

A Strategic Misstep | John J. Mearsheimer

The Maritime Strategy and Deterrence in Europe

A core element of the Reagan Administration's defense buildup lies in its plan to increase the size of the U.S. Navy to 600 ships.¹ This 600-ship force is purportedly required to implement "The Maritime Strategy," which is the Navy's blueprint for fighting a global conventional war against the Soviet Union. It is being built at the expense of American air and ground forces in Central Europe, which have not been significantly strengthened during the Reagan Administration's tenure, even though the Administration has expressed the view that the NATO-Warsaw Pact conventional balance in Europe clearly favors the Pact.²

Serious controversy has surrounded both the naval buildup and its attendant Maritime Strategy. Critics have charged that the Maritime Strategy is not coherent or complete, and does not provide an adequate rationale for

This article was originally prepared for the Naval War College's May 1985 conference on the Maritime Strategy. I would like to thank James Kurth, who was then Director of the Strategy and Campaign Department at the War College, for suggesting the topic to me, as well as the many conference participants who offered comments on my original draft. I also am deeply indebted to the following individuals for comments on later drafts of this article: Robert Art, Richard Betts, Daniel Bolger, Michael Brown, Owen Cote, Michael Desch, Benjamin Frankel, Charles Glaser, Karl Lautenschläger, Robert Pape, Barry Posen, George Quester, Rade Radovich, Jack Snyder, Peter Swartz, and Andrew Twomey. None bears any responsibility for the arguments offered here. Finally, I would like to thank the MacArthur Foundation for providing support.

John Mearsheimer, an associate professor in the political science department at the University of Chicago, is completing a book on B.H. Liddell Hart.

1. See Richard Halloran, "Reagan Selling Navy Budget As Heart of Military Mission," *The New York Times*, April 11, 1982, p. 24; James Meacham, "The United States Navy," *The Economist*, April 19-25, 1986, pp. 57-69; Peter T. Tarpgaard, *Building a 600-Ship Navy: Costs, Timing, and Alternative Approaches* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, March 1982); and Caspar W. Weinberger, *Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1983* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), pp. I-30, II-12-II-17, III-19-III-36.

2. President Reagan, for example, told a press conference in his first year in office that NATO is "vastly outdistanced" by the Warsaw Pact in terms of forces on the Central Front. See *The New York Times*, October 3, 1981, p. 12. Admiral Watkins, former Chief of Naval Operations, recently wrote that the Soviets have a "massive ground force advantage" over NATO. Admiral James D. Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," in *The Maritime Strategy*, Supplement to U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, January 1986, p. 8. The supplement is hereinafter cited as *The Maritime Strategy*. On the Reagan Administration's defense allocations, see Michael R. Gordon, "The Pentagon Under Weinberger May Be Biting Off More Than Even It Can Chew," *National Journal*, February 4, 1984, pp. 204-209.

International Security, Fall 1986 (Vol. 11, No. 2)

© 1986 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College and of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

increasing the size of the Navy. They also charge that no sound rationale can in fact be offered for investing so heavily in the Navy.³ The Navy has answered that the Maritime Strategy and its attendant buildup are vital to the protection of American interests and the preservation of peace.

This article explores the wisdom of the Reagan Administration's naval buildup by assessing the overall effect of the Maritime Strategy on deterrence in Europe. America's central military objective, aside from deterring a direct attack on the United States, is to deter the Soviet Union from starting a European war. Strategically, Europe is the most important area of the world for the United States, and is the place where the Soviet Union has concentrated its most formidable military assets.⁴ A European war would therefore directly threaten America's vital interests. Such a war also could jeopardize the survival of the United States if it escalated to a nuclear exchange. Detering the Soviet threat to NATO, especially the Soviet conventional threat, is therefore the baseline case against which the Maritime Strategy should be measured.⁵ This is not to deny the importance of other contingencies, but simply to point out that NATO is the most important and most demanding contingency confronting the American military. Indeed, the Navy itself has

3. See, for example, Keith A. Dunn and William O. Staudenmaier, *Strategic Implications of the Continental-Maritime Debate*, Washington Paper No. 107 (New York: Praeger, 1984); William W. Kaufmann, "The Defense Budget," in Joseph A. Pechman, ed., *Setting National Priorities: The 1983 Budget* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1982), pp. 51-99; Joshua M. Epstein, *The 1987 Defense Budget* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1986); Robert W. Komer, *Maritime Strategy or Coalition Defense?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books, 1984); Edward N. Luttwak, *The Pentagon and the Art of War: The Question of Military Reform* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985); and Jeffrey Record, *Revising U.S. Military Strategy: Tailoring Means to Ends* (New York: Pergamon Brassey's, 1984). Also see Michael Gordon, "Lehman's Navy Riding High, But Critics Question Its Strategy and Rapid Growth," *National Journal*, September 21, 1985, pp. 2120-2125.

4. Classic statements on the subject are: Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1943); Hans J. Morgenthau, "The United States and Europe in a Decade of Detente," in Wolfram F. Hanrieder, ed., *The United States and Western Europe: Political, Economic and Strategic Perspectives* (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop, 1974), pp. 1-7; Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (1942; reprint ed., Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1970); and Alfred Vagts, "The United States and the Balance of Power," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (November 1941), pp. 401-449. A recent analysis of this matter is Stephen Van Evera, "Why Europe Should Remain the Focus of American Strategy: A Geopolitical Assessment," Testimony prepared for the European Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, October 3, 1985.

5. Secretary of the Navy John Lehman succinctly expressed this point when he noted: "Every dollar has to be justified by what it can do to defeat the Soviet maritime threat in time of war, and that is it and it only." Michael R. Gordon, "John Lehman: The Hard Liner Behind Reagan's Navy Buildup," *National Journal*, October 3, 1981, p. 1765. At the same time, Lehman made clear his strong opposition to justifying the Navy's budget on the grounds that it facilitated peacetime presence. *Ibid.*

long recognized that its chief role lies in its contribution to a global conventional war against the Soviet Union and that such a war would be, above all, a war for the control of Europe. Accordingly, the Navy has argued that the Maritime Strategy would indeed contribute to NATO's European deterrent posture. In this article, I explore whether this is true.

I will offer four principal conclusions. First, the Navy has not defined the Maritime Strategy clearly and, moreover, has defined it in different ways at different times. The strategy therefore tends to have an amorphous and elastic quality about it. Nevertheless, it seems apparent that the strategy is a package of four different offensive postures. The Navy has occasionally shifted its rhetorical emphasis from one to another of these four postures, but all four have remained elements of the Maritime Strategy since it was formulated in 1981.

Second, the four offensive concepts encompassed by the Maritime Strategy contribute little to deterrence in Europe and may actually detract from it. Importantly, the latest variant of the strategy, which emphasizes using American attack submarines (SSNs) to strike at Soviet ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) so as to shift the strategic nuclear balance at the start of a conventional war, is destabilizing in a crisis and potentially escalatory in a conflict, and therefore is a dangerous strategy.

Third, the Navy's main value for deterrence lies in the realm of sea control, where protection of NATO's sea lines of communication (SLOCs) might matter to Soviet decision-makers contemplating war in Europe. The Navy can counter this threat with a defensive sea control strategy. It is not necessary or desirable to adopt an offensive strategy to protect the SLOCs.

Finally, as a result of the Reagan Administration's policy of favoring the Navy over NATO's ground and tactical air forces, a significant opportunity to improve NATO's deterrent posture has been missed. Moreover, the seeds of future defense policy crises have been sown. In fact, if (as is widely forecast) future defense budgets do not grow significantly and if the Reagan Administration continues to favor the Navy at the expense of the forces in Europe, NATO's deterrent posture may actually be weakened.

Conventional Deterrence

When two large armies directly face each other in a crisis, under what conditions is deterrence likely to fail?⁶ What are the circumstances, in other

6. For an elaboration of the ideas presented in this section, see John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional*

words, that would lead one side to go to war? This question lies at the heart of conventional deterrence. It is especially relevant because of the situation in Central Europe, where NATO and Warsaw Pact armies stand opposite one another.

Four general points are in order. First, war is most likely to start when a potential attacker believes that he can score a quick and decisive victory. Deterrence is best served when decision-makers conclude that war would be a ghastly and destructive experience, which happens when the war is protracted. The objective of the deterrer is therefore to decrease his opponent's ability to gain a quick and decisive victory and instead to increase the likelihood that a long and costly war would result. In short, the threat of a war of attrition is the bedrock of conventional deterrence. It is a particular military strategy, the blitzkrieg, that provides the means to win rapidly and decisively on the modern battlefield. This point has been resoundingly demonstrated by the Israelis on at least two occasions and by the Germans in the early years of World War II. Thus, whether or not deterrence obtains in a future superpower crisis would depend in large part on whether the Soviets think they could launch a successful blitzkrieg. This point is clearly reflected in Soviet military literature as well as in the organization of Soviet ground forces. They have no desire to engage in a lengthy war of attrition.

Second, conventional deterrence is ultimately a function of both these military considerations and a broader set of political considerations. Nation-states, after all, go to war to gain political objectives. In a crisis, political incentives may place significant pressure on decision-makers to go to war. Generally, deterrence is most likely to hold when the risks and costs of military action are very high. In certain cases, however, decision-makers might still opt for war even though the risks of military action are very high—simply because the political pressures for war are so great that pursuing a risk-laden military policy may be preferable to the status quo. The risks of doing nothing in such situations may seem greater than the risks of military action.

Third, the discussion up to now has portrayed deterrence as a function of the relationship between the prospects of an easy victory on the battlefield and the political considerations underlying the movement toward war. It is

Deterrence (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983); John J. Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Winter 1984-85), pp. 19-46; and John J. Mearsheimer, "Offense and Deterrence," unpublished manuscript, August 1985.

assumed here that the opponent is bent on aggression and that deterrence would hold only if the potential aggressor was confronted with formidable military power that could deny him his objectives or punish him for his transgressions, or both. These calculations comprise the degree of *deterrence stability*. Deterrence, however, is not only affected by military calculations about what might happen on the battlefield, but might also be affected by calculations about *crisis stability*. This kind of stability, which applies in cases where neither side is firmly committed to aggression, is a function of the structure of the rival deterrent postures. They may be configured so as to cause fears and provide incentives to strike first in a crisis.

Three factors determine the degree of crisis stability: each side's perceptions of the other's aggressiveness; the degree of military advantage accruing to the side striking first; and the tendency of peacetime military operations to activate the opponent's rules of engagement—the standing orders under which local commanders are permitted to fire their weapons. Certain strategies, especially offensive ones, are likely to signal aggressive intentions to an opponent, and thus give that opponent cause to think about launching a preemptive strike. The rationale for such a strike would be that war is inevitable and that there are military advantages to striking the first blow. This dynamic is not a problem if the side with the provocative strategy is intent on aggression; war is inevitable anyway. It is a major problem, however, if there is no intention to attack, but the strategy, because it appears offensive to the adversary, creates a perception of aggressive intentions. Some strategies also can cause forces to intermingle in a crisis in a manner that produces a tactical or strategic first-strike advantage, creating an incentive to preempt. Finally, some strategies can raise the risk that forces will collide with one another in a manner that activates one side's rules of engagement, leading it to commence firing. In each instance crisis stability is undermined, and crises are more likely to erupt into war.⁷

To determine how a military strategy affects the probability of war, it is necessary to consider its impact on the adversary's calculations about crisis stability as well as its effect on deterrence stability. It is important to empha-

7. There is no universally accepted definition of crisis stability. It is usually taken to refer to the absence of a first-strike advantage. However, since other factors affect the stability of crises in addition to the size of first-strike advantages, I have used the concept with a broader meaning, to include the three factors discussed above. The classic discussions of this subject are Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 221–259; Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 207–254; and Glenn Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 104–110.

size that there is sometimes a real tension between these two forms of stability. A particular military strategy might very well enhance deterrence stability while serving to undermine crisis stability, or vice versa. There is no simple way to resolve this dilemma.

Finally, the historical record suggests that navies should not be expected to play an important role in deterring major conventional wars. Consider the German decision to launch the Schlieffen Plan in July 1914 and the German decision-making process between October 1939 and May 1940 which led to the fall of France. These two cases are analogous to the present situation in Europe since they involved a decision by a land power (Germany) with a significant navy to attack westward against a coalition that included a formidable naval power (Great Britain) that was heavily dependent on SLOCs. The evidence from these cases shows that calculations regarding the naval balance did not play an important role in the decision for war.⁸ German decision-makers paid little attention to the consequences of the naval war that was sure to ensue and focused instead almost exclusively on what would happen in the land war.

Competing Views of the Navy's Role in Deterring War in Europe

The U.S. Navy has four broad missions.⁹ The first is nuclear deterrence, for which the Navy relies mainly on SSBNs. The second mission is peacetime presence, which calls for maintaining naval forces around the world on a day-to-day basis. The aim is to use them to influence both allies and potential adversaries. The third mission is direct military intervention in Third World conflicts, while the fourth is deterring and fighting a large-scale conventional war with the Soviet Union. The first three missions, although certainly essential, are not directly relevant to the Maritime Strategy. Rather, the Mari-

8. For the 1914 decision, see Gerhard Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany*, Vol. II, trans. Heinz Norden (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1970), chapter 10; and Gerhard Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth* (New York: Praeger, 1958), especially pp. 69–72. For the 1939–1940 decision, see F.H. Hinsley, *Hitler's Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), chapters 2–3; Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, "Dunkirk 1940," in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen and Jurgen Rohwer, eds., *Decisive Battles of World War II: The German View*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (New York: Putnam, 1965), pp. 29–68; and Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, chapter 4.

9. There is not much literature on this important subject. For two exceptions, see Stansfield Turner, "Missions of the U.S. Navy," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 26, No. 5 (March–April 1974), pp. 2–17; and John A. Williams, "U.S. Navy Missions and Force Structure: A Critical Reappraisal," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Summer 1981), pp. 499–528.

time Strategy is concerned primarily with the fourth mission, which is largely synonymous with deterring a war in Europe. This fourth mission is the most demanding of the lot and therefore the baseline case against which the Maritime Strategy must be assessed.

The public debate about the Navy's role in deterring a European war is a confusing one. Basic concepts are not well defined, and arguments are often not clearly articulated. To impose order on this subject, it is helpful to think in terms of five alternative views about the role that the Navy might play.¹⁰

THE "NAVAL IRRELEVANCE" POSITION

This first position holds that the Navy contributes very little to deterrence in Europe. The fundamental assumption here is that the Soviet Union is essentially a land power and, in deciding whether to initiate war with NATO, would pay little attention to naval considerations.¹¹ The Soviets would instead focus almost wholly on calculations regarding those ground and air forces that would be directly engaged in the land battle. The Soviet decision-making process would, in effect, be very similar to that of the Germans in 1914 and 1939–1940. The case for naval irrelevance is buttressed by the fact that blockade, a traditional naval weapon against land powers, has virtually no utility against a largely autarkic power like the Soviet Union. The principal implications of this position for NATO are that maintaining SLOCs should not be accorded a high priority and that the United States does not need a large navy.

THE "SEA CONTROL" POSITION

A second position holds that sea control *might* matter for deterrence. The Soviets, so the argument goes, would certainly focus on the balance of forces on the Central Front, asking themselves whether a blitzkrieg is feasible. A situation might arise, however, in which they conclude that their prospects for success in the ground war are slim, but that there is a good chance that they can sever the Atlantic SLOCs and thereby bring NATO to its knees. This would be a defensible option only if: there was tremendous political

10. Although these views are treated largely as ideal types in this section, they are clearly reflected in the current debate about the Maritime Strategy, as will become apparent below.

11. See James A. Barry, Jr., "Soviet Naval Policy: The Institutional Setting," in Michael McGwire and John McDonnell, eds., *Soviet Naval Influence: Domestic and Foreign Dimensions* (New York: Praeger, 1977), pp. 107–122; and Bryan Ranft and Geoffrey Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1983), chapter 4.

pressure on the Soviets to go to war and as a result they were willing to pursue a risk-laden military strategy; and it appeared that the SLOCs could be cut in some reasonably short period of time—say six to nine months.¹² Although it is difficult to imagine the Soviets turning to their navy to provide the margin of victory in a European land war, this might happen. In such a case, the U.S. Navy would matter for deterrence. Therefore, NATO must ensure that the Soviets are never in a position where they might conclude that although a war of attrition on the Central Front is likely, they could win that war in some reasonably short time frame by cutting NATO's SLOCs.

