

## THE COAST GUARD AND NAVY

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### It's Time for a "National Fleet"

*Colin S. Gray*

**T**he U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Navy have been, are, and will remain complementary. They are not competitors. However, notwithstanding the distinctiveness of their missions and functions, in practice their duties overlap. There is a zone of activity wherein the services share maritime geography and foci of concern. Because the Coast Guard operates shallow-draft warships, it can be misrepresented as the coastal or shallow-water navy of the United States. Similarly, because the Navy supports the Coast Guard when necessary and feasible, perception of naval enthusiasm for such support (and beyond) can feed ill-founded anxiety that the Coast Guard is in peril of imperial absorption by the much larger service. A well-ordered U.S. defense community, confident in its understanding of the emerging strategic environment and prepared to pay the freight for national security, would provide little fuel for these essentially foolish

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apprehensions. However, this article is propelled by the appreciation that even though the Coast Guard and the Navy are natural and necessary allies, trends exist today—both internal to each service and, even more, in their contexts of operation—that could strain their relationship.

As we shall see, it is not surprising that most of the sources of difficulty in the interservice relationship stem from questions about missions and equipment pertaining to the Navy, rather than to the Coast Guard. The latter does not face challenges to its roles, missions, and relative importance that are so radical as those that stalk the Navy. The Coast

Guard, understandably, is occasionally anxious lest some of its duties be outsourced, privatized, or picked up by a Navy looking for self-justifying tasks. However, those periodic perils (real and imaginary) fade nearly into insignificance when compared with the vulnerability of the Navy to shifts in defense-intellectual fashion and foreign-policy mood. The Coast Guard's potential (domestic) critics are largely toothless tigers; the Navy's are not. The centerpiece of this discussion, then, is the future relationship between the Navy and Coast Guard in light of their common status as sea services of the United States, under the conceptual umbrella of a "national fleet."

That relationship cannot be considered in isolation, however. Both services must shape their interconnection with reference to powerful contextual factors. Whether or not Navy-Coast Guard relations constitute a love match, each needs the other. Trends point with a uniform logic to the common sense contained in the idea of a national fleet. What the Navy lacks by way of blue-water challenge from a pressing "high end" threat finds ample compensation in opportunities and problems posed by the emerging information-led revolution in warfare. An unmistakable trend afflicting the all-high-end U.S. Navy is a declining number of ships. Fleet size is not everything, but—as the last Chief of Naval Operations reminded us—"numbers do matter."<sup>1</sup> Especially do numbers count when operations of all kinds must be conducted worldwide by a rotational deployment pattern.

Just as the Navy's operational tempo has become unsustainably high for a peacetime rotational fleet, so the Coast Guard is obliged to cope with a higher demand for its services. The uses made of the sea, which taken all together constitute the principal driver of Coast Guard activity, have risen, are rising, and are projected to rise much farther yet. Quite aside from its national defense mission, the Coast Guard has a basket of traditional duties, a collection expanding in variety, quantity, and quality of challenge.

### THE ARGUMENT

We will examine in some detail the current and anticipated conditions and circumstances of the Navy and the Coast Guard, and also the terms by which and ways in which they can best complement each other. First, however, it is useful to break the rules of dramatic construction and reveal the five points that, together, represent the "argument" of this article. These points are not particularly remarkable or even controversial (except for the fifth). Rather, as we will see after setting the argument, actual and potential controversy on a major scale attaches to the character of the "contexts" (political, military, intellectual-doctrinal, societal, and so forth) within which the services must operate over the decade ahead.

For the Navy in particular, there is much scope for dispute as to the requirements in military and strategic effect that U.S. foreign policy will place upon it.

*First: The U.S. Navy needs to be all that it has to be as a war-fighting instrument.* Indeed, it is as the exemplar of naval prowess that the Navy supports the foreign policy of the global superpower. Given that major naval combatants, with

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*I do not want the Coast Guard to be the second best navy in the world. Thank God for the U.S. Navy!*

ADMIRAL JAMES M. LOY, USCG, 1998

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midlife refits, may well be in commission for thirty or forty years, contemporary defense-intellectual fashions and fads, even today's "best guesses" about the strategic future, should be treated with

some reserve. Much as nominal, back-of-the-envelope answers to, say, ballistic-missile-defense queries can always be manufactured promptly on demand (how long does it take to produce a vugraph?), so high-end naval power—in general and specifically—can quite easily be dismissed as yesterday's unaffordable and irrelevant answer to the bold novelties of tomorrow. The past century has seen great combat fleets "sunk" virtually by torpedo-firing flotilla craft, erased by airpower, sidelined or destroyed by nuclear menace, and now relegated to deep-reserve status by "asymmetric" anti-access capabilities that could, allegedly, lock out most of the U.S. Navy from an enemy's maritime approaches.

Let us note that in the twentieth century great navies survived strategic challenge from new classes of threats deriving from the subsurface, aerial, space, and electronic environments. The smart money says that the U.S. Navy will be as successful in the future as it was in the past at riding the erratic waves of revolutions in military affairs, and that predictions of its imminent strategic relegation will prove as ill judged in the future as before.<sup>2</sup> Because "history is geography," as Jacob Burckhardt wrote with only modest exaggeration, the U.S. Navy cannot responsibly be regarded as just one player on an infinitely fungible national security team.

*Second: Insofar as practicable, the Navy should leave coast guarding to the Coast Guard.* If naval warships happen to be in the right place at the right time and have no truly urgent and stressful national-defense missions to perform, then by all means let them contribute to security at sea in its fullest and broadest sense. However, just as the warships with orange and blue stripes can fight but are not expected to excel in the conduct of naval warfare, so the gray hulls of the Navy certainly can function as surrogate coast guard but are not expert in that role. Moreover, as the Navy continues its up-market movement with acquisition of supercapable and superexpensive destroyers and cruisers, so it will have ever

fewer (leading to zero) relatively small and cheap general-purpose warships (that is, frigates) appropriate for shallow-water duties short of naval war.

