided on the land, not from the sea, and that it not be de-
pendent on allied contributions.

In an attack directed principally at the Air Force, the Army also rejected the
notion that technology would offer some sort of panacea for the problems of pro-
tecting American interests, particularly if those interests continued to be defined
in liberal-internationalist terms. On this, the Army was blunt in its appraisal:

> While the risk of a high technology peer competitor cannot be discounted, trends
> indicate an increasing frequency of U.S. involvement in lesser regional conflicts and
> operations other than war (e.g., peace support operations, security assistance, hu-
> manitarian relief, combating terrorism). Retention of engagement and enlargement
> (or an evolutionary successor) as a national security strategy will increase the fre-
> quency of such operations. While technology can assist in the conduct of such op-
> erations, rarely can precise, highly lethal weapons delivered from a distance redress
> the strategic conditions that created the challenges to U.S. interests. Nor may those
> high technology solutions apply to the increasing likelihood of irregular and non-
> conventional warfare or operations conducted in urban areas.[27]

In other words, the Army wanted to be on record that it doubted that more
effective means of killing people and destroying things would solve the problem
of creating liberal democratic societies.

The Navy agreed with the Army on many of these issues. The Navy posi-
tion, drafted by the Strategy and Concepts Branch of the Navy Staff (N513, in
Pentagon parlance—the successor to the old OP-603, the shop that had prided
itself on having provided the critical intellectual impetus in developing the
Maritime Strategy), followed the lines suggested by ". . . From the Sea" and
"Forward . . . from the Sea."

Though couching its concerns in more Realist, less liberal phraseology than
the Army, the Navy too saw the United States as having a fundamental national
interest in protecting and expanding international order, and it concluded that
this would mean the United States would need to be involved, even militarily,
in events on the farther shores of the world's oceans.

The United States will have vital interests overseas arising from its alliance com-
mitments and historic ties with several nations, its broad strategic interest in pre-
venting the rise of regional hegemons, its responsibility to protect U. S. citizens
abroad, and its international economic interests, including trade, investment and
access to resources. U.S. security strategy will continue to be transoceanic in or-
der to protect and promote those interests.[28]

Again like the Army, the Navy argued that overseas presence was the key to
stabilizing the international order, deterring aggression, and preventing conflict.
"Posturing with forces in the continental United States, such as by increasing
their readiness for deployment, can be used to strengthen the message conveyed
by forward deployed forces, but cannot be a substitute for on-scene combat
credible forces."[29]

Where the Navy departed from the Army was on the issue of whether over-
seas presence ashore would be possible or necessarily desirable.

Nationalism and ethnic politics will cause declining access to overseas bases, in-
creasing operational restrictions on the use of remaining bases, and growing re-
luctance to enter in status of forces agreements that grant U.S. personnel special
status in their countries. Lack of clear and present danger will lead to less willing-
ness on the part of other nations to allow either permanent or temporary basing of
U.S. forces in their countries. It will also lead to less willingness to grant over-
flight rights through their airspace to U.S. military aircraft not directly supporting
their immediate defensive needs.[30]

This skepticism that shared interests in liberal order would be sufficient to
support continued U.S. military presence within the sovereign boundaries of
other states was heightened by concern that "future adversaries will attempt to
use intimidation and coercion to prevent U.S.-led coalitions from forming and
to prevent potential coalition partners from granting base access to U.S.
forces."[31] In the Navy's view, bases and land power were unlikely to be available
for unconstrained use at the right time and in the right place. Worse yet, be-
cause of their fixed, sovereignty-challenging nature, such bases and forces
would serve as vulnerable lightning rods.

Overseas bases in unstable, trouble-prone regions will be vulnerable to a variety of
threats, including terrorism, special operations forces, and WMD [weapons of mass
destruction] delivered by ballistic missiles, tactical aircraft or unconventional means.
Thus, in some countries routine peacetime overseas shore basing may not be desir-
able even when it is available.[32]

The implications of this were clear: overseas presence would have to be pro-
vided by naval forces.

By providing a highly visible expression of U.S. resolve and capabilities, naval forces will shape the strategic environment, enhance the U.S. leadership role abroad, reassure friends and allies, enhance regional stability, and deter potential aggressors. Operating with strategic mobility on the high seas, free of the political constraints that can deny U.S. forces direct routes through foreign airspace or access to forward bases ashore, naval forces will remain the force of choice for preventing troublesome situations at the low end of the conflict spectrum from escalating to war. . . . Their multifaceted ability to take decisive, early action ashore is essential to containing crises and deterring conflicts. . . . The flexibility and mobility of naval forces make them particularly valuable for deterring the potential aggressor who might exploit U.S. involvement in a major conflict elsewhere as an opportunity for strategic advantage. Finally, the deterrent value of naval forces is greatly enhanced by their ability to extend full-dimensional protection over allies and critical infrastructure ashore.[33]

The Marine Corps shared the Army's and Navy's belief in the importance of overseas presence and the Navy's skepticism that land-basing would be possible: "In the future, overseas sovereignty issues will limit our access to forward land bases and geo-prepositioning."[34] The solution, in the Corps' view, was to maintain forward-deployed, at-sea forces able not only "to conduct operations other than war (OOTW) and other expeditionary operations" but most importantly, to engage in forcible entry—the Corps' core competency.[35]

Like the Army, however, the Corps was explicitly skeptical about technology as a solution to the nation's strategic problems. The Corps' skepticism, however, was more pragmatic than the Army's: the problem with technology was not that finding more effective ways of killing the enemy would fail to provide effective political leverage but that technology was unlikely to work.

