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SEA POWER AND STRATEGIES FOR THE CONTROL OF THE SEAS

A staff presentation delivered
at the Naval War College
on 17 March 1954 by

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Gentlemen:

Today, the United States is the dominant sea power of the world — unchallenged by friend, unchecked by foe. This position is as novel to the history of the republic as the advent of the atom bomb. This is a fact that is not widely appreciated because pre-occupation with the problems of the atomic age has left little room in the public mind for consideration of either the problems or implications of our new position at sea. Yet, the influence of sea power will be as realistic a factor in determination of our national future as the atom. For the United States is, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future, a major maritime power.

Although continuous maritime interest is an American historical fact, it has varied greatly in degree according to the internal or external orientation of national interest and policy. In a like manner, sea power in the United States has developed in an erratic fashion; it has usually reached a maximum in war due to intensive building programs for support of war operations, and then deteriorated due to lack of public support in times of peace. Until its tremendous development in World War II, United States' sea power in war or peace has been inferior relative to sea power distribution throughout the world.

During all but the most recent periods of United States history, U. S. foreign policy has developed against a background of British domination of the seas; American sea power, itself, has risen to its present position in alliance with the British in two world wars. While the history of British sea power shows that it

has grown out of broad maritime interests of trade and colonization, the history of its modern American counterpart shows that it has grown from a narrower naval base and is really the result of a successful strategy of war production.

Although as students at the Naval War College we are thoroughly familiar with this historical background, it is important that we keep it in mind in any discussion of sea power, for our thinking has been unconsciously influenced by it. The position of the challenger is more natural to us than that of the champion.

With the foregoing in mind, I shall now proceed to discuss in more or less broad terms certain fundamentals of sea power and the strategy of control of the seas that derive from it. In developing my subject, I shall break my discussion into three main parts: *First* — sea power, its fundamental theory and its relation to grand strategy; *second* — control of the seas, its basic principles and their application in strategy; and, *last*, the United States problem of control of the seas today.

The use and control of sea communications has been the object of many wars in the past and the fate of nations has hung on its gain or loss. Well could Mahan write of the sea as “a wide common over which men could pass in all directions but on which well-worn paths show that controlling reasons have led them to choose certain lines . . . rather than others . . . and the reasons that have determined them are to be sought in the history of the world.”

In the past, as nations have ripened and decayed, so has their marine activity ebbed and flowed. These two processes have not necessarily been in phase or always shown evidence of direct connection. For there have been great powers without maritime activity and there have been great nations with impressive interests who were not counted among the great powers of their time. Be this as it may, it seems well-established by history that the

order and dominion of those great powers which have been associated with the sea have had greater prosperity and influence than those in which the sea element has been lacking or of secondary importance. From this relationship between the maritime activity of such nations and their national potency derives sea power.

Modern sea power is complex in character and widespread in its ramifications. These characteristics, as well as loose usage, often lead to ambiguity as to just what is meant by the term. In this discussion, I shall use the term "sea power" in three senses:

(a) in the sense of the strength and efficiency of a nation, or of nations, generally to conduct sea warfare — a "might" sense;

(b) in the sense of a nation having international influence on the seas — an "influence" sense; and

(c) in the sense of an abstract integral, representing the resultant of the complex interaction of the "might" and "influence" senses with elements of national power — a "total" sense. It is in its total sense that sea power assumes an importance that transcends the sea activities from which it stems. In fact, so vital has been its significance to some great states, such as the British Empire, that its character has closely approached, if not actually achieved, that of a national interest.

In modern times, as in Mahan's day, the decisive factor in the control of sea communications is naval force. Hence, the "might" sense of sea power has come to mean naval power. However, it is well to remember that this is a convenient oversimplification. The basic object of sea power is the control and exploitation of the sea lines — and sea power, itself, is the sum total of all elements of national power that contribute to this end.

