B A C K G R O U N D E R

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A COOPERATIVE STRATEGY FOR 21ST CENTURY SEAPOWER: AN ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, the US Navy, US Marine Corps, and US Coast Guard have been in search of a new maritime strategy—a new naval Holy Grail.[1] The first grail, revealed in 1890 in the form of Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Seapower on History,* guided the Sea Services through the end of the Second World War.[2] Mahan's views on sea control and his emphasis on a concentrated battle fleet were genetically encoded into generations of officers during two decades of wargaming at the Naval War College between the two world wars.[3] Soon after World War II, however, the grail was lost during a turbulent period when America faced no real maritime challenger. Decades later, after the Vietnam War ended, and with the Soviet Navy on the rise, the grail was re-discovered in the form of the simply titled *Maritime Strategy.*[4] This strategy polished up the offensive notions of a Mahanian battle fleet rushing forward to defeat its opponent. However, it was soon rendered moot with the implosion of the Soviet Union. This unanticipated, disorienting event spurred a long search for its qualified replacement.

To qualify as the new naval holy grail, any new maritime strategy must do three things at once:

- inform and guide those American fighting men and women who make their professional living by operating on, over, under, and from the sea;

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[1] As used herein, the term "holy grail" is defined as a very desired object or outcome that borders on a sacred quest; the object of any prolonged endeavor; an object or goal that is sought after for its great significance.

[2] Mahan actually wrote and delivered his lectures on "sea power" at the Naval War College between 1885 and 1889. However, he published them nationally in 1890. See A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783,* 12th edition. (Boston, MA: Little Brown & Company, 1890).

[3] This thought was first expressed by Michael Vlahos, *The Blue Sword: The Naval War College and the American Mission, 1919-1941* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1980).

[4] The Maritime Strategy, published in its unclassified form in 1986, was an operational strategy that explained how US naval forces would be used in a war with the Soviet Union. It presented the rationale for the "600-ship Navy" thought necessary to defeat the Soviet Navy and to contribute to US victory.

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- be welcomed by US political leaders and representatives of the American people who will then seek and approve the funds necessary to implement the three Sea Services' strategy (above those that might otherwise be expected); and

- be accepted, if not outright applauded and supported, by US naval allies.[5]

Since the end of the Cold War, many new potential naval grails have been proposed, but none were judged to have its three defining, miraculous powers, and were therefore quickly discarded.[6]

In October 2007, with much fanfare, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandants of the Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced the end of the long post-Cold War search for a new grail, unveiling *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*.[7] The three proclaimed that the document represented the first time that the nation's three Sea Services had come together to create a unified maritime strategy. According to them, the new maritime strategy bound the Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard "more closely together than they have ever been before to advance the prosperity and security of our Nation."[8]

The strategy was "designed to meet the expectations and needs of the American people," as discerned from a series of public forums known as "Conversations with the Country."[9] As reported in the document, these expectations were that the three Sea Services should remain strong; work together with the Army, Air Force, and other government agencies to protect the American people and the homeland; and work with other partners around the world to prevent war.[10] These three expectations informed the subsequent

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[5] As argued in Robert O. Work, "'Economics' and Established Maritime Powers: Resource Implications of the New Maritime Strategy," in *Economics and Maritime Strategy: Implications for the 21st Century* (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2006), p. 55.

[6] For a wonderful recapitulation of US Navy strategies that have failed to pass muster as the Naval holy Grail, see Dr. John B. Hattendorf, ed., *US Naval Strategies in the 1990s: Selected Documents,* Naval War College Newport Papers, No. 27 (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, September 2006). For a shorter discussion, see Peter M. Swartz, principal author, "US Navy Capstone Strategies and Concepts (1970-2006)," a draft PowerPoint briefing prepared by the Center for Naval Analysis, dated May 17, 2005.

[7] Admiral Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations, General James T. Conway, Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Admiral Thad W. Allen, Commandant of the Coast Guard, "A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower," October 2007. The entire strategy can be accessed online at http://www.navy.mil/maritime/ MaritimeStrategy.pdf, and will be referred to hereafter as *21st Century Seapower*.

[8] *21st Century Seapower,* Foreword. [Note: *21st Century Seapower* was not paginated. The cites herein consider the signature page to be the Foreword, and page entitled "Introduction" as page 1.]

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

shaping and polishing of what the leaders of the three Sea Services hoped would be recognized as the new naval holy grail.

That said, the jury is still out as to whether the new strategy will ultimately be accepted as the new grail. While the strategy has been generally well-received and approvingly reviewed by several pundits,[11] its reception by the three primary target audiences has been mixed. The reaction to the strategy on the deckplates has been muted, at best. More troubling, its reviews on Capitol Hill have been less than enthusiastic. Indeed, Representative Gene Taylor (D-Miss.), chairman of the Seapower and Expeditionary Forces Subcommittee, House Armed Services Committee, said of the strategy, "It's a really slick brochure—[but] at the end of the day, it didn't do much for our country."[12] On the other hand, the strategy appears to have been well received by US naval allies—and perhaps even potential US adversaries as well.[13]

Whether or not the new strategy becomes the new naval holy grail or just another document in a long line of naval strategies and operational concepts published since the end of the Cold War, it bears intense scrutiny by naval professionals. It was nearly 18 months in the making, consuming enormous time and effort. This effort included academic research and debate at the Naval War College, intense discussions between the staffs of the three Sea Services, and the aforementioned Conversations with the Country. The fruits of these efforts reflect the common judgment of the top leaders of US maritime forces and their shared vision of the enduring role of American seapower in the 21st century. As such, the new strategy is well worth a serious review.

The following few pages accordingly offer a general assessment of *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, highlighting its nature, origins, strengths and weaknesses.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?
The first big question is perhaps the most surprising: is *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* really a strategy at all? Joint Publication 1-02, the *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines strategy as "a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives."[14] In the typical American formulation of strategy, these prudent "sets of ideas" are often listed in the form of ends (objectives,

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[11] For just one such favorable review of the strategy, see Robert D. Kaplan, "The Navy's New Flat Earth Strategy," *Atlantic Magazine* online, accessed at http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200710u/kaplan-navy on October 25, 2007.

[12] Michael Bruno, "New Maritime Strategy Plan Meets Congressional Doubts," *Aerospace Daily & Defense Report,* December 14, 2007.

[13] For example, the Chinese appear to be favorably disposed toward the strategy. Chris Johnson, "Chinese Official Praises New Maritime Strategy at War College Forum," *Inside the Navy,* December 24, 2007.

[14] Joint Pub 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, accessed online at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/el/doddict/ on January 7, 2008.

end states, criteria for success), ways (the methods that the organization uses to achieve those ends), and means (the resources used to accomplish the ways).[15]

Using this definition and conceptual hierarchy, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* would seem to only partially qualify as a true strategy. It starts out by listing six "strategic imperatives"—key tasks that US seapower must accomplish—which serve as the strategy's *ends*. These are: limit regional conflict with forward deployed, decisive maritime power; deter major power wars; win our nation's wars; contribute to homeland defense in depth; foster and sustain cooperative relationships with more international parties; and prevent or contain local disruptions before they impact the global system. It next lists six "expanded core capabilities," or *ways*, needed to successfully achieve the ends. These are: forward presence; deterrence; sea control; power projection; maritime security; and humanitarian assistance and disaster response. It then goes on to list three key "implementation priorities"—areas of priority attention for the three Service leaders. These are to: improve integration and interoperability; advance maritime domain awareness and expand intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capacities; and properly prepare Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen for the challenges ahead.