While we must capitalize on technology as a force multiplier, history repeatedly teaches that technology promises more than it ultimately delivers. U.S. military strategy must retain the flexibility to accommodate a failure of technology. Such failures, whether enemy induced, mechanical malfunctions, or deficiencies in design, must not prevent accomplishment of the mission.[36]

The Corps' major contribution to the intellectual debate was its introduction of the concept of "chaos" and its skepticism that liberal democracy would take successful root in the Third World. The Corps' embrace of liberal internationalism was thus weaker than the Navy's and far weaker than the Army's. Thinking in the more traditional Realist-internationalist terms of the Cold War, the Corps tended to assume the inevitability of conflict and the improbability that international institutions would restrain humanity's violent tendencies. Foreseeing failed economies, failed states, internal upheaval, shortages of and competition for natural resources, surging populations, undereducation and overurbanization, mass migration, awareness of income disparities, proliferating military technology

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including weapons of mass destruction, and fertile conditions for terrorism, the Corps painted a bleak picture.

> The epicenter of instability will be in the world's littorals where 70 percent of [the] world's population now lives. By 2010, that percentage will increase. Countering these threats will not be easy. As overseas bases close, America will rely more and more upon the most flexible and adaptable crisis response force. These forces must be capable of loitering in close proximity, near enough to influence events, but far enough away to avoid agitating potentially explosive situations.[37]

The Air Force, by contrast, offered a strikingly different, if not entirely internally consistent, solution. While providing a threat assessment not dissimilar from the Marine Corps' and acknowledging the continued importance of military OOTW, the Air Force concluded that engagement and environment shaping could be handled from a distance—from bases in the continental United States or in space. This move away from forward operations would be dictated by the fact that "forward deployed forces (i.e., staging areas, patrol areas, airbases, maritime task forces, etc.) will face increased risk."[38] The Air Force vision called for coupling improved information technology with longer-range strike capability to enhance American capacity to target and destroy objects and people precisely and with impunity. How exactly these improvements in military technology would translate into political influence or the capacity to shape political outcomes in a chaotic world was never specified. The Air Force did, however, assert that "nuclear weapons will continue to be relevant to U.S. national security for the foreseeable future," though it warned that "U.S. nuclear strategy must be updated. Nuclear proliferation and a decrease in U.S. conventional strength requires a coherent plan about the long-term role and utility of nuclear weapons in achieving U.S. strategic objectives."[39] In sum, the Air Force suggested, technology and not forward engagement would represent the key to stabilizing a turbulent world.

"2020 Vision" and the NOC

Outside the Navy, then, very different visions of how to accomplish the goals of U.S. national security policy were circulating, challenging the Navy's preferred strategy. Even inside the Navy, however, important questions remained.

". . . From the Sea" and "Forward . . . From the Sea" offered some explicit prescriptions for shifting resources within the Navy, away from forces for open-ocean and sea-control missions and toward forces for littoral force projection. Beyond this, however, these white papers did not offer much specific advice. Given the enormous budgetary pressures on the Navy in the late 1990s, some clearer appreciation of exactly how a littoral strategy would work was highly desirable. For example, could lesser force packages be substituted for

carriers and amphibious ready groups? Could forward operating tempos be lightened? Could forces be shifted between deployment hubs to get a more optimal distribution of resources? Could modernization in some technical areas be slowed? Answers to these questions, of course, hinged on a clear and shared understanding of what it is about forward operation in the littorals that is valuable—that is, about how to "operationalize" the littoral strategy.

In the 1995–1997 time frame, two distinct answers were developed within the Navy. At one level, the struggle was a classic bureaucratic one between two competing offices—the CNO's Executive Panel (the CEP, or in Pentagon nomenclature, N00K) and the Strategy and Concepts Branch of the Navy Staff in the Pentagon (N513). At another level, however, what emerged was a real intellectual debate, in which two clearly articulated visions of naval power were presented and carefully considered.

Because of its close ties to Admiral Jeremy Boorda, the principal action was initially in N00K's hands. Throughout 1996 N00K briefed and gamed repeated revisions of "2020 Vision," a draft white paper intended for the CNO's signature. Under the principal authorship of Captain Edward A. Smith, Jr., "2020 Vision" attempted to uncover the implicit logic of ". . . From the Sea" and "Forward . . . from the Sea."

The essential argument of "2020 Vision" was that precision engagement, or massed precision engagement, would permit naval forces to have a decisive impact, obviating the need for a lengthy war of attrition. Drawing on superior information about the location of targets and about how the adversary's political and military authority and command was structured—what the key nodes, or "targets that mattered," were—naval forces would be able to direct precise fires of sufficient magnitude to stun an adversary, destroying his capacity to wage war effectively and potentially compelling a political settlement. Operating forward and maneuvering freely, naval forces would be able to deliver this knockout blow immediately and at will.

The heart of "2020 Vision" was its notion of three tiers, or "axes," of targeting: national political, military infrastructure, and battlefield forces. While "2020 Vision" maintained that any of these tiers might be attractive, the implicit message was that either of the first two tiers offered a critical vulnerability that the Navy would be able to exploit, avoiding the necessity of going against the adversary's probable strength, the sheer mass of his battlefield force.

There were several interesting implications in "2020 Vision." In the first place, it moved warfighting capability back to center stage. N00K reasoned that the peacetime and crisis influence of U.S. naval forces depended entirely on the meaningful wartime options at their disposal. "Presence" might be valuable, but it had an impact only to the degree that those forces could affect wartime outcomes. Peacetime and crisis-environment shaping ought therefore to be regarded as a positive externality, not a central focus for Navy planning.

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Deterrence—the major peacetime mission, in the view of "2020 Vision"— would hinge on a visible capacity to identify and strike swiftly, massively, and repeatedly critical targets without running significant risk of enemy counterattack. Forward operation might be necessary to remind an adversary of this capability and to ensure that such blows could be executed in a timely fashion, but it was the capability for massed precision attack that lay at the core of deterrence.