To succeed, a sea control strategy must neutralize the Soviets' Northern Fleet, which poses the principal threat to NATO's SLOCs. This fleet is based on the Kola Peninsula, in the Arctic, east of northern Finland.¹³ Its principal elements are surface ships, attack submarines, ballistic missile submarines, and land-based aircraft. Of these forces, Soviet attack submarines comprise the main element of the threat to the SLOCs, although NATO must also be concerned about Soviet long-range bombers, Backfires in particular, that could reach the North Atlantic.

NATO could deal with this threat by either defensive or offensive sea control.¹⁴ Defensive sea control would involve three tasks: sealing off the Soviet attack submarines with a formidable barrier defense in the Greenland–

12. It is difficult to define with any precision what the Soviets might consider a reasonably short time frame. It is difficult to imagine them banking on a victory that takes a year or more to achieve. It seems much more likely that they would insist on securing a victory in a period of a few months. Six to nine months seems like a reasonable outer limit since, if it takes longer than that to cut the SLOCs, the Soviet advantage in the SLOC battle could not be very great and a strategy resting on SLOC cutting therefore would not provide the Soviets with a high-confidence option.

13. See Jean L. Couhat and A. David Baker III, *Combat Fleets of the World 1986/87* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1986), p. 481; Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1986), pp. 11–12; *The Military Balance, 1984–1985* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1984), pp. 17–22; *The Military Balance, 1985–1986* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1985), pp. 26–27; Major Hugh K. O'Donnell, Jr., "Northern Flank Maritime Offensive," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 111, No. 9 (September 1985), pp. 42–57; Tomas Ries, "Defending the Far North," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 17, No. 7 (1984), pp. 873–880; and the subsequent correspondence about this article in "A New Strategy for the North–East Atlantic?," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 17, No. 12 (1984), pp. 1803–1804.

14. Good primers on these two kinds of sea control are Dov Zakheim, *Planning U.S. General Purpose Forces: The Navy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, December 1976); Dov Zakheim, *Shaping the General Purpose Navy of the Eighties: Issues for Fiscal Years 1981–1985* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, January 1980); and Dov Zakheim, *The U.S. Sea Control Mission: Forces, Capabilities, and Requirements* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, June 1977).

Iceland–Norway (GIN) gap, a major choke point through which those submarines must pass to reach NATO’s SLOCs; conducting open-ocean anti-submarine warfare (ASW) operations in the area of the Atlantic directly below the GIN gap to neutralize those attack submarines that penetrate the barrier; and providing troop and supply convoys with ASW assets.¹⁵ The Backfire threat would be met with interceptor aircraft based in Britain, Iceland, Norway, and possibly Greenland. An offensive sea control strategy would include those same tasks but would add the task of moving north of the GIN gap to strike directly at Soviet SSNs, Soviet surface ships, naval bases, air bases, and aircraft located on the Kola Peninsula. This added task would be emphasized over the others.

Proponents of offensive sea control make their case on three grounds. First, they argue that the threat to move north forces the Soviets to hold their attack submarines in their home waters, thus keeping them away from the SLOCs. Second, they believe that it is militarily more efficient to defeat the Soviet SSN and Backfire threats in the far north than at the GIN barrier. The best way to deal with the threat to the SLOCs, in other words, is not to wait for the adversary to attempt to surge attack submarines into the North Atlantic, as mandated by defensive sea control, but to go directly to the root of the problem and eliminate it. Third, proponents suggest that an offensive strategy is essential to protect northern Norway from a Soviet attack. In this view, carrier operations in the Norwegian Sea are essential to fight off Backfire attacks against northern Norway and to provide air cover for NATO forces operating in that region. The Soviets would gain, without doubt, an important strategic advantage by capturing this area, since it would allow them to project power more easily into the lower reaches of the Norwegian Sea as well as against the SLOCs. There is, however, disagreement about whether offensive sea control is necessary to prevent that outcome.

Offensive sea control is the more demanding of the two strategies since it alone calls for taking offensive action against a powerful naval force that would have considerable assistance from land-based forces. The offensive, in its most ambitious form, would be comprised of two major operations.

15. The GIN gap, which covers about 1000 miles of water and runs from Greenland to Iceland to the United Kingdom to Norway, is sometimes referred to as the GIUK gap. This is a misnomer, however, since the GIUK gap actually includes only the western part of the GIN gap—covering as it does only the 750 miles of water between Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom, while excluding the water between the U.K. and Norway. The other key barrier in this area is the Bear Island–North Cape line which is north of the GIN gap and which essentially separates the Barents and Norwegian seas.

First, American SSNs would destroy the Soviet SSN force in the Norwegian and Barents seas. In what is called a “rollback campaign,” attacking American SSNs would form themselves into lines in the Norwegian Sea and then move north to engage Soviet SSNs. The northernmost line might be located as far north as the Bear Island–North Cape gap, and even possibly in the Barents Sea. Second, after completion of the first operation, carrier battle groups would move into the upper reaches of the Norwegian Sea and launch air strikes or cruise missile strikes against naval and air bases on the Kola Peninsula. This operation would presumably eliminate the air threat to NATO’s SLOCs. The Soviet Northern Fleet’s surface navy, which would be involved in defense of the Barents Sea, would surely be sought out and attacked in both of these operations. Soviet SSBNs are another matter. They are not essential targets in an operation concerned with sea control and, in all likelihood, many of them would not be in harm’s way. Nevertheless, as will be discussed, a successful offensive sea control strategy would pose a significant threat to these strategic nuclear forces.

Two further points about offensive sea control bear mentioning. First, it is possible to pursue a truncated version of this strategy. One might, for example, abandon the second operation and concentrate on the anti-SSBN rollback operation. One might even limit the rollback operation to the Norwegian Sea, not going beyond the Bear Island–North Cape line. Second, offensive sea control is not a time-urgent strategy. It does not matter how long it takes the Navy to destroy the Northern Fleet, since the adversary will not be wreaking havoc in the SLOCs while this massive naval war is taking place in his home waters. It should be emphasized, however, that the strategy mandates that carriers move into the Norwegian Sea early in a conflict to provide air cover over northern Norway.

The force posture requirements of defensive and offensive sea control are quite different.¹⁶ Defensive sea control does not require aircraft carrier battle groups and cruise missile platforms. The emphasis instead is on attack submarines, land-based patrol aircraft, destroyers, and frigates. These weapons are ideally suited for barrier defense, convoying, and wide-area ASW operations in the North Atlantic. By contrast, an offensive sea control strategy requires aircraft carrier battle groups, cruise missile platforms, and a very

16. See Peter T. Tarpgaard, *Naval Surface Combatants in the 1990s: Prospects and Possibilities* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, April 1981); Williams, “U.S. Navy Missions and Force Structure”; and the sources cited in note 14.

robust SSN force, while it places less emphasis on destroyers and especially frigates.

THE "DIRECT NAVAL IMPACT" POSITION

Sea control is all about denying the Soviets the capability to interrupt the flow of men and materials from the United States to Europe. Regardless of whether a defensive or an offensive strategy is employed to achieve that end, NATO's aim of protecting itself from Soviet attacks is fundamentally defensive in nature. Deterrence, in other words, is enhanced because NATO's ability to protect itself has been increased. A third position on the role of the Navy—direct naval impact—reverses this situation by suggesting that the U.S. Navy strike Soviet targets and thereby directly lessen Soviet prospects of winning a conventional war in Europe. In essence, this is the classic task of power projection.

Such a strategy might include three components, which need not be accorded equal weight. First, the Navy and the Marines might launch amphibious attacks onto the European continent—specifically, the Soviet or Eastern European coasts. The aim would be to create a significant threat in the rear of the Soviet forces fighting on the Central Front. This would presumably divert ground and air forces from the battles along the intra-German border, thus decreasing the Soviets' prospects of winning the critical land and air battles in that area. Second, the Navy could introduce its carrier-based aircraft into the air war on the Central Front. Third, the Navy could mount carrier-based air attacks directly against the Kola Peninsula, which, if successful, might force the Soviets to shift air assets from the Central Front to the Northern Flank. The key assumption underlying the latter two components is that, in a closely contested air war over Europe, these actions by the Navy might provide the margin of victory for NATO.

Striking directly at the Kola Peninsula, the third component, is obviously congruent with offensive sea control. However, critical time constraints are involved when attacking the Kola for the purpose of drawing forces away from the continent. Specifically, the attacks must come early enough in the war to influence events on the Central Front. An air offensive against the Kola coming after NATO had lost the air war in Central Europe would matter little. The same principle applies, of course, to amphibious operations. In short, direct military impact, unlike sea control, involves time-urgent operations.

The force posture implications of direct military impact are similar to those of offensive sea control, since both are concerned with projecting power against the Soviet homeland. Both strategies require a very large and powerful navy with a substantial carrier battle group component. The most important difference is that direct military impact could call for a truly robust amphibious capability, which is not necessary for offensive sea control.

THE "HORIZONTAL ESCALATION" POSITION

A fourth position calls for using the Navy to threaten Soviet vital interests *outside* of Europe—for instance, Soviet Third World allies such as Cuba or Vietnam, or Soviet naval bases in East Asia. The Soviets, it is assumed, are particularly vulnerable in the Third World or on their own periphery. When struck there, they would be forced either to draw units away from Europe or simply to make concessions in Europe because of the grave threat to these other areas. Horizontal escalation would obviously require a navy built around a large number of carrier battle groups and with a substantial amphibious assault capability. In this regard, it would have much in common with the forces needed for offensive sea control and direct military impact. Horizontal escalation would differ from these two positions, however, in that it would place greater emphasis on strategic mobility assets than would the other two. This reflects the fact that horizontal escalation is a truly global strategy while the other two are focused mainly on Europe. Horizontal escalation, in other words, involves simultaneous operations around the world, while the other two call for sequential operations (which is shorthand for concentrating first on the European theater).¹⁷

THE "COUNTERFORCE COERCION" POSITION

A fifth position holds that the Navy can deter the Soviets from moving against NATO, or could persuade them to terminate the war, by threatening to use American SSNs to eliminate significant numbers of Soviet SSBNs. This policy would represent a counterforce attack against the Soviets' strategic retaliatory forces—although conducted with conventional weapons.

Advocates of this position suggest that the threat of such a counter-SSBN campaign could enhance deterrence in two ways. First, the United States could threaten to sink enough Soviet SSBNs to shift the strategic balance

17. See note 41.

against the Soviets. The key assumption here is that they place so much importance on the nuclear balance that the threat to shift it significantly would deter them or compel them to halt their attack and withdraw.

Secondly, the Navy's counterforce campaign could produce deterrence simply by generating the risk of nuclear war, even if it did not necessarily change the strategic balance. Such a campaign would exemplify Thomas Schelling's notions of "manipulation of risk" or "rocking the boat"—actions taken that endanger both sides in order to deter one side.¹⁸ There is widespread agreement that striking directly at the Soviets' strategic forces in a conventional war would be a risky strategy, simply because of the threat of nuclear escalation. By threatening to pursue such a dangerous strategy—with its potential for events spinning out of control—the Soviets, so the argument goes, would be deterred from starting a war in Europe in the first place. Deterrence, it is said, is not based simply on calculations about the balance of nuclear forces, but also on the stark fear that the U.S. Navy's actions would precipitate a nuclear war. This is deterrence based on the threat of inadvertent or accidental escalation, rather than the threat of coercion based on American nuclear superiority.¹⁹

The main targets of a counterforce coercion strategy would be Soviet SSBNs, although it is safe to assume that in executing this strategy American SSNs would also destroy large numbers of the Soviets' SSN force as well as a large portion of their surface navy.²⁰ After all, these forces would be attempting to protect the SSBNs. Thus, the principal targets of a counterforce

18. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp. 92–125; and Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict*, p. 196.

19. "Inadvertent escalation" refers to deliberate nuclear escalation, ordered by national command authorities (NCAs) on one side, which is inadvertently provoked by actions of the other side. In contrast, "accidental escalation" arises when individual commanders use nuclear weapons, in accordance with their rules of engagement, before NCAs on either side have decided to go to nuclear war. Such escalation can develop if NCAs order operations without realizing that they will thereby bring forces into contact under circumstances where standing orders authorize local commanders on one side to fire. An error of this kind could result if NCAs fail to understand the nature of the operations that they order, the nature of their opponent's operations, the rules of engagement governing their own forces, or their opponent's rules of engagement. Accidental escalation is also often taken to include escalation arising from mechanical failure, insanity, and unauthorized use of weapons. However, I believe that these risks are very small, so I am here using the term only to refer to the risk of accidental activation of rules of engagement.

20. A counterforce coercion strategy would surely involve a major offensive against the 31 SSBNs and SSBs located with the Soviets' Pacific Fleet as well as the 41 SSBNs stationed on the Kola Peninsula. This coercion strategy therefore involves operations that are similar to those required by the variant of the horizontal escalation strategy calling for attacks against Soviet forces in the Far East. Also see note 41 and the attendant text. The subsequent analysis, because of space limitations, does not address the feasibility of an American offensive against the Soviets' Pacific Fleet, but instead focuses on the U.S. Navy's prospects against the Northern Fleet.

coercion strategy (SSBNs) are different from those of offensive sea control (SSNs), although in practice there would be considerable overlap in the actual target sets. However, the actual operational strategy associated with counterforce coercion is different from the rollback strategy needed for offensive sea control.

Counterforce coercion places a high premium on mobilizing the American SSN force early in a crisis and *inserting* large numbers of those attack submarines deep into the Barents Sea as quickly as possible. This operation is necessary because in a crisis the Soviets would surge large numbers of SSBNs—the principal target—out from their ports to hide under the polar ice cap.²¹ There, they would be difficult to find and destroy.²² The Navy would have to beat the Soviets to the punch by quickly getting attack submarines in positions outside of those ports so that they could pick up and trail the SSBNs as they head toward the ice. If American attack submarines do not move into the Barents before the SSBNs are surged, finding and destroying them would be a difficult task. Such a situation would threaten to undermine the counterforce coercion strategy, since it demands that the nuclear balance be shifted rather quickly—so as to have an impact on the Central Front. It would not make much sense for purposes of coercion for changes in the strategic nuclear balance to occur after Europe had been lost. Thus, the more pessimistic one is about the conventional balance in Europe, the more necessary it becomes to execute the strategy quickly. Since a rollback operation by its very nature would allow large numbers of Soviet SSBNs to get under the ice and would concentrate anyway on pushing back and eliminating the Soviet forces defending the bastion, it is not suited for coercion. The emphasis must instead be on a large-scale insertion operation.

21. See Craig Covault, "Soviet Ability to Fire Through Ice Creates New SLBM Basing Mode," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, December 10, 1984, pp. 16–17; Richard Halloran, "Navy Trains to Battle Soviet Submarines in Arctic," *The New York Times*, May 19, 1983, p. 9; Willy Ostreng, "The Strategic Balance and the Arctic Ocean: Soviet Options," *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1977), pp. 41–62; Captain Gerald E. Synhorst, "Soviet Strategic Interest in the Maritime Arctic," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 99, No. 5 (May 1973), pp. 89–111; William T. Tow, "NATO's Out-of-Region Challenges and Extended Containment," *Orbis*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Winter 1985), pp. 836–837; George C. Wilson, "Navy is Preparing for Submarine Warfare Beneath Coastal Ice," *The Washington Post*, May 19, 1983, p. 5; and "3 U.S. Submarines Join at Pole," *The New York Times*, May 24, 1986, p. 7.

22. See Gordon V. Brown, "Arctic ASW," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (March 1962), pp. 53–57; Captain T.M. LeMarchand, "Under Ice Operations," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (May–June 1985), pp. 19–27; Ostreng, "The Strategic Balance and the Arctic Ocean"; and Norman Polmar, "Sailing Under the Ice," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 110, No. 6 (June 1984), pp. 121–123.