Aside from listing its strategic imperatives, core capabilities, and implementation priorities, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* is relatively short on *how* the core capabilities will be "synchronized and integrated" to achieve its strategic imperatives beyond a spirited explanation of the benefits of forward presence in a globalized world (to be discussed in detail in a moment). For example, aside from declaratory statements that "we will pursue an approach to deterrence that includes a credible and scalable ability to retaliate against aggressors conventionally, unconventionally, and with nuclear forces," the strategy offers few specific details about the approach itself.[16] In other words, the strategy suffers the same general weakness that inflicts many US strategy documents, which are often long on lists of laudable goals, sub-goals, and core capabilities, but short on *how* these goals and sub-goals might be achieved.

However, it is the lack of any substantive discussion on the means necessary to accomplish its ways and ends, or how resources will be diverted toward its implementation priorities, that cause it to fall short as a true strategy. Indeed, the new strategy steers completely away from delving into its specific resource implications. The framers of the strategy announced at the very beginning of its development process that they had no desire to produce a programmatic document. Doing so would likely have made the development of

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[15] See for example Dr. Jack D. Kem, Colonel, US Army (retired), "Military Transformation: Ends, Ways, Means," *Air and Space Power Journal*, Fall 2006, accessed online at http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj06/fal06/kem.html on January 7, 2008.

[16] *21st Century Seapower,* p. 7.

a joint strategy far more contentious. The Navy had developed its 313-ship future battle force and the Coast Guard its Integrated Deepwater System long before the strategy was signed. In addition, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) had already approved an expansion of the Marine Corps. The writers of the new strategy thus pointedly avoided making any overt changes to these three existing plans, opting instead to only hint at possible changes to come. In short, the document does not address what should be a core element of any strategy—namely, how both the goals and the capabilities needed to pursue them will be brought into balance with available resources.

Lacking any specifics as to how the three Sea Services intend to achieve the document's goals, or any hint as to how resources should be used to pursue the desired ways and ends, the new "strategy" is therefore incomplete. Navy officials have essentially admitted as much, saying that *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* will be followed by a rewrite of the Naval Operational Concept and the development of a new classified Navy Strategic Plan. Together, these three documents will shape the development of the Service's future program objective memorandum (POM). But as one analyst wrote, any strategy is mere "tokenism" unless it is backed up with the resources needed to implement it: "Until you see incentives, careers, and capital expenditures lining up, all you have is more rhetoric than fact."[17]

A MARITIME STRATEGIC CONCEPT, NOT A STRATEGY

Although *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* may not constitute a complete strategy, it is nonetheless a very important and valuable strategic document. As highlighted boldly on the top of page 5, the document describes a new maritime *strategic concept*, defined by Samuel P. Huntington as a service's collective purpose or role in implementing national policy:

> Basically, this concept is a description of how, when, and where the military service expects to protect the nation against some threat to its security. If a military service does not possess such a concept, it becomes purposeless, it wallows about amid a variety of conflicting and confusing goals, and ultimately it suffers both physical and moral degeneration.[18]

A strategic concept is more akin to a strategic vision statement designed to guide and foster change in an organization. It therefore lacks the specifics that one might expect to find in a true strategy. One of its primary aims is to help garner the "resources, human and material, which are required to implement [a Service's] strategic concept."[19] In other words, the key aim of a strategic concept is to bolster public support for the Service. As Huntington wrote:

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[17] Gordon Lubold, "U.S. Navy Aims to Flex 'Soft Power'," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 27, 2007, p. 2.

[18] Samuel P. Huntington, "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings,* May 1954, p. 483.

[19] Ibid.

> If a service does not possess a well-defined strategic concept, the public and the political leaders will be confused as to the role of the service, uncertain as to the necessity of its existence, and apathetic or hostile to the claims made by the service upon the resources of society.[20]

In Huntington's view, a strategic concept and the resources needed to implement it are two of the three key "elements" associated with any military service. The third and final element is its organizational structure—how the service "group[s] the resources allocated by society...most effectively to implement the strategic concept. Thus the nature of the organization is likewise dependent upon the nature of the strategic concept."[21]

As can be seen, then, in Huntington's hierarchy, a sound strategic concept is the most important overriding element of any military service, as it is used both to garner public support for resources and to inform its organizational structure. Importantly, however, although a strategic concept is tied closely to both resources and organization, the three elements are separate and distinct. By recognizing *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* as a maritime strategic concept instead of a comprehensive strategy, its glaring lack of resource priorities and implications and concrete organizational initiatives becomes more understandable, as does its sweeping, visionary style.

A MARITIME STRATEGIC CONCEPT FOR 21ST CENTURY

As argued by Huntington, the hunt for a new maritime strategic concept following epochal events is a worthy quest. Significant geopolitical shifts inevitably bring about the diminution of some national security imperatives and the rise of new ones. The changes in the principal threats to the nation's security, in turn, cause important changes in national policy and force all of the Services to adjust their strategic concepts. As Huntington observed:

> A military service capable of meeting one threat to the national security loses its reason for existence when the threat weakens or disappears. If a service is to continue to exist, it must develop a strategic concept related to some other security threat. As its strategic role changes, it may likewise be necessary for the service to expand, contract, or alter its sources of public support and also to revamp its organizational structure in light of this changing mission.[22]

Huntington identified what he believed to be three distinct national policy eras in US history (up through 1954).[23] Consistent with his thesis, these

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 484.

[23] Huntington actually referred to these eras as "phases." As used herein, however, phases denote specific periods within a broader era.

three different eras gave rise to three different maritime strategic concepts for the three Sea Services.[24] During the ***Continental Era***, which lasted from the founding of the Republic to about 1890, the primary national security threats were restricted to the North American continent. All major wars were fought north of Mexico City and south of the Canadian border. As a result, major national security threats were generally met by the US Army. Throughout this era, the three Sea Services were therefore assigned subordinate roles throughout the spectrum of conflict, from maritime safety, counter-smuggling, coastal defense, and protecting American commerce overseas to raiding the enemy's commerce during time of war, blockading, and riverine and amphibious support.

By 1890, all major threats on the North American continent had been eliminated. American Indians no longer posed a threat, and there were friendly and/or weaker nations to the north and south. The United States stood "practically sovereign" on the continent, if not the entire Western hemisphere. Not surprisingly, this circumstance led to a broadening of the American defense perimeter to include the maritime approaches in the Pacific and the Atlantic (particularly in the Caribbean). During the ***Oceanic Era***—a period characterized by multiple naval powers—the role of the three Sea Services therefore became far more central in US defense planning, as foretold by the first grail—*The Influence of Seapower on History*. Over time, the primary maritime strategic concept adopted Mahan's ideas on sea control, which demanded both an integrated fighting fleet with both Navy and Coast Guard vessels, as well as a Marine component capable of seizing advanced bases.

After the Second World War, the primary threat to the United States and its allies came from the Soviet Union—a continental land power sitting astride the Eurasian continent. During the ***Transoceanic Era***,[25] now commonly referred to as the Cold War, the international situation thus changed from a world of many sea powers to one characterized by a competition between "one nation and its allies which dominate the land masses of the globe and another nation and its allies which monopolize the world's oceans."[26] As a result, the US defensive perimeter was expanded once again to include American allies on the opposite sides of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The roles of the Sea Services switched from fighting for command of the seas to securing American ports and home waters, protecting the sea bridge between America and Western Europe, and exploiting command of the seas to influence events and project power along and from the Eurasian littoral. Toward the end of the era,

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[24] The following paragraphs are all derived from Huntington, "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy." Although Huntington was writing at the time about the Navy and Fleet Marine Forces, his basic argument applies to (or can be extended to) all of the Sea Services.