Second, "2020 Vision" put air power—both manned aircraft and cruise missiles—at the core of its account. Where ". . . From the Sea" and "Forward . . . from the Sea" had made the Navy–Marine Corps marriage the linchpin of a littoral strategy, "2020 Vision" was principally a vision of unilateral Navy impact. To be sure, it suggested that massed precision strike would also enable ground operations ashore, both by disrupting the adversary's capacity for organized resistance and by providing supporting fires. But even in this regard, "2020 Vision" moved away from the close partnership with the Marine Corps and toward a broader conception of jointness that embraced the Army, Air Force, and coalition partners.

Third, "2020 Vision" emphasized the interaction of mass and precision in firepower. Precision alone would fail to have the desired effect. If the purpose of the blow was to induce shock and paralysis, a handful of missiles or air strikes would not be enough. Further, gradual attrition of key targets was unlikely to have the necessary impact: what was needed was the ability to take down an entire political system or an entire military infrastructure in a short period of time—with the clear capacity to do it again if the opponent attempted to reconstruct its control. "2020 Vision" assumed that with proper intelligence and careful modeling of the opponent's systems, the mass necessary to achieve these blows could be kept to achievable levels; "2020 Vision" also assumed that the cost of precision weapons would fall.

The upshot of "2020 Vision" was clear: effective presence requires concentrating on real warfighting plans. These would center on forward naval air and missile power. "2020 Vision" thus made a strong implicit case for the proposed arsenal ship—essentially a large, inexpensive floating missile magazine, with a small crew, deployed for very extended periods of time in critical theaters. The arsenal ship would be able to "pickle off" large numbers of cruise missiles in a relatively short period of time, delivering the kind of initial massed precision attack envisioned.

A secondary theme in both "2020 Vision" and in the arsenal ship design, but one that grew in importance as war games explored the concepts, was theater ballistic missile defense (TBMD). The potential importance of TBMD in both the political equation (preventing potential coalition partners or targets of coercion from being pressured into concessions early on) and in the military equation (keeping critical ports and airfields open, particularly given the danger of

chemical and biological attacks) became clear. Forward naval forces and a TBMD-armed arsenal ship might be critical in this role.

Perhaps not surprisingly, "2020 Vision" faced considerable opposition. The Marine Corps was openly hostile, of course. Within the Navy, many officers viewed it as a bureaucratic misstep, for two reasons. First, by stressing air and missile strikes as the Navy's critical contribution to national security, "2020 Vision" left the Navy vulnerable to (correct or incorrect) claims from the Air Force that it could perform the Navy's functions more cheaply. Second, by tying the presence mission so closely to warfighting requirements at a time when the Navy was larger than the warfighting requirements established by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, it left the Navy vulnerable to pressures for downsizing. Sub rosa, the linkage to the arsenal ship probably also generated hostility: the arsenal ship was seen by aviators as a threat to the carrier in a capital ship role, and it was seen by surface sailors as a threat to more capable high-technology missile shooters. Finally, war gaming failed to resolve doubts among skeptics about the decisiveness of the actions envisioned by "2020 Vision."

At a deeper level, however, the problem with "2020 Vision" was its fundamentally Realist flavor. Apart from recognizing that coalition partners might be more likely to cooperate if the Navy could provide TBMD, "2020 Vision" was a strategy for dealing with conflict, for engaging in coercion, not a strategy for creating cooperation. Its concerns were with how to threaten credibly to take down an opponent's infrastructure and how to overcome his area-denial efforts.

Opposition to "2020 Vision" was most actively centered in N513, N00K's natural rival in strategic planning. To be fair, N513's opposition was less bureaucratic than intellectual. N513 and its head during this period, Commander Joseph Bouchard, felt that "2020 Vision" failed to give sufficient attention to the real strengths of naval power—the enormous maneuverability of naval forces, their freedom from foreign political constraints, their sustainability, and their contribution to shaping the peacetime diplomatic environment and to responding to a range of humanitarian, political, and military crises—and that it overstated the likely impact of massed precision attacks. Initially, N513's alternative vision was expressed in the form of critiques of "2020 Vision." Ultimately, though, as support for "2020 Vision" waned, N513 was commissioned to produce its own document. Its mandate, however, was not to produce a "vision" statement (which might give the impression that the Navy was moving away from "Forward . . . from the Sea") but to generate an "operational concept."

The "Navy Operational Concept" (NOC) produced by N513 in early 1997 stressed that   .

operations in peacetime and crisis to maintain regional economic and political stability are traditional roles of the Navy–Marine Corps team. . . . Our hallmark is

forward-deployed forces with the highest possible readiness and capability to transition instantly from peace to crisis to conflict. This flexibility positions us to fight and win early, or to contain conflict. More importantly, our presence may prevent conflict altogether. By any standard or measure, peace is cheaper than war.[40]

The NOC returned to the concept of "expeditionary operations" first suggested in ". . . From the Sea" as the intellectual centerpiece for understanding how the Navy would execute its littoral strategy.

Expeditionary operations . . . are a potent and cost-effective alternative to power projection from the continental United States and are suited ideally for the many contingencies that can be deterred or quickly handled by forward-deployed forces. Expeditionary operations complement, enable and dramatically enhance the effectiveness of continental power-projection forces when a larger response is needed.[41]

Where "2020 Vision" had focused on what naval power might accomplish in wartime, the NOC focused on the stabilizing value of "being there" in peacetime. Bouchard was explicit about the liberal-internationalist ideology inherent in his account of the role played by sustained forward naval presence.

The Navy's role in peacetime engagement is to project American influence and power abroad in support of U.S. efforts to shape the security environment in ways that promote regional economic and political stability. Stability fosters a sense of security in which national economies, free trade practices, and democracies can flourish. Democratic states, especially those with growing economies and strong trade ties, are less likely to threaten our interests and more likely to cooperate with the United States. This stability and cooperation, which our peacetime engagement promotes, assists in meeting security threats and promoting free trade and sustainable development.[42]

Where "2020 Vision" focused on tiers of targets, the NOC offered a vision of enhanced cooperation and strengthened international regimes.