This need to insert SSNs into the Barents Sea to destroy SSBNs notwithstanding, the American Navy would still have to strike at the Soviet SSNs, which would be attempting to protect the SSBNs. Thus, in the final analysis, counterforce coercion would require a large-scale insertion operation as well as a rollback operation. Obviously, this posture could only be executed with a large force of attack submarines. As defined here, counterforce coercion could be accomplished without aircraft carriers, although one could argue that destroying military targets on the Kola Peninsula would facilitate the Navy's efforts. This posture obviously requires a powerful navy with significant offensive capability.

The Maritime Strategy

The Maritime Strategy can best be understood in terms of the five positions outlined in the previous section.²³ It is important to emphasize, however, that it is not easy to describe this strategy since the Navy has often been vague in describing it. This was especially true in the first years of the Reagan Administration.²⁴ As a result, the public debate on this subject is often carried on without any reference to the specifics of the strategy.²⁵ Moreover, the core aim of the strategy appears to have changed over time. Specifically, there seems to have been a shift of emphasis during 1981–1986 from offensive sea control to counterforce coercion. This emphasis on a core aim notwithstanding, the Maritime Strategy is, in effect, an inclusive package of four offensive postures: direct naval impact, horizontal escalation, offensive sea control, and counterforce coercion. (The Navy categorically rejects the naval irrelevance and defensive sea control postures.) Although the Navy might emphasize a particular offensive posture, reference to the other three can

23. The subsequent discussion is based largely on the Navy's public pronouncements about the Maritime Strategy and public discussion surrounding that strategy.

24. Consider, for example, that Admiral James Watkins recently noted that in 1983 "we reviewed our extant strategy—a strategy with broad contours reasonably well understood, but one which had not been submitted to the rigor inherent in codification." Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," p. 4. Also see Francis J. West, Jr., "Maritime Strategy and NATO Deterrence," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 38, No. 5 (September–October 1985), p. 12.

25. For a good example of this phenomenon, see U.S. Congress, House Armed Services Committee, *Report on the 600-Ship Navy*, 99th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 1985). This report, which was issued after the Seapower Subcommittee held hearings on the 600-ship navy and the Maritime Strategy, goes to some lengths to defend the Navy's strategy without ever defining the strategy or explaining why it is essential. These hearings unfortunately were not available for preparation of this article.

still be found. This fact, coupled with the often vague descriptions of the strategy offered by the Navy, lends the Maritime Strategy an ambiguous or elastic quality.

There are a number of reasons for this ambiguity. First, the Navy simply has not had or has never articulated a coherent strategy for deterring or fighting a conventional war with the Soviet Union.²⁶ Since the Maritime Strategy represents the Navy's first attempt to provide a coherent strategic rationale for its conventional forces, some confusion is to be expected in the early stages of such a difficult process. Second, there are almost certainly important disagreements about strategy among the different constituencies in the Navy.²⁷ A loosely and broadly defined strategy is an ideal device for smoothing over such differences. Third, it is hard to make the case that the Maritime Strategy significantly contributes to deterrence in Europe. It is especially difficult to justify a 600-ship navy on the grounds that it markedly enhances NATO's deterrent posture. One should therefore not expect to find an explicit or narrow rationale for the present naval buildup. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the vagueness and hydra-headed quality of the Maritime Strategy make it difficult for observers to challenge, since evaluating it is like taking aim at a moving target that is constantly changing shape and size. This kind of ambiguity is bureaucratically advantageous, however, because it provides the Navy with multiple rationales for its forces as well as a very demanding set of military requirements, and it deflects criticism by allowing Navy spokesmen to shift the grounds of debate.

26. There is little evidence of a coherent strategy or even an interest in strategic arguments in the Navy's Congressional testimony and key policy statements between 1945 and 1985. See also Peter Swartz's excellent bibliography on naval strategy, the listings in which reveal little evidence of strategic thinking in the Navy during these years. Captain Peter M. Swartz, "Contemporary U.S. Naval Strategy: A Bibliography," in *The Maritime Strategy*, pp. 41-47. Also see Captain Linton F. Brooks, "Naval Power and National Security: The Case for the Maritime Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Fall 1986), fn. 1; and the testimony of John Lehman in U.S. Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Hearings On The Nomination of John F. Lehman, Jr., To Be Secretary Of the Navy*, 97th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 28, 1981), pp. 8-10. Probably the only exception to this general point is the Navy's attempt in the late 1940s to find a role for itself in a nuclear war. See David A. Rosenberg, "American Postwar Air Doctrine and Organization: The Navy Experience," in Alfred F. Hurley and Major Robert C. Ehrhart, eds., *Air Power and Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1979), pp. 245-278. Also see pp. 279-282 of that volume.

27. See Richard Halloran, "The Steady Rise of the Submariners," *The New York Times*, November 21, 1985, p. 14; Morton H. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1974), chapter 3; and Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, *On Watch: A Memoir* (New York: Quadrangle, 1976), *passim*.

The evolution of the Maritime Strategy can be divided into roughly three periods, the first of which covers the initial two years of the Reagan Administration. The details of the strategy were obscure during this period, which is paradoxical, since that was when the key decisions were made to build a 600-ship navy, and these decisions presumably should have been informed by requirements generated by strategy. During 1981–1982, Navy spokesmen frequently advocated regaining “maritime superiority,” a phrase that, however useful for public relations, says little about strategy or the precise purposes for which a 600-ship fleet is needed.²⁸ However, insofar as the strategy was articulated, it emphasized offensive sea control and horizontal escalation, with less emphasis on direct military impact. Counterforce coercion was not mentioned.

Horizontal escalation was one of the main tenets of the overall defense policy of the early Reagan Administration.²⁹ The concept proved to be controversial, especially because it was widely perceived at the time that advocates of horizontal escalation intended to substitute it for American forces in Europe, and intended to reduce greatly the American commitment to fight in Europe. There was much talk about abandoning the American military’s traditional emphasis on sequential military operations in a major conventional war with the Soviet Union and stressing simultaneous operations in different theaters instead. The implication of this position was that Europe was no more nor less important than any other region of the world for the United States. There was indeed much discussion of unilateralism and the

28. This wording is most closely identified with John Lehman. See “Lehman Seeks Superiority,” *International Defense Review*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (1982), pp. 547–548; John F. Lehman, Jr., “Thinking About Strategy,” *Shipmate*, April 1982, pp. 18–20; John F. Lehman, Jr., “Rebirth of a U.S. Naval Strategy,” *Strategic Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Summer 1981), pp. 9–15; and “Rebuilt Navy,” Transcript of “The MacNeil-Lehrer Report” broadcast on March 27, 1981, library number 1435, show number 6195.

29. See Richard Halloran, “Weinberger Tells of New Conventional-Force Strategy,” *The New York Times*, May 6, 1981, p. 10; Samuel P. Huntington, “The Defense Policy of the Reagan Administration, 1981–1982,” in Fred I. Greenstein, ed., *The Reagan Presidency, An Early Assessment* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 101–104; Fred C. Iklé, “The Reagan Defense Program: A Focus On The Strategic Imperatives,” *Strategic Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring 1982), pp. 14–16; Weinberger, *Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1983*, pp. I-14–I-17; Dov S. Zakheim, “The Unforeseen Contingency: Reflections on Strategy,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Autumn 1982), pp. 158–166. It is clear from these sources that there was a direct connection between the Administration’s emphasis on the Navy and its advocacy of horizontal escalation. Also see John Lehman’s comments in “Mideast Crisis: U.S. Navy at the Ready,” *U.S. News and World Report*, August 2, 1982, p. 24.

adoption of a blue water strategy, although it should be emphasized that no Navy spokesman publicly identified himself with this position.³⁰

There was also considerable discussion during this early period about conducting offensive operations north of the GIN gap, which, if anything, shows that the Navy was still quite interested in Europe.³¹ This discussion was linked to the issue of sea control. The Navy emphasized that defensive sea control was an unsatisfactory posture and that only an offensive strategy would provide adequate sea control.³² Navy spokesmen also maintained that only an offensive strategy would provide the means to protect northern Norway, the defense of which is important for protecting the Atlantic SLOCs.³³ The Navy's case for offensive sea control, at least in the public domain, was based largely on assertion, not on analysis. Actually, the Navy had begun making the case for offensive operations in the Norwegian and Barents seas in the late 1970s, largely in response to the perception that the Carter Administration embraced defensive sea control.³⁴ The specifics of the

30. There is a voluminous literature associated with this subject. See *inter alia* Dunn and Staudenmaier, *Strategic Implications of the Continental-Maritime Debate*; Gary Hart, "Can Congress Come to Order?," in Thomas M. Franck, ed., *The Tethered Presidency* (New York: NYU Press, 1981), pp. 229-244; Josef Joffe, "Europe's American Pacifier," *Foreign Policy*, No. 54 (Spring 1984), pp. 66-84; Komer, *Maritime Strategy or Coalition Defense?*; Christopher Layne, "Ending the Alliance," *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Summer 1983), pp. 5-31; Jeffrey Record and Robert J. Hanks, *U.S. Strategy at the Crossroads: Two Views* (Cambridge, Mass.: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1982); Stansfield Turner and George Thibault, "Preparing for the Unexpected: The Need for a New Military Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Fall 1982), pp. 122-135; and F.J. West, Jr., "NATO II: Common Boundaries For Common Interests," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (January-February 1981), pp. 59-67.

31. This point is clearly reflected in the sources cited in note 28. Also see Barry R. Posen, "Inadvertent Nuclear War?," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall 1982), pp. 28-54, a controversial article from this first period which focuses on the Navy's plans for an offensive north of the GIN gap; and "Battle for the Norwegian Sea," Transcript of "Frontline" Television Program broadcast on January 1, 1985.

32. The Navy emphasized the claim that the threat of an offensive strategy forced the Soviets to keep their SSNs in their home waters and away from the SLOCs. See note 104. Navy spokesmen also argued that, "If we are not able to go on the offence against the Soviet submarine and air threat, if we have to wait for them to come to us, then we can't survive." "Lehman Seeks Superiority," p. 548.

33. For a recent statement of this case, see Vice Admiral H.C. Mustin, "The Role of the Navy and Marines in the Norwegian Sea," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (March-April 1986), pp. 2-6.

34. It is important to emphasize that the roots of the Maritime Strategy rest firmly in the late 1970s. The Navy was dissatisfied during that period over the Carter Administration's decision to emphasize defensive sea control. (It seems that the previous administration also favored defensive sea control.) In response, the Navy, largely in the person of Admiral Thomas B. Hayward (Chief of Naval Operations), began arguing forcefully that the Navy should be used offensively against the Soviet Union. See, for example, Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, "The Future of U.S. Sea Power," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol. 105, No. 5 (May 1979), pp. 66-

new strategy were not clearly spelled out in the first Reagan years, and consequently considerable controversy arose about the actual conduct of offensive operations. One issue was whether aircraft carriers would be sent forward early in a war to strike at the Soviet Union. This view was identified with Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, while it was generally believed that the admirals would hold the carriers back behind the GIN gap until submarines had swept the Norwegian Sea and large portions of the Barents Sea.³⁵ There was also much debate about whether the Navy could strike Soviet SSNs without destroying their SSBNs.³⁶

The second period in the evolution of the Maritime Strategy began in 1983 and culminated with testimony by Navy officials before the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 1984, where they presented a detailed and reasonably coherent version of the strategy.³⁷ During this period, offensive

71, which contains virtually all the principal ideas articulated by John Lehman and others in the early Reagan years. For a discussion of the bitter feud that broke out between the Navy and the Carter Administration, see Richard Burt, "U.S. Defense Debate Arises Over Whether Focus on Europe Neglects Other Areas," *The New York Times*, March 24, 1978, p. 3; "Navy Protests Limitation of Its Long-Term Mission," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1978, p. 3; Bernard Weinraub, "Brown Criticizes Navy Officers Who Oppose Changes in Strategy," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1978, p. 11; Bernard Weinraub, "Claytor Criticizes Pentagon Aides on Plans to Reduce the Navy's Role," *The New York Times*, March 28, 1978, p. 10; and Bernard Weinraub, "Dispute Over Navy Role Termed Biggest Defense Fight Since 1949," *The New York Times*, April 4, 1978, p. 16. For examples of the Ford Administration's commitment to defensive sea control, see James R. Schlesinger, *Annual Defense Department Report, FY 1975* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1974), pp. 93–94; James R. Schlesinger, *Annual Defense Department Report, FY 1976 and FY 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1975), p. III-25; and Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Annual Defense Department Report, FY 1978* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1977), pp. 96–97.

35. See Halloran, "Navy Trains to Battle Soviet Submarines in Arctic"; U.S. Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for FY 1985 (Part 8)*, 98th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March–May 1984), pp. 3871–3872 [Hereinafter cited as *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*]; and Wilson, "Navy is Preparing for Submarine Warfare Beneath Coastal Ice."

36. The centerpiece article in this debate was Posen, "Inadvertent Nuclear War?" Also see Bruce G. Blair, "Arms Control Implications of Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Programs," in U.S. Congress, House Committee on International Relations, *Report on Evaluation of Fiscal Year 1979 Arms Control Impact Statements*, 95th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 3, 1979), pp. 103–119; Joel S. Wit, "Advances in Antisubmarine Warfare," *Scientific American*, February 1981, pp. 31–41; and footnote 100 and the attendant text.

37. See *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, pp. 3851–3900, which is the key document from this period. Also see O'Donnell, "Northern Flank Maritime Offensive"; Commodore Dudley L. Carlson's statement in U.S. Congress, House Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on Defense Department Authorization and Oversight for FY 1984 (Part 4)*, 98th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February–April 1983), pp. 47–51 [These hearings are hereinafter cited as *HASC Hearings on FY 84 Budget (Part 4)*]; West, "Maritime Strategy and NATO Deterrence"; and Robert S. Wood and John T. Hanley, Jr., "The Maritime Role in the

sea control was elevated to a preeminent position, while counterforce coercion made its first appearance as a secondary mission. Although the Navy did not explicitly endorse counterforce coercion in its public statements, the first indirect evidence began to appear in Congressional hearings and elsewhere that the Navy considered this an important element of its strategy.³⁸ Direct military impact continued as a secondary mission, while horizontal escalation now drew little mention. The lack of attention paid to horizontal escalation was probably due to the fact that Navy spokesmen were intent on combatting the criticism that they were advocating unilateralism while emphasizing their commitment to the Alliance.³⁹ Not surprisingly, they also backed away from arguing for simultaneous military operations against the Soviet Union and instead identified themselves with the traditional policy of sequential military operations. John Lehman, for example, told Congress that the Navy "cannot deal simultaneously with every theater" and therefore it would be necessary in a large-scale conventional war to deal sequentially with the various threats in the different theaters.⁴⁰ The implication was that the Navy would first concentrate its efforts in Europe and turn later to the other theaters.⁴¹

North Atlantic," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 38, No. 6 (November–December 1985), pp. 5–18.

38. See, for example, *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, pp. 3864, 3893. Although the discussion on p. 3864 does not mention attacking Soviet SSBNs, it highlights the very high premium that counterforce coercion (as opposed to offensive sea control) places on inserting large numbers of SSNs in the Barents Sea early in a crisis. Also see Melissa Healy, "Lehman: We'll Sink Their Subs," *Defense Week*, May 13, 1985, p. 18; and West, "Maritime Strategy and NATO Deterrence," pp. 6, 8, 11. Also of interest are Commander Richard T. Ackley, "No Bastions for the Bear: Round 2," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 111, No. 4 (April 1985), pp. 42–47; Hamlin Caldwell, "The Empty Silo—Strategic ASW," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (September–October 1981), pp. 4–14; and David B. Rivkin, "No Bastions for the Bear," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 110, No. 4 (April 1984), pp. 36–43.

39. It is interesting to note that the Navy has now adopted the rhetorical concept of coalition defense, which was originally used by Robert Komer to attack the Navy. See, for example, *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, pp. 3853–3855; and Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," p. 4.

40. *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, p. 3854.