[25] Huntington referred to this period as the Eurasian phase of national policy. However, the terms Continental, Oceanic, and Transoceanic phases better convey the steadily widening US national security aperture since the birth of the Republic.

[26] Huntington, "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy," pp. 488-89.

naval strategic thinking culminated in the 1986 *Maritime Strategy*, which informed and guided a generation of naval officers in the effective application of American seapower.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States entered a fourth national policy era. To this point, this new era has been shaped by four important circumstances:

> the great concentration of capability in the United States relative to other consequential powers, a condition often shorthanded as "unipolarity"; the re-emergence of identity politics, especially amalgams of religion and ethno-nationalism, as the key ideational foundations of modern domestic and, to a lesser extent, international political conflict; the diffusion of power—especially military power—to nominally weak states and to non-state actors alike; and, finally, globalization.[27]

Of these four circumstances, "unipolarity" and globalization—defined by Barry R. Posen as "the spread of capitalism across the globe along with the intensification of international trade and the diffusion of manufacturing, investment and finance that is . . . enabled by the crumbling of old political barriers and by the continuing improvements in information and all modes of transportation for goods and people"—are perhaps the two most important, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. The political leadership of the United States generally accepted that globalization was a force for universal good which would help to bind all countries more closely together and contribute to global peace and prosperity. Backed by America's unchallenged global influence and power, successive US administrations thus aggressively worked to expand globalization by championing free-market capitalism, working to enlarge the community of democratic nations, directly confronting both rogue nations and evident transnational security threats (such as nuclear proliferation), and intervening in failing or failed states. Indeed, the end of the Cold War could be said to mark the beginning of a new **Global Era** of national policy.

US efforts to expand globalization and American power and influence in first decade or so of the Global Era were underwritten by an enormous US lead in conventional military power. Despite the inevitable post-Cold War demobilization, the culmination of a guided weapons/battle network revolution and the rise of an American monopoly in this new warfare regime gave US strategic planners great confidence that a smaller joint force could still quickly overwhelm any regional opponent.[28] In fact, by 2001, military planners

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[27] Barry R. Posen, "The Case for Restraint," *The American Interest* Online, accessed at http://www.the-american-interest.com/ai2/article.cfm?Id=331&MId=16.

[28] For a thorough description of the guided weapons/battle network revolution, as well as the rise of an American monopoly in the new warfighting regime, see Barry Watts, *Six Decades of Guided Munitions and Battle Networks: Progress and Prospects* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2007).

believed that US conventional dominance was so great that they planned on winning two wars against regional opponents in 90 days.[29] The extent of US conventional superiority and the lack of any peer competitor contributed to an unprecedented peacetime use of armed forces for a wide variety of peace-making, peace-keeping, humanitarian, and nation-building roles.

Because the United States was no longer constrained by the multi-polar competition of the Oceanic Era or the intense two-way competition of the Transoceanic Era, it was free to wield its substantial diplomatic, economic, and military power against any perceived threat to the advancement of globalization. Indeed, over time, some strategists began to conflate threats to globalization with direct threats to US national security.[30] As one analyst wrote, US political leaders essentially globalized the Monroe Doctrine, which in turn led US national security interests to become broader, more global, and more expansive in scope.[31] In the pursuit of US interests, although Democratic administrations may have emphasized multilateral solutions to a greater degree than Republicans, Bill Clinton's idea of the United States as the "indispensable nation"[32] was only slightly different from the neoconservatives' notion of the United States as a benevolent "global hegemon."[33] Not surprisingly, then, during this early ***unilateral phase*** of the Global Era, the United States became accustomed to going and getting its way, either without allied support or with "coalitions of the willing" that acquiesced to or supported American-led efforts.[34]

In these heady times, America's guiding faith in the benefits of globalization, its great relative conventional military advantage, and its military's preoccupation with state-on-state warfare caused American political and military leaders alike to ignore or underestimate the growing threats accompanying globalization. For example, as Posen explains, developing countries saw a steady growth in the number of "urbanized citizens at the lower end of the income scale." The governments of many such countries had a difficult time meeting their expectations, and often blamed outside powers for

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[29] See Greg Jaffe, "Battle Lines: Rumsfeld's Push For Speed Fuels Pentagon Dissent," *Wall Street Journal*, 16 May 2005.

[30] Perhaps the most well known proponent of this view was Thomas P. Barnett, who argued that "disconnectedness [from globalization] defines danger." See Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map* (New York, NY: Berkley Books, 2004).

[31] Many analysts and strategists have written on America' post-Cold War drive for primacy. For just two examples, see Robert Kagan, "End of Dreams, Return of History," *Policy Review,* August and September 2007; and Tom Donnelly's comments in "What's America's Grand Plan?" *Armed Forces Journal*, August 2007, pp. 17-18. The comment on globalizing the Monroe Doctrine is found in Adam Garfinkle, "Strategy on the Cheap," *The American Interest,* November/ December 2007, p. 138.

[32] William J. Clinton, Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 1997.

[33] See Donnelly in "What's America's Grand Plan?" p. 17.

[34] As one analyst put it, "Ad hoc allies were to serve primarily as window dressing and hopefully pick up the bills." Graham E. Fuller, "Strategic Fatigue," *The National Interest,* Summer 2006, p. 38.

their own failures. Concurrently, "The enhanced ability to communicate and travel makes it possible for like-minded groups in different countries to find each other, and to organize and cooperate," leading to the rise of unconventional transnational threats exemplified by radical Islamist extremism.[35]

It took the horrific attacks of September 11, 2001, the first major foreign attack on the American homeland since the War of 1812, to fully alert US strategic and military thinkers to these rising unconventional threats. Their initial reaction was to simply widen the steadily expanding US national security aperture, which reinforced interventionist and unilateral trends that had been steadily building since the fall of the Soviet Union.[36] These trends reached their apex with the preventive war launched against Iraq in 2003, arguably the ultimate culmination of the Global Era's unilateral phase.

In 2004-2005, however, an important shift in American strategic thinking appears to have occurred. Conventional wars against weaker regional powers seemed increasingly less likely, absent a compelling "clear and present danger." The United States was bogged down in large-scale counter-insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq, and both campaigns were increasingly unpopular at home. Moreover, the costs of the wars were skyrocketing and the pace of repeated back-to-back deployments was imposing great strain on both the Army and Marine Corps. Many of the governments that had supported the US invasion of Iraq either had been thrown out of office or were in trouble at the polls. Perceived US heavy-handedness and disdain for its allies, perceptions of the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, reports of abuses at Abu Ghraib, revelations about secret overseas prisons, and persistent reports of US interrogators torturing detainees all contributed to a sharp drop in US approval ratings and moral standing around the world, particularly among Muslims. Contemporaneously, the rise of both old and new great regional powers (e.g., Russia, India and China) suggested new potential security concerns that might be rising to the fore.[37]

Under these circumstances, an emphasis and reliance on "traditional" military power, preventive war, and US-led "coalitions of the willing" no longer seemed as imperative or effective as the special circumstances right after 9/11 seemed to suggest. The idea of preparing for more diverse threats, building stronger and more resilient global security partnerships, and pursuing more indirect strategic approaches became relatively more attractive. This change in US strategic thinking was clearly reflected in both the 2005 National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the follow-on 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). For example, the 2005 NDS announced that, "The United States follows a

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[35] Posen, "The Case for Restraint."

[36] See "The Bush Doctrine," accessed at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bush_Doctrine on February 15, 2008.