Given the authoritative status of the national fleet “treaty” of 21 September 1998 between the Navy and the Coast Guard, it is troubling to find that the *Navy Strategic Planning Guidance with Long Range Planning Objectives* of April 2000 is all but oblivious both of the Coast Guard’s skills and of the limitations of the Navy itself.<sup>3</sup> The *NSPG* sees no tension between arguing soundly that “insufficient numbers entail strategic risk as well as excessive personnel and operational tempos” and reaching close to coast-guarding domain.<sup>4</sup> Describing the “day-to-day engagement” activities of the Navy, it argues that

this engagement process also encompasses the spectrum of military operations other than war (MOOTW), which repeatedly employs naval forces in missions such as humanitarian disaster relief, non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO), peace support missions, enforcement of embargoes and no-fly zones, counterproliferation measures, and rapid reaction to terrorism. Future forces also must be prepared to support law enforcement agencies to deal effectively with non-military challenges to our national security, such as illegal immigration, illegal drug trafficking, and other international criminal activity.<sup>5</sup>

There are times when what U.S. policy most needs for its support is what Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., usefully terms “formidability—e.g., as manifest bigness, obvious speed, devilish appearance, and demonstrated cunning.”<sup>6</sup> However, as a general rule, sending an *Arleigh Burke*-class guided-missile destroyer like the USS *Cole* into the Arabian littoral is akin to “sending a man out to do a boy’s job.”<sup>7</sup> A U.S. Navy properly and jointly directed in strategic terms should focus on the higher-risk tasks that fit logically and prudently with its trends in equipment acquisition, leaving as many extramilitary maritime security tasks as possible to the Coast Guard.<sup>8</sup> Of course the Navy could undertake many coast-guarding jobs, and in many countries navies do just that (Britain’s Royal Navy, for example).<sup>9</sup> However, that has not been the American way, and given the fact that the United States has the world’s best coast guard (as well as the world’s best navy, by far), there is every reason for exploiting the duality of its sea services.

*Third: The national fleet treaty of 21 September 1998 is no more than common sense.* The “Treasury Fleet,” later the Coast Guard, has served in or with the U.S. Navy in all of America’s wars that have had maritime dimensions. The concept of a national fleet can raise paranoid fears in both services, but in fact it dignifies what has been the American experience: the Navy and Coast Guard have fought as a national fleet. The Navy’s anxiety that the Coast Guard would use the national-fleet idea as a license to hunt for more missions, more force structure,

and more money at the Navy's expense is amply matched by Coast Guard nervousness lest the national fleet should become a "bear hug," extinguishing organizational independence, even autonomy. Neither fear is well founded, but both need exposure and recognition.

The fact of the matter is that on its current course regarding technical choices and force structure, the U.S. Navy is opening more and more space between the shallow-draft multimission warships that major Coast Guard cutters are and its own newly "low end" destroyers (DDs) and guided-missile destroyers (DDGs). Should the Navy, improbably, elect to pursue variants of the STREETFIGHTER concept, then indeed it would be back in the business of small (and more expendable) warships. At present, though, that point is strictly speculative. It is no stretch to reason that a navy acquiring DDG 51s (*Arleigh Burkes*) and intending (and hoping) to buy DD 21s as the low end of its fleet mix is likely to be size challenged. The concept, and one hopes the practice, of the national fleet provides an important, actually essential, part of the answer to the challenge of too few "frigates."



*Fourth: The Coast Guard should be recapitalized by rapid implementation of its planned Integrated Deepwater System (IDS).* For an acquisition cost in the range of fifteen to twenty billion dollars over twenty years, the Coast Guard will replace and modernize with a new class of maritime security cutter, long-range aircraft, and C4ISR.\* This modernization is necessary to enable the service to cope with the expanding demands of its maritime safety, environmental protection, and law enforcement roles, as well as its national defense duties.

Coast Guard maritime security cutters will not be frigates, but these categories of warship do bear more than a casual similarity. Writing at the end of the Cold War, Eric Grove informed us that a frigate is a "combatant of about 1,750 to 3,000 tons usually optimized for ASW [antisubmarine warfare] but with general purpose capability; essentially intended for the escort of noncombatant shipping, although useful for patrol and limited offensive operations, capable of oceangoing transits and tasks; usually air capable [operating helicopters]."<sup>10</sup> *Oliver Hazard Perry*-class guided-missile frigates (FFGs) displace around four thousand tons and the Coast Guard's *Hamilton*-class high-endurance cutters (WHECs) about three thousand. That is to say, some Coast Guard cutters are frigate-sized warships. They can be made as frigate-like as the Coast Guard prefers, politically is permitted, and can be afforded. Looking to the future, however, when the Navy ceases to have FFGs in commission, no one will be in any

\* Command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

danger whatsoever of mistaking a hull with an orange stripe—even one from the top end of the catalog—for a nine-thousand-ton DDG.

Service sentiment aside, the national fleet of the United States needs some more or less frigate-sized and modestly priced general-purpose warships. If the Navy cannot afford to operate them, given the military logic of its high-end-procurement strategy, it should be a cause for rejoicing that the Coast Guard, prudently modernized, can take up some of the slack. If a modernized Coast Guard is to complement the Navy in a national fleet—or simply in joint warfare—it requires equipment that not only is complementary but can operate seamlessly with that of the other armed services. Whether or not some in the Navy regard the Coast Guard as a necessary evil (or regrettable necessity!), all can agree that a modern Coast Guard, if it is to sail and fly on national-defense duties, must not be a net liability to operational and tactical commanders. A Coast Guard recapitalized by the IDS has to be able to function with the Navy as a tactically and technically reliable team player, working by the same rules of network-centricity.<sup>11</sup> Needless to say, it comes down to money, doctrine, planning, and training.

*Fifth: As an armed service, the Coast Guard probably should relocate to the Department of Defense.* There is no general law governing the proper character or bureaucratic location of a coast guard. Each country does it its own way. Moreover, what arrangement is suitable may vary, depending upon trends in roles and missions of both the service in question and host institutions. The U.S. Coast Guard, consolidated as such in 1917, lived under the aegis of the Treasury Department until 1967. Since then it has been a part of the extended empire of the Department of Transportation. Cases can be made for “no change” (stay in Transportation), some form of independent agency (the Federal Emergency Management Agency?), a move to the Justice Department, or—as suggested here—a move to Defense. There are problems with each alternative. Suffice it at this point to argue that the military benefits that should flow from the Coast Guard’s being fully recognized, and treated bureaucratically, as one of the five armed services match trends in Coast Guard duties, facilitates the vital national-fleet concept/treaty/plan, and should promote vital commonalities in C4ISR, *inter alia*. (An interesting case can be made for moving the service to the Justice Department, but—considered overall—Coast Guard activities fit better within the Defense Department, or DoD.) The challenge, of course, would be to identify ways to reap the military benefits of Defense family membership while retaining the distinctively law-enforcement and regulatory, civilian-lifeguard, and resource-protecting character and ethos of this uniquely dual-focused service.

## CONTEXTS

The future force structures of the Navy and the Coast Guard, and the terms and conditions of their relationship, will be shaped vitally by the several contexts that give them meaning. Four contexts dominate: domestic (resource), foreign, military, and (nonnaval) maritime. The fourth, “(nonnaval) maritime,” refers to a broad understanding of the uses of the sea; its inclusion here is essential, because it accommodates the many activities and trends by which are created public demand for coast-guarding services. While the Navy and the Coast Guard are complementary and can be fashioned at the margins so as to take cost-effective account of each other’s assets, they are nonetheless driven by the beats of very different drummers. At least forty or so of the world’s “navies” are really greater or lesser coast guards, but that is not, and cannot be, the case for the global superpower. In fact, as our argument explains, the military context for the U.S. Navy is changing in ways that accelerate its distinctiveness from the Coast Guard. This is not a criticism; it is just the way things are in the military realm at the beginning of the new century.