Our global presence ensures freedom of navigation on international trade routes and supports U.S. efforts to bring excessive maritime claims into compliance with the international law of the sea. When disaster strikes, we provide humanitarian assistance, showing American compassion in action. Our forward deployments always include a wide range of diplomatic activities, such as: sending Sailors and Marines ashore as representatives of the American people; bringing foreign visitors onto sovereign U.S. naval vessels; and carrying out a wide range of community relations activities. These efforts promote American democratic ideals abroad, enhance mutual respect and understanding with the peoples of other countries, and demonstrate U.S. support for friendly governments. Our forces

support U.S. diplomatic efforts aimed at shaping the security environment, such as improving relations with former adversaries or reducing tensions with potential adversaries.[43]

Obviously, the NOC could not ignore the more violent side of the Navy's duties. But, the NOC argued, the deterrent impact of naval forward presence derived not so much from the particular capabilities resident in the forward force but from the implicit threat of the full might of America. "We deter by putting potent combat power where it cannot be ignored, and by serving as a highly visible symbol of the overwhelming force the United States can deploy to defeat aggression." The unique contribution of naval power to national strategy was its political and military flexibility, not its firepower. Politically,

> operating in international waters, our forces are sovereign extensions of our nation, free of the political constraints that can hamper land-based forces. We put the right capability in the right place at the right time. We possess the unique capability of responding to ambiguous warning that either would not justify costly deployments from the continental United States, or might be insufficient to persuade nations in the region to host U.S. forces on their soil. When a visible presence might be provocative or foreclose U.S. military options, we can position submarines covertly to provide on-scene surveillance capabilities and firepower. Rotational deployments allow us to maintain our forward posture indefinitely.[44]

Militarily, the range of options provided by forward naval forces was their strength during crises—the same forces could send Marines ashore, evacuate noncombatants, enforce no-fly or no-sail zones, escort shipping, or launch air or missile strikes. In combination with the maneuverability of naval forces, this flexibility provided the capacity to frustrate a potential aggressor:

> We make it exceedingly difficult for an adversary to target us and deny him the option of pre-emption by keeping our forces dispersed and moving, by operating unpredictably or covertly, and by employing deception. The wide range of options we provide for immediate response to aggression leaves a potential aggressor uncertain of the intended course of action. This uncertainty keeps him off balance, disrupting his ability to formulate a coherent campaign plan and eroding confidence in his ability to effectively execute operation plans.[45]

In wartime, forward presence meant that naval forces could disrupt an aggressor's plans and frustrate his efforts to achieve a fait accompli. In addition, naval forces would be "critical for enabling the joint campaign. We ensure access to the theater for forces surging from the United States by supporting coalition forces to keep them in the fight, by seizing or defending shore bases for land-based forces, and by extending our defensive systems over early-arriving U.S. joint forces ashore."[46]

In deliberate contrast to "2020 Vision," the NOC was also careful to stress that "in some tactical situations, such as operations on urban terrain, a SEAL or Marine with a sniper rifle may be the optimum precision weapon," and that the Navy

> will be a full partner in developing new amphibious warfare concepts and capabilities for implementing the Marine Corps concept Operational Maneuver From the Sea (OMFTS). . . . We will provide enhanced naval fires, force protection, command and control, surveillance and reconnaissance, and logistics support for Marines ashore—enabling the high-tempo operations envisioned by OMFTS.[47]

Interestingly, while the NOC was briefed to and approved by the Navy's top leadership, and unlike "2020 Vision" was signed out by the CNO, its release was handled without any fanfare: distribution was on the Internet, and no "glossy" was prepared. Far from reflecting doubts about the content of the NOC, however, this low-key approach was meant to underscore the consistency of Navy policy and to dispel any concerns that the NOC represented a change in direction or new intellectual departure.

"Forward . . . from the Sea: Anytime, Anywhere"

In the wake of the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Navy again reaffirmed its commitment to its littoral strategy and to the liberal-internationalist vision of foreign policy and to the transoceanic-countermilitary image of war on which that strategy rested. Underscoring and publicly confirming the continuity in Navy thinking, the Department of the Navy's 1998 Posture Statement—issued jointly by Secretary of the Navy John Dalton, the CNO (Admiral Jay Johnson), and the Commandant of the Marine Corps (General Charles Krulak)—was titled "Forward . . . from the Sea: Anytime, Anywhere."

Like the NOC and earlier white papers, "Forward . . . from the Sea: Anytime, Anywhere" was premised on the assumption that the role of the U.S. military would be to support the spread of liberal institutions, such as democracy and the free market, around the globe. At the same time, however, it accepted the Marine Corps' concept of "chaos" and at least some of the Corps' pessimism about building a peaceful world order:

> We live in a complex and ever-changing world. The growth during this decade of democracies and free market economies is most encouraging. Yet nationalism, economic inequities, and ethnic tensions remain a fact of life and challenge us with disorder—and sometimes chaos. As both positive and negative changes take shape, the United States has become what some call the "indispensible nation"— the only nation with the technological capability and acknowledged benevolent objectives to ensure regional stability.[48]

This chaos and disorder, and the threat posed to the spread of democracy and liberal values, represented the principal challenge to American security, not some peer competitor. The Posture Statement went on to reiterate both the American national interest in supporting a liberal international order and the role of American naval power in this mission: "Naval forces project U.S. influence and power abroad in ways that promote regional economic and political stability, which in turn serves as a foundation for prosperity."[49] Now explicitly linking the littoral strategy to the new National Military Strategy of "Shape, Respond, Prepare," the 1998 Posture Statement reprised five familiar themes about the role of naval power in supporting a liberal-internationalist foreign policy.