[37] It nonetheless remains noteworthy that the international system has not seen significant bandwagoning against the United States to date.

strategy that aims to preserve and extend peace, freedom, and prosperity throughout the world."[38]

In pursuit of this strategy, the United States would have four primary national security objectives ("ends"): securing the homeland from direct attack, especially attacks using weapons of mass destruction (WMD); securing strategic access and retaining global freedom of action; strengthening alliances and partnerships; and establishing favorable security conditions. The strategy required that, in addition to *traditional* challenges, US forces be prepared to take on three new types of challenges/challengers: *irregular* challenges (conflicts in which enemy combatants are not regular military forces of nation-states); *catastrophic* challengers employing WMD; and *disruptive* challenges aimed at eroding the qualitative US technological edge or blunting America's ability to project power. The strategy also hinted that most future confrontations might involve combinations of these four threats, resulting in "hybrid wars" that could not be easily categorized into distinct boxes.[39]

The subsequent 2006 QDR went on to identify the top four things that DoD would need to do to "operationalize" the NDS. These were to: defend the homeland in depth; fight a Long War against radical extremists and defeat global terrorist networks; prepare for a wide range of WMD elimination operations, including against nuclear-armed regional powers; and shape the choices of countries at strategic crossroads, such as a rising India or China, or a resurgent Russia. As the QDR stated, "Strengthening capabilities in these areas [would] . . . improve the versatility of the force to perform a wider range of military operations than today."[40]

While past US strategic documents had long acknowledged the importance of allies, the 2005 NDS and 2006 QDR both suggested the United States would attempt to engage them in a more constructive and cooperative way than it had since the end of the Cold War. For example, the NDS states, "International partnerships continue to be a principal source of our strength. Shared principles, a common view of threats, and commitment to cooperation *provide far greater security than we could achieve on our own*" (emphasis added).[41] The QDR was even more explicit, saying, "Recent operations

[38] Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, March 2007), p. 1. The strategy can be found online at a number of different sites. One is http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/dod/nds-usa_mar2005.htm, accessed for this paper on November 30, 2007. The embedded quote in this paragraph is found on page 1 of the strategy.

[39] See Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: the Rise of Hybrid Wars,* Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007, accessed online at http://www.potomacinstitute.org/publications/Potomac_HybridWar_0108.pdf on February 15, 2007.

[40] Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 6, 2006), accessed online at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/dod/qdr-2006-report.htm on November 30, 2007, p. 19.

[41] Rumsfeld, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States,* March 2005, p. 4.

demonstrate the critical importance of being organized to work with and through others, *and of shifting emphasis from performing tasks ourselves to enabling others*" (emphasis added). The QDR explained this in terms of a new indirect strategic approach.[42]

Consistent with the theme of building more and more durable partnerships and trying to spread the burden associated securing the global system, both the NDS and the QDR emphasized the importance of existing and new alliances and allies, and seeking new authorities to help build governance, stability, and warfighting capacities both in the US government and in countries around the world. In effect, the 2005 NDS and 2006 QDR announced the beginning of a new ***cooperative phase*** in the Global Era of national security policy. Most indications were that the United States no longer intended to continue the more heavy-handed and costly direct strategic approach followed in the earlier unilateral phase.[43]

Within this context, then, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* should thus be seen as an attempt to articulate a lasting maritime <u>strategic concept</u> for the cooperative phase of the Global Era (and will be referred to as such below).

How does it stack up?

AN EMPHASIS ON GLOBALIZATION AND COOPERATIVE ACTION

At the macro level, the new maritime strategic concept stacks up quite well. Consistent with the new Global Era of national security policy and the new cooperative spirit of both the 2005 NDS and 2006 QDR, the concept's intellectual framework is built around the increasingly inter-connected nature of the globalized world and the need for cooperative action to keep it safe. Indeed, its authors argue that protecting the "global system" is now a vital national security imperative. As they wrote:

> The security, prosperity, and vital interests of the United States are increasingly coupled to those of other nations. Our Nation's interests are best served by fostering a peaceful global system comprised of interdependent networks of trade, finance, information, law, people, and governance.[44]

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[42] Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report,* February 6, 2006, p. 17.

[43] Note, however, that the 2006 National Security Strategy does reaffirm the right to take pre-emptive action in self-defense. "If necessary, however, under long-standing principles of self defense, we do not rule out the use of force before attacks occur, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack. When the consequences of an attack with WMD are potentially so devastating, we cannot afford to stand idly by as grave dangers materialize. This is the principle and logic of preemption. The place of preemption in our national security strategy remains the same." *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, March 2006, p. 23.

[44] *21st Century Seapower,* p. 1.

Within this context, the new maritime strategic concept "...describes how seapower will be applied around the world to protect our way of life, *as we join with other like-minded nations to protect and sustain the global inter-connected system through which we prosper*" (emphasis added).[45]

While extolling the virtues of globalization, the concept does a fair job of defining its potential dangers and downsides. These include: increased competition for resources and capital; weak or corrupt governments that fail to provide for their citizens; growing dissatisfaction among the disenfranchised; the rise of religious extremism and ethnic nationalism; rogue states and transnational actors intent on disrupting the system; and the proliferation of both weapons technology and weapons of massed destruction. As the concept states, "These conditions combine to create an uncertain future and to cause us to think anew about how we view seapower."[46]

In this regard, the concept implicitly rejects the idea of preventive wars and instead explicitly argues for the prevention of wars. Indeed, it advances the argument that *using seapower to prevent wars is as important as winning wars*. To do this, "maritime forces will be employed to build confidence and trust among nations through collective security efforts that focus on common threats and mutual interests in an open, multi-polar world."[47]

First among these efforts is securing the global maritime domain. The concept observes that the world economy is tightly interconnected and that 90 percent of the world's trade travels over the world's oceans—the "lifeblood of a global system that links every country on earth."[48] It then goes on to say that the sea-lanes and supporting shore infrastructure such as ports and container hubs are "visible and vulnerable symbols of the modern distribution system that relies on free transit through increasingly urbanized littoral regions."[49] Consequently, the security of the globalized world is inextricably linked to security in the maritime domain, which includes the three quarters of the planet covered by water and the airspace above it, as well as the landward side of the world's littorals, which extends "a few hundred miles" from the sea.[50] As one pundit wrote, "As this document sees it, the world is interconnected, its population clustered in dense pulsing demographic ganglia near the sea that will be prone to disruptions such as asymmetric attacks and natural disasters."[51] These views help to explain the elevation of maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster response to the status of Sea Service core

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[45] Ibid., Foreword.

[46] Ibid., p. 4.

[47] Ibid., p. 2.

[48] Ibid., p. 1.

[49] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

[50] Ibid., p. 1 and p. 4.

[51] Kaplan, "The Navy's New Flat Earth Strategy."

capabilities, alongside the traditional capabilities of forward presence, deterrence, sea control, and power-projection.

Importantly, however, the concept makes plain that cooperation with partners is key. "No one nation has the resources required to provide safety and security throughout the entire maritime domain. Increasingly, governments, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and the private sector will form partnerships of common interest to counter emerging threats."[52] In other words, US maritime forces will need to work hand-in-hand with allies and partners to ensure the maritime domain remains secure.

The concept's heavy emphasis on preserving the "global inter-connected system" through cooperative maritime security and action is reflected in its six aforementioned maritime strategic imperatives—limiting regional conflict by forward deploying decisive maritime power; deterring major power wars; winning our nation's wars; contributing to homeland defense in depth; fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships with more international parties; and preventing or containing local disruptions before they impact the global system. It also helps to explain the concept's three key arguments in support of routine forward maritime deployments and steady-state partnership building activities.

First, such efforts allow US maritime forces to work with "navies and coast guards around the world to police the global commons and suppress common threats" like terrorism, piracy, and weapons proliferation.[53] Suppressing these threats both enhances global security and protects the American homeland.