Without examining in any detail the complexities of sea power throughout the ages, we must look at certain fundamental principles and characteristics it has shown in the past in order to understand its present relation to grand strategy and its genera-

tion of maritime strategy. For these do not change, though their pattern in each succeeding situation is ever new.

The fundamental fact about sea power is that its primitive base lies in the geographic nature of the sea itself. The land areas of the globe are interspersed in a vast water area which covers over 70% of its surface — and although these areas are called oceans and seas, they are in reality all one. Thus, the sea has from time immemorial served as a barrier and a highway: a barrier behind which an insular nation could pursue its internal ends unmolested, and a highway by which it could reach the littoral of any land area in the world. In the present age, the sea's role as a barrier has become unimportant due to advances in the technology of marine communications as well as man's conquest of another medium of universal communication — the air. On the other hand, modern technology and economic development have enhanced rather than diminished the value of the sea as a medium of communication, and the use of the air medium has tended to complement rather than supersede.

While the use of lines of communication has always characterized maritime activities in peace or war, the power to establish, maintain, and exploit control of the sea lines is characteristic of a sea power; and the extent, degree, and efficiency by which this can be done furnishes the scale of its evaluation.

Not all maritime nations, no matter how strong the urge, develop the power necessary to ensure desired control of sea communications. Again, some nations develop sea power of a local or secondary significance. In explanation of this, Mahan enumerated six conditions which affected the development of sea power. Today, some of these seem of doubtful validity or at least of negligible effect. However, the history of sea power in the last forty years seems to have pretty well established that three of his conditions, translated into modern terms, are the real governing factors in its development. These are: geography, economic resources, and

industrial development. This means that any nation which is strategically situated, which has sufficient economic resources and a large enough industrial potential, can, if it chooses, develop sea power of an order proportional to the value of these factors.

Likewise, sea power has developed best where it has not had to compete for national resources with other elements of national security. Thus, all things being equal, the sea power of a nation that has to defend a land frontier will be of an order inferior to that of an insular nation whose frontiers lie wholly on the sea. This was both true of the Dutch versus the English in the seventeenth century, the Germans versus the British in World Wars I and II, and should be true of the United States and Russia in case of World War III.

The power to control sea communications or the position of the dominant sea power has always acted as a magnet to those maritime nations who are not in direct conflict with it. Thus, in the past, Great Britain—dominant on the seas—has not only been able to secure the help of allies in opposing power on the continent, but has also been able to secure the cooperation of friendly neutrals whose maritime interests were subject to her sea power. So strong has this factor been in the grand strategy of the past wars that sea power has been said to fight with allies—a statement that is both figuratively and literally true. In the modern world of economic internationalism, this characteristic of sea power can not be overrated in the grand strategy of a future war.

If, as has been stated previously, the realization of sea power lies in the establishment, maintenance and exploitation of the sea lines of communication, then control of those areas which contain these lines must be the primary object of maritime strategy.

Here, maritime strategy differs from that school of military thinking in which destruction or containment of the enemy's armed forces is the ultimate object. Considered alone, destruction

of an enemy force is not in itself a legitimate objective in maritime strategy; only in so far as destruction is related to control of the sea or exploitation of that control can it be considered as a proper objective in naval warfare.

During their long tenure of dominant sea power, the British have well understood the overriding and ultimate character of control of the seas as "the object" of maritime strategy. That their concept of naval warfare is sound has never been better illustrated than by the success of their maritime strategy in World War I. By a combination of geographical advantages and an overwhelming concentration of naval forces in the North Sea they established and exploited control of the world sea routes, in spite of the existence of the powerful German High Seas Fleet. Although the crisis of this particular part of British strategy, the Battle of Jutland, might be viewed as a tactical victory for the Germans, there can be no doubt that the German High Seas Fleet was no more able to interfere with British control of the world trade routes after the battle than before. In other words, from the point of view of over-all British strategy the previous satisfactory containment of the German fleet was maintained. More aggressive action on their part for the purpose of inflicting heavier losses on the Germans was not justified when considered in light of the effect that possible British losses could have had on the main object of control of the seas.