First, "Forward . . . from the Sea: Anytime, Anywhere" reasserted the centrality of forward presence across the spectrum of conflict—in shaping the peacetime environment, responding to crises, and preparing to counter aggression. Second, it equated forward presence with *naval* forward presence, suggesting that constraints on the deployment or use of American forces on the sovereign territory of allies would mean that forward deployments would, in general, necessarily be sea based. It reasoned that

> shaping and responding require presence—maintaining forward-deployed combat-ready naval forces. Being "on scene" matters! It is and will remain a distinctly naval contribution to peacetime engagement. As sovereign extensions of our nation, naval forces can move freely across the international seas and be brought to bear quickly when needed. . . . Operating in international waters and unfettered by the constraints of sovereignty, naval forces are typically on scene or the first to arrive in response to a crisis. The inherent flexibility of naval forces allows a minor crisis or conflict to be resolved quickly by on-scene forces. During more complex scenarios, naval forces provide the joint force commander with the full range of options tailored for the specific situation. From these strategic locations, naval forces shape the battlespace for future operations.[50]

Third, while noting the role of naval power in warfighting, the Posture Statement emphasized that the unique Navy contribution to U.S. security efforts was the ability of naval forces to shape the peacetime environment and respond to crises short of, or prior to, war. The document detailed the wide range of peacetime and crisis "shape" and "respond" missions conducted by naval forces.

> Our forces . . . participate in a complete range of shaping activities—from deterrence to coalition building—establishing new friendships and strengthening existing ones during port visits around the world. These visits promote stability, build confidence, and establish important military-to-military relationships. In addition, port visits provide an opportunity to demonstrate good will toward local communities, further promoting democratic ideals. . . . Each exercise, large or

small, directly contributes to successful coalition building. Credible coalitions play a key role in deterring aggression and controlling crises. . . . Routine naval deployments signal both friend and foe of our commitment to peace and stability in the region. This demonstrated ability to respond rapidly to crises—and to fight and win should deterrence fail—offers a clear warning that aggression cannot succeed. Moreover, the ability of the forward-deployed forces to protect local allies and secure access ashore provide [*sic*] a guarantee that the full might of our joint forces can be brought to bear.[51]

Fourth, even while stressing the Navy's unique capability to shape the peace and respond to challenges short of war, the Posture Statement was careful to underscore Navy's endorsement of jointness in warfighting. Without backing away from the position that Navy–Marine Corps activities were inherently joint, the Posture Statement emphasized that "the Navy and Marine Corps also can integrate forces into any joint task force or allied coalition quickly."[52] Jointness would not relegate the Navy to subordinate roles, however. In the first place, even while recognizing that "in those cases where aggression is not contained immediately . . . by swiftly responding naval forces" the Army and Air Force would be involved, the Posture Statement sought to dispel any impression that the Navy's role in a land battle would be limited to providing logistics.[53] The document emphasized the Navy's participation in actual combat and its ability to provide key command and control for joint operations.

Naval operations are critical elements of the joint campaign. We deliver precision naval fire support—strike, force interdiction, close air support, and shore bombardment. We seize the advantage of being able to operate on and from the sea. Using high-tech information-processing equipment, we achieve superior speed of command by rapidly collecting information, assessing the situation, developing a course of action, and executing the most advantageous option to overwhelm an adversary.[54]

In the second place, in addition to playing a critical role while missiles, bombs, and bullets were flying, the Navy would (presumably unlike the Army or Air Force) be in harm's way both in the critical days and hours before the shooting started and in the weeks, months, and years after it stopped: "When the joint campaign is over, naval forces can remain on scene for long periods to enforce sanctions and guarantee the continuation of regional stability."[55]

Finally, the Posture Statement also repeatedly underscored the remarkable flexibility of naval forces, likening them to a rheostat permitting the National Command Authorities to send carefully calibrated messages and respond in a carefully calibrated fashion—and to leave force levels at a particular setting for indefinite periods of time. The extraordinary range of political and military options inherent in forward-deployed naval forces was also highlighted.

Even while extolling flexibility, however, the Posture Statement reaffirmed the Navy's commitment to traditional force packages—carrier battle groups and amphibious ready groups—and its unwillingness to address the possibility that less capable forces or other force packages might be sufficient to carry out the Navy's forward tasks in peacetime or crisis, let alone wartime.

> The balanced, concentrated striking power of aircraft carrier battle groups and amphibious ready groups lies at the heart of our nation's ability to execute its strategy of peacetime engagement. Their power reassures allies and deters would-be aggressors, even as it demonstrates a unique ability to respond to a full range of crises. . . . The combined capabilities of a carrier battle group and an amphibious ready group offer air, sea, and land power that can be applied across the full spectrum of conflict. . . . This balance and flexibility provides the National Command Authorities (NCA) a range of military options that is truly unique.[56]

Indeed, in the same paragraph it cited a commitment to "innovative thinking [in] preparing us . . . for an uncertain future," the Posture Statement was explicit and emphatic about what would not change—that "we will maintain carrier battle groups and amphibious ready groups forward, shaping the international environment and creating conditions favorable to U.S. interests and global security."[57]

Back to the Sea? Unresolved Difficulties

Despite the Navy's confidence that it is on track and that "the Navy's course for the 21st century set by *Forward . . . From the Sea* has proven to be the right one for executing our critical roles in all three components of the *National Military Strategy* [peacetime engagement, deterrence and conflict prevention, and fight and win] and for conducting the future joint operations envisioned in *Joint Vision 2010*," there are reasons for concern about the Navy's littoral strategy.[58] Two are obvious.

Barring dramatic developments in the external environment or unanticipated and profound shifts in domestic political culture, the liberal-internationalist construction of national security seems likely to dominate American thinking well into the new century.[59] The notion that a stable, peaceful international order is achievable is an attractive one, and at the moment Americans seem unlikely to conclude either that their own well-being can be separated from that of the rest of the world or that they are powerless to effect change.