Second, these efforts may have dissuasive and deterrent effects on those contemplating assaults on the global system. As the concept argues:

> ...integrated maritime operations, either within formal alliance structures (such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) or more informal arrangements (such as the Global Maritime Partnership initiative), send powerful messages to would-be aggressors that we will act with others to ensure collective security and prosperity.[54]

Finally, "By participating routinely and predictably in cooperative activities, maritime forces will be postured to support other joint or combined

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[52] *21st Century Seapower,* p. 4.

[53] Ibid.*,* p. 11.

[54] Ibid., p. 5. The concept refers repeatedly to the Global Maritime Partnerships initiative, which "seeks a cooperative approach to maritime security, promoting the rule of law by countering piracy, terrorism, weapons proliferation, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities" (Ibid., p. 8).

forces to mitigate or localize disruptions," or to "transition to war."[55] Stated another way, forward operations give the joint force the ability to conduct proactive humanitarian assistance and rapid disaster relief operations, gain cultural awareness and intelligence, and provide immediate operational access to the littoral, if necessary.

Given these advantages, the "Sea Services will establish a persistent global presence using distributed forces that are organized by mission."[56] The concept highlights four key geographical areas in which the Sea Services will be postured. It calls for "combat credible" forces to be continuously deployed in the Western Pacific and Arabian/Persian Gulf, and "increased peacetime activities" in Africa and the Western Hemisphere (Central and South America). Consistent with the concept's theme of protecting the globalized system, this force posture reflects a shift away from the "functioning core" of globalization, especially North America and Europe, and toward the "non-integrating gap" of globalization that stretches from Central America and the northeastern corner of South America across Africa, into the Indian Ocean and down through the southernmost extension of the East Asian littoral.[57] However, while these four regions merit special attention, the concept makes plain that naval forces can be "selectively and rapidly repositioned to meet contingencies that may arise elsewhere."[58]

Finally, the concept places an equal emphasis on the need to strengthen the partnership among the three Sea Services, stating that the strategy cannot be implemented without "an unprecedented level of integration among our maritime forces."[59] Toward this end, "Coast Guard forces must be able to operate as part of joint task forces thousands of miles from our shores, and naval forces must be able to respond to operational tasking close to home when necessary to secure our Nation." Marines will be "employed as detachments aboard a wider variety of ships and cutters for maritime security missions" And Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen will be "teamed in various combinations of security forces, mobile training teams, construction battalions, health services, law enforcement, and civil affairs units to conduct security cooperation and humanitarian assistance missions."[60]

OLD WINE IN OLD BOTTLES?
The Maritime Strategic Concept for Cooperative 21st Century Seapower seems perfectly attuned to the Global Era's new cooperative phase. But is it anything more than a repackaging of the long-held preferences of the Sea Services, explained within the framework of a globalized world? At least some

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[55] Ibid.*,* pp. 9-10.

[56] Ibid., p. 7.

[57] The idea of globalization's "core" and the "gap" was fully developed by Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map.*

[58] *21st Century Seapower,* p. 6.

[59] Ibid.*,* p. 2.

[60] All three quotes can be found at Ibid.*,* p. 12.

critics see the new concept as offering nothing new—as being "old wine in old bottles."[61]

There is some truth to this observation. Certainly, the emphasis on the global inter-connectedness of the world's economy and the consequent importance of the sea-lanes is nothing new. It simply continues the centuries-old pursuit of a stable global economic and trading system, led first by Great Britain and then by America. As Walter Russell Mead explains:

> As a vital element of that system, the leading global power—with help from allies and other parties—maintains the security of world trade over the seas and air while also ensuring that international economic transactions take place in an orderly way.[62]

Four of the concept's six "core capabilities"—forward presence, deterrence, sea control, and power projection—have been identified as pillars of US maritime power for some time. The value of maritime forward presence, in particular, is a hallmark of contemporary maritime strategies. The Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard team operated forward as long ago as the Revolutionary War, and the idea of maintaining "combat credible" forces forward has been a trademark of US maritime operations since the late 1940s. The concept's arguments in favor of maintaining persistent presence forward are thus well known and well worn. True, the concept does artfully couch the arguments to explain the importance of persistent forward presence in an inter-connected globalized world, but it is difficult to make the case that the concept's emphasis on globally distributed, networked naval forces is anything particularly new or novel.

It is also difficult to support the claim that the concept's very laudable emphasis on more closely integrating the three Sea Services is something radically new. While it may be true that this is the first time that all three leaders of the Sea Services have actually signed a joint strategic concept, it is simply factually incorrect to assert that the Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines have never come together to follow a "unified maritime strategy." Indeed, the three leaders will be hard-pressed to match the thorough integration of the three services in World War II, when the Coast Guard fought forward in the Atlantic and Pacific and manned over 300 Navy ships, or when the Navy-Marine-Coast Guard team fought the brilliant island-hopping campaign in the Pacific. Similarly, although the 1980s *Maritime Strategy* was not signed by the Commandant of the Coast Guard, it was based on a close integration of the three Sea Services. The Coast Guard was responsible for patrolling the Maritime Defense Zones (MDZs) along both American coasts, and their high-endurance cutters were given both anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare

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[61] Christopher P. Cavas, "Critics: New Maritime Strategy is Incomplete," *DefenseNews.com*.

[62] Walter Russell Mead, "Why We're in the Gulf," *Wall Street Journal*, December 27, 2007, p. 11.

capabilities to allow them to operate as part of the Navy's battle fleet. Similarly, Marines were to support the planned foray of the battle fleet north of the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) gap with ground and air operations in Norway, and fleet operations in the Mediterranean with landings in Thrace. In truth, then, *The Maritime Strategic Concept for Cooperative 21st Century Seapower* simply marks a long overdue reaffirmation of the importance of an integrated **National Fleet**, consisting of the combined capabilities of the Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, and Military Sealift Command/Ready Reserve Force.[63]

Nevertheless, while this reaffirmation of a National Fleet may be nothing new, it is still very significant. The Marines took a step away from the Maritime Strategy in the late 1980s, guided by a strategic concept for an expeditionary-force-in-readiness that started to diverge from that of the Navy's. During the 1990s, even after the very promising maritime strategic concept espoused in *...From the Sea* and *Forward...From the Sea*, the Marines spoke of standing up separate Marine components rather than building up the Fleet Marine Forces. Then, in 1998, they pulled the last Marine detachment off of Navy combatants. As for the Coast Guard, it sent no major units forward for Operation Desert Storm, and soon thereafter removed all anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare systems from their cutters. It did routinely send cutters forward on engagement missions, and worked closely with the Navy for US drug interdiction efforts, but its interoperability and operational linkages declined through the late 1990s. Then, in 1998, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Coast Guard signed the first National Fleet policy statement. However, it took the 9/11 attacks to push the two Services closer together. In other words, *The Maritime Strategic Concept for Cooperative 21st Century Seapower* marks a great stride over the Global Era's unilateral phase, when the very idea of an integrated National Fleet was battered, and very nearly broken. If nothing else, should the concept prompt increased integration and interoperability among the three Sea Services and lead to more effective combined maritime operations, it will have made a marked contribution to the security of the Nation.

NEW WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

Proponents of the maritime strategic concept can make stronger cases that three of its other aspects represent something new, but even these remain debatable.

The first is the concentration of combat-credible forces in the Arabian/Persian Gulf and the Pacific. Indeed, Admiral Roughead, the Chief of Naval Operations, said, "Our concentration of power is something you have not seen in decades."[64] Critics might respond that this concentration is spurred

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[63] As used in the concept, the term "National Fleet" describes the cooperative activities of the Navy and the Coast Guard. The authors prefer to think of the National Fleet in broader terms, including the Fleet Marine Forces, the ships of the Military Sealift Command and the Maritime Administration's Ready Reserve Force.