Control of the seas, as used here, is a technical term of naval warfare describing a strategic and dynamic process and the strategic condition which it engenders. A nation has control of the seas when it can use the lines of communication thereon for its own purposes and can deny their use to others.

Control of the seas, as just defined, represents an ideal rarely attained in practice. Mahan has pointed out that surreptitious use of the seas is possible, no matter how firmly control has been established. There have been few times in history where

a power has had free use of the sea in war without the continuous application of force thereon. The Crimean War of 1854-56, in which the British control of the seas was unchallenged by the Russians, is probably the best as well as the most modern example of this.

It is more usual for an enemy to challenge control by whatever means he can bring to bear. Regarded in this light, practical control of the seas may be said to have been established when operations for this purpose have produced a condition in which a state's ability to use or deny the sea lines of communication has reached a degree that is satisfactory to the requirements of over-all strategy; conversely, control may be said to have been lost when enemy threats or activity reduce use or denial of the sea lines below the standard of strategic requirements.

For instance, in World War II, a basic and primary requirement of British strategy was the maintenance of a steady flow of supplies and raw materials into the United Kingdom; without this, Britain could not survive — much less, wage war. Although the bulk of these supplies had to pass along the North Atlantic trade routes, British control of this area never reached an absolute value; in the first six months 164 merchant vessels and one aircraft carrier were sunk by submarines, and 12 merchant vessels and one converted cruiser were sunk by battleship and cruiser raiders. From the point of view of over-all British strategy, control of the North Atlantic was satisfactory because the flow of essential supplies along its lanes was maintained above a critical level.

On the other hand, control of the Mediterranean was lost in 1941 through increased enemy activity, especially in the air. From this time on, fighting for control was continuous and though some use was made of its communication lines, the amount of control was not sufficient to meet the requirements of over-all strategy; shipping had to be routed around the Cape of Good

Hope and the allies were unable to deny to Axis forces the use of the trans-Mediterranean support lines to North Africa.

Many other examples could be cited to emphasize the fact that the strategic condition of control of the seas in the face of enemy opposition is one of dynamic rather than static stability and a condition whose stability will be quickly lost unless: (1) operations for its establishments are positive; (2) operations for its maintenance are continuous; (3) the forces assigned to these tasks are adequate, and (4) the priority of the tasks themselves are properly fixed.

Heretofore, in the interest of clarity, control has been discussed mostly in terms of control of sea lines of communication. This has had the advantage of focusing attention on the fundamental object of control, and the means by which it is exploited. It also has the advantage of suggesting its connections with the general geopolitical and military problem of communications in peace and war. However, when we consider the practical problem of control, this term is incorrect since control of sea lines of communication can not be established and maintained in the limited manner of those on land. From the very nature of the sea, sound strategic control of these lines must be established in a wide enough area to prevent control being lost by the projecting of enemy force from areas in which control has not been established. These areas must be sufficient in extent to meet the requirements of the strategic concept of the war that generates it.

This does not preclude establishing control of the seas of a local character extending only within definite limits. However, this concept is usually the characteristic of a weaker sea power. By a judiciously selected balance between naval, land, and air forces and an advantageous geographic position, an inferior sea power can establish and maintain control of a local area by setting a great price to the challenger. Such was the case of the Germans in their coastal waters and the Baltic in World Wars I and II,

and such seem to be likely Russian strategy in the Baltic and Black Seas in any World War III.

Such local control can not be maintained against a superior sea power which has control of global lines of communication, and which is willing to accept the losses entailed. Such a power, especially in this air age, can, at a time and place of its own choosing, concentrate overwhelming strength from global resources and proceed by a series of progressive steps to secure or neutralize the area concerned. Hence, local control of the sea approaches is no insuperable barrier to invasion by a dominant sea power.