We should note that our current strategic condition is not exactly the first period in modern history when the greatest navy of the day had to cope with the challenges of what became a long political peace (to borrow from Edward Gibbon) and an accelerating technological revolution. C. J. Bartlett, in his now-classic study of British sea power in the four decades from the fall of Napoleon to the Crimean War, writes:

Many were the calls upon the [British] government after 1815 for cuts in official spending, for tax concessions, and for money for other purposes. A weak ministry would neglect such demands at its peril. Naval supremacy could not be sacrificed, nor would the country have allowed such a thing, but many savings short of that point might be exacted.

Earlier he advises that

the formulation of naval policy is perhaps best viewed as a fluctuating, intermittent, triangular struggle, with three main considerations, sometimes in opposition, determining the decisions. These considerations may be described as domestic, foreign, and naval.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Domestic-Resource Context*

In long periods of peace, especially when the character of war is being rapidly altered by new technologies, strategic rationality rarely governs defense policy. Among the reasons why this should be so is the uncomfortable fact that strategic need is inherently contestable—whereas, there is by definition a shortage of convincing reality-tests to sort good ideas from bad ideas. Why does the United

States, with more than a nine-trillion-dollar gross domestic product, spend approximately \$290 billion annually in its Defense Department budget? Is roughly 3 percent of GDP the “correct” resource allocation? Historical scholarship and common sense tell us that the overall level of U.S. defense expenditure in peacetime is driven by public mood. For a while, at least, the United States can afford to spend on defense literally whatever it takes to see off the foe of the moment.

Americans today assuredly could (and almost certainly should) choose to spend close to \$400 billion. But this economic feasibility could be translated into political demand (voiced by the people’s tribunes in Congress) only by a mood

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*With a 600-ship Navy, 40 or so Coast Guard cutters were virtually an after-thought. With a Navy of 116 or fewer surface combatants, and in a world plagued with regional instability and strife, however, our 40 major cutters along with several hundred coastal patrol boats take on new significance.*

ADMIRAL JAMES M. LOY, USCG, 1997

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swing, triggered by a shift in threat perception. Although the armed forces, including the Coast Guard, enjoy high public approval ratings, the nation is not about to write them a very much larger check—not, at least, until the need appears to be demonstrated by real-world events. Careful defense analysis probably can show

quite plausibly that the country can and should spend that extra hundred billion a year on national defense, but to advocate as much is to “whistle Dixie,” absent some indisputable revelation that the military machine is broken or inadequate. (We won the Cold War and the Gulf War, didn’t we?)

The politics behind U.S. defense expenditure since World War II have produced an irregular cycle, a “wave train,” of surging and then falling outlays as the tide of popular alarm has risen and receded.<sup>13</sup> If we ignore the direct costs of the Vietnam War, we find that there have been two surges—one truly great, the other merely major—in the U.S. defense budget over the past half-century. The first, a tripling of the DoD budget fueled by the shock of Korea in 1950, allowed the country to arm properly (and then some) to wage the Cold War seriously. That was the “wave” that bought the “real Strategic Air Command,” not to mention a nuclear-armed navy and army. The second financially significant “wave” began to rise in the final year of Jimmy Carter’s presidency and climbed usefully through and beyond the mid-1980s (the Ronald Reagan years), as plans and contracts eventually led to actual expenditures.

Great new ventures in U.S. national defense, including candidate revolutions in military affairs and military technical revolutions, may be conceived in the lean years between “waves” (think of carrier warfare, amphibious warfare, long-range bombing, armored warfare);<sup>14</sup> to be transformed, however, from ideas into capabilities they have to catch and ride a “wave.” The Strategic Defense

Initiative, for example, missed the Reagan budget wave. The United States will deploy a multilayered ballistic-missile defense architecture on a scale suitable to the threat only if the idea rides some future swell in the defense-budget wave train.

The budgetary context of the future of the Navy and the Coast Guard, and particularly the future of their relations, is therefore as follows. First, the defense budget currently is in the trough between waves; the level is rising, but not significantly. (In today's dollars, the DoD budget has declined from \$436 billion in fiscal 1985 to \$291 billion in 2001; the Navy budget has dropped over the same period from \$150 to ninety-plus billion.) Second, there will be a new wave, or surge, in the budget the next time Americans are persuaded that they face a clear and present danger. That new wave will very rapidly raise all boats. The lesson of the early 1950s and early 1980s is that Congress and the White House will want to fund virtually whatever is ready to be purchased (and, of course, much else besides). If ballistic-missile defense is arguably ready, or ready enough, it will be bought on an impressive scale.

If this historically and culturally based argument has merit, it means both good and bad news for the U.S. Navy. The bad news is that until there is a fairly dramatic, and self-evident, deterioration in the security environment, ninety to a hundred billion dollars (in fiscal 2001 currency) will be the politically authoritative and enduring support level. It does not much matter who is in the White House: no administration is going to effect a step-level jump in dollars for the Defense Department, let alone for the Navy in particular, unless something significantly and unexpectedly nasty occurs in the world. The good news, however—if one dares put it that way—is that the defense budgetary wave train is assuredly still working. It is a thoroughly safe bet that sometime in the next few decades the country will decide—probably rapidly and on the basis of scant strategic analysis—that it must have a much larger, at least more capable, navy. The political challenge is to be ready to mobilize when the moment arrives and meanwhile to make such investment as is possible in the \$90–\$100 billion fleet, so as to minimize regret later on.

After all, strategic history has a way of delivering crises and wars for which countries and armed services are less than optimally ready. Recall that the U.S. Navy was ready for war by late 1943, not 1941–42, and that Hitler's Kriegsmarine had been hoping to be "game fit" by 1949, certainly no earlier than 1946. Bartlett captures the point in his treatment of the Royal Navy after the Napoleonic Wars:

Respect for this principle [to maintain naval supremacy] did not prevent ministers from living upon "capital" accumulated in the past, from economizing in stores and new ships in the interest of domestic politics and finance, or from putting the immediate calls upon the Navy before future security. . . . Altogether it is doubtful whether

any power with a parliamentary constitution, with Britain's insular position and a history of territorial inviolability for so many generations, could maintain in time of peace a fleet prepared in every particular for a large-scale war. The test should not be perfection but the adequacy of the fleet to deal with an unexpected emergency: not whether sufficient money and effort had been expended but whether economy had been pushed too far.<sup>15</sup>

### *The Foreign Context*

The second context is, confusingly, both a cause and effect of the first. What Americans allocate to national defense is a function not only of events in the outside world, the course of international history, but also of the policy they choose to follow. Foreign policy can age far more rapidly than ships and aircraft. The new carriers, destroyers, submarines, aircraft, Marine weapon systems, or maritime security cutters that we debate today may well be staple elements of the national fleet beyond mid-century, meeting the strategic demands of foreign policy (and domestic policy, for the Coast Guard). But what do we really know about the "out-decades" of the century we have just entered? Perhaps more to the point, does it really matter what we do and do not (and cannot) know? Can we simply register a few grandly sweeping political assumptions about the U.S. role in the world of tomorrow and then, having checked that box, sail smartly on to what we find genuinely interesting—a possible revolution in *naval* affairs, ship design, network-centricity, the perils of combat in the littoral, and so forth?