[64] Cavas, "Critics: New U.S. Maritime Strategy is Incomplete."

not by the concept, but by the natural geopolitical shifts that attended the end of the Cold War, the outcome of the 1991 Gulf War, and the rise of China. They could also argue that the realignment from the Transoceanic Era's three fleet hubs in the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, and Pacific to the Global Era's two hubs is due less to the concept than to the greatly reduced size of the battle force, which has compelled the Navy to concentrate its smaller force in fewer locations. Finally, they could note that the concentration of naval forces in the Pacific was ordered in the 2006 QDR, to help influence the strategic choices of China (e.g., whether or not China opts to become a responsible member of the global system, or a non-status quo power anxious to alter it).

Whether one sees the concentration of combat-credible naval forces as being old wine in old bottles or new wine in new bottles, the focusing of US naval fighting power in the Gulf and Western Pacific does indeed represent a fundamental realignment of naval forces compared to the Transoceanic Era, which was focused on the Atlantic. This realignment accurately reflects the areas of the most vital US interests. Walter Russell Mead makes the very strong case that for the current global system to work the United States must prevent any power from dominating the Persian Gulf and retain the ability to protect safe passage of ships through its waters. As he says, "The end of America's ability to safeguard the Gulf and the trade routes around it would be enormously damaging—and not just to us."[65] Similarly, China's rapid rise as a global power, and its rapidly expanding naval and maritime capabilities, represent one of the most important geopolitical events of the Global Era. The concentration of US naval power in the Pacific to hedge against possible Chinese adventurism is only prudent.

The second thing that proponents of the concept can argue represents real change is the elevation of maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to core maritime capabilities. Once again, however, critics could argue that maritime security has been a core capability of the Navy since the Continental and Oceanic Eras, when Navy ships combated pirates and slave traders. Maritime security was also important in the Transoceanic Era, as the Navy contributed ships to the war on drugs and anti-terrorist operations (e.g., the Achille Lauro operation). And, of course, maritime security has been a defining role for the Coast Guard since its inception. The same goes for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, which have long been important naval missions. Proponents of the strategy can argue that the concept's call for more proactive humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities is something new. However, critics could argue that the Navy is simply using its tools in a slightly different way. For example, the hospital ships *Mercy* and *Comfort,* in the fleet since the 1980s, were designed to support a major combat operation. Proactively dispatching them on "Missions of Peace" during peacetime is simply a smart return on their investment.

Once again, whether one sees the elevation of maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as being old wine in old bottles or

[65] Mead, "Why We're in the Gulf."

new wine in new bottles is really in the eye of the beholder. Unquestionably, however, the concept's overall emphasis on the two, and its explanation why the two are so important in a globalized world prone to "system disruptions," is something new in US maritime strategic documents.

The third and final thing that the strategic concept's proponents can point to as real change is the degree to which it emphasizes the pursuit of global maritime partnerships and cooperative naval action. Critics might argue that global maritime partnerships are nothing new, pointing to the thorough integration of the NATO fleet and the close cooperative activities of the US and Pacific navies in the Transoceanic Era. Moreover, a cynic might say that the reason the Navy is now emphasizing global maritime partnerships is because it lacks the ships to do all the things it needs to do. Nevertheless, the emphasis on partnerships and cooperative naval action is a natural development in the cooperative phase of the Global Era, and wholly consistent with the indirect approach espoused in the 2006 QDR. Indeed, it is no surprise that 15 of the 17 next largest foreign navies come from democracies with as big a stake in a stable global trading system as the United States. Taking action to build a global maritime concept with these countries makes great strategic sense. Along these lines, the concept's Global Maritime Partnerships initiative, with its emphasis on cooperative policing of the commons, appears to be something new and worthwhile.

EMPTY BOTTLES

Given that its outcome will be largely a matter of subjective viewpoint and judgment, the debate over whether or not the new maritime strategic concept represents something really new is unlikely to be decisively resolved. However, even among those who find common ground with the concept's intellectual framework, many are likely object to four significant omissions.

The first and most obvious is that although the concept argues that maritime security is central to the success of globalization, it fails to acknowledge that the threats to the maritime commons are now likely as low as or lower than at any time in the last century. Trade flows freely and unobstructed over the oceans. Piracy remains a problem, but mainly to local shipping, fishermen, and coastal communities; it poses little threat to international trade and shipping. Terrorism at sea is also a relatively minor threat.[66] The lack of any general threat to maritime security is reflected in relatively low maritime insurance rates, except in a few localized areas. The concept offers no evidence that this circumstance is likely to change in the future. This omission might lead some to conclude that the concept purposely hypes *potential* future threats to maritime security in a transparent attempt to justify a great increase in the size of maritime forces. As one admitted proponent of the concept says, "Without mentioning China and without going into specific numbers or even asserting the need for more ships, the 16-page

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[66] Martin N. Murphy, *Contemporary Piracy and Maritime Terrorism: the Threat to International Security,* Adelphi Paper 388, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2007, p. 85.

document makes the case for a Navy that must do, if not everything, then nearly everything."[67] Given that a fierce competition for resources is looming, this argument is not likely to be persuasive unless backed up by evidence that threats to maritime security are on the rise. The concept would have benefited from a more balanced discussion of real and imagined threats to maritime security, which would be helpful in determining real shortfalls in US maritime capabilities.

The concept's second notable omission is the absence of any discussion of China. The 2006 QDR said, "Of the major and emerging powers, China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional US military advantages absent US counter-strategies."[68] Yet beyond an oblique reference to preventing great power war and announcing the concentration of combat credible maritime power in the Pacific, the concept is completely silent on the impressive growth in China's maritime power, and what that might mean over time for the three Sea Services.[69] Indeed, most readers of the document would likely deduce that the concept's authors discount the rise of China as a potential maritime competitor and have concluded that no counter-strategies for this potential outcome are necessary.

There are those who believe that the United States should do everything possible to avoid making China into an enemy, and that US grand strategy should aim to induce China into becoming a responsible stakeholder in the globalized world. However, these laudable goals do not excuse the leaders of the three Sea Services from failing to acknowledge that the United States and China are clearly on the edge of a maritime competition. At the very least, the Chinese are developing maritime forces and capabilities designed to raise the costs of any United States intervention in a military confrontation, either over Taiwan or some other vital interest in the East Asian littoral.[70] What counter-strategies are the Sea Services developing in response? Will they seek to fight from longer range? Increase the battle fleet's proportion of submarines? Pursue offset strategies? The concept has nothing to say on such potentially important subjects.[71]

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[67] Kaplan, "The Navy's New Flat Earth Strategy."

[68] Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report,* February 6, 2006, p. 29.

[69] See for example Jonathan D. Pollack, "Chinese Military Power: What Vexes the United States and Why?" and June Teufel Dreyer, "China's Power and Will: the PRC's Military Strength and Grand Strategy" both in *Orbis,* Fall 2007, accessed online at http://www.fpri.org/orbis/5104/ on February 15, 2008.

[70] As just one example, see Roger Cliff, et al, *Entering the Dragon's Lair: Chinese Anti-Access Strategies and Their Implications for the United States* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007).

[71] Note that such a discussion ideally would have gone beyond the Taiwan scenario to consider security implications in a world in which China and Taiwan had achieved a peaceful accommodation. (A non-peaceful resolution would clarify matters vis-à-vis China in a different way.)