So far, we have been concerned with control of the seas and its relationship with the maritime aspects of national strategy. However, the control condition is not the result of spontaneous generation, but of positive measures deliberately undertaken for its establishment, maintenance and exploitation. Therefore, if control of the seas is the primary object of maritime strategy, establishment of control is the primary task in its execution, and the maintenance of control the prime necessity for its exploitation, it therefore follows in a logical fashion that operations carried out in support of such strategy fall into three categories: (1) establishment of control; (2) maintenance of control, and (3) exploitation of control. We can best understand the scope and character, as well as the strategic relationships, of all three categories if we examine them against the background of their separate application.

Establishment of control of the seas is the primary task of naval forces in support of a maritime strategy. Successful accomplishment of this task requires positive measures and adequate forces. It does not result automatically from a preponderance of naval power. Those sea areas in which we have not established control are available to the enemy for his own use or to deny use to us; or, lacking enemy action, neutral powers will have free use in furtherance of their own interests, which may be adverse to

our war aims. Our own declaration of armed neutrality and the Western Hemisphere Defense Zone in the last war is a good illustration of cussedness of neutrals. While our action was in support of British war efforts, in other times and circumstances such action by a neutral would have been extremely detrimental to the British conduct of the war at sea.

In general there are three basic strategic situations which, singly or in combination, form the climate in which the control problem develops in war:

(1) Where the enemy does not challenge control of the high seas.

(2) Where enemy sea power is relatively large and its naval power concentrated in sufficient force to seriously threaten control of the seas. This situation is usually characterized by operations of opposing fleets.

(3) Where enemy sea power is limited and its naval strength or deployment is such that it can only control local areas and/or attempt to deny or weaken our control of the high seas. This situation is characterized by diverse enemy operations, among which is usually some form of "guerre de course." For convenience in reference, I will use the label "default" for the first situation; the label "fleet" for the second; and "guerre de course" for the last. Remember that these labels are not descriptive of method or operation, but are simply convenient tags.

You will notice that the differences between situations as here classified are functions of enemy concepts, actions and capabilities. This highlights the axiom that the initial strategic attitude of the superior sea power in a maritime strategy must perforce be defensive, though the operations which this attitude engenders may be — and often are — offensive in character. Establishment of control of the seas is a necessary primary step, and it is the enemy who determines the climate in which this step will be taken.

With regard to the situations themselves, the first or "default" situation is by far the simplest as well as the rarest in the history of sea warfare. At the start of war, it is generated by enemy weakness or his adoption of a strategic concept such as that of a "fortress fleet," or both. However, it is more likely that the "default" situation will develop later in a war, after the enemy has suffered decisive defeat at sea. In this case it forms the climate for the maintenance of control, or its exploitation, rather than its establishment; the case of the Japanese towards the end of World War II is a good example of this. It is well to note, though, that no matter how absolute the "default" situation is, control measures must be instituted and maintained. For if they are not, other nations not necessarily friends will profit from the use of the sea lanes.

The second or "fleet" situation is the one that has been most frequent in maritime warfare of the past. In this situation, destruction or containment of the enemy's concentrated naval force, because it offers the greatest obstacle to control of the seas, is the primary and overriding objective of naval strategy. It should always be remembered that any control of the sea area must be temporary in nature and unpredictable in tenure if the area lies within the radius of capability of an enemy force which threatens it.

This is the real meaning of an oft-misquoted and misunderstood axiom of Mahan that "the main objective of a navy is the enemy's navy." However, in connection with Mahan's axiom, it is also well to keep in mind another most valuable maxim originated by Captain McCartney Little, of the War College Staff during Mahan's time: "a principle applies when it applies and don't apply when it don't apply."

The classic example of modern times of this "fleet" type of strategy has already been mentioned — the operations of the Grand Fleet in 1914. By the Grand Fleet's concentration in nor-

thern waters the German High Seas Fleet was forced into a position of being contained, or accepting battle against superior forces and on disadvantageous terms. At the same time, this strategic employment of the Grand Fleet served to protect the United Kingdom from attack and invasion, to cut the German colonies from their home communications, to protect the North Atlantic food routes and the French troop routes from North Africa, and was the basic measure for bringing about conditions favorable to empire concentration on the battlefields of France.