Because we are speaking of the future of the Navy and Coast Guard, we must consider the foreign-policy driver of U.S. defense in a strictly functional way. Just as naval analysis needs to be contextualized by the perspective of maritime strategy (a healthy dose of Julian Corbett), so strategy requires a political context.<sup>16</sup> Are the Navy and Coast Guard to be so confident in political assumptions about the future of world politics and the U.S. role (and derivative missions) therein as, in effect, to regard foreign policy as a given? We have characterized domestic-resource context as an irregular wave train, with occasional great and not-so-great budgetary surges, triggered by the ringing of security alarms. Can the Navy shape long-term acquisition programs (such as the DD 21) with only generic foes in mind? Surely, distinctive geopolitics might imply distinctive geostrategy (for instance, China's strategic geography is dramatically different from Russia's). If so, defense planners today should have no difficulty acknowledging, at least in principle, that the relative importance of naval power in joint warfare should vary with the identity, and hence geography, of the enemy; and that the utility of different kinds of naval capabilities should vary with the character of combat specific to adversaries and places. Geography does matter.<sup>17</sup> It may have seemed to be overridden when U.S. naval power reached into

landlocked Afghanistan in 1998 to try to touch a rogue among rogues, but as a strategic enterprise the exercise was not entirely satisfactory. Technology is not synonymous with strategic effect.

Some of the contemporary speculation about the future of the U.S. Navy is highly intriguing but deeply flawed—specifically, by apparent unfamiliarity with the enduring lore of global strategy. Jan Breemer, a leader of the “Monterey school,” for example, argues that “naval strategy is dead,” while others note that ours is a “golden age of United States sea power.”<sup>18</sup> On the first assertion, one might be moved to quote Mark Twain’s wry comment that reports of his death were greatly exaggerated; as for the second, all golden ages without exception fade and pass away. Characteristically, golden ages bear the seeds of their own demise. They glitter most brilliantly when they have already endured many years and seem likely to endure for many more—but are in fact nearing dissolution.

The *Navy Strategic Planning Guidance* records that “the Navy assumes that no peer competitor on a global scale will arise prior to 2020.”<sup>19</sup> That assumption is



probably correct, though the qualifying phrase “on a global scale” merits watching. Nonetheless, consideration of the foreign and the (nonnaval) maritime (see below) contexts of the twenty-first century reduces confidence in the “golden age” argument. There are at least two torpedoes in the water racing to destroy that view. First, the whole history and logic of international relations tells us that the United States will not be permitted to exercise unchallenged a benign hegemony on behalf of the existing global “order.”

One may attempt to argue that the present course of events shows a profound transformation away from the dangerous competitive practices of the past, but the evidence is weak and assuredly inconclusive.<sup>20</sup> Second, and as a strategically logical corollary to the first point, it would be absurd to suggest that the greater among America’s enemies in this new century will concede, without contest, to U.S. sea power—writ large, the right to use the seas at will. It is about as prudent a thing to suggest today as it would have been in 1815.

Let us be crystal clear: If it continues to be important, indeed vital, that the United States be able to use the seas for commercial and military purposes, then its rivals and enemies must inevitably be motivated to contest that ability—directly or indirectly, symmetrically or asymmetrically. Little comfort should be drawn from the fact that the U.S. Navy is currently the “last man standing.” Resources, time, and strength of political motivation will find a way to challenge that status. Mahan was as correct for 1890 as he was for 1990, and prospectively for 2090, when he wrote, “Notwithstanding all the familiar and unfamiliar dangers of the sea, both travel and traffic by water have always been easier and

cheaper than by land.”<sup>21</sup> Whatever technological erosion Mahan’s claim has suffered with the passage of 110 years has been only marginal.

Of course, the U.S. Navy is not opposed today by any other navy with global pretensions. But that is not a profound, or even particularly significant, observation. The most basic reason for this “golden age” of U.S. maritime command is eminently temporary: world politics has been shaking down from the Cold War, is in an interwar period of uncertain duration, and no polity or coalition now existing has both the political incentive and the readily mobilizable base to challenge the U.S. maritime imperium. The *Navy Strategic Planning Guidance* makes its claim only to the year 2020. It is highly improbable (though not inconceivable) either that the United States will be permitted to enjoy a Second American Century untroubled by serious competition or that a major foe, probably a coalition of foes, will be content to concede the high seas as a sanctuary and highway for such commercial and military activity as the United States chooses to conduct. The current understandable focus on operating “from the sea,” “forward from the sea,” and even “beyond the sea” should not lead to a self-indulgently static view of the future of international politics. American defense theorists have to avoid intellectual capture by the “grammar” of contemporary military affairs at the expense of longer-range strategic thought that is properly contextualized politically.<sup>22</sup>

Let us close this part of the discussion with a historically based caveat for those susceptible to “golden age” fallacies. Such errors misled both the imperial Athenians and Britons, and they have induced others, like the continentalist Spartans and Germans, to acquire fleets (leading the latter to a strategically unsuccessful outcome).<sup>23</sup> In this century, the greater among America’s foes are not likely to concede all operations in the entire maritime realm beyond coastal waters to the authority of the U.S. Navy. This brings us to the inherently contestable military context of guesswork about future warfare.

### ***The Military Context***

Navy–Coast Guard relations in the framework of the national–fleet concept have to be shaped, in their military aspects, principally by the military future of the Navy. That future has implications for the Coast Guard, but national defense is only one among the roles of that service. We have to be careful lest in a search for cost-effective complementarities between Navy and Coast Guard we underplay the vital point that the first duty of the latter is excellence as a coast guard. If the U.S. government decided, foolishly, that the overriding job for the Coast Guard was to assist the Navy, it would be sensible to fold the Coast Guard wholly into the larger service.