41. The Navy's position on this matter is not altogether clear. Sequential military operations focusing on Europe would seem to require a "swing" strategy, under which the United States would move at least some naval forces from the Pacific to the Atlantic in a conventional war, to cope first with the war in Europe. Yet the Navy has emphasized that it will not swing forces to Europe—implying that offensive operations in the Pacific will not take a back seat to the naval offensive in Europe. See, for example, John F. Lehman, Jr., "The 600-Ship Navy," in *The Maritime Strategy*, pp. 34–36; and *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, p. 3893. This position is obviously not fully consistent with the notion of sequential operations that make Europe the first priority. Moreover, there is further reason to believe that the Navy does not plan to swing forces out of the Pacific, since its counterforce coercion strategy mandates that it strike at Soviet

During this period, the Navy also fleshed out some of the operational details of the offensive sea control element of the Maritime Strategy.⁴² The offensive would be conducted in two phases. In the initial phase, aircraft carriers would be kept out of harm's way while attack submarines were used to roll back Soviet naval forces deployed in the Norwegian and Barents seas. Only after that task was completed would the carriers be moved forward to strike at Murmansk and other targets on the Kola Peninsula. There now appeared to be no difference between John Lehman and the admirals about the employment of carriers in a war with the Soviets.

The second period, with its emphasis on offensive sea control, came to an abrupt end in January 1986, when Admiral James Watkins, former Chief of Naval Operations, introduced a revised version of the Maritime Strategy in an important article written for a special supplement to the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*.⁴³ Offensive sea control was de-emphasized somewhat by the Navy chief, apparently predicated on the widely agreed-upon assumption that Soviet SSNs would *not* attempt to cut NATO's SLOCs in the early stages of a war but would instead remain in the Norwegian and Barents seas to protect Soviet SSBNs from American SSNs.⁴⁴ The threat of offensive action, in other words, largely neutralized the Soviet threat to the SLOCs. Instead of offensive sea control, Watkins now made counterforce coercion the centerpiece of the Maritime Strategy. "The Soviets," he argued, "place great weight on the nuclear correlation of forces."⁴⁵ From this, he deduced that the Navy could affect Soviet behavior on the Central Front by shifting the nuclear balance against them, principally by destroying large numbers of Soviet SSBNs. Watkins also briefly noted that the Navy would place "carriers and Tomahawk platforms around the periphery of the Soviet Union," implying that such a move would further shift the nuclear balance

SSBNs in the Pacific as well as those located with the Northern Fleet. See note 20. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that, when Navy spokesmen discuss sequential operations, they really mean that major offensives would be launched simultaneously against the Soviets' Northern and Pacific fleets, while naval operations in all other theaters would be assigned secondary importance in the war's initial stages.

42. See *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, *passim*; and Judy J. McCoy and Benjamin F. Schemmer, "An Exclusive AFJ Interview with: Admiral Wesley L. McDonald," *Armed Forces Journal International*, April 1985, pp. 68–70. Hereinafter cited as McDonald Interview.

43. Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy." Also see Michael R. Gordon, "Nonnuclear War Might Start Raid on Soviet A-Arms," *The New York Times*, January 7, 1986, pp. 1, 11; and George C. Wilson and Michael Weisskopf, "Pentagon Plan Coldly Received," *The Washington Post*, February 6, 1986, p. 14.

44. Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," p. 7. Also see note 98 and the attendant text.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

against the Soviets.⁴⁶ In short, altering the strategic balance now appears to be the principal goal of the Maritime Strategy.

At the same time, counterforce coercion was not the only deterrent posture discussed in Watkins's article. All three of the other elements of the Maritime Strategy received roughly equal mention as matters of secondary importance. Offensive sea control, although demoted from preeminence, was nevertheless treated as a matter of concern. Horizontal escalation reappeared after its near-disappearance during 1983–1985.⁴⁷ Specific references to direct military impact on the Central Front also occurred. For example, Admiral Watkins stressed at least twice that "the full weight of the carrier battle forces could . . . contribute to the battle on the Central Front, or carry the war to the Soviets."⁴⁸ In that same special supplement, General P.X. Kelley, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, made a more elaborate case for direct military impact. He wrote:

Maritime forces offer the opportunity to avoid a long, costly, and uncertain land effort to push the Soviets back in Central Europe. Naval operations on the exposed Rimland flanks present the option of striking quickly at key Soviet pressure points in a campaign of nautical maneuver. Used in this manner, our naval forces can make the strategic difference.⁴⁹

Not surprisingly, he placed special weight on using "massed amphibious task forces . . . to seize key objectives in the Soviet rear."⁵⁰ He went so far as to raise the possibility of landing Marines along the eastern Baltic or the Black Sea coasts.⁵¹

Two general conclusions emerge from this discussion. First, the Maritime Strategy has evolved through three periods, with the public emphasis changing from a somewhat vaguely defined interest in offensive sea control and

46. Ibid.

47. Watkins writes, for example: "Forward deployment must be global as well as early. Deployments to the Western Pacific directly enhance deterrence, including deterrence of an attack in Europe, by providing a clear indication that, should war come, the Soviets will not be able to ignore any region of the globe." Ibid., p. 10. Also see pp. 7, 10–11, 14.

48. Ibid., p. 13. Also see p. 12.

49. General P.X. Kelley and Major Hugh K. O'Donnell, Jr., "The Amphibious Warfare Strategy," in *The Maritime Strategy*, p. 26.

50. Ibid.

51. As a sidelight on this matter, the military analyst Walter Millis raised the possibility in 1951 of launching simultaneous amphibious operations in the Baltic and Black seas. "The space between the Black Sea and the Baltic is only 750 miles wide," he noted, implying that the attacking forces could link up and produce a decisive victory against the Soviet Union. Walter Millis, "Sea Power: Abstraction or Asset?," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (April 1951), p. 383.

horizontal escalation (1981–1982) to a relatively clear-cut preference for offensive sea control (1983–1985) to the adoption of counterforce coercion as the centerpiece of the strategy (1986). Second, although Navy spokesmen may accentuate one or more of the offensive postures, they have used all four deterrent postures to make their case. Thus, to analyze the impact of the strategy on deterrence in Europe, one cannot simply evaluate the case for counterforce coercion. It is also necessary to consider the other three offensive postures: direct military impact, horizontal escalation, and offensive sea control. As will become evident, none of these contributes much to deterring the Soviets from going to war in Europe.

Direct Military Impact and Horizontal Escalation

DIRECT MILITARY IMPACT

The Navy has not argued forcefully about the deterrent value of direct military impact, perhaps because the case is so weak.⁵² All three of the principal scenarios for using the Navy in this way lack plausibility.

Consider amphibious operations against the Soviet mainland, which would entail a major landing operation along the coast of either the Baltic or Black sea.⁵³ The aim would be to create such a formidable threat in the Soviets' rear that they would have to pull a substantial number of forces away from the Central Front. This is a completely unrealistic scenario for three reasons. First, it would be essential that the attacking forces have control of the air and seas in and around the landing area.⁵⁴ The landing forces must be

52. In this section and in the following two, I have sometimes listed the number of forces on each side and drawn conclusions from those raw balances. As I have tried to show elsewhere, it is important to go beyond mere force levels and examine what is likely to happen when the opposing forces actually engage each other. [See John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly in Central Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Summer 1982), pp. 3–39. Also see Joshua M. Epstein, "Soviet Vulnerabilities in Iran and the RDF Deterrent," *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall 1981), pp. 126–158; and Barry R. Posen, "Measuring the European Conventional Balance: Coping With Complexity in Threat Assessment," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Winter 1984–85), pp. 47–88. Copies of these three pieces can be found in Steven E. Miller, ed., *Conventional Forces and American Defense Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 79–157, 309–341.] Given limitations of space and time, I am unable to offer such dynamic assessments here. I am nevertheless confident about the conclusions offered in the subsequent analysis.

53. The following discussion is not addressed to a small-scale landing operation in non-Soviet territory (i.e., Norway), but to a major landing on the Soviet homeland.

54. See Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious Warfare: Its Theory and Its Practice in the Pacific* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), *passim*; and Alfred Vagts, *Landing Operations: Strategy, Psychology, Tactics, Politics, From Antiquity to 1945* (Harrisburg: Military Service Publishing Company, 1946), chapter 4.

protected from enemy air and naval strikes. Moreover, a major amphibious operation against the Soviet Union would require substantial fire support from air and naval forces, support that would not be forthcoming if those forces were themselves vulnerable to enemy air and submarine attacks. Thus, it would be imperative that the assaulting forces dominate the air and sea. This would almost certainly not be the case in the Baltic and Black seas. The Soviets have ground-based air defenses in these regions as well as large numbers of land-based anti-ship missiles.⁵⁵ Furthermore, they maintain powerful fleets in both seas, and large numbers of land-based aircraft are within easy striking distance of these coasts. Also, it would be extremely difficult to achieve tactical surprise because the attacking forces would have to move through restricted routes of passage to get into either sea. Soviet surveillance would surely discover the assault forces early and move to destroy them before they reached the landing areas. The Baltic and the Black seas would be veritable hornets' nests in a war and hardly suitable for amphibious operations.

Second, the United States has a limited amphibious lift capability. The Navy, which has long considered it a low-order priority, is now in the process of procuring enough ships to increase its amphibious assault capability by approximately one Marine brigade, from one Marine division to 1½ Marine divisions.⁵⁶ These would be essentially light infantry forces which would be at a real disadvantage against Soviet heavy mechanized and armored divisions. This is hardly a formidable threat against a power like the Soviet Union, assuming, of course, that the Navy could insert that force into the Soviets' rear. To have a significant impact on the Central Front, where scores of divisions would be locked in combat, the Navy would have to insert more than a reinforced division.⁵⁷ Instead for NATO to have any chance with an amphibious operation against the Soviet mainland would require a striking force of at least five divisions, something on the scale of the Allied force that landed at Normandy in June 1944.⁵⁸ Furthermore, NATO would need rein-

55. For information on Soviet forces in these two areas, see Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*, pp. 12–14; Vice Admiral Helmut Kampe, "Defending the Baltic Approaches," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 112, No. 3 (March 1986), pp. 88–93; *The Military Balance*, 1984–1985, pp. 17–22; and *The Military Balance*, 1985–1986, pp. 26–29.

56. See Kelley and O'Donnell, "The Amphibious Warfare Strategy," pp. 18–29.

57. For a good description of the size and scope of possible engagements on the Central Front, see Andrew Hamilton, "Redressing the Conventional Balance: NATO's Reserve Military Manpower," *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Summer 1985), p. 116.

58. For an appreciation of the giant scale of effort that was required to launch and sustain the

forcements, most of which would have to be heavy divisions. NATO does not have and is not likely to develop such a capability, if for no other reason than because it would mean taking land forces away from the Central Front and naval forces away from their planned offensive against the Northern Fleet. No rational NATO planner would pull forces away from those main engagements to attempt a highly risky amphibious operation in the Baltic or Black sea. In fact, there would undoubtedly be great pressure to use Marine units on the Central Front, in much the same way that their predecessors were used on the Western Front in World War I.⁵⁹

Finally, even if NATO were able to raise such a force of five or more divisions and somehow manage to land it in the Soviets' rear, it most likely would not be capable of presenting so serious a threat to the Soviets that they would have to draw forces away from the Central Front. First, it is not clear that NATO could maintain lines of communication with the attacking forces. The Soviets would bring substantial air and naval assets to bear to cut off the amphibious forces from their source of supply. Second, the Soviets should have adequate ground forces to check the amphibious forces without having to pull units from the Central Front. They have a large pool of divisions near the potential landing areas which they could draw upon to meet the attacking forces.⁶⁰ If NATO were to develop a formidable amphibious capability, the Soviets would certainly make preparations to shift those forces in the actual event. Furthermore, because the Soviets would enjoy internal lines of communication and because they have good rail and road systems, they should be able to shift forces quickly enough to contain a NATO assault force. In sum, a major amphibious operation against the Soviet mainland is *not* a serious threat and offers little promise of enhancing NATO's deterrent posture.⁶¹

Normandy invasion, see Susan H. Godson, *Viking of Assault: Admiral John Lesslie Hall, Jr., and Amphibious Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), chapters 5–6; Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1951), *passim*; Roland G. Ruppenthal, "Logistic Planning for OVERLORD in Retrospect," in The Eisenhower Foundation, *D-Day: The Normandy Invasion in Retrospect* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1971), pp. 87–103; and Martin Van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), chapter 7.

59. The Marines, who have a long-standing fear of being incorporated into the Army, seldom refer to their experience in World War I; nor do they encourage discussion of their possible use on the Central Front.

60. See the sources cited in note 55.

61. It is instructive to note that before World War I some British naval officers argued for an

What about the Navy's claim that carrier-based air might play a key role in the air war over Central Europe? This argument cannot be taken too seriously simply because neither the Navy nor NATO plans to use naval tactical air for this purpose.⁶² After all, the Navy's primary rationale for carrier task forces in a European conflict is that they are necessary for projecting power against the Kola Peninsula, not for helping win the air war on the Central Front. One certainly cannot rule out the possibility that carrier-based aircraft would be used in the air war over Germany, but it must again be emphasized that NATO's deterrent posture largely ignores that possibility and depends instead on Air Force tactical fighters.

There is a fundamental problem with relying on carrier-based air to provide the margin of victory in the air war over the Central Front. The cost of procuring a fixed number of naval tactical aircraft is much greater than the cost of procuring the same number of Air Force replacement aircraft.⁶³ It is not the aircraft that account for the difference but the fact that, when calculating the price of naval air, it is necessary to include the enormous cost of the entire carrier battle group. In short, building naval air for the Central Front is a very inefficient way to buy tactical air power. If the purpose is to improve NATO's chances in the air war over Europe, it would make much more sense to use resources allocated to the Navy to buy additional Air Force fighters.

amphibious assault along the German coast as a means of thwarting a German offensive against France and that the proposal was rejected as strategically unsound. See John Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900–1916* (New York: Wiley, 1974), chapter 9; Paul Haggie, "The Royal Navy and War Planning in the Fisher Era," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (July 1973), pp. 125–131; Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904–1919*, Vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 383–395; John McDermott, "The Revolution in British Military Thinking From the Boer War to the Moroccan Crisis," *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (August 1974), pp. 171–177; Nicholas d'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy: Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain, 1902–1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), chapter 2; and Samuel R. Williamson, Jr., *The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904–1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), *passim*. The British navy maintained interest in this scheme even after the war had begun. See Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), pp. 255–259. Kennedy aptly concludes: "The mind recoils at the fate which would have befallen an expeditionary force landed on the Pomeranian coast, even had the fleet managed to break into the Baltic. Whilst the French political and military leaders saw such diversions as a virtual betrayal, British generals regarded them as a nonsense." *Ibid.*, p. 258.

62. I know of no evidence in the public record that shows otherwise.

63. For a good discussion of this matter, see Arnold M. Kuzmack, *Naval Force Levels and Modernization: An Analysis of Shipbuilding Requirements* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1971), pp. 27–31.

Finally, there is the issue that the threat of a successful naval offensive against the Kola Peninsula would cause the Soviets to pause when contemplating a blitzkrieg in Europe. Specifically, it has been suggested here that a naval victory on the Northern Flank might force the Soviets to transfer much-needed air units from the European heartland to the Kola—reducing their chances for success in the main land battles. Although Navy spokesmen do not often make this argument, it is important to consider.⁶⁴

The first problem with it is lack of credibility. It is not at all obvious that the national command authorities would allow the Navy to strike at the Kola Peninsula and, even if allowed to do so, it is not clear that the Navy would achieve a major success. These matters will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections. Suffice it to say here that the Navy, if sent to strike north, would face a very formidable task.

Second, if the Soviets were pressed to send additional air units to the Northern Flank, they could be drawn from units in regions not directly involved with the conflict on the Central Front.⁶⁵ Third, there is the time factor. The Soviets are likely to go to war only if they believe that there is a good chance that they can win a quick and decisive victory. Should they reach such a conclusion, it would not be unrealistic for them to think in terms of effectively crippling NATO in 10–14 days.⁶⁶ After all, NATO lacks strategic depth and employs most of its forces in forward positions. An American naval offensive, on the other hand, would probably take considerable time to execute. Carrier-based strikes against the Kola Peninsula, for example, would not take place until after the Northern Fleet's SSNs and surface navy had been rolled back; and that difficult task would probably take much time (several weeks or months) to accomplish. This point is driven home by John Lehman's response when asked to specify the period of time

64. For examples of this argument, see Michael Getler, "Lehman Sees Norwegian Sea as a Key to Soviet Naval Strategy," *The Washington Post*, December 29, 1982, p. 4; and "Lehman Seeks Superiority," p. 547.