The transoceanic-countermilitary image of war, however, appears far less robust. Experiences in places like Somalia and Bosnia have two impacts. In the first place, they underscore the ugliness and wearisome unpleasantness of actually trying to control another nation's sovereign territory. In the second place,

they make the idea of countermilitary warfare appear ridiculous: when the "enemy" is a mobilized society, not distinctively uniformed and highly disciplined soldiers, it is increasingly difficult to maintain an image of warfare as a clean, surgical interaction between opposing states and their professional soldiers, sailors, and airmen.

Indeed, the tension between liberal internationalism and a transoceanic-countermilitary image of war should be obvious. If American political leaders hold to a liberal-internationalist vision of national security, it is logically necessary for them also to believe that war is an acceptable, albeit unpreferred, tool: the liberal-internationalist vision implies a willingness to intervene, with force if necessary, to protect liberal democratic states and liberal international norms. Given recent experiences, however, if war is conceptualized in transoceanic-countermilitary terms (that is, if it is seen as requiring an intervention in the sovereign affairs of an adversary, and the defeat of his military forces, to achieve political victory), it will probably cease to be regarded as a usable option. The American public's stomach for Somalias and Bosnias appears quite limited. Ultimately, a liberal-internationalist image of national security is thus likely to compel Americans leaders to find some new, more attractive image of war. When they do—when, as in the past, they start assuming that war can be won simply by controlling the high seas or that war is a struggle between entire nations in which direct attacks on society are permitted—the littoral strategy will become a liability for the Navy.

The second and more important reason for beginning to explore alternatives to the littoral strategy, however, is skepticism about its ability to yield the peacetime, crisis, and wartime leverage claimed. The old Scottish verdict "not proven" seems amply earned in this case. It is useful to consider each of these environments—peacetime, crisis, and wartime—and what littoral naval power can reasonably be expected to produce.

In peacetime, the littoral strategy reasons, forward naval presence will encourage societies to take the risk of investing in liberal democratic institutions both at home and internationally. This ability of a forward-operating American navy to project power ashore is assumed to support regional politics by supporting general deterrence—that is, by deterring dissatisfied states from even thinking about changing the status quo through violent means. And it is expected to reassure existing liberal democracies, convincing them that neither accommodation with antidemocratic forces nor unilateral security measures that might trigger a spiral of hostility are necessary. This is an appealing image.

Belief in the peacetime impact of power projected "from the sea," however, is based on faith rather than evidence or analysis. There is no actual evidence that either routine peacetime presence by naval forces or expeditionary naval operations affect the evolution of societies, their support for international law,

their general propensity to resort to force to resolve disputes, or their fears that others will.

The lack of evidence in support of a proposition is, of course, not evidence against that proposition; it is simply an absence of evidence. A priori, however, there is substantial reason to doubt the efficacy of littoral projection of naval power in shaping the peacetime environment. What is known, principally from studies of crises (about which more will be said below), regarding decisions to engage in aggression and states' ability to understand or focus on power projected "from the sea" suggests a real danger that states will ignore or underestimate the capabilities inherent in American naval power. Moreover, even if it were shown to be the case that applying naval power "from the sea" has a significant positive impact on the peacetime environment, it would still remain to be demonstrated that it is a cost-effective means of creating that impact—that naval power is less expensive than alternative military means, such as subsidizing regional proxies, or than nonmilitary means, such as fostering trade and development or developing a specialized capacity for humanitarian relief.

In crisis, the forward-deployed capacity to project power "from the sea" is touted as having an immediate deterrent effect—that is, dissuading an adversary who is tentatively considering going to war from following through on that idea. Here we do have some evidence; at very best, however, it must be regarded as offering mixed support for the Navy's advocacy of a littoral approach. A variety of studies of conventional deterrence have been undertaken.[60] While the research questions, underlying theoretical assumptions, and research methods have varied, several general findings emerge.

The principal one is that immediate extended deterrence with conventional means—that is, using threats of conventional response to deter an adversary who is considering aggression against a third party—regularly fails, even in cases where commitments are "clearly defined, repeatedly publicized and defensible, and the committed [gives] every indication of its intentions to defend them by force if necessary."[61] Unlike nuclear deterrence, conventional deterrence does not appear to result in a robust, stable stalemate but in a fluid and competitive strategic interaction that, at best, buys time during which underlying disputes or antagonisms can be resolved. The possession of decisive conventional military superiority and the visible demonstration of a resolve will not necessarily permit the United States to deter attacks on friends and interests.

There are three reasons why immediate extended conventional deterrence is so problematic. First, potential aggressors are sometimes so strongly motivated to challenge the status quo that they are willing to run a high risk, or even the certainty, of paying the less-than-total costs of losing a war. Second, potential aggressors frequently conclude, correctly or incorrectly, that they have developed a military option that has politically or militarily "designed around" the deterrent threat. Third, there is considerable evidence that, particularly when

they are under severe domestic stress, potential aggressors are unable to understand or respond rationally to deterrent threats. "Wishful thinking" by leaders who find themselves caught in a difficult situation appears to be an all-too-common pathology.

Further, and more germane to the issue of naval forward presence as a crisis deterrent tool, there is some evidence that because of the general insensitivity of potential aggressors to information, efforts to "signal" resolve through measures such as reinforcing or redeploying forces have limited effectiveness. If force movements are large enough to foreclose particular military options, they may forestall aggression. But as a means of indicating resolve and convincing an aggressor of the credibility of deterrent commitments, they do not generally appear to have an impact.

All of this would seem to provide a reasonable argument against bothering to invest too heavily in forward military forces—or at least against believing that they offer much assurance of guaranteeing regional crisis stability. Ultimately, the key to preventing conflicts seems to be resolution of the underlying issues. At best, conventional deterrent efforts buy time.

On the other hand, there is also some evidence that in some circumstances it is in fact possible to buy time. In particular, having forces in place that can deny potential aggressors a quick victory seems to tend to reinforce deterrence. The historical record suggests that the prospect of quick victory may be an important element in at least some aggressors' calculations: the potential aggressor's belief that he can either score a quick knockout or achieve a limited fait accompli appears to make aggression significantly more attractive.