The U.S. Navy takes its tune, or at least should, from control (even command) of the high seas. Evolution in the grammar of sea war, and of war generally, will

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*Since the last Quadrennial Defense Review, I've said—and believed—that a force of 305 ships—fully manned, properly trained, and adequately resourced—would be sufficient for today's requirements—within acceptable levels of risk. But . . . mounting evidence leads me to believe that 305 ships are not likely to be enough in the future.*

ADMIRAL JAY L. JOHNSON, USN, 1999

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from time to time suggest shifts in emphasis among subsurface, surface, air, space, and indeed land-based naval assets. What is significant as a matter of broad guidance for planning, however, is that the first duty of a navy, in this case the premier navy, is to control sea lines of communication—to allow or deny access to the sea, thence across it, and fi-

nally to the land, where humankind lives.<sup>24</sup> Whether or not today we judge it probable that any foe of the United States will try to build a high-seas fleet over the next half-century that might mount a challenge for maritime command, thereby hazarding a Trafalgar or Midway, is not at all the point. The true point is that the more powerful of the nation's foes in the future are certain—yes, certain—to need ways to defeat or sideline the U.S. Navy. Much as the European Nato members were always unenthusiastic in the Cold War about strategies geared to “win” a war, as if on points, in Europe, so America's enemies would prefer to do more than just deny to U.S. military power their own littorals. Sophisticated fortress design usually included outworks, to act as attriting and distracting breakwaters. Contemporary China, for example, like imperial Japan before it, understands the concept of area denial very well indeed.

The military context for the U.S. national fleet comprises so rich a set of topics that it can be treated here only in summary fashion. First of all, the great RMA debate of the 1990s is over. By historical analogy, it is in the condition reached in the nuclear debate by the early 1960s: the debaters are out of fresh inspiration; the intellectual offerings have become overelaborate; the real world of strategic history has provided little new stimulus; and antithesis has done its work, leading to some synthesis. Scholars differ on whether an information-led RMA is a seismic military revolution, meaning a wave to be ridden but not directed, or merely a military technical revolution, to be “made” by dedicated revolutionaries in the face of atavistic forces. We must not forget that these terms are no more than the conceptual inventions of imaginative people; we should not take them too seriously. Competent theorists always can invent and deploy exciting-sounding concepts to explain the necessity for the navy they prefer. The RMA family of ideas is inherently biased in favor of the novel. Also, it is worth noting that the recently advertised “revolution in naval affairs” has less to do with

military science than with a political reality: that the (somewhat) blue-water Soviet naval challenge to U.S. maritime superiority was terminated by radical change in its domestic political context.

Second, a U.S. Navy planning “to boldly go” (to use a split infinitive institutionalized by a famous television series) where great navies have feared to sail, into coastal waters—at least to operate forward from, and beyond, the sea—needs to be alert to a logical paradox of conflict that Edward N. Luttwak has all but made his own.<sup>25</sup> In the same way that a United States apparently omniscient in conventional warfare motivates enemies to find, if they can, asymmetrical strategic “equalizers” (such as weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and political warfare), so a U.S. Navy shaped significantly for littoral warfare should expect foes to investigate other regions in which to seek its embarrassment.

Third, whether in coastal waters or on the high seas, the navy of a superpower that aspires to protect commerce and international order globally has no responsible choice other than to pursue excellence virtually wherever military science takes it, however serendipitously. (Remember the trireme;<sup>26</sup> recall HMS



*Dreadnought* and then *Queen Elizabeth*.) Athens and Britain had structurally similar problems in translating naval strength into strategic advantage, but they were both entirely sound in policies of maritime supremacy.<sup>27</sup> Such supremacy alone did not ensure their security—which is why we read Corbett as well as Mahan—but it was the keystone of their strategies.<sup>28</sup> The U.S. Navy in the twenty-first century, following Pericles and Jackie (properly, Admiral Sir John) Fisher, has to be and remain unarguably

“second to none.” In an important sense, it does not fashion itself to defeat the navies of today’s (absent) enemies; rather does it plan to control the sea, and especially the high seas—failing which any discussion of littoral warfare is strictly moot—against all comers, in all combinations, and with any style of combat. Politically and strategically, this is the nature and character of the U.S. Navy with which the Coast Guard must cooperate in a national fleet.

Fourth, twenty-year expectations should not drive forty-year capabilities. The current naval debate is pervaded with some doubtful orthodoxies that are probably just plausible fallacies. For example: naval strategy is dead; naval warfare is now just warfare, not even an especially distinctive category of it, and accordingly naval vessels are simply vehicles more or less interchangeable and competitive with those based on land (or in space); and blue water is “American” by history’s definitive strategic verdict. Perhaps victory in three great wars (two hot, one cold) prompts this supposition. Unfortunately, the most recent victory—all but an accident in geopolitical and geostrategic terms (the demise of the erstwhile other superstate)—is being interpreted as a lasting condition in

its naval implications.<sup>29</sup> Devotees of the proposition that the high seas are permanently American should ask themselves on what basis they judge themselves superior in predictive talent to the statesmen of the 1920s who failed to foresee the 1930s, or of the 1970s and early 1980s who missed the grand Soviet collapse of 1989–91.

Finally, technological change drives tactics, shapes operational art, and can imply strategy. However, certain inherent strengths and limitations of sea power, and naval power, have proved remarkably resilient in the face of technological, social, economic, and political change. The demise of navies has been much anticipated but appears no more imminent today than it was half a century ago. In fact, as Sam Tangredi has argued (and we will suggest in the maritime context), current trends in globalization are augmenting, not shrinking, the relative importance of sea power in general, and therefore of navies and coast guards in particular.<sup>30</sup> Modern military science has not so homogenized military affairs that physical geography is strictly yesterday's dimension of war and strategy. Ships can loiter menacingly as no other form of military power can. The (admittedly expensive) self-defending, mobile airfield that is a fleet carrier (and its escorts) means—to paraphrase the tag line of a once-famous 1970 movie—never having to say one is sorry to, ask political permission from, or consult the sensitivities of, a local friend.

Of course, there is much that the Navy and Marine Corps cannot do, or cannot do well—as both are continually reminded by the Army and Air Force as well. That, we must add, is one reason why there is a U.S. Coast Guard. We can illuminate with a four-way discriminator what each of the four environmentally specific services—and, distinctively, the Coast Guard—brings to the banquet in contrast to the Navy. We ask:

- What each can do uniquely
- What each can do well
- What each tends to do poorly
- What each cannot do at all.

As best one can tell—and the historical evidence is truly impressive—naval power is in no danger whatsoever of being overtaken by a technological, or any other, revolution. Mahan and Corbett are classics not only of sea power but also of strategy. Much of their explanation of the strategic utility of navies and of sea power is as valid today as it was a century ago.

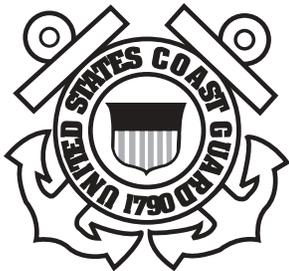
#### *The (Nonnaval) Maritime Context*

The three contexts discussed thus far have leaned heavily toward consideration of the future of the Navy in the national fleet alliance. The fourth context shifts

the focus to the Coast Guard. It so happens that we can be as certain about trends in the nonnaval uses of the sea, and therefore in the demand for distinctively coast-guarding services, as we are necessarily uncertain about the major problems that could test the Navy in combat. The guesswork involved in naval planning is nearly absent from forecasts bearing upon the Coast Guard—because the primary focus of the service is not the national defense duties legally laid upon it but marine safety, maritime law enforcement, and marine environmental protection. Whatever (say) China attempts, the U.S. Coast Guard will have to try to cope with an expanding domain and the growing severity of challenges in its unique role as the country’s policeman at sea (and on shore). What do we know about the future of non-national-defense demands upon the Coast Guard?