65. The Soviets have a very large number of tactical aircraft as well as a formidable fleet of medium and long-range bombers. Air units from regions not directly involved in the fighting on the Central Front could be easily and quickly moved to the Kola Peninsula in a conflict. For information on the size and location of those air forces, see Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*, pp. 12–14; *The Military Balance, 1984–1985*, pp. 17–18, 20–22; and *The Military Balance, 1985–1986*, pp. 21–30.

66. I should note that I do not believe that it is likely that the Soviets would reach this conclusion. See Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly in Central Europe."

needed to conduct the rollback operation. Lehman, who has great confidence in the Navy's ability to carry out difficult missions, answered:

No one has tried to put a timeframe on it because of the inherent unpredictability. . . . War is inherently unpredictable, one can't easily determine how it will break out or how long it will take, for instance, to nullify the submarine force in the Norwegian Sea. *That is a tough area to operate in.* It may take a week or it may take a month or 3 months.⁶⁷

The key point here is that the Soviets' time frame for executing a successful blitzkrieg would, in all likelihood, be short enough that events on the Northern Flank would not upset it in any way.

Fourth, even if the Navy is capable of executing an offensive against the Kola Peninsula in a relatively short period of time, the resulting threat to the Soviet Union would not be very great. The Soviet Union is a great land power that cannot be hurt badly by naval strikes against its periphery. For the Soviets, and ultimately for NATO, Central Europe is where a major conventional war would be settled. The Navy could score a stunning victory on the Northern Flank, and it would be all for naught if NATO failed to check the Soviets in the land battle on the intra-German border. The Soviets, after consolidating their position on the continent, would then have little difficulty eliminating the threat on their northern flank. There would therefore be no compelling reason for the Soviets to pull units away from the Central Front. In short, a Soviet decision to launch a blitzkrieg would probably not be affected by the threat of naval strikes against the Kola Peninsula.

HORIZONTAL ESCALATION

The Reagan Administration was initially attracted to horizontal escalation as a deterrent posture. However, except for the Navy, there no longer appears to be much interest in this strategy.⁶⁸ This is probably because such a strategy does little to enhance deterrence—especially for NATO. One of the principal difficulties is finding an appropriate target. No area in the Third World compares in importance to Western Europe. Surely, the consequences for the Soviet Union of “losing” Angola, Cuba, or Vietnam would be nowhere

67. SASC *Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, p. 3877. Emphasis added. Also see Watkins, “The Maritime Strategy,” pp. 8–9.

68. Good critiques of horizontal escalation are Joshua Epstein, “Horizontal Escalation: Sour Notes of a Recurrent Theme,” *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Winter 1983/1984), pp. 19–31; and Robert Perry, Mark A. Lorell, and Kevin N. Lewis, *Second-Area Operations: A Strategy Option*, R-2992-USDP (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, May 1984).

near as great as the consequences to the United States of seeing Western Europe fall into Soviet hands. As a result, the Soviets would not be deterred by the prospect of the loss of those areas and probably would not move significant forces to defend them. The net result would be that American forces, but not Soviet forces, would be diverted from the crucial battle in Europe into campaigns that held little strategic significance. Furthermore, as the United States learned in Southeast Asia, America's ability to influence the course of events in the Third World is limited, so American horizontal escalations could develop into costly enterprises. It is, in short, simply not plausible to think in terms of threatening the Soviets with a tit-for-tat strategy in which they take Europe and the United States takes an area of comparable value in the Third World.

One might argue that the threat of a major military strike on the Soviet periphery would force the Soviets to pull units away from the Central Front.⁶⁹ This kind of offensive would have to be directed at Soviet forces in the Far East, since this is the only important Soviet area *outside* of Europe that is vulnerable to attack by powerful naval forces. The logic here is analogous to the claim that direct strikes against the Kola Peninsula would weaken the Soviets' position in Central Europe. The flaws in the argument are similar. The Soviets could afford to absorb a temporary beating in the Far East while they were rolling up NATO's forces in Central Europe. A setback on the periphery would not weaken their European effort in any meaningful way and, moreover, once the Soviets had consolidated their position in Western Europe, they could move massive forces to deal with problems on their periphery. In any event, it is not clear that the Navy could inflict a significant defeat on Soviet forces in the Far East.⁷⁰ The Soviets have formidable military forces in this area, and they could transfer forces from areas other than Central Europe to this theater. The Navy likes to emphasize the ease with which it could move forces around the Soviet periphery, giving the impression that it could bring greater force to bear at the point of attack than could the Soviets. This is a dubious claim. As Fred Iklé, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, notes:

69. Navy spokesmen, when discussing horizontal escalation, focus mainly, although not exclusively, on striking at the Soviet periphery—not areas in the Third World. Also see note 20.

70. There is hardly any analysis in the public domain about the Navy's prospects against the Soviets' Pacific Fleet. It is apparent, however, that the Navy believes that the Soviets have formidable forces in that region. For information on Soviet forces in the Far East, see Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*, p. 13; *The Military Balance, 1984–1985*, pp. 19–21; and *The Military Balance, 1985–1986*, pp. 29–30.

The Soviets are able to exploit their interior lines of communication in order to shift rapidly the geographical pivots of their force concentrations for power projection. Thus, they are in a position to move airborne forces and air forces swiftly along their periphery, and they can shift Backfire bombers to attack our fleets more rapidly than the United States can shift its aircraft carriers between widely separated sea regions near the Soviet Union.⁷¹

Finally, a major non-European offensive would employ forces that could otherwise be used in Europe. It takes NATO forces to divert Soviet forces, and there is no evidence, as implied in arguments for horizontal escalation, that NATO could force the Pact to divert more forces than NATO would divert. Thus, there is no evidence that NATO could improve the force ratio in Europe by pursuing a horizontal escalation strategy.

SEA POWER IN THE INDUSTRIAL AGE

The inadequacies of direct military impact and horizontal escalation as deterrent postures extend beyond their particulars to include the general view of military power that underpins them. Advocates of both strategies tend toward a Mahanian view of military power.⁷² They believe that control of the seas is the key ingredient for great power status. John Lehman, who is given to highlighting the relevance and importance of Mahan, argues that "the sea is *inevitably* the major arena of competition and conflict among nations aspiring to wealth and power."⁷³ Underlying this belief is the core assumption that, in the competition between land power and sea power, the latter has distinct advantages that derive mainly from the flexibility inherent in naval forces. For these neo-Mahanians, offensively oriented naval forces provide the key for gaining advantage over a land power like the Soviet Union.

71. Iklé, "The Reagan Defense Program," p. 15. This point notwithstanding, the author actually argues in favor of horizontal escalation.

72. For a listing of Mahan's principal writings, see Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 904–905. For a discussion of Mahan's thinking about naval power, see *inter alia*: Philip A. Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Naval Historian," in *ibid.*, pp. 444–477; Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, pp. 1–9; William E. Livezey, *Mahan on Sea Power* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981); William Reitzel, "Mahan on the Use of the Sea," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (May–June 1973), pp. 73–82; Donald M. Schurman, *The Education of a Navy: The Development of British Naval Strategic Thought, 1867–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 60–82; and Margaret T. Sprout, "Mahan: Evangelist of Sea Power," in Edward Mead Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought From Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), pp. 415–445.

73. Lehman, "Rebirth of a U.S. Naval Strategy," p. 11. For a brief discussion of the enduring influence of Mahan on naval thinking, see Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan," pp. 476–477.

This view of power in the international system is fundamentally flawed and has little application to the U.S.–Soviet competition. Mahan's theories, as is widely recognized by scholars, were largely outdated when they were written.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the notion that "the sea is . . . the major arena of competition" between great powers is probably an accurate description of the past conflict between Japan and the United States, but it is not an accurate assessment of the present superpower rivalry.⁷⁵ Nor is it an accurate description of the British–German competition in the first half of this century. The Soviet Union, like Germany before it, is a continental power that threatens to take control of the Eurasian heartland, an area of tremendous strategic importance. Consequently, a rival power, be it Britain or the United States, has no alternative but to treat the Eurasian heartland as the principal arena of competition.

One might accept the claim that the Soviet Union is primarily a continental power, but maintain that naval forces provide an insular power like the United States with a significant lever against a land power like the Soviet Union. This, however, is not true. The industrialization and democratization that has occurred over the past century and a half, especially the development of mass armies and of railroads to move them rapidly, has led to a significant shift in the relationship between land power and sea power in favor of the former.⁷⁶ Insular powers like the United States can do little with independent

74. For a superb exposition of this point, see Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, especially chapter 7. Also see Paul M. Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy, 1870–1945* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), pp. 43–85.

75. The Navy, not surprisingly, has historically had a preference for the Pacific over the European theater. See Vincent Davis, *Postwar Defense Policy and the U.S. Navy, 1943–1946* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), pp. 76–80. Former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Arleigh Burke explained this preference in the mid-1950s: "Naval forces, because of the size of the Pacific Ocean and the geographical positions of the potential enemy, will be the primary source of U.S. strength in the Western Pacific, whereas in the European Theater, other elements of this and other nations' armed forces would most surely dominate." Quoted in Lt. Commander Joseph A. Sestak, Jr., "Righting the Atlantic Tilt," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol. 112, No. 1 (January 1986), p. 66. Recently, General P.X. Kelley, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, noted: "Making a case for an offensively oriented Navy and Marine Corps is not an easy undertaking if Europe is the primary U.S. area of interest." Kelley and O'Donnell, "The Amphibious Warfare Strategy," p. 23.

76. The classic statement of this position is Halford J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (April 1904), pp. 421–437, with subsequent discussion on pp. 437–444. Also see Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: Norton, 1962); Derwent Whittlesey, "Haushofer: The Geopoliticians," in Earle, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 388–411; Martin Wight, "Sea Power and Land Power," in Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, eds., *Power Politics* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978), pp. 68–80; and the sources cited in note 72.

naval forces to hurt a land power like the Soviet Union. This point was demonstrated in both world wars, when Britain's navy had little effect on Germany's ability to wage war.⁷⁷ To the extent that there was an impact, it involved the much over-rated naval blockade of World War I.⁷⁸ However, a blockade against an autarkic state like the Soviet Union would be fruitless.

The only suitable military lever that can bring pressure against a continental power is a strong army amply supported with tactical air forces.⁷⁹ It is worth noting here that at the time of the infamous Munich accord the British chiefs of staff concluded that Britain, because it lacked an army that could be employed on the continent, had no choice but to appease Hitler.⁸⁰ Britain's navy was simply not an effective instrument for confronting the likes of the Third Reich. The same is true with regard to the American Navy and the Soviet Union. The neo-Mahanian threats of horizontal escalation and direct military impact simply do not provide a satisfactory posture for deterring a formidable land power like the Soviet Union.

It would be a mistake to conclude from this discussion that NATO should not be concerned with the naval dimension of a conventional war with the Soviet Union. The evidence from both world wars makes it clear that a continental power with a robust submarine force can seriously threaten an insular power that is either heavily dependent on imports or has to project forces and materials across wide oceans. The Germans, in both wars, came dangerously close to knocking Britain out of the war with their U-boats, and although it is not widely recognized, American submarines greatly reduced Japan's warfighting capability by cutting its SLOCs.⁸¹

77. See Gerd Hardach, *The First World War, 1914–1918* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), chapter 2; Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, chapters 9, 11; and Alan S. Milward, *War, Economy and Society, 1939–1945* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), chapter 9.

78. Liddell Hart's claim that "Among the causes of Germany's surrender the blockade is seen to be the most fundamental" is often cited by other authors. See Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 218. This is not, however, the case. See Louis Guichard, *The Naval Blockade*, trans. Christopher R. Turner (New York: Appleton, 1930); and Hardach, *The First World War*, chapter 2.

79. This discussion leaves aside, of course, the important matter of nuclear weapons. For my views on this subject, see Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe."

80. See Paul M. Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865–1980* (London: Fontana, 1981), pp. 290–293; and Telford Taylor, *Munich: The Price of Peace* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979), *passim*, but especially pp. 600–603, 629–633, 832–837, 995–1000.

81. Regarding the American submarine campaign against Japan, see Clay Blair, Jr., *Silent Victory* (New York: Lippincott, 1975); and U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, *The War Against Japanese Transportation, 1941–1945*, Pacific War, Report 54 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing

The principal lesson to be derived from the historical record is *not* that an insular power with a large surface navy can use that force to threaten a continental power but, on the contrary, that a continental power armed with submarines is a very real threat to an insular power. It is the United States, not the Soviet Union, that must concern itself with falling victim to the other side's naval power. Thus, in the final analysis, the central question is not whether the United States can hurt the Soviets with its navy, but whether NATO can protect its SLOCs from Soviet submarines. Sea control is the key issue.

Offensive Sea Control

It is not likely that Soviet calculations about the SLOC battle will have much influence on a decision to launch a war against NATO since that decision would probably be based on an assessment of their prospects in the ground war. Nevertheless, NATO must be concerned with the scenario in which the Soviets conclude that they are not likely to effect a blitzkrieg, but that there is a reasonable chance that they can defeat NATO by cutting its SLOCs in a few months' time. NATO must ensure that it has a sufficiently strong sea control capability that this situation never occurs. In this regard, the Navy matters for deterrence on the Central Front. The key issue, however, is whether offensive sea control is necessary to secure the SLOCs or whether that goal is best served by a defensive sea control strategy.

The balance of evidence suggests that offensive sea control is not an appropriate deterrent strategy for NATO. In the first place, it is not a credible strategy. Simply put, it is unlikely that the national command authorities would allow the Navy to pursue such a strategy in a conventional war. In addition, it is not necessary for the Navy to strike north to protect NATO's SLOCs. A robust defensive sea control posture would provide adequate protection.

The credibility of the Navy's threat to move north to protect the SLOCs depends on three factors. First is the matter of feasibility. It is not clear that the Navy, even a 600-ship navy, could roll back the Soviets' Northern Fleet

Office, 1947). Concerning the German U-boat campaigns in the two world wars, see Hardach, *The First World War*, chapter 3; Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, Vol. 5, pp. 77–120; Milward, *War, Economy and Society*, chapter 9; and Jurgen Rohwer, "The U-Boat War Against the Allied Supply Lines," in Jacobsen and Rohwer, *Decisive Battles of World War II*, pp. 259–312.

and then launch devastating attacks against the Kola Peninsula. Second are the problems of inadvertent and accidental escalation. An offensive strategy carries a real risk of nuclear escalation, and NATO decision-makers will surely want to avoid a situation in which a conventional war escalates extempore. Finally, there is the matter of necessity. Policymakers might be willing to set aside the problems of feasibility and nuclear escalation if they conclude that NATO has no choice but to strike north to guarantee protection of the SLOCs. Since this is not the case, offensive sea control is neither credible nor necessary.

THE PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

The Navy's prospects for rolling back Soviet naval forces in the Norwegian and Barents seas and then eliminating the important military installations and forces located on the Kola Peninsula are not good. This would not be an easy task in general, for it has become increasingly difficult in the 20th century for naval forces to strike effectively against powerful land-based forces. One only has to recall that in the First World War the British navy would not venture near the German coast to strike at the High Seas Fleet.⁸² British leaders worried that they would lose their fleet to the combined actions of mines, long-range coastal ordnance, torpedo boats, submarines, and the main units of the High Seas Fleet. The airplane further complicated the attacking naval force's problem. Although a striking force could employ carrier-based aircraft, the defending land power could always deploy many more aircraft than could a handful of carriers. The same argument applies to cruise missiles.

There are three specific reasons why it would be difficult for the Navy to roll back Soviet naval forces located in the Norwegian and especially the Barents seas. First, it is not apparent that the balance of forces would work to NATO's advantage. The Soviets have a large number of submarines in their Northern Fleet: 41 ballistic missile submarines and 140 attack and cruise missile submarines.⁸³ Some of these submarines are old and would be of limited utility against modern American attack submarines. Still, approximately 75 percent of the Soviets' most modern attack submarines are in these northern waters. The American Navy, once it achieves the Maritime Strategy's goal of 100 attack submarines, would normally maintain about 56 of

82. See Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, chapter 9; and Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, Vols. 2–5, *passim*.