The third situation, "the *guerre de course*," is the one most likely to be encountered if war comes in the immediate future. It does not permit quick solution of the control problem by destruction or containment of enemy naval concentrations because they do not exist. We are all familiar with the various means by which the enemy conducts war against our lines of communication in a "*guerre de course*" —air, mines, submarines, and raiders. All these must be countered in establishing control of the seas in this situation. Time does not permit full discussion of the "*guerre de course*" situation. It presents a knotty problem which is both time and resource-consuming in its solution. While a greater amount of concentrated force is required to establish control of the seas under the "fleet" condition, a greater "number" of units of diverse types is required for this purpose in a "*guerre de course*."

Once established, control of the seas must be maintained. During the whole course of a war, positive effort must be exerted to maintain control of necessary sea areas. So long as the enemy has a capability to attack our use of the sea, naval forces must be employed in the often drab and unexciting chores of maintaining control of the seas. And the number of units required will always be larger than the number of units in the enemy threat. To you who have been raised on these chores, I need not elaborate. However, there is one point that can not be too often repeated, for it is seldom recognized except in a post-mortem of a loss of control. This is that control of the seas, once gained, can be and

has been lost by political and military mistakes or defeats as well as by mistakes or defeats of naval forces. In the past year, the entry of Spain on the Axis side would have effectively closed the Western Mediterranean to the Allies; the entry of Italy into the war did lead to loss of control of the central Mediterranean, and that of Japan to the loss of the Western Pacific. The military defeat of France brought about the loss of control of the Bay of Biscay and immeasurably increased the problem of control of the North Atlantic. A basically political decision to build up blind bombing of Germany — at the expense of providing adequate air support for British naval forces — led to the loss of control of the trans-Mediterranean lines of communication to North Africa. A further consequence of this was the large and costly North African campaign.

The final category of control operations, "exploitation," represents the fruition of maritime strategy. In exploitation, control of the seas transcends the narrow field of naval strategy for the broader national one. Any wartime operation — political, economic, or military — which requires the use of sea communications is in fact the exploitation of control of the seas. Consequently, this control is not only the concern of the Navy but of all elements of the Government who have a responsibility for furthering the national interest in time of war.

If a modern sea power succeeds in establishing control of the seas in war on a global basis, exploitation of this success leads to an ever-increasing expansion of its power position relative to its world distribution and, especially, in relation to its availability for war purposes. Such a nation, by a series of progressive steps, can project its power into critical areas at times and points of its own choosing. At the same time it may increase its concentration of power to overwhelming proportions by mobilization of world-wide resources, while denying them to the enemy. The titanic power position of the United States at the end of two world wars, both overseas and at home, is a concrete illustration of the result of successful exploitation.

Besides in support of grand strategy, exploitation of control of the seas may be carried out in a more modest fashion — in support of naval or military campaigns, or parts thereof. These are too numerous to mention here and most of us are familiar with some of them as actual participants. It is only necessary to point out that the greatest support contribution of sea power is control of sea communications itself. No matter what form naval supporting operations take, they will always stem from control of the seas.

Although in theory operations for control of the seas should be carried out in the logical order of establishment, maintenance, and exploitation, this can rarely be done in practice. Establishment and maintenance tend to merge into a continuous pattern, while there are always maintenance requirements during an exploitation phase. However, it should be written in words of gold: That any attempt to carry out exploitation of control of the seas before it has been established and provision made for its maintenance is to court disaster against any but the weakest enemy. Where this has happened in the past, it has generally indicated that the power concerned has outrun its basic plans. Such operations characterized the later phases of the Japanese advance into the South Pacific and led to well-known results.

So much for the fundamentals and principles of sea power and control of the seas. Let us now look at the control problem of the United States today.