This offers some grounds for supporting forward naval presence. On the other hand, it also suggests the possibility that the Army is right and that if forward presence is to matter it needs to be on the ground, that an offshore presence of a potent but limited force, with only the implicit threat of surged ground forces, is less likely to have an impact, at least if the potential aggressor has limited goals. It also suggests the possibility that the symbolism of naval forward presence, serving as a reminder of the full weight and power the United States could ultimately bring to bear, may not be that important.

In war, the argument that forward naval forces operating with a littoral strategy can have an important impact in the initial phases of the conflict, thereby preparing the ground for later U.S. successes, is doubtless true. While true, however, it may well be relevant in only a limited range of cases. Most potential conflicts or contingencies involve adversaries who are too small for this effect to matter much. Short of a major regional conflict (MRC), the superiority of U.S. military forces is sufficiently overwhelming that initial setbacks are not likely to be critically important. At the other extreme, in the case of a regional near-peer competitor—a Russia or a China—it is hard to imagine a littoral strategy having much of an impact: the amount of (nonnuclear) power that can be projected

from the sea is trivial compared to the size of the adversary's society or military establishment. What is left is a handful of admittedly very important cases: MRCs against such rogue states as Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. What is interesting about these cases, however, is that there are not very many of them; their identity is known; and plans can be made in advance to move large amounts of land power and land-based air power to the theater at relatively short notice. The unique flexibility of naval power is, in these cases, relatively less valuable.

Critics of the littoral strategy are, then, likely to argue that it is difficult to find cases in which a major investment in the capacity to project power from the sea makes sense. A small investment would be sufficient for most Third World contingencies, particularly if the United States does not demand real-time response. Even a large investment would be insufficient to deal with the great powers. And in the case of the medium-sized conflicts, the MRCs, paying for the extra flexibility of naval power may not be cost-effective.

If there is reason for some cautious skepticism about the wisdom of building a navy for its capacity to project power from the sea, then perhaps it is worth thinking about some of the other things that the U.S. Navy does. In particular, it may be worthwhile to rethink the old Mahanian notion of sea power—not because Mahan was some sort of prophet and his ideas have eternal validity but because in the particular circumstances of the early twenty-first century his observations about the importance of the international commons per se may be relevant.

The globalization of energy and food markets, as well as cross-industry trade in industrial goods, makes the sea remarkably important for national well-being, not simply for the well-being of the American nation but for that of most nations. By the middle of the next century, even China will be critically dependent on its access to the ocean. Global naval hegemony—that is, the capacity to exercise control over the world's high seas—thus offers a powerful reason to invest in naval power. At best, control of the world's oceanic highways may convey the power to shape the general evolution of international society. At minimum, it is likely to provide a veto power over many changes in international norms and regimes that the United States dislikes.

Obviously, global naval hegemony does not convey an ability to dictate national policies or to control the social and political development or activities of other states. It is unlikely to offer much useful leverage if the Chinese choose to repeat Tienanmen Square, if there is a coup in Russia, or if Hutus and Tutsis resume killing each other. But then again, no approach to naval power is likely to offer much useful leverage in these cases.

The point is that there are realistic limits to what naval power is likely to provide to a twenty-first-century America, and these may be well short of the goals encompassed within a liberal-internationalist vision of national security. These limits do not mean the United States should cease investing in naval power.

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They do, however, suggest that U. S. leaders and the U.S. Navy should not mislead themselves into believing that investing in the capacity for littoral warfare will necessarily yield an ability to control social and political developments around the world. Liberal internationalism can generate a dangerous hubris. A naval strategy that panders to the hubris is unlikely in the long run to serve the interests of either the nation or the Navy.

Back to the Future:
Sea Power and the American Navy

The Navy's success in navigating the dangerous waters of post–Cold War strategic adjustment should not blind it to the challenges that lie in the immediate future. As the military services struggle to design strategies to support the national one of "engagement and enlargement," as the Navy continues to wrestle with the problem of operationalizing a littoral strategy, and as both the vision of war on which the littoral strategy is based and that strategy's capacity to deliver what it promises are called into question, it may be wise to begin to think about moving Navy strategy back to the sea. A more realistic understanding of what naval power can actually accomplish—what navies do and what necessitates their construction—may well lead the United States to scale back its efforts and to set itself the historically daunting, but under present circumstances modest, goal of oceanic hegemony. Controlling the world common and the global commerce that moves across it may not in itself prevent challenges to peace and liberal democracy, but it offers the potential for considerable influence and leverage, and this, at the present juncture, may be all that can reasonably be expected of naval power.

Moving naval strategy back to the sea implies a way of employing naval power to further the liberal international goals the nation has set itself that is very different from the one envisioned in " . . . From the Sea." With America's entry into the second American century, however, the time seems ripe for another Mahan to explore what this alternative strategic conception would mean for the U. S. Navy.

Notes

1. For a review of this debate and a sophisticated theoretical account of factors that enhance the capacity of military institutions to undertake strategic adjustment see Emily O. Goldman, "Organizations, Ambiguity, and Strategic Adjustment," in Peter Trubowitz, Emily O. Goldman, and Edward Rhodes, eds., *The Politics of Strategic Adjustment: Ideas, Institutions, and Interests* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1998).

2. See Edward A. Smith, Jr., "'. . . From the Sea': The Process of Defining a New Role for Naval Forces in the Post–Cold War World," in Trubowitz, Goldman, and Rhodes, eds.

3. William A. Owens, *High Seas: The Naval Passage to an Uncharted World* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995), p. 4.

4. On the competition between various visions and the cultural forces and dynamic underlying it, see Edward Rhodes, "Constructing Peace and War: An Analysis of the Power of Ideas to Shape American Military Power," *Millennium*, Spring 1995.