83. Couhat and Baker, *Combat Fleets of the World, 1986/87*, p. 481.

those SSNs in the Atlantic and about 44 in the Pacific.⁸⁴ The Navy stresses that it would not swing forces from the Pacific to the Atlantic.⁸⁵ It seems reasonable to assume that about six of those 56 submarines would be in overhaul at any one time.⁸⁶ Furthermore, about 20 of the 50 operational attack submarines in the Atlantic would probably have to be used for defending the GIN barrier, protecting carrier battle groups, and possibly escorting high-value convoys across the Atlantic.⁸⁷ The Navy would therefore have about 30 attack submarines to send north against a total force of 181 Soviet submarines. Not counting Soviet SSBNs brings that number down to 140. There is no doubt that American submarines have a qualitative edge over their Soviet counterparts. Nevertheless, the Navy maintains that this qualitative edge has eroded markedly over the past decade and that the Navy now needs anywhere from 115 to 140 attack submarines to carry out its strategy.⁸⁸ In short, it is not easy to assess what is likely to happen in a submarine war in northern waters. After all, there has never been a submarine versus submarine war, and military history demonstrates that outnumbered forces occasionally prevail in war. Nevertheless, it is difficult to be confident about the Navy's assumption that its submarines would score greater than 3:1 exchange ratios in Soviet waters.

Second, the Soviet submarine force will be assisted by an impressive array of land-based aircraft and surface combatants assigned to the Northern Fleet. These forces are specifically designed to participate in ASW operations.

Third, the Soviets have a huge arsenal of mines, which promise to complicate American efforts to move swiftly into this northern bastion.⁸⁹ To

84. See the testimony of Admiral James A. Lyons, Jr., in U.S. Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Hearings on Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1986 (Part 8)*, 99th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February–March 1985), p. 4411. Hereinafter cited as *SASC Hearings on FY 86 Budget (Part 8)*.

85. See note 41.

86. As a rule of thumb, about 10 percent of the attack submarine force is in overhaul at any time. See *HASC Hearings on FY 84 Budget (Part 4)*, p. 176.

87. This number, which is admittedly a rough calculation, is based on the assumption that the Navy would send $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of its available attack submarines north to strike at the Soviet fleet. This assumption is derived from interviews.

88. Admiral N.R. Thunman, the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Submarine Warfare, notes that with regard to attack submarines "our force level goals [presumably 100 attack submarines] are well short of those considered necessary for a reasonable assurance of success." *HASC Hearings on FY 84 Budget (Part 4)*, p. 192. For references to the need for 115, 130, or 140 attack submarines, see *ibid.*, pp. 177, 181, 185, 192–193, 217, 219. Regarding the erosion of the American qualitative edge in submarine technology, see McDonald Interview, p. 72; and Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April 1985), pp. 28–29.

89. See Ted S. Wile, "Their Mine Warfare Capability," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 108, No. 10 (October 1982), pp. 145–151.

compound these difficulties, the NATO navies, and particularly the American, have a weak countermine capability. To quote Admiral Wesley McDonald (the former Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic), the "US countermine capability is *woefully* inadequate."⁹⁰ In sum, it will be difficult for the American Navy to roll back the Soviet Northern Fleet.

It may be the case, however, that the American Navy is such a superb fighting force that it would ultimately eliminate the majority of the adversary's fleet. Let us assume that the Navy has successfully rolled back the Northern Fleet, driving the remnants of that force into their bases on the Kola, and that the time has arrived to move the carriers forward and strike directly at the Kola Peninsula. This too would be a very difficult mission. The Soviets would undoubtedly have had considerable time to augment their already formidable forces and to fortify their defensive positions. These forces would present two different problems for the carriers. First, the Soviets would have a large number of Backfire bombers, cruise missiles, and other strike systems that could be used against the carriers.⁹¹ Second, the Soviets would employ large numbers of fighter aircraft as well as surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) to defend the Kola Peninsula. Thus, even if the carriers survive, their strike aircraft would be flying into the teeth of a well-armed defender.

Other considerations cast doubt on the likelihood of the Navy successfully silencing the Soviet threat on the Kola Peninsula. First, the number of attacking aircraft that a handful of carriers could muster for an air offensive is not great. There are limits to how many aircraft could be placed on a carrier, and furthermore, a substantial number of them would have to be used to defend the carriers.⁹² It is therefore not surprising that the Joint Chiefs of

90. Quoted in Giovanni de Briganti, "Europe's Navies: Can They Keep NATO Ports Open?," *Armed Forces Journal International*, April 1985, p. 56. Also see Jan S. Breemer, *U.S. Naval Developments* (Annapolis: Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1983), pp. 56-57; and Norman Friedman, "US Mine-Countermeasures Programs," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (1984), pp. 1259-1268.

91. For information on the formidable array of assets that the Soviets have on the Kola Peninsula, see the sources cited in note 13.

92. There are generally about 90 aircraft on a carrier, and about 34 of them are designated attack aircraft. See Alan H. Shaw, *Costs of Expanding and Modernizing the Navy's Carrier-Based Air Forces* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, May 1982), p. 4. Thus, if three carriers were placed in the upper reaches of the Norwegian Sea, the Navy would have only about 100 attack aircraft to strike against a wide variety of heavily defended targets. This small force hardly generates confidence. The Navy, if it is serious about launching a large-scale air offensive against the Kola Peninsula, would surely have to augment its forces with *significant* numbers of land-based fighters and bombers.

Staff maintain that the Navy would need 22 carriers, not the currently programmed 15, to execute its chosen strategy.⁹³

Second, even if the Navy enjoys great success with its initial air strikes, Soviet air power in that region would not be “finished off” in any meaningful sense. The Soviets would simply move air units from other areas of the Soviet Union to the Northern Flank.⁹⁴ It is not possible to inflict a knockout blow against the Soviet air forces; the air war would be a protracted one. This is one of the central lessons of the air war in World War II.⁹⁵ In that war, the United States and its allies, despite inflicting a series of major defeats on the German and Japanese air forces in the early years of the war, were not able to establish complete dominance of the air until the late stages of the war. Earlier, the Luftwaffe scored a great victory against the Soviet air forces in the opening weeks of June 1941, but the Soviets nevertheless recovered.

Third, the Navy does not have many replacements or the capability of quickly generating replacements for either carriers or air wings lost in combat.⁹⁶ The Navy, in short, is not well-suited to fight a protracted air war on NATO’s Northern Flank. These considerations point up that there are substantial reasons for doubting whether the U.S. Navy could successfully execute its forward offensive strategy.⁹⁷

93. See Richard Halloran, “Pentagon Draws Up First Strategy For Fighting a Long Nuclear War,” *The New York Times*, May 30, 1982, pp. 1, 12; and George C. Wilson, “U.S. Defense Paper Cites Gap Between Rhetoric, Intentions,” *The Washington Post*, May 27, 1982, p. 1.

94. See note 65.

95. See R.J. Overy, *The Air War, 1939–1945* (New York: Stein and Day, 1981).

96. For a good discussion of this problem, see George C. Wilson, “Navy Cites a Shortfall of Combat Aircraft,” *The Washington Post*, June 5, 1983, p. 5. Also see Lane Pierrot and Bob Kornfeld, *Combat Aircraft Plans in the Department of the Navy: Key Issues* (Congressional Budget Office, Staff Working Paper, March 1985); Shaw, *Costs of Expanding and Modernizing the Navy’s Carrier-Based Air Forces*; and Peter T. Tarpgaard and Robert E. Mechanic, *Future Budget Requirements for the 600-Ship Navy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, September 1985), pp. 27–32.

97. Consider, for example, these two quotations. Captain (Ret.) Robert H. Smith wrote the following in response to an article in the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* that called for direct attacks on the Kola Peninsula: “The author takes it for granted that sufficient forces *can* do the job of defeating all the defending Soviet naval forces and land-based air, and thence destroy the SSBNs. I don’t believe it for a minute, and I don’t believe any other knowledgeable naval observer believes it either.” Letter, U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 110, No. 7 (July 1984), p. 17. Admiral (Ret.) Stansfield Turner wrote the following about Secretary Lehman’s views on an offensive naval strategy: “Finally, the Secretary advocates a strategy for the Navy of ‘maneuver, initiative and offense.’ Presumably he is reaffirming his many public statements that our Navy is going to be capable of carrying the war right to the Soviets’ home bases and airfields. That sounds stirring and patriotic. The only problem is that I have yet to find one Admiral who

THE THREAT OF ESCALATION

The majority of Soviet SSBNs are located with the Northern Fleet. There is widespread agreement in the Navy and the intelligence community at large that the principal mission of the Northern Fleet's other assets, its SSNs and surface forces, is to protect those SSBNs.⁹⁸ Soviet forces in the Barents Sea, in other words, would be principally concerned with preventing American naval forces—especially SSNs—from reaching their SSBN sanctuaries. An offensive sea control strategy calls for strikes into the Barents, not for the purpose of eliminating Soviet SSBNs, but to destroy Soviet SSNs, which are the main threat to NATO's SLOCs. The aim would be to ensure that the Soviets cannot stage another "Battle of the Atlantic." There is, however, a major problem with this strategy: an offensive into the Barents Sea, regardless of intentions, would seriously threaten Soviet strategic nuclear forces, thus raising the specter of nuclear escalation.⁹⁹

The Navy, in pursuing a strategy of offensive sea control, might simply decide *not* to attempt to discriminate between Soviet SSBNs and SSNs, but to destroy all Soviet submarines. The rationale need not be linked to the counterforce coercion posture, but could instead include the following arguments: when a state goes to war, it should go all-out to defeat the adversary; because Soviet SSBNs are well equipped to destroy attack submarines, it would be dangerous to grant them immunity; the tactical situation facing the American attack submarines (i.e., the intermingling of Soviet SSBNs and SSNs) would not permit discrimination without placing the attacking SSNs in jeopardy; and the Navy simply does not have the intelligence capability to discriminate among Soviet submarines in a fast-paced conflict.¹⁰⁰ There is

believes that the U.S. Navy would even attempt it." Letter, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Winter 1982/83), p. 457. Also see "Battle for the Norwegian Sea," *passim*.

98. For a discussion of the evolution of American thinking on this important matter, see Jan S. Bremer, "The Soviet Navy's SSBN Bastions: Evidence, Inference and Alternative Scenarios," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, Vol. 130, No. 1 (March 1985), pp. 18–21. Also see note 44 and the attendant text.

99. For a good discussion of this problem, see Posen, "Inadvertent Nuclear War?"

100. Consider the recent Congressional testimony of the Director of Naval Warfare: "I don't believe you could effectively [distinguish between attack submarines and strategic submarines when conducting ASW]. . . . I think that it would be a stricture that would be very, very onerous from the standpoint of ASW. I don't believe you could make a distinction in a combat environment—even prehostilities—with certainty. . . . It is going to get worse in the future with the quieting trends that I depicted. . . ." *SASC Hearings on FY 86 Budget (Part 8)*, p. 4399. For more general discussions of this problem, see Desmond Ball, "Nuclear War at Sea," *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Winter 1985–86), pp. 17–18; Blair, "Arms Control Implications of Anti-

little doubt that in this case an offensive sea control strategy would result in the destruction of some portion of the Soviets' strategic retaliatory forces.

There is, however, the possibility that the Navy would try to avoid striking Soviet SSBNs, but it is not clear that this would be possible in practice. Indeed, even if the Navy could technically discriminate SSNs from SSBNs, Soviet defensive strategy might call for co-mingling the two kinds of submarines. The attacking forces would then have no choice but to destroy SSBNs as well as SSNs. The best case that can be made for a discriminating strategy is that the Soviets would, in fact, accommodate it by placing their SSBNs under the polar ice cap, while locating the majority of their SSNs in the Norwegian and Barents seas to do battle with American attack submarines.¹⁰¹ Thus, the rollback strategy would largely involve a battle between rival SSN forces. Assuming this proves to be the case, successful execution of the strategy would still seriously threaten the Soviet SSBN force. The shield that protects the SSBNs would be destroyed, leaving them exposed to American attack submarines. Furthermore, the Navy plans to smash all military installations on the Kola Peninsula, which means elimination of the SSBNs' ports. As John Lehman notes, "They'd lose their whole strategic submarine fleet if they lose Kola."¹⁰² Thus, despite the best intentions, a discriminating strategy would probably not mean very much to Soviet decision-makers intent on preserving their SSBN force.

In sum, an offensive sea control strategy would seriously threaten one leg of the Soviets' strategic triad. Whether intended or not, this deterrent posture would have the markings of a strategic ASW campaign and would therefore create risks of inadvertent nuclear escalation. The Soviets probably would not stand idly by while the strategic nuclear balance shifted against them. There would undoubtedly be pressure, which would grow as Soviet strategic assets were destroyed, to strike at American nuclear forces or to use Soviet nuclear weapons against selected NATO targets. Moreover, in addition to the risk of deliberate Soviet escalation provoked inadvertently by the United States, there would be the additional risk of accidental nuclear escalation against the wishes of both sides—meaning escalation in which individual

Submarine Warfare (ASW) Programs," pp. 112–115; and Posen, "Inadvertent Nuclear War?," *passim*.

101. See Robert Pape, "Offensive Sea Control and Inadvertent Escalation," Paper prepared for Seminar on Military Affairs, University of Chicago, May 1985.

102. Quoted in Getler, "Lehman Sees Norwegian Sea as a Key to Soviet Naval Strategy," p. 4.

commanders fire nuclear weapons before national command authorities on either side have decided to go to nuclear war. This could arise because of the uncontrolled or unforeseen interactions of local forces.¹⁰³

In a conventional war between the superpowers, American policymakers would almost surely go to great lengths to prevent nuclear escalation. Therefore, a good case can be made that they would not allow the Navy to launch an offensive against the Northern Fleet. Whether they are seriously tempted to overlook these risks and pursue such a strategy would depend on military feasibility and strategic necessity. As emphasized, there is good reason to doubt that the Navy could actually execute the strategy. Let us now consider whether offensive sea control is required for SLOC protection.

IS OFFENSIVE SEA CONTROL NECESSARY?

The Navy's case for offensive sea control rests on three beliefs: (1) an offensive strategy forces the Soviets to keep their SSNs in their home waters, where they are not a threat to the SLOCs; (2) offensive sea control is militarily more efficient than defensive sea control; and (3) an offensive strategy is essential for keeping northern Norway out of Soviet hands. These arguments are flawed. NATO does not need an offensive sea control strategy. In fact, NATO's deterrent posture would be better served by the defensive alternative.

First, regardless of which sea control strategy the Navy adopts, only a small number of Soviet attack submarines at most are going to leave Soviet home waters and attempt to move into the Atlantic. The SSNs' primary mission is to protect SSBNs, *not* to attack NATO's SLOCs. Navy spokesmen are correct when they emphasize the importance the Soviets place on protecting their strategic nuclear forces. They fear, however, that if the Navy does not have an offensive sea control strategy, Soviet SSNs would be free to roam the Atlantic since there would be no threat of the American Navy moving north.¹⁰⁴

This fear is unfounded. The Soviet SSNs must remain in home waters to protect the SSBNs—regardless of American declaratory strategy—because of the threat posed by the mere presence of American attack submarines in the

103. See note 19.

104. See, for example, *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, p. 3870; and Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," p. 9.

area around the GIN gap. They cannot risk leaving their SSBNs exposed to the formidable American SSN force.

For this reason, the Navy should always maintain a powerful attack submarine force with offensive potential. It is not necessary, however, to have an offensive sea control strategy. The best overall sea control strategy lies between pure offense and pure defense: the Navy should maintain an offensive punch but hold it in reserve to deter the Soviets from sending their SSNs to attack the SLOCs.

The validity of this argument seems to be supported by the historical record: despite the fact that the United States moved toward defensive sea control in the 1970s, it was during this period that the American intelligence community became convinced that the Soviets would keep most of their naval forces in the Barents Sea to protect their SSBNs.¹⁰⁵ The Soviet decision to concentrate on protecting their SSBNs, which means that a large force of SSNs would not be surged into the Atlantic, does not correlate with the Reagan Administration's much-advertised switch from defensive to offensive sea control.

Let us assume for argument's sake that NATO adopts a strategy of defensive sea control and, as a result, the Soviets attempt to cut NATO's SLOCs. Can they be confident that their navy can accomplish that end and emasculate NATO's fighting power in some reasonably short period of time?