The pressure on America’s maritime frontier is increasing and will continue to increase.<sup>31</sup> It ranges from a huge foreseeable growth—probably a tripling—in the volume of legitimate maritime trade by 2020 (95 percent of U.S. exports and imports now move by sea); a boom in illegal migration by sea; an increase in marine drug smuggling; and greater demands on the resources of the sea, including fisheries and mineral deposits. The general picture of growth is clear enough. Those who guard the maritime approaches know that more and more is required of them, aside from their also-growing list of defense-related duties.

The bare statistics on Coast Guard activity are awe inspiring. The American public is reminded of the Coast Guard when a white hull with the orange and blue stripes is seen in the context of an air crash at sea or the interception of a



boat with illegal drugs or immigrants. The big picture, however, is that the service responds each year to approximately fifty thousand distress calls, saves perhaps five thousand lives outright, and provides help to a hundred thousand other people in emergencies. Every year, roughly eight hundred Americans lose their lives in marine accidents. Seventy-eight million Americans a year now use recreational vessels, a figure predicted to rise by 65 percent over the next twenty years. Relatedly, cruise ship fleets will double

in that period; individual vessels will carry five or six thousand people and displace up to 142,000 tons, fifty thousand more than the carrier *Nimitz*. Consider the sheer scale of another key current Coast Guard activity: each year the service conducts safety inspections of thirty-four thousand U.S. vessels, nineteen thousand foreign vessels, and seven thousand fixed marine facilities on and off shore.

The relevant trends are almost entirely in the direction of heavier burdens, and the reasons are all but self-evident. For one, the world’s population is likely to expand by a staggering two billion by 2020. For another, the United States is a giant economy (nine trillion-plus dollars) with gigantic maritime responsibilities, including guardianship of the world’s largest offshore exclusive economic

zone (or EEZ, at 3.36 million square miles); U.S. economic performance is critically dependent on the high seas and its own coastal and internal waterways. Everywhere we look we find an increase in pressure on marine resources and, of course, on those charged with their protection. For just one example, fisheries law-enforcement boardings by the Coast Guard increased from 9,440 in 1994 to 14,173 in 1998. No fewer than twenty-six thousand commercial fishing boats operate in U.S. waters. The context of pressure on the Coast Guard, in fact, most vividly emerges from the juncture of these two factors: the predicted growth in world population translates to an annual demand for perhaps 110 million tons of protein from fish, while only eighty-two million is likely to be prudently harvestable. It follows that the Coast Guard, charged with protecting the world's largest EEZ, with 20 percent of the world's estimated fish resources, is going to be kept very busy.

The litany goes on. The next twenty years will see an expansion of oil imports (by sea, of course) to the United States, from today's 40 percent of domestic consumption to 66 percent of an even larger total demand. There will be more shipping, larger and faster ships with smaller crews, and many more people taking their leisure on, and traveling (by ferry) through, U.S. ports and waters. With regard to drug traffic, for example, at least 70 percent of the total drug flow into the United States now travels part of the way by sea.

The fact is that each of the three segments of the Coast Guard's portfolio—justice, transportation, and defense—is registering noticeable growth. The service, uniquely, is responsible for law enforcement at sea (being the only armed service exempt from the restrictions of *posse comitatus*), leads in marine safety in all respects, and has a noteworthy clutch of maritime defense assignments. Therefore the significance to the nation of the Coast Guard is in effect that of the sea itself. Only those who do not appreciate how vital is the sea to the safety, prosperity, and well-being of the United States will find difficulty in understanding why an obsolescing Coast Guard matters deeply.

#### A NATIONAL FLEET

As noted at the beginning of this article, the Navy has entered the new century perilously thin in numbers of surface warships, a condition currently programmed to worsen markedly. Pessimistic projections show as few as ninety ships (all "high-end") by 2020. The service has descended in a decade from a total of 592 ships to 316 today and is headed below three hundred. But times alter needs. The Navy has looked hard at what it may require to enforce access from the sea through the coastal waters of enemies, and it has unsurprisingly concluded that numbers matter.

Today the service is examining ways to square the circle—how it can increase the number of its surface combatants while carrying through a revolution in ship propulsion (integrated electric drive, which enthusiasts claim should prove as significant as the shift in the nineteenth century from sail to steam), all without breaking the bank.<sup>32</sup> The much discussed, though as yet little endorsed, STREETFIGHTER concept of small but highly competent coastal warships is a notable sign of the times.<sup>33</sup> By the Navy's own sensible admission, the plainly predictable scarcity of surface warships and attack submarines threatens the integrity of policy and strategy. Mean, potent STREETFIGHTERS may or may not be part of the strategic solution, but the thirty-five to forty maritime security cutters that the Coast Guard plans to acquire over the next twenty years have to be.

The present high and medium-endurance cutters, patrol aircraft, and communications systems of the Coast Guard are generally old, becoming obsolescent, and in some regards already inadequate. In the apposite words of the

Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral James M. Loy, "Our ships and aircraft that operate offshore are among the oldest of all the world's fleets of similar platforms—38th of 41. The personnel and maintenance costs of keeping these ancient craft running grow increasingly prohibitive."<sup>34</sup> The point is not that obsolescent equipment cannot do as good a job as more modern equipment—that is obvious—but that it will increasingly be unable to do the job at all. Smuggling craft, for example, already outrun or

otherwise evade Coast Guard vessels, and their radar cross sections defeat the old search radars on the cutters. Similarly, the maintenance problems of aging ships and aircraft affect endurance on station, especially far from shore.<sup>35</sup>

The need to recapitalize the deep-water assets of the U.S. Coast Guard draws urgency, then, both from the ever-more-challenging scale and quality of traditional coast-guarding tasks and from the need to operate effectively with the other U.S. armed services. The sharpness of this problem has been highlighted usefully by the Coast Guard's Assistant Commandant for Operations, Rear Admiral Ray Riutta. He confides that "the biggest challenge I have . . . is to make sure that I do not field assets that are so slow, defenseless, and technologically outdated as to be albatrosses around the necks of the Navy's forces with which we sail."<sup>36</sup> To underfund (as today) the Coast Guard while its duties expand is to produce an entirely predictable result: its equipment and people are worked harder than is wise; retention, equipment life, and readiness rates suffer; and a crisis gathers.