A third obvious omission is the concept's lack of any substantive discussion of "seabasing." The idea of using the sea as a joint base of operations in both peacetime and wartime has been a central theme of the Navy-Marine Corps story since the mid-1950s, and especially since the late 1990s.[72] Its absence suggests that this central theme no longer pertains in the Global Era's cooperative phase. When asked why seabasing had been dropped from the Sea Services' primary narrative, one of the authors of the strategy responded that the Services had purposely steered away from addressing or highlighting any specific "program."[73] This answer is itself quite revealing. It suggests that framers of the concept now view seabasing simply in programmatic terms (e.g., what platforms to buy) rather than as a strong foundation for any maritime strategic concept.

This is unfortunate. The rationale for seabasing is stronger than at any time since the end of World War II. During the Transoceanic Era/Cold War, the United States adopted a global defense posture that emphasized forward-*based* combat forces in the theaters in which they were expected to fight. During the Global Era, the US has begun shifting away from this garrison posture toward one that emphasizes the forward-*deployment* of US combat forces from bases located on American sovereign territory. In such an expeditionary posture, the value of maritime forces in general, and seabasing in particular, naturally goes up.[74] By omitting any discussion of the general strategic, operational, and tactical advantages of seabasing, the authors seem to have lost an important opportunity to further distinguish the Sea Services' maritime strategic concept from those of the other Services. Moreover, this omission is inconsistent with the 2006 QDR, which stressed the need for innovative basing concepts to maximize US global freedom of action.

The fourth important omission is the general lack of any acknowledgement of how joint forces contribute to the maritime strategic concept, and how their contributions allow the Sea Services to re-allocate their own resources for other purposes. The concept's references to the joint force are few and far between, and then they are made almost exclusively in terms of what maritime forces bring to the joint force, not vice versa. For example, the concept states that "The speed, flexibility, agility and scalability of maritime forces provide joint or combined force commanders a range of options for responding to crises,"[75] and that "maritime forces will be postured to support

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[72] Sea basing was a central theme in Huntington, "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy," published in 1954. For a complete review of the contemporary development of sea basing, see Robert Work, *Thinking About Seabasing: All Ahead, Slow* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2006).

[73] Phone conversation between Robert O. Work and Commander Bryan McGrath, USN, one of the key authors of the new maritime strategy, November 2007.

[74] For a discussion of global defense postures and the posture changes made since the end of the Cold War, see Andrew F. Krepinevich and Robert O. Work, *A New US Global Defense Posture for the Second Transoceanic Era* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2007). Since this report was published, the authors now refer to the Second Transoceanic Era as the Global Era.

[75] *21st Century Seapower,* p. 5.

other joint or combined forces to mitigate and localize disruptions."[76] Never mentioned is the dependency of maritime forces on space forces, on Air Force tankers and surveillance and reconnaissance assets, or on Air Force long-range bombers or fighter aircraft.[77] Never discussed is the golden opportunity to develop a new AirSea Battle Doctrine with the Air Force to deal with rising maritime anti-access/area-denial threats. Never argued is the potentially powerful combination of maritime and special operations forces in advancing the concept's aims. Such omissions seem particularly noteworthy given that one of the three cited expectations of the American people was that the three Services *should work together with the Army, Air Force*, and other government agencies to protect the American people and the homeland.

None of these four omissions are damning in and of themselves. Collectively, however, they may work to undermine the concept's long-term relevance.

PREVENTING WAR

Perhaps the most striking new aspect of this maritime strategic concept is its heavy emphasis on preventing wars. Is this really anything new? Who could possibly argue with the statement that "preventing war is preferable to fighting wars"?[78] This has been a hallmark of US national policy since the Continental Era. During this time period, US leaders specifically sought to avoid entangling alliances or participation in great power conflicts overseas in order to prevent US involvement in wars (though not to prevent wars generally). Similarly, the core end of US Cold War strategy was to prevent a war with the Soviet Union, and to contain and roll back communism through the steady accumulation of diplomatic, economic, military, cultural, and moral superiority. Moreover, the Sea Services have argued the deterrent and dissuasive effects of maritime forward presence since at least the late-1940s.

Significantly, however, the historical cases cited above were about preventing the United States from getting into a war (i.e., they were primarily about narrow US national interests). What is new is that the concept implicitly argues that the US must be willing to intervene and risk getting into wars to limit regional conflict and/or to prevent or contain disruptions before they impact on the global system. Although the concept acknowledges that "[the US] cannot be everywhere, and... cannot act to mitigate all regional conflict," it goes on to say that "Where conflict threatens the global system and our national interests, maritime forces will be ready to respond alongside other elements of national and multi-national power, to give political leaders a range of options for deterrence, escalation and de-escalation."[79] Given the concept's argument that the security, prosperity, and vital interests of the United States

[76] Ibid.*,* p. 9.

[77] Loren B. Thompson, Ph.D., "New Maritime Strategy: Three Cheers, and Three Complaints," The Lexington Institute, Issue Brief dated October 23, 2007.

[78] *21st Century Seapower,* p. 10.

[79] Ibid.*,* p. 6.

are now inextricably coupled to those of other nations and the global system, it seems to follow that the United States has a general duty to intervene to prevent or contain wars because *any* disruption to the global system might ultimately pose a threat to US security. Unquestionably, pursuing such an approach would place extraordinary demands on the three Sea Services, as well as the United States more generally. Perhaps this explains the Chief of Naval Operation's recent comment that "the 313-ship Navy will not be enough for the missions that we're going to be tasked with in the coming years."[80]

Setting aside the great demands that such a stance would place on the Sea Services and the joint force, when used as part of a maritime strategic concept, the statement that "preventing wars *is as important* as winning wars" is much different than saying that "preventing war is preferable to fighting wars"—which, as mentioned above, goes without saying. Consistent with Huntington, the former statement implies that organizing the Sea Services (the third key element of any strategic concept) primarily for "Missions of Peace" *is as important* as organizing the Sea Services to win wars. This thinking would appear to conflate the idea of deployment strategies—how the Sea Services choose to employ the warfighting fleet in peacetime—with organizing and structuring the Sea Services primarily to meet an existing or emerging national security threat.

As Huntington wrote, this would be a great mistake:

> A military service may at times, of course, perform functions unrelated to external security, such as internal policing, disaster relief, and citizenship training. These are however, subordinate and collateral responsibilities. A military service does not exist to perform these functions; rather it performs these functions because it has already been called into existence to meet some threat.[81]

Huntington goes on to say that when the American people and their elected representatives decide to devote resources to the maintenance of a military capability, "it is necessary for the society to forego the alternative uses to which these resources might be put and to acquiesce in their allocation to the military service."[82] There are far cheaper ways to allocate resources for "Missions of Peace" than building or organizing military units dedicated solely for these purposes. However, as Huntington suggests, allocating resources to build and organize forces to meet a national security threat, and then using them to conduct "Missions of Peace" when the threat is quiescent or in check makes perfect sense: it accrues a higher rate of return on the resources allocated by the American public to the service.

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[80] "CNO: 313-ship Fleet Represents a Minimum," *Associated Press*, January 8, 2008.

[81] Huntington, "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy," p. 483.

[82] Ibid.

More fundamentally, even if one fully accepts the premise that "preventing wars is as important as winning wars," then it remains a big omission that the *Maritime Strategic Concept for Cooperative 21st Century Seapower* provides no guidance regarding the converse premise, namely that winning wars, tautologically, is therefore as important as preventing wars. **It explains neither how the three Sea Services will help win the war we are in (the Long War against radical extremists) nor what wars the three Sea Services are most interested in preventing.** The concept seems to imply that ameliorating human suffering or responding to natural disasters in the world's littorals is as important as, say, defeating radical Islamist extremism, being prepared to confront a nuclear-armed regional power, or developing plans to confront a powerful Chinese naval build-up in the Pacific.