The strategic value of control of the seas to a state can always be gauged by the role that sea power plays in its national interest and the synthesis of its national power. Today, the national interests of the United States requires it to maintain a world-wide system of alliances and commitments which could be neither formed nor maintained in face of superior and hostile sea power. Again, the global power position of the United States is in no small measure due to this country's superior status relative to the present distribution of sea power throughout the globe.

The power structure of the United States' opposition to communism is built around a base of maritime resources and is dependent for its maintenance and aggrandizement on maritime activities. As both the exploitation of maritime resources and the conduct of maritime activities require sea communications, it follows that the stability of the western anti-communist alignment is dependent on their use. Consequently, any deterioration of the capability of the United States and its allies to control the sea areas required by their political commitments will cause a proportional deterioration in their influence in a world power alignment. And, as a corollary, the recovery rate will always be much slower than that of deterioration.

Come war with the U.S.S.R., it is generally acknowledged by the United States and its allies that control of the seas is a necessary requirement of their grand strategy. But to just what extent it shall be established, the method of its accomplishment, and the priority of tasks for this purpose vary greatly according to point of view. While such divergence of thought is to be expected, there is a fundamental difference between control of the seas in the past and, today, which it is important to recognize in delimiting the present control problem of the United States: This is that the center of gravity of sea power has shifted outside of Western Europe.

The strategical significance of this geographical shift in relative strength and distribution of world sea power is often obscured by the persistence in our thinking of its pattern of former times. After all, Britain dominated the seas for the last three hundred years and it was she that set the pattern for their control in the last two major wars. It is, therefore, to her maritime strategy that we instinctively turn for guidance in interpreting the tasks of our new sea power position.

The fundamental principles that have governed British maritime strategy in the past have been thoroughly treated by Mahan,

Corbett and Churchill, and are well known to you. It is only necessary here to point out certain highlights which are peculiar to British thinking. First, the basis of British sea power has been a favored geographic position relative to the sea lanes and distribution of sea power on the European continent. This strategic advantage has proven over-whelming against continental sea power, but has shown an increasing weakness against that outside Europe. Second, the British insular position has become a source of weakness as well as strength due to British dependence on overseas supply and the increasing vulnerability of its supply system to attacks from the continent, or elsewhere. These factors of strength and weakness have been, and still are, the center of British strategic thinking — if the security and supply of the home base can be maintained, victory will follow in due time from the global resources of the British Empire and its allies.

That such thinking has been sound has been many times proven in the past, but it must be remembered that its strategic philosophy is oriented around the power center of the British Isles and necessarily emphasizes British interests and objectives.

Such a philosophy becomes local in scope in a world situation in which the Eurasian land mass has been substituted for Europe, and the insular base of the new power center is the American continent — several thousand miles from Western Europe. In this new world situation, the maritime strategy of the dominant sea power — the United States — in case of war against the dominant power of the Eurasian land mass — the U.S.S.R. — can not be developed from the age-old point of view of British sea power; nor can the character and scope of its problem of control of the seas in war be appreciated unless it is examined from the point of view of the United States as the center of gravity in the global distribution of sea power.

From this point of view, the American continent is in reality a huge insular base, situated at the strategic center of

an immense water area called the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The United States, through a happy combination of political and economic factors, is the central core of this American island whose positional advantages and economic resources are available to this country to a limited, but effective, extent in peace or war. In terms of lines of communications, over three-fourths of the air and sea traffic of the world flows along lines capable of strategic dominance by the United States.

In relation to the U.S.S.R., the location of the United States is poor, positionally, but strong, strategically. Positionally, it is not contiguous to the Russian power complex; it does not dominate the main lines of communication that support the Russian economy. Strategically, it is relatively strong because of the remoteness of its power sources on the American continent, its favorable position relative to global communications, and its access via these communication lines to areas of strategic vulnerability of the U.S.S.R. Although the Russian heartland, in geopolitical theory, is the center of interior lines radiating throughout the Eurasian land mass, the practical strategic values of these lines is much less than one would expect when calculated in terms of time, space capacity, and feasibility. Calculations made in this manner show the power centers of the United States to be nearer to many parts of the Eurasian periphery than the power centers of the U.S.S.R.; this is especially true in parts of Asia and Europe.