To sustain operational tempo in the near term, spare parts are cannibalized from working equipment. That practice is now standard for the Coast Guard's fleet of thirty C-130s. Some planes are kept flying, but at the cost of reducing an



already lean force structure, demoralizing overworked personnel, and lowering retention rates of experienced service members. (Between 1994 and 1999, the availability of Coast Guard C-130s dropped from 80 percent to an unacceptable 60 percent.) Cannibalization means that at least one of the aircraft assigned to each of the Coast Guard's five air stations is likely to be a "hangar queen." These planes, of course, are in no sense "extra"; stripping them for parts means patrols not conducted or backup not available; the consequence can be lives needlessly lost at sea and laws not properly enforced. The issue is easy to explain. Admiral Loy simply states the facts when he says: "The unfavorable trends in aircraft availability, parts inventories, and crew experience challenge our ability to provide mariners in distress with the rescue services Americans have come to expect."<sup>37</sup>

The national security community typically shows as little interest in the Coast Guard as did the Clinton administration (understandably, the jury is out on the Bush administration).<sup>38</sup> Many of the problems described here lend themselves to elementary and inexpensive solution. Again to quote Admiral Loy, speaking on the same occasion, "Many of our readiness issues are the sort of problems that really can be solved by throwing money at them. Twelve or thirteen million dollars to restore our parts inventories to where they were a few years ago would be a nice place to start." Both intellectually and financially the Coast Guard operates beneath the notice of most political leaders. In 1998 the White House approached Congress for an emergency supplemental budget augmentation to improve the readiness of the armed forces. The administration's request did "not include a nickel for the Coast Guard," even though the service had participated in its development and shared the readiness problems of all the other services.<sup>39</sup>

It would be a serious mistake to assume that the crisis described may produce, at worst, a graceful degradation of performance—"merely" more lives lost at sea, more pollution not prevented or punished, more drugs brought in by "go-fast" boats, and more fish stocks illegally run down.<sup>40</sup> A persistently underresourced, aging Coast Guard could also mean large and exceedingly unhappy events: another *Exxon Valdez* disaster, a super-cruise ship aided too late, or a nuclear device transported by sea undetected into the United States.

Aside from all this, the Coast Guard has to be ready to place itself in harm's way in active war zones. It is not the mission of the service to win and keep control of the sea; that is the job of the Navy. However, the Coast Guard does have to be able to operate seamlessly with the Navy and the other armed services. As the Navy heads for mastery of information-led network-centric warfare, it must help the Coast Guard to function within that framework.<sup>41</sup> The C4ISR regime needs to be common to all of America's services, not just a "high-tech" four.

The emerging picture is one of national security under increasing stress at sea. The Defense Department and the Navy admit—in the national fleet “treaty” signed with the Coast Guard—that the fleet is too small and that accordingly the Coast Guard has to reequip itself for duties farther offshore.<sup>42</sup> Forty-one deep-water cutters were a useful adjunct to the (almost) six-hundred-ship Navy of the 1980s. Today, as the Navy copes with austerity and technical revolution by concentrating its capabilities in fewer ships, optimized for high-intensity conflict, those cutters assume a new significance. By 2020, the Navy will have no frigates left, and all its destroyers will be large and expensive. There will be no small, general-purpose warships—a yawning void between the fourteen *Cyclone*-class (PC 1) patrol boats on the one hand and the fifty-seven *Arleigh Burkes* and the new DD 21s on the other.<sup>43</sup> This trend could change in the future, particularly if the service pursues some variant of the STREETFIGHTER coastal warship, but certainly it is not going to change rapidly. The Navy intends to replace no fewer than eighty-eight *Oliver Hazard Perry* frigates and *Spruance* destroyers with thirty-two DD 21s (really mini-Arsenal Ships, close in concept to the monitors of yesteryear), beginning with the first DD 21 in 2008 and about three ships a year thereafter. By 2020, as noted already, Navy surface warships might well number scarcely more than ninety.

The interconnecting parts of the compounding maritime crisis, however, suggest a workable solution. For once, the law of unintended consequences should work in favor of U.S. national security. If the Navy expects to be short of, or even lack entirely, frigate-like warships of the future, the Coast Guard can help fill the gap; it need only reequip itself in a way that it ought to anyway for the better conduct of nondefense duties. The concept is that of a national fleet: the idea that the Navy and Coast Guard are complementary and synergistic, that they are especially cost-effective when yoked in tandem.

The concept is bureaucratically new, but it is well established in historical practice; no break with law or tradition is contemplated. The Coast Guard is legally an armed service, and its cutters have always been more or less well-armed, shallow-draft warships.<sup>44</sup> The question is how much “war” equipment Coast Guard warships should be capable of carrying. That question has yet to be answered in detail, but as a matter of guiding principle it is answerable today; indeed, the agreed concept of the national fleet settles the most pertinent issue. In political fact, of course, matters are not so simple. At present the Coast Guard must compete within the Department of Transportation for respect and dollars; within the administration for provision within the balanced budget; and in the face of a Navy all too willing to offer cast-off equipment (frequently overage and therefore expensive to maintain, crew, and operate; or otherwise excellent craft like the *Cyclones*, inappropriate for the Coast Guard’s blue-water tasks).



The zone of reasonable disagreement about the Coast Guard's duties and equipment is not extensive. There is no uniquely right number of Coast Guard cutters, no unquestionably correct timetable for their replacement, and certainly no unarguably optimal equipment for them. Probably it is intelligent to think about a flexible, mixed fleet of deep-water cutters, perhaps with "plug-in" capabilities. Not all cutters would be available for combat zones, though obviously the more that are equipped to survive in a hostile environment—at least under the wings of other armed forces—the better. Also, the sea services need not decide soon and definitively precisely how "warship-like" new cutters should be. What matters is that cutters and aircraft be so designed that modular adjustments of combat power can be effected as required over operating lifetimes that could extend into the second half of the century, and that Coast Guard C4ISR allow interoperability with all the other services.<sup>45</sup>

All of this brings us to the only point in the argument not extensively supported thus far—that the Coast Guard, as an armed service, should seriously consider a move to the Department of Defense. The case can be put negatively or positively, and it is quite persuasive either way. The negative argument emphasizes the increasingly poor fit of the Coast Guard in the Department of Transportation. Too many of its missions and tasks—aside from safety of maritime passage, a core concern of the Coast Guard—lie far outside the charter, interests, and even culture, of Transportation. This is not a criticism of that department but an acknowledgment that the Coast Guard and its current administrative parent have evolved in different directions.

The positive argument for relocation to Defense is that America's security environment increasingly requires the four armed services in that department to operate against irregular and unconventional foes. At the same time, the varied missions of the Coast Guard are requiring it to equip for, and perform, operations more military in nature. Whatever may have been the case in the past, the total job of the Coast Guard today is more complementary to those of the other armed services than it is to the Department of Transportation.

None of this denies the uniqueness of the Coast Guard among the armed services. As noted earlier, it is exempted from *posse comitatus*, and it is the federal policing agency at sea and on the coasts. Coast Guard people are lightly armed *military* professionals, many of whose tasks are notably nonmilitary (ship inspection, port safety, marine resource protection, safety of navigation, and so forth). However, an unmistakable practical convergence is under way: the Coast Guard's defense mission is growing, while the national *security* agenda of interest to the Defense Department is widening.