5. On the "clash of cultures," Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs,* Summer 1993, and Huntington, "If Not Civilizations, What?" *Foreign Affairs,* November–December 1993.

6. This vision was perhaps given its most elegant expression by the great liberal-isolationist statesman Charles Evans Hughes. See Hughes, *The Pathway of Peace: Representative Addresses Delivered during His Term as Secretary of State (1921–1925)* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1925), esp. pp. 3–31 ("The Pathway of Peace," 1923, and "Limitation of Naval Armament," 1921), or David J. Danelski and Joseph S. Tulchin, eds., *The Autobiographical Notes of Charles Evans Hughes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 209–52.

7. For a discussion of the forces leading to an abandonment of the transoceanic-countersocietal image and resulting in the attractiveness of the oceanic-countermilitary one, see Rhodes, *Millennium.*

8. See Robert W. Komer, *Maritime Strategy or Coalition Defense?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books, 1984).

9. The Maritime Strategy grew out of a diverse set of intellectual efforts in various locations around the Navy. Probably the most important center of activity was OP-603, the strategic concepts branch of the Navy Staff, which developed several influential papers and briefings in the early 1980s spelling out the basic logic of the Maritime Strategy. For the definitive history of the Maritime Strategy, see Peter Swartz, manuscript in preparation. The Maritime Strategy was publicly released as a supplement to the January 1986 issue of the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings,* under the signature of the Chief of Naval Operations, James D. Watkins. The most widely cited explication of the strategy is Linton Brooks, "Naval Power and National Security: The Case for the Maritime Strategy," *International Security,* Fall 1986.

10. On the history of the NFCPE, see Smith.

11. Sean O'Keefe, Frank B. Kelso II, and C. E. Mundy, Jr., "...From the Sea: Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century," Department of the Navy, September 1992. Reprinted in U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings,* November 1992, pp. 93–6; this quotation from p. 93.

12. Ibid., p. 94.

13. Ibid., p. 93.

14. "The seeds of conflict will continue to sprout in places where American interests are perceived as vulnerable. The art of managing crises in these areas is delicate and requires the ability to orchestrate the appropriate response and to send precisely tailored diplomatic, economic, and military signals to influence the actions of the adversaries. Naval Forces provide a wide range of crisis response options, most of which have the distinct advantage of being easily reversible. If diplomatic activities resolve the crisis, Naval Forces can withdraw *without* action or build-up ashore." Ibid., p. 94.

15. Ibid., pp. 95–6.

16. John H. Dalton, J. M. Boorda, and Carl E. Mundy, Jr., "Forward . . . from the Sea," Department of the Navy, 1994, p. 1.

17. Ibid., p. 3.

18. Ibid., pp. 7, 8.

19. Ibid., p. 7.

20. Ibid., p. 4.

21. Maj. Gen. Joseph G. Garrett III, USA, "Memorandum for Deputy Director, Strategy and Policy, J-5, Subject: Service Input for the Joint Strategy Review (JSR)," U.S. Army, 3 September 1996, p. 2.

22. Ibid., p. 11.

23. Ibid., p. 4.

24. Ibid., p. 3.

25. Ibid., p. 5.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 3.

28. Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Plans, Policy and Operations), "United States Navy Strategy Review: Report to the Deputy Director for Strategy and Policy (J-5)," U.S. Navy, 29 August 1996, p. 5.

29. Ibid., p. 10.

30. Ibid., pp. 1, 2.

31. Ibid., p. 7.

32. Ibid., pp. 11, 12.

33. Ibid., p. 11.

34. "Beyond 2010: A Marine Perspective," U.S. Marine Corps, n.d., p. 2.

35. Ibid., p. 5.

36. Ibid., p. 7.

37. Ibid., p. 4.

38. Cnl. Richard M. Meeboer, USAF, "Memorandum for Strategy Division, (J-5), Joint Staff, Attn: Col. Nelson, Subject: Joint Strategy Review (JSR), Air Force Input," U.S. Air Force, 4 September 1996, p. 7.

39. Ibid., p. 9.

40. Jay L. Johnson [Adm., USN], "Forward ... from the Sea: The Navy Operational Concept," U.S. Navy, March 1997.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. John H. Dalton, J. L. Johnson, and C. C. Krulak, "Department of the Navy 1998 Posture Statement—Forward ... from the Sea: Anytime, Anywhere," n.d., p. 2.

49. Ibid., p. 5.

50. Ibid., pp. 2–3.

51. Ibid., pp. 6, 7.

52. Ibid., p. 3.

53. Ibid., p. 9.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., pp. 3, 7.

57. Ibid., p. 12.

58. Ibid. More recent versions of the National Military Strategy have revised this tripartite formulation: shape (the environment), respond (to the threats), and prepare (for the future).

59. See Edward Rhodes, "Wilson, Roosevelt, and Defense Policy in the 1990s," *Defense Analysis*, November 1992.

60. See, for example: John Arquilla and Paul K. Davis, *Extended Deterrence, Compellence, and the "Old World Order"* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1992); Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974); Paul K. Huth and Bruce Russett, "What Makes Deterrence Work? Cases from 1900 to 1980," *World Politics*, July 1984; Paul K. Huth, *Extended Deterrence and the Prevention of War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1988); Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985); Peter Karsten, Peter D. Howell, and Artis Frances Allen, *Military Threats: A Systematic Historical Analysis of the Determinants of Success* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1984); Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1981); Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *When Does Deterrence Succeed and How Do We Know?* (Ottawa: Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, 1990); John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983); Jonathan Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988); and Barry Wolf, *When the Weak Attack the Strong: Failures of Deterrence* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1991). For a summary of this literature see Edward Rhodes, "Review of Empirical Studies of Conventional Deterrence," unpublished, presented at the "Future Navy RMA Roundtable," CNO Executive Panel, Alexandria, Virginia, June 1997.

61. Lebow, p. 211.

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