The answer is almost surely no. First, Soviet attack submarines would confront not only the American Navy, but the not-insignificant navies of U.S. allies.¹⁰⁶ NATO's combined navies represent a very formidable fighting force. Second, Soviet SSNs would have to pass through the GIN gap, which NATO has turned into a strong defensive barrier, on their way to *and* from the Atlantic.¹⁰⁷ Third, NATO's land-based tactical aircraft can deal with the Backfire threat in and around the GIN gap.¹⁰⁸ Finally, NATO's dependence on reinforcement by sea in the early stages of a conflict is not great. Massive amounts of U.S. equipment and many thousands of American soldiers and airmen are already located in Europe. Moreover, much of the equipment that American reinforcements would need in the early stages of a war is pre-

105. See the sources cited in notes 34 and 98.

106. For a good description of the allied navies, see de Briganti, "Europe's Navies"; also see *The Military Balance, 1985-1986*, pp. 37-60.

107. See Wit, "Advances in Antisubmarine Warfare"; and Zakheim, *The U.S. Sea Control Mission*.

108. See Deborah Shapley, "New Study of Land-Based Aircraft Questions Need for Aircraft Carriers," *Science*, June 2, 1978, pp. 1024-1025.

positioned in Europe. The manpower for those units could be flown in from the United States and would not depend on sea transportation. It is not surprising, given these factors, that NATO was confident in the 1970s that it could protect its SLOCs with a strategy of defensive sea control.¹⁰⁹ The bottom line is that the Soviets could not be confident of winning the SLOC war—much less winning it in a reasonably short period of time—if NATO pursued a defensive sea control posture.

Even if one doubts the efficacy of a defensive sea control strategy, it still seems apparent that, on grounds of military efficiency, defensive sea control is preferable to offensive sea control. Consider dealing with the Backfire threat. It would be much easier for NATO to destroy Backfires in the area around the GIN gap than near the Kola Peninsula. The Backfires would have virtually no support in the southern part of the Norwegian Sea, while NATO would have numerous assets that it could use to target and destroy them. The situation would be reversed if the battle took place near the Kola Peninsula. There, the Backfires would be supported by fighter escorts, while the American Navy's striking forces would surely be under heavy pressure from the numerous Soviet naval and air forces in that region. The same logic applies to the submarine war. NATO could use a variety of assets at the GIN barrier that it probably would not be able to use in the submarine war in the Barents Sea. This would include land-based aircraft like the P-3, the American surface navy, and the sophisticated listening devices that NATO has deployed in the Norwegian Sea. Correspondingly, the Soviets could not use their surface navy and their land-based aircraft to support their submarines at the GIN barrier, while they could do so in the Barents Sea. The choice between defensive and offensive sea control boils down to a question of whether the Navy is best served by fighting air battles and SSN battles in the Soviets' backyard, where Soviet forces might outnumber NATO forces, or in NATO's backyard, where NATO forces would outnumber the Soviets. There is a strong case for preferring the latter location.¹¹⁰

109. This optimism is reflected in the Defense Secretaries' *Posture Statements* of that decade. Also see the sources cited in note 14.

110. A problem with the debate about sea control is the use of the adjectives "offensive" and "defensive" to describe alternative sea control strategies. Conversations with military officers and civilian analysts have convinced me that much opposition to a defensive sea control strategy is based on its label as "defensive." This label brings a stigma with it, since many observers believe that offensive strategies are almost always preferable to defensive ones. However, judgments based simply on the offensive or defensive nature of the two strategies are not well grounded. The real issue is: where is it best for NATO to conduct its ASW campaign—in the

Proponents of offensive sea control also argue that offensive operations are necessary to defend against the Soviet threat to northern Norway. This is not the case. Close examination of the terrain in that region and the disposition of forces reveals that NATO has adequate ground forces for thwarting a Soviet ground attack launched from the Kola Peninsula.¹¹¹ Regarding air support, which the Navy implies that only carriers can provide, NATO could rely on land-based air forces in Norway. Additional aircraft, if needed, could be flown into those bases.

One final point about sea control bears mentioning. It is not clear why the Navy is concerned about this matter since there appears to be a widespread consensus in the Navy as well as among key Reagan Administration defense officials that the conventional balance in Europe is so unfavorable that in the event of war it is almost certain that the Soviets would quickly knock out NATO. There is no point in worrying about SLOCs if the United States is going to suffer a quick and decisive defeat on the continent. Only those who believe that NATO has the wherewithal to thwart a Soviet offensive and turn the conflict into a lengthy war of attrition should worry about the SLOC battle. It would appear that this logic has not escaped the Navy. Counterforce coercion, which the Navy now emphasizes, is a strategy that says, in effect, that the Navy, acting independently, can reverse NATO's expected losses on the Central Front.¹¹²

Counterforce Coercion

Deterrence is a function of both crisis stability and deterrence stability. It is essential to threaten an adversary with a formidable military posture so that

area around the GIN gap or in the Barents Sea? This choice, as Karl Lautenschläger notes, resembles choices faced by earlier navies between close blockades and distant blockades, where the issue was whether to engage the opponent's forces close to his coast or in more distant waters. (Personal correspondence with the author, May 16, 1986.) The distant blockade was usually favored because the opponent had military advantages near his own coast that did not obtain in waters far from the coast. See Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, Vol. 1, pp. 368–373. The same logic applies to the choice between offensive and defensive sea control.

111. For an excellent discussion of this matter, see Major General Richard C. Bowman, "Soviet Options on NATO's Northern Flank," *Armed Forces Journal International*, April 1984, pp. 88–98. Also see O'Donnell, "Northern Flank Maritime Offensive," p. 46; and Ries, "Defending the Far North," p. 877.

112. This strategic concept resembles claims by air power advocates of the 1920s and 1930s that independent air forces, not ground and tactical air forces, would decide the outcome of future wars. See Edward Warner, "Douhet, Mitchell, Seversky: Theories of Air Warfare," in Earle, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 485–503; and David MacIsaac, "Voices from the Central Blue: The Air Power Theorists," in Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 624–647.

he recognizes that he cannot use force to upset the status quo. At the same time, when dealing with an adversary who is not clearly bent on aggression, it is wise to avoid employing a strategy that gives him any incentive to launch a preemptive strike. The aim in such a situation should be to dampen tensions, not to exacerbate them. This matter of crisis stability was not an important issue for the previous three offensive postures, mainly because they do not require the Navy to take provocative action in a crisis. Counterforce coercion, however, could be quite destabilizing in a crisis. Of course, it is possible that counterforce coercion provides so much deterrence stability that it is worth accepting the danger of crisis instability. However, there is a strong case that this is not so. Counterforce coercion provides very little deterrence stability and is therefore a deficient naval strategy.

CRISIS STABILITY

The root of the crisis stability problem is that a counterforce coercion strategy demands that the American SSN force be mobilized early in a crisis and that large numbers of those attack submarines be inserted deep into the Barents Sea as quickly as possible.¹¹³ If the SSNs are not moved into the Barents before the Soviets surge their SSBNs and move them under the ice, finding and destroying those SSBNs would be a difficult and time-consuming task. Inserting a large number of attack submarines into the Barents Sea during a crisis, however, would be very dangerous for several reasons. First, such a deployment would almost surely be interpreted by the Soviets as an offensive move, signalling offensive American intentions, even if the Americans meant it as a defensive measure that would buttress deterrence.¹¹⁴ After all, the

113. Navy spokesmen make it unequivocally clear that successful execution of this strategy is dependent on early insertion of American SSNs into the Barents Sea during a crisis. Consider, for example, the following comment of Admiral Watkins: "The transition to war is perhaps the most crucial of all [phases of the Maritime Strategy]. How we position ourselves in the transitional phase, what Admiral Gorshkov calls the 'battle for the first salvo' is critical. How we handle rules of engagement and the willingness of the political authority to deal realistically with the potential threat is crucial. In every crisis we get into, we see just how determinant that can be. . . . I believe that this pattern of political inaction [observed in war games—see notes 118 and 119 and the attendant texts] prior to receiving the first blow will be devastating in the next conflict. Somehow we have to build up in this crisis period, the transition to war, in a new way. We have to think more aggressively in terms of the pre-positioning of forces. The rules of engagement must change to meet emerging circumstances." *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, p. 3864. Also see Part 2, p. 902 of these hearings.

114. See Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1978), pp. 167–214; and Stephen Van Evera, "Causes of War" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1984), chapter 3.

United States will soon have, with Trident D-5, MX, Minuteman IIIA, nuclear-armed Tomahawk cruise missiles, and the Pershing IIs, a substantial counterforce capability against Soviet land-based ICBMs.¹¹⁵ This development, coupled with the fact that the Soviets have a small, antiquated, and vulnerable bomber force, means that the two land-based legs of their triad would be in good part vulnerable to an American strike. The survivability of their SSBN force would therefore loom as a much more important matter. Given this situation, the Soviets would almost certainly make worst case assumptions about American intentions if U.S. attack submarines began to position themselves to destroy the Soviet SSBN force. This would probably intensify rather than defuse a crisis.

A second dimension to the crisis stability problem lies in the risk that the Soviets would not stand idly by as American attack submarines moved into their bastion. They would undoubtedly use some of their SSNs to create a barrier defense at the Bear Island–North Cape line and maybe even at the GIN gap. Soviet attack submarines, because they are based closer to these two lines than their American counterparts, should be able to establish defensive positions there before large numbers of American attack submarines reach them. The Americans would then have to decide whether to penetrate these barriers, while the Soviets would have to face the question of whether to attempt to destroy any American submarines that cross the barriers. There would be several compelling reasons for the Soviets to fight at the barriers rather than allow American SSNs to reach the Barents Sea. First, it is important for them to keep the American SSNs far away from their SSBNs. Second, it would not be easy for the Soviets to find the American SSNs once they reached the Barents. They would be easier to locate and target at the barriers. Finally, it is probable that one-on-one SSN engagements, where each submarine knows of the other's presence, would occur at the barriers. There would be an incentive in these confrontations to fire at the opponent, since the side that got off the first shot would stand a good chance of destroying the adversary.¹¹⁶ It is a straightforward case of the classic gunfighter analogy. To make matters worse, the command and control of

115. This should not be interpreted to mean that the United States will have a splendid first-strike capability. See note 130 and the attendant text.

116. A recent comment by a senior naval officer goes to the heart of this problem: "In submarine warfare, the most important thing to do is shoot first." *HASC Hearings on FY 84 Budget (Part 4)*, p. 354.

submarines is generally poor.¹¹⁷ It is not difficult in such a circumstance to imagine submarine commanders on either side interpreting their orders liberally and perhaps firing their weapons. This is, without a doubt, the kind of situation to avoid in a crisis.

Even if the Soviets failed to erect barriers or if the American SSNs penetrated them without prompting a naval battle, there would still be significant potential for crisis instability. The Soviets would surely send attack submarines to search the Barents for American SSNs and, moreover, Soviet SSBNs would certainly be on constant look-out for the American submarines. A deadly game of cat and mouse would ensue in which there would be the danger of one-on-one first-shooter-wins engagements as described above. There is the additional possibility that some American submarines would be lost to mines, which the Soviets would undoubtedly use at the barriers and in the Barents Sea. The United States, which would probably not know how these submarines were destroyed, might conclude that Soviet SSNs were responsible and that therefore a response in kind was in order. Finally, in a severe crisis, the Soviets might decide to declare a keep-out zone around their home ports, firing at unidentified submarines that enter. Again, these are the kinds of situations to avoid in a crisis.

DETERRENCE STABILITY

Thus, it is apparent that a counterforce coercion posture, when viewed in terms of crisis stability, weakens deterrence. Nevertheless, it might be argued that the strategy provides so much deterrence stability that it is worth accepting the danger of crisis instability. To evaluate this matter, it is necessary to answer three questions. First, how likely is it that the Navy would actually be allowed to execute this variant of the Maritime Strategy? Second, assuming that the Navy is turned loose, is successful execution of the strategy likely? Is an anti-SSBN campaign realizable? Finally, assuming the strategy is operationally effective, what is the Soviet response likely to be? In other words, is a successful anti-SSBN campaign or the threat of one likely to provide the leverage necessary for coercion? It should be emphasized that, since the focus here is on deterring the Soviets, the key issue is how *they* would answer

117. See Ball, "Nuclear War at Sea," pp. 10–11, 15, 18–21; Blair, "Arms Control Implications of Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Programs," pp. 116–117; and Owen Wilkes, "Command and Control of the Sea-Based Nuclear Deterrent: The Possibility of a Counterforce Role," in *World Armaments and Disarmament: SIPRI Yearbook 1979* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1979), pp. 389–420.

these questions in a crisis. This is obviously impossible to determine with any precision because there is little information about Soviet thinking on these questions and also because it is difficult to predict how decision-makers will behave in an actual crisis. Still, one can make reasonable guesses about each question.

It is *not* likely that the U.S. national command authority would allow the Navy to surge submarines into the Barents Sea during a crisis with the Soviet Union, simply because American policymakers would almost surely try to dampen, not exacerbate, the crisis. This point is not lost on the Navy, which is well aware that counterforce coercion is a “strategy not without risk.”¹¹⁸ Admiral Watkins candidly told the Senate Armed Services Committee in 1984 that:

*All of our war games, all of our exercises that we have run, where we have the very best people playing the roles, whether on the Soviet side or the United States side in our games, indicate that, in fact, we will not make the political decision to move forces early.*¹¹⁹

Not allowing the Navy to move north in a crisis would cripple the strategy since, to use again the words of Admiral Watkins, it “depends on early reaction to crisis.”¹²⁰ The key point, however, is that the deterrent value of the strategy would suffer if it is improbable that the Navy would be allowed to execute it. As Admiral Watkins’s testimony suggests, there is at least a good chance that the SSNs would be held back.

A second reason why national command authorities are not likely to allow the Navy to execute counterforce coercion is not related to crisis stability but to the threat of nuclear escalation during a war. There is a danger that a large-scale offensive against the Soviets’ northern bastion would lead to nuclear war. American policymakers, who would surely go to great lengths to keep a conventional war from escalating to the nuclear level, would certainly have serious reservations about launching a submarine offensive

118. Watkins, “The Maritime Strategy,” p. 14. Also see *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, p. 3864, where Watkins notes that when playing war games that involve inserting large numbers of American SSNs in the Barents Sea during a crisis, “There is great consternation . . . on the part of the players about whether we are sending more of a deterrent signal by moving forces, or whether we are actually tearing down deterrence and encouraging adventurism.”

119. *SASC Hearings on FY 85 Budget (Part 8)*, p. 3860. Emphasis added. Also see p. 3864; and Richard K. Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1982), *passim*, which provides a good discussion of those factors that would make NATO leaders reluctant to mobilize military forces in a crisis.

120. Watkins, “The Maritime Strategy,” p. 14. Also see note 113.

that is laden with escalatory potential. Thus, there are good reasons to believe that the Navy would not be allowed to execute a counterforce coercion strategy. The willingness of policymakers to pursue such a risky strategy would depend in large part on the likelihood of operational success and the likelihood that that success would favorably influence events in Central Europe.

It is not clear that the counter-SSBN campaign could succeed quickly if the Navy were allowed to move north. Counterforce coercion, with its emphasis on destroying large numbers of SSBNs in a short period of time, is a demanding strategy.¹²¹ The attacking forces, as emphasized in the discussion of offensive sea control, would be outnumbered and they would be operating in a heavily defended bastion.¹²² The Soviets have a variety of assets to protect their SSBNs. Furthermore, the SSBNs themselves could prove to be an elusive target. If, for example, in the very early stages of a crisis, the Soviets were able to move a large number of their SSBNs under the ice before the American attack submarines reached the Barents, those SSBNs would then be difficult to find. Finally, it should be remembered that the Navy has never conducted an operation of this kind under wartime conditions.¹²³

For all these reasons, it is difficult to be confident about the military outcome in the event. This is undoubtedly why John Lehman, when asked about the timing of an offensive operation, answered that "No one has tried to put a timeframe on it because of the inherent unpredictability."¹²⁴ No evidence in the public record would lead one to view counterforce coercion as a high-confidence option.