Of course, there would be problems for the Coast Guard within Defense. However, the difficulties look distinctly manageable; they should be dwarfed by the advantages. The Coast Guard probably cannot fit snugly into the Defense Department (or anywhere else), but it can fit well enough there, provided the problems are understood and addressed. For instance, the essential recapitalization of the Coast Guard must meet distinctive Coast Guard operational needs; it must also capture complementarities and synergisms with the Navy. That would surely be easier to arrange within Defense than from outside. The material and strategic advantages, in general, could be huge. In Defense, the Coast Guard would be perceived and treated as what it truly is, the country's fifth armed service.

Further, it would be able to participate more effectively in logistical, procurement, and personnel arrangements. Recent, indeed current, experience makes plain that the skilled people who are the Coast Guard increasingly suffer adverse disparities with respect to Defense Department personnel in benefits and allowances (though not pay). This fifth armed service has to try to recruit and retain professionals in competition with other services better able to look after their people; as it is, the Coast Guard can make up the difference only by siphoning money out of the equipment and operating budgets. In the Defense Department, the Coast Guard's people would be treated as what they are, members of the U.S. armed forces.

The risks in all this are not trivial, but neither are they truly daunting. Above all else, a Coast Guard within DoD would need to preserve its distinctive warrior-policeman culture. There would be some areas of disagreement with other services. For example, it is probable that the Coast Guard's expanding role as guardian of marine resources would fuel tension with the Navy, whose priorities have been rather different.<sup>46</sup> So be it: America needs both perspectives. There is every reason to be optimistic that the service could retain its (somewhat) policeman-like reputation and yet function, and be seen to function, as a full member of the armed forces team. Perhaps a civilian assistant secretary of defense for the Coast Guard would be useful in achieving that balance.

Alternatives such as relocation to the Justice Department or conversion to something like the Federal Emergency Management Agency are interesting, and the arguments for them have merit, but they do not yet compete seriously with the Defense option. Looking to the decades ahead, the Coast Guard inevitably will be more of *an armed service with a difference* than a *maritime police force with a difference*. At the least, it is time for this subject to be aired publicly.

The dominant conclusion is that the Navy and the Coast Guard are natural complements and that this complementarity should be expressed practically in a "national fleet" that is not mere rhetoric. It is surely beyond argument that the

Navy cannot often afford to devote exceedingly scarce (and frighteningly expensive) assets to operations other than war. For its part, the Coast Guard, limping along on between four and five billion dollars per annum, could not take up naval—which is to say war-fighting—duties even if it so wished (which it does not). Even the next great surge in the defense budget (ideally by that time including the Coast Guard), which would presumably put the Navy back in the frigate business, would not promote serious difficulty vis-à-vis the Coast Guard. A rising budgetary tide would raise all boats—gray hulls *and* orange stripes. If—realistically, *when*—the American public becomes alarmed once again about defense, both the Navy and the Coast Guard (for its national-defense duties) assuredly will be bolstered.

Those who have the leisure to read history and strategic theory, and who are not immersed in the short-term issues and crises of government, have a duty to try to sort the enduring from the ephemeral. Officials lack the time (and, having chosen to be officials, probably the inclination) for such reflection. The whole subject of Navy–Coast Guard relations is in need of just such conceptual, strategic, and historical contextualization. In the heat, excitement, and urgencies of interservice issues, with their large budgetary ramifications, significant truths can slip out of sight. One is that, like the Athenian and British navies of the past, the U.S. Navy has an international “ordering” function that obliges it to dominate the most demanding possible conflict. The Navy is therefore prudent in investing in naval supremacy on the high seas, even though no plausible competitor is in view today.

Some concepts *du jour* hide their real obsolescence behind fashionable buzzwords, novel-seeming theories of future warfare, and mood swings, either optimistic or pessimistic. Donald and Frederick W. Kagan deftly skewer one such flawed view:

The absence of “global peer competitors” does not make the world safe for the foreseeable future—it only makes it uncertain and difficult to understand. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941 it was not a “global peer competitor.” Nor was Germany in either world war. Still less was North Korea in 1950, North Vietnam in the 1960’s, Saddam Hussein in 1990, or Slobodan Milosevic in 1999 when they unleashed attacks that compelled American military intervention. None of these states posed an imminent threat to the continental United States. The concept of “global peer competitors” is the thinking of the Cold War and is not relevant to debates about future American national strategy.<sup>47</sup>

When the nation considers carefully the domestic, foreign, and military contexts of Navy–Coast Guard relations, much that is uncertain can be settled. The proposition that the sea services of the United States should behave as

complementary parts of a national fleet is true to their several natures and functions. It need not provoke controversy.

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#### NOTES

1. Admiral Jay L. Johnson, "Numbers Do Matter," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, November 1999, p. 32.
2. Some of the reasons why this should be the case are explained in Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 217–27.
3. "National Fleet: A Joint Navy/Coast Guard Policy Statement, 21 September 1998," in Bruce Stubbs and Scott C. Truver, *America's Coast Guard: Safeguarding U.S. Maritime Safety and Security in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: Assistant Commandant, Operations, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, January 2000), app. C, pp. 131–2.
4. Admiral Jay L. Johnson, *Navy Strategic Planning Guidance with Long Range Planning Objectives* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, April 2000), p. 27.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
6. Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., "22 Questions for Streetfighter," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, February 2000, p. 48.
7. George C. Wilson, "Remember the *Cole* and Reform the Military," *National Journal*, 28 October 2000. Journalists can be cruel.
8. Mark H. Johnson, "The Coast Guard Alternative," *Naval War College Review*, Winter 2000, pp. 141–7, offers some cogent argument and useful illustrative detail.
9. With regard to active duty personnel, though of course not equipment, the U.S. Coast Guard, at 36,230, is not far short of the roster of the Royal Navy, which (without the 6,740 marines) numbers 37,030.
10. Eric Grove, *The Future of Sea Power* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1990), p. 138.
11. On IDS, see Stubbs and Truver, *America's Coast Guard*, esp. chaps. 4–5.
12. The organization of this part of the discussion owes much to Bartlett's pioneering approach. C. J. Bartlett, *Great Britain and Sea Power, 1815–1853* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press, 1963), esp. p. 1.
13. I have made, and graphically illustrated, this argument in my "Strategy in the Nuclear Age: The United States, 1945–1991," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, ed. Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), esp. p. 586.
14. Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, eds., *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), is outstanding.
15. Bartlett, *Great Britain and Sea Power*, pp. 23.
16. Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, ed. Eric J. Grove (1911; repr. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1988).
17. See Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan, eds., *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), for theory and history in support of this assertion. See Mackubin Thomas Owens, "In Defense of Classical Geopolitics," *Naval War College Review*, Autumn