Such, in broad terms, is the geopolitical background against which the United States must carry out its strategy for control of the seas in a future war.

Now let us look at some of the specific features of the United States' problem if war should come tomorrow or in the immediate future.

No matter how you look at it, this problem is dominated by the requirement for continuous support of our forces currently

deployed in possible theaters of war in Europe and Asia. These forces are dependent on maritime communications — both for their logistic support and their build-up or evacuation, as the case may be. While from a military point of view the forces in Europe have a priority over those in Asia, from the point of view of security and internal politics they are all equally important. As it seems probable that the initiative will be with the enemy during the start of the war, their time of greatest need for the support of sea communications will coincide with the time in which these communications are most insecure — because control of the seas will not yet have been established.

However, the requirements of our forces deployed abroad are not the sole determinants of the size of our initial control tasks. Support of allies, global mobilization, and policies towards neutrals all have requirements for control of the seas. All in all, this adds up to the certainty that we will have more initial requirements for control than there will be forces necessary to carry out its tasks.

There can be no real appraisal of the problem of control of the seas in World War III, unless it is projected against a background of probable conflict — and this is basically a matter of the capabilities and intentions of the U.S.S.R.

From your studies and lectures of the past year, you should be familiar with current estimates of the Soviet capabilities and intentions as well as their probable courses of action on the Eurasian land mass in event of World War III — a global and total war. In such estimates, Soviet naval capabilities are generally limited to control of local sea areas, limited amphibious operations and conduct of a “*guerre de course*” against our lines of communications. Although such general statements are satisfactory for high planning and policy purposes, they distort the true capabilities of the Russian naval forces — which can only be determined by considering their employment in relation to the Soviet objectives, military operations, and political scheme of things.

To put it very briefly, it seems most likely that Soviet offensive naval operations — other than those in local areas — will be designed and timed to support Soviet attainment of military objectives in Eurasia, or political objectives throughout the world. For, unless they are less realistic than they have shown themselves to be, the Soviet leaders in the Kremlin are fully conscious of the limitations of Soviet sea power: that it can not challenge the sea power of the Western Allies directly; that isolation of the British Isles will not neutralize a center of sea power in America; and, finally, that in global terms disruption of sea lines of communication, except those dominated by communist or communist-seized territory, can be only temporary. Consequently, Soviet campaigns outside of their home waters will be for purposes of diversion and attrition. And their basic object will be to weaken our forces opposing achievement of Soviet objectives — political or military.

Of course, there is no positive evidence that the Soviets will attempt to disrupt the control of the high seas by the U. S. and its allies; they might confine their naval operations to waters over which they have positive control — as they have done in the past. Nevertheless, they can do otherwise if they so wish — and their capabilities for air, submarine, mine and raider warfare, as well as paranaval operations, are too large to assume that they will not use them.

You have heard many times from this platform discussion of Soviet air, submarine, mine and raider capabilities. Some has been frightening and some not. I should like to say, however, that it is not in the individual Soviet capabilities in each type of warfare that the true dimension of their threat against our use of the sea lanes lie, but in the integrated and coordinated operations of all types.

Considered alone, the close coordination of air, submarine, and surface types forms an impressive threat to sea communications. But this is not the whole story, as far as the U.S.S.R.

is concerned; for in her case the dimensions of the threat can be greatly increased by her exploitation of certain geographic and politico-subversive advantages, together with our corresponding vulnerabilities.

I shall sketch these briefly:

Geographically, today, the Soviet Union is in a far better position to wage modern warfare than was Germany — even after the fall of France. She has free access to the North Atlantic and Pacific; and while her position, relative to the focus of trade lanes and terminal ports of the British Isles, is no better than Germany's, her access to the world trade routes is infinitely more so. It is not often realized that the U.S.S.R. has not only a long coast line on the Arctic Ocean but also over three thousand miles of coast line on the Asiatic mainland, from Hainan to the Bering Sea. The possibilities of this coast line to support raider operations are obviously enormous.