Nevertheless, let us assume that in some future conflict the Navy is allowed to pursue a counterforce coercion strategy and, furthermore, that the Navy successfully destroys a large number of SSBNs, markedly shifting the balance

121. The subsequent discussion does not consider the Navy's prospects in an offensive against the Soviets' Pacific Fleet, which would surely be part of a counterforce coercion strategy. See note 20. Thus the task facing the American Navy is somewhat more difficult than the following analysis indicates. Also see note 70.

122. It is important to note that the risks to American attack submarines would increase if they were asked to destroy enemy submarines quickly, since they would more often be forced to fire in a manner that exposed themselves to answering enemy fire.

123. Two recent studies dealing with ASW provide good accounts of the difficulties associated with destroying large numbers of Soviet SSBNs quickly in a conventional war. See Donald C. Daniel, "ASW and Superpower Strategic Stability," unpublished manuscript, n.d., especially chapters 1-2; and Tom Stefanick, "Strategic Antisubmarine Warfare and Naval Strategy," unpublished manuscript, 1985, *passim*. Both manuscripts will soon be published as books. Also see Donald C. Daniel, "Antisubmarine Warfare in the Nuclear Age," *Orbis*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Fall 1984), pp. 527-552.

124. See note 67.

of nuclear forces. What are the Soviets likely to do? In other words, is an operationally effective strategy likely to lead to coercion? The Navy assumes that the Soviets would be so disturbed by this shift that they would throw up their hands and agree, in the words of Admiral Watkins, "to end the war on our terms."¹²⁵ Presumably, this means that on the continent they would, at the very least, retreat to the prewar borders.

But this is not likely. It is more likely that the Soviets would either ignore the shifting nuclear balance, refusing to be coerced, or would lash back militarily, themselves applying nuclear coercion against NATO.¹²⁶

If they chose to lash back, they would have three principal military options: (1) a strike against U.S. strategic nuclear forces, to redress the strategic balance; (2) a theater nuclear strike against U.S. anti-submarine forces, to cut the American noose before it closes completely on their SSBN force; or (3) a theater nuclear strike against American naval targets as a shot across the bow, or a "manipulation of risk," to introduce the threat of nuclear escalation unless NATO called off its counter-SSBN campaign.

A Soviet strategic strike against some portion of the American nuclear retaliatory force seems possible, although not likely. The Navy maintains that the Soviets would not attempt a strategic nuclear strike because the nuclear balance would be against them.¹²⁷ This argument misses the essential point that the very attraction of a counterforce strike is that it would offer the prospect of redressing that balance. If the balance of nuclear forces is as important to the Soviets as the Navy claims, then there would undoubtedly be significant pressure on them to rectify the balance with a counterforce strike. This is not a likely response; it would involve a direct attack on the American homeland and they have other options.

A more attractive response would be to mount limited nuclear attacks against American naval forces and installations, for purposes of either noose-cutting or the manipulation of risk. Targets could include American aircraft

125. Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," p. 11.

126. Classic works on the general subject of military coercion are Morton A. Kaplan, *The Strategy of Limited Retaliation*, Center of International Studies Policy Memorandum No. 19, Princeton University, April 9, 1959; and Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, chapter 1. Also see Robert J. Art, "To What Ends Military Power?," *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Spring 1980), pp. 3-35; Daniel Ellsberg, *The Theory and Practice of Blackmail*, P-3883 (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1968); Alexander George, "The Development of Doctrine and Strategy," in Alexander George, David Hall, and William Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), chapter 1; Wallace J. Thies, *When Governments Collide: Coercion and Diplomacy in the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1968* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), chapters 1, 5, 8; and Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict*, chapter 2.

127. Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," p. 14.

carrier battle groups, which are vulnerable, and could be attacked without wide collateral damage.¹²⁸ The Soviets should have no shortage of targets since the Maritime Strategy calls for ringing the Soviet Union with carriers and other ships carrying Tomahawk missiles. The Soviets also might consider nuclear strikes against those NATO naval installations in Norway, Iceland, Britain, and Greenland that contribute to the American anti-SSBN campaign or against high value targets in continental Europe.

Such strikes might not do much to cut the American noose, because its crucial element, the SSN force, is not directly vulnerable to nuclear attack.¹²⁹ However, such attacks would signal seriousness of purpose and would make clear that the ante could be raised if the American Navy continued to destroy SSBNs. The Soviets could thereby put the last clear chance to avoid uncontrolled escalation on the United States.

As a final option, the Soviets could accept the SSBN losses and operate on the assumption that shifts in the strategic nuclear balance have no political utility. This is a viable strategy as long as the Soviet Union retains a secure assured destruction capability. The United States is unlikely to launch a first-strike against the Soviets as long as they have the capability to inflict massive damage on the American homeland. A counterforce coercion strategy will not eliminate the Soviets' assured destruction capability. The Navy, it should be emphasized, does not call for eliminating all Soviet SSBNs, but argues only for destroying enough SSBNs to shift perceptibly the nuclear balance. Even if the Navy were to eliminate this leg of the Soviet triad, the United States would still not be able to effect a splendid first strike against the triad's other two legs. The Soviets could adopt a launch-on-warning posture, and even if that failed, they could lose 95 percent of their land-based assets and

128. The Navy has not paid much attention to the issue of nuclear war at sea, preferring instead to concentrate on preparing for a conventional war. However, it would be very difficult to protect a carrier battle group from a nuclear strike. See Ball, "Nuclear War at Sea," pp. 8–10; Captain Linton F. Brooks, "Escalation and Naval Strategy," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 110, No. 8 (August 1984), pp. 33–37; Captain Linton F. Brooks, "Tactical Nuclear Weapons: The Forgotten Facet of Naval Warfare," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 106, No. 1 (January 1980), pp. 28–33; Gordon H. McCormick and Mark E. Miller, "American Seapower at Risk: Nuclear Weapons in Soviet Naval Planning," *Orbis*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Summer 1981), pp. 351–367; and Lt. Commander T. Wood Parker, "Theater Nuclear Warfare and the U.S. Navy," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (January–February 1982), pp. 3–16.

129. Barry Posen suggests a scenario that illustrates how the Soviets might use nuclear strikes to stop the American anti-SSBN campaign. He posits that the Soviets, after using nuclear weapons to render the GIN barrier ineffective, could then move large numbers of submarines into the North Atlantic to strike at NATO shipping. This move might force the American Navy to call off its hunt for Soviet SSBNs and move most of its SSNs into the Atlantic to counter Soviet attacks against the SLOCs. (Personal correspondence with author, May 14, 1986.)

still have a sufficient number of warheads left to wreak unacceptable damage on American society.¹³⁰ As long as the Soviets maintain this capability, they can ignore an unfavorable nuclear balance. Those who doubt the logic of this argument should be reminded that little evidence exists that Soviet behavior in the first two decades of the Cold War was affected in any meaningful way by the fact that the balance of nuclear forces clearly favored the United States.¹³¹

Thus three principal flaws are apparent in arguments that an anti-SSBN offensive would produce deterrence stability by shifting the strategic balance: (1) American political leaders may not allow the Navy to execute the strategy; (2) the Navy may not be capable of implementing it effectively; and (3) a successful anti-SSBN campaign may not coerce the Soviets into better behavior, since the Soviets would have options other than standing down, including escalation on their own part.

Advocates of a counter-SSBN strategy still might argue that such a campaign need not create a meaningful shift in the strategic balance in order to produce deterrence stability. Rather, in this view, such a campaign would deter the Soviets simply by generating or manipulating a shared risk of nuclear war. The Soviets, so the argument goes, would be given pause not by concern about the balance of nuclear forces, but by fear that the naval conflict would spin out of control and lead to a strategic nuclear exchange.¹³²

There is no question that NATO derives some deterrence stability from this threat, although not a great deal. The principal limiting factor is that, given the triple dangers of crisis instability, inadvertent escalation, and ac-

130. Five percent of the existing Soviet ICBM force would represent an arsenal of more than 321 warheads delivering 208 equivalent megatons (EMTs). It is generally assumed that an American assured destruction capability of 200 EMT is enough to destroy 20 to 25 percent of Soviet population and 50 percent of Soviet industry, thereby destroying the Soviet Union as a functioning modern society. If we assume, as we probably should, that the United States is similarly vulnerable to nuclear attack, then it follows that 5 percent of the Soviet ICBM force could inflict destruction of the same scale on the United States. Data derived from *The Military Balance, 1985–1986*, p. 181. This discussion, of course, does not take into account any surviving Soviet SSBNs or bombers, a handful of which could alone inflict significant damage on the United States. See Daniel, "ASW and Superpower Strategic Stability," especially pp. 5–11, 123–133.

131. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about this matter since so little is known about Soviet thinking during this period. See Richard K. Betts, "Elusive Equivalence: The Political and Military Meaning of the Nuclear Balance," in Samuel P. Huntington, ed., *The Strategic Imperative: New Policies for American Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1982), pp. 101–140. For a general defense of the position that shifts in the nuclear balance are not important, see Robert Jervis, "Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn't Matter," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 4 (Winter 1979–1980), pp. 617–633.

132. This argument is implied, for example, in Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," p. 14.

cidental escalation, it is again not likely that the Navy will be allowed to execute the strategy. Therefore, the threat may not be sufficiently credible to produce deterrence.

Is it worth pursuing a counterforce coercion strategy nevertheless, in order to gain the modicum of deterrence stability that its threat of escalation produces? The answer is no, for several reasons. First, this small gain in deterrence stability is far outweighed by the danger of crisis instability inherent in the strategy. Second, it would be the height of irresponsibility for NATO to begin purposely manipulating the risk of nuclear escalation *before* determining the fate of NATO's conventional forces on the Central Front; and a counterforce coercion strategy must be launched immediately upon the outbreak of war. Finally, if it becomes necessary for NATO to manipulate the risk of nuclear escalation, NATO already has forces in Europe that can perform this function in a safer and more credible manner. The express purpose of the American Pershing IIs, ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs), and other theater nuclear forces in Europe is to generate the risk of nuclear escalation if the Soviets overrun Europe.¹³³ These forces have the advantage of producing such risks at the appropriate time (after and only after NATO conventional forces are overrun), and they can do so more credibly than can sea-based forces, since "use or lose" dynamics could operate to persuade NATO commanders to use them. In contrast, an American anti-SSBN campaign generates risk too early and with less credibility.

The bottom line is that a counterforce coercion posture promises little deterrence stability. It is a strategy built on a number of suspect assumptions, and on close scrutiny it hardly generates confidence. When one then considers that the strategy also undermines crisis stability in important ways, the net conclusion is that counterforce coercion is a badly flawed deterrent posture.

Conclusion

The Maritime Strategy, which can best be described as a loose combination of four offensive concepts (direct military impact, horizontal escalation, offensive sea control, and counterforce coercion) does not contribute much to

133. For an excellent discussion of NATO thinking about the employment of nuclear weapons, see J. Michael Legge, *Theater Nuclear Weapons and the NATO Strategy of Flexible Response*, R-2964-FF (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, April 1983), chapter 2.

detering a war in Europe. Direct military impact and horizontal escalation, which use the Navy to project power against the Soviet Union or its allies, simply have very little deterrent value. Counterforce coercion, the posture the Navy now stresses, actually threatens to undermine deterrence, mainly because implementation of that strategy in a crisis would be highly destabilizing. This problem, coupled with the threat of nuclear escalation that attends this posture, points up that this variant of the Maritime Strategy is potentially dangerous.

Sea control is where the Navy matters for deterrence in Europe. The Soviets must not be allowed to think that they can cut NATO's SLOCs quickly. The Navy maintains that an offensive sea control posture is necessary for this purpose, but this is not so. A defensive sea control posture would satisfy NATO's needs on this count without the risks that attend offensive sea control. Very importantly, the force structure demands of defensive sea control are more modest than those of offensive sea control. Specifically, a defensive sea control strategy would allow the Navy to relinquish its requirement for 15 carrier battle groups. The Navy would still need large-deck carriers for its other missions—peacetime presence and direct intervention in Third World conflicts—but the overall number would be significantly less than 15—perhaps 10 would be enough. The Navy, however, should continue to maintain a powerful SSN force, which would not only be useful for executing a defensive sea control strategy, but would also provide the threat needed to keep Soviet SSNs concentrated in their home waters.

Moving to this smaller force structure would free up resources for the ground and air forces on the Central Front, which represent the nucleus of NATO's deterrent. This discussion points up that an assessment of the Maritime Strategy must consider the crucial issue of opportunity costs. Specifically, what are the implications for the forces *in* Europe of spending very large sums of money to procure a 600-ship navy built around 15 carrier battle groups?

The Reagan Administration has not sought to increase the size and strength of NATO's ground and air forces. Instead, it has essentially maintained the status quo on the Central Front, even though the Administration is clearly identified with the position that NATO is badly outnumbered in Europe. Perhaps this decision was made on the assumption that substantially increasing the size and strength of the Navy would markedly enhance the allies' deterrent posture in Western Europe. Unfortunately, this assumption is invalid. The best way to achieve that end is to invest more heavily in those

forces that stand in the way of the Warsaw Pact armies—NATO's ground and air forces. The Administration passed up this opportunity to devote extra resources to the Navy. Thus, the Administration's defense buildup has done remarkably little to improve NATO's prospects of deterring the Soviet Union in a crisis.¹³⁴

In sum, the Maritime Strategy is fundamentally flawed, not only because it fails to enhance the deterrent posture in Europe, but also because it has meant spending large sums of money on the Navy that might have otherwise been spent on enhancing the fighting power of those forces that matter most for deterrence. While NATO is not any worse off in 1986 than it was in 1980, the more important point is that the Administration missed an excellent opportunity to improve NATO's deterrent posture.

Even worse are the implications of the Reagan naval program for the future. The U.S. defense budget probably will not grow very much, if at all, in the next few years. Therefore, choices about defense spending will become even more painful. At the same time, however, the Navy's budget will have to keep growing simply in order to man and maintain the ships that the Administration has already begun to build.¹³⁵ In effect, early Reagan Administration decisions locked the country into future Navy budget increases that cannot be avoided without taking inefficient steps, such as mothballing new ships or failing to outfit them fully.¹³⁶ This situation is particularly worrisome because it threatens NATO's ground and air forces, which may be underfunded in order to meet the Navy's ever-growing budget demands.

Thus the Reagan naval program represents more than a missed opportunity. It also threatens to do real damage to NATO's crucial deterrent forces.

To minimize the damage from this unfortunate situation, the United States should adopt the long-range goal of moving toward a smaller navy config-

134. There is a growing debate about the management and direction of the overall Reagan defense buildup. See, for example, William W. Kaufmann, *A Reasonable Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1986), pp. 41–46; Richard Stubbing, "The Defense Program: Buildup or Binge?," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (Spring 1985), pp. 848–872; and R. William Thomas, *Defense Spending: What Has Been Accomplished* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, Staff Working Paper, April 1985).

135. See John Enns, *Manpower for a 600-Ship Navy: Costs and Policy Alternatives* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, August 1983); House Armed Services Committee, *Report on the 600-Ship Navy*; Bill Keller, "Strain on Budget Seen In Navy Plan," *The New York Times*, September 7, 1985, p. 8; and Tarpgaard and Mechanic, *Future Budget Requirements for the 600-Ship Navy*.

136. See Michael Getler, "'Too Late to Stop' Fleet Buildup, Says Navy Secretary," *The Washington Post*, December 2, 1982, p. 16; and George C. Wilson, "The Birth of a Spending 'Bow Wave,'" *The Washington Post*, November 28, 1982, pp. 1, 12–13.

ured for defensive sea control and away from the larger, offense-oriented navy required by the Maritime Strategy. These changes, however, will take many years to accomplish. In the meantime, the Administration should seek to slow down spending on the Navy wherever possible, while going to great lengths to avoid weakening American air and ground forces in Europe, although the Administration has limited room for maneuver at this point.

I should emphasize that this article does not argue that the Navy is irrelevant for dealing with the Soviet threat in Europe. The Navy is necessary to protect NATO's SLOCs in a war of attrition and, moreover, that mission might be important for deterrence. Nevertheless, the key to deterrence is not the Navy, but the forces that will be fighting on the Central Front. Those forces should be given first priority when deciding how to allocate defense budgets.