In the end, the concept may have been better advised to advance a proposition that "preventing wars is preferable to fighting wars," but, unambiguously, "*nothing* is more important than winning wars." This was the type of thinking behind the Strategic Air Command's (SAC's) Cold War motto, "Peace is our profession", emblazoned across a crest depicting a mailed fist holding a lightning bolt. The implication was clear: the best way to prevent a war with the Soviet Union was for SAC to be organized, trained, equipped and ready to defeat them in time of war. After reading the maritime strategic concept, what war or wars would a reader believe the three Sea Services should be best organized and ready to win? Beyond vague generalities, it gives little hint as to which national security threats or potential wars should most drive the organization of the three Sea Services. Said another way, it fails to establish any clear strategic priorities.

STRATEGY CANNOT BE POLL-DRIVEN

This major conceptual flaw cannot be defended by referring to the Conversations with the Country, where participants evidently indicated that the American people wanted the three Sea Services "to work with other partners around the world to prevent war." As has been stated, this expectation is self-evident. Indeed, the three expectations identified in the concept appear to be either so obvious or open to interpretation as to be useless for developing a useful strategic concept. While having open and frank discussions with the American people about the role of seapower is a worthy endeavor, and perhaps well worth the effort for other reasons, designing a maritime strategic concept to "meet the expectations and needs of the American people" based on "Conversations with the Country" is highly suspect intellectually. Who participated in the conversations? Did these efforts offer the participants clear choices?

Scientific public polling would be no more useful or relevant. For example, in a recent Chicago Council on Global Affairs poll, 70 percent of those polled listed the following as the four top priorities in foreign and national security affairs: preventing nuclear-weapons proliferation; fighting

terrorism; protecting American jobs; and guaranteeing energy security.[83] Perhaps these four priorities should have guided the concept's development. Note however, that the third priority is inconsistent with the basic precepts of globalization. Moreover, one would be hard-pressed to win an argument that these four priorities should be more important in the development of the Sea Services' strategic concept than the priorities listed in the 2005 National Defense Strategy or the 2006 QDR.

Indeed, the whole idea of designing a strategic concept based on "conversations with" or polling of the American people overlooks a fundamental reality. It ignores the central fact that it is the Members of Congress (the elected representatives of the American people) and the appointed officials of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (who are responsible for the development of the military component of national security policy), who are the true target audience of the concept if it is to have any practical impact. These two groups have little time or interest in rhetoric. They deal in specifics that can help them make decisions and choices.

And therein lies the concept's final and perhaps deepest flaw. As Robert D. Kaplan, a supporter of the concept, put it: "This is very much a diplomatic document, meaning it is necessary to read between the lines…In essence, this new maritime strategy represents a restrained, nuanced, yearning for a bigger Navy, albeit one whose mission will be cooperation with other navies."[84] In other words, the three Sea Services clearly bet that by explaining the role of seapower within the intellectual framework of globalization, and by emphasizing the importance of preventing wars, the concept would "resonate well with the public and a Democratic Congress,"[85] and allow them to skip the specifics.

Unfortunately, early indications are that this was a bad bet, as evidenced by the concept's unenthusiastic endorsement by even acknowledged naval proponents in Congress. Restrained, nuanced diplomatic documents that require careful reading between the lines are not very helpful for those in Congress and OSD predisposed to fight for the additional resources needed to pay for greater maritime capabilities.

As Huntington pointed out, OSD and Congress allocate resources for the armed forces to meet existing or emerging national security threats. Congress is fully aware, and expects, that the Sea Services will be used in peacetime to expand US influence, cooperate with other navies, respond to crises, work to protect the global system, and to try to prevent wars. But they allocate money to armed services primarily to win wars. As a result, any maritime strategic concept should be straight-forward and focused on why the Sea Services are the best equipped to address existing and emerging direct threats to US

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[83] Paul J. Saunders, "The Road to Recovery," *The National Interest,* January-February 2008, p. 4.

[84] Kaplan, "The Navy's New Flat Earth Strategy."

[85] Ibid.

national security. By making it so visionary and generic, focusing so much on preventing war, and repackaging the long-standing arguments for forward-deployed operations within the context of globalization, the concept simply doesn't give proponents of stronger maritime capabilities the specificity needed to fight for additional resources at a time when all claims for resources are so hard fought. It is an important missed opportunity.

WRAPPING UP

After 18 months of intensive effort, the leaders of the three Sea Services recently announced the end of a long search for a new maritime, holy grail, unveiling *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower.* However, the lack of any associated strategic priorities or resource implications makes the document not a true strategy but rather an integrated strategic concept for the three Sea Services. This is not a knock on those who worked hard to produce it. As Samuel Huntington convincingly argued, a strategic concept is the fundamental element of any armed service. It is used both to garner resources for the service, and to guide its organizational structure. Developing such a concept is an important and worthy endeavor, and a central component of a true strategy.

More aptly titled a *Maritime Strategic Concept for Cooperative 21st Century Seapower*, it is well-attuned to the cooperative phase of the Global Era in national policy, explaining the role of seapower within the "dialectic of globalization."[86] It is particularly effective in explaining the benefits of persistent forward maritime presence in an inter-connected global system prone to disruption. It outlines a shift in basic US maritime deployment patterns, calling for "combat credible" forward presence in the Pacific and Arabian/Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, and increased peacetime activities in South American and Africa. It elevates maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to "core maritime capabilities," and emphasizes new partnership building efforts such as the Global Maritime Partnerships initiative. It espouses the idea of a National Fleet, and promises increased interoperability and integration for all three Sea Services. Whether one views these as "old wine in old bottles," or "new wine in new bottles," together they outline the foundation of a coherent strategic concept.

However, the concept may be weakened by four key omissions. First, it offers little evidence that threats to maritime security, and their derivative threats to globalization and US interests, are growing, undercutting one of the concept's primary themes: that globalization is reliant upon improved maritime security. Second, the document fails to acknowledge, much less discuss, China's burgeoning maritime power and what that might mean to the three Sea Services. Third, it fails to discuss the strategic, operational, and tactical advantages of seabasing in an era when most US combat power resides on sovereign US territory. Finally, it does not acknowledge joint force contributions to the maritime strategic concept. These four key omissions may work to limit the concept's long-term strategic relevance.

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[86] Ibid.

Two other problems may also work to limit the concept's likely longevity. One is its assertion that preventing wars is as important as winning wars. Even if one can overlook the conceptual problems with this statement, the concept fails to say how the three Sea Services will help win the war we are in (i.e., the Long War against radical extremists) or what wars the three Sea Services are most interested in preventing. Without this, strategic priorities are impossible to set, and questions over both resource allocation and organizational choices remain open.

A second, related problem is that the document is "a restrained, nuanced yearning for a bigger Navy." However, the two key audiences that such a concept must influence to have impact—the appointed officials of the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Members of Congress—have a difficult time in fighting for additional resources with restrained, nuanced yearnings and arguments. Because the concept lacks few specifics on implications for resource levels and programs for the three Sea Services, it has been greeted with relatively little enthusiasm from these two groups.

Despite its problems, *The Maritime Strategic Concept for Cooperative 21st Century Seapower* is a good step in the right direction, particularly in its emphasis on cooperative maritime partnerships and its ringing endorsement of an integrated, interoperable National Fleet with congruent strategic concepts. Moreover, its very existence will also work to sharpen the ongoing debate over the role of US seapower in the Global Era. In so doing, this maritime strategic concept represents an important contribution and operational stimulus. As the concept is revised and made richer and more complete, it may indeed become the new maritime holy grail and help lead the way toward a new and vibrant age of American seapower.

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