As to politico-subversive advantages: The world-wide communist organization and influence offers important support to any Soviet "guerre de course"; first, by political and logistic aid in neutral countries; second, through provision of secret bases, air fields, and reconnaissance; and, third, by paranaival operations — including clandestine operations destined to destroy shipping at ports of origin or transshipment. These may vary from small submarine and other underwater attacks to the sabotage of vessels, cargoes, and facilities; from strikes and political pressure to revolution; from un-neutral acts to the enemy maintenance of base facilities in neutral territory.

As to our vulnerabilities: Our basic vulnerability against the Soviet Union at sea is that the initial logistic requirements of ourselves and our allies is so large that we will not have the forces to protect them in convoy, and time schedules will be so tight that ships can not be held in port or diverted by circuitous routes. Moreover, our problems will be much more global in charac-

ter than it was in previous wars; not only will we have to support forces on the two opposite sides of the world but also the enemy will have access to our back door, so to speak. By use of conventional "guerre de course" and paranaul operations he is in a position to destroy vessels or cargo in, or en route to and from, ports of origin — many of which are located in primitive or semi-primitive countries whose internal and external security is small. In this connection, it is well to observe that a vessel sunk at a port of origin is just as sunk as one at or near a terminal port in Europe.

Finally, not the least of our vulnerabilities are those of our allies. Most of these countries lie in range of heavy Soviet attacks and will require our full support to withstand them. Britain, our principal ally, is wholly dependent on an overseas supply system whose concentration of lines and terminal ports are increasingly subject to attack and damage. The strategic value of the United Kingdom as a base is seriously impaired by its increasing vulnerability; not the least of which is the necessity to supply its large civil populace under any and all conditions. For instance, if the Soviets made an attack in the Middle East or Asia and at the same time launched atomic and undersea attacks against the United Kingdom, a large part of our maritime resources would have to be diverted to its support, to the detriment of our capability to support operations against the Russian thrust.

While some of this may seem far-fetched, it is well to remember that the pattern of the next war will not be that of the last war. In this connection, there is a maxim of the German General Staff that is particularly applicable — "the enemy always attacks where you are most vulnerable." The Russians, if they challenge at sea, will attack our weak points — not our strength.

Such are the highlights of the control problem that faces us if war comes in the immediate future. It is global in character and demanding in maritime resources. Future control of the seas

is not likely to be more than a highly dynamic balance — easily upset by any one of a horde of unpredictables. We can foresee no situation that can not be solved in time, but time is seldom available in sufficient quantity once the chips are down — and, so far, nobody has devised a way to stockpile time.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF LECTURER

Captain George R. Phelan, U.S.N.

Captain George R. Phelan, U.S.N. was graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy in 1925 with a B.S. degree.

As a junior officer he was assigned various division duties in battleships and destroyers and from 1929-30 was District Intelligence Officer, Third Naval District. He served as Assistant Fleet Intelligence Officer, Asiatic Fleet, from 1933-38 and was assigned to the Far Eastern Desk in the Office of Naval Intelligence from 1938-39. During the early part of World War II Captain Phelan was Commanding Officer of the USS TRACY, the USS ALWIN, and the USS TERRY and Commander, Destroyer Division Eight. In 1944 he returned to the Office of Naval Intelligence where he remained until 1949, serving first as Head of Technical Intelligence and then Head of the Intelligence Staff. He served as Commander, Destroyer Squadron Five, and then was assigned to the Staff of CINPAC/CINCPACFLT, where he served as Fleet Intelligence Officer and J-2 until 1951.

Following other intelligence duties Captain Phelan reported to the Naval War College in 1952 as a student in the Course of Advanced Study in Strategy and Sea Power, his present assignment.

Another lecture by Captain Phelan, entitled "Introduction to Command Intelligence," appeared in the December, 1958 issue of "Naval War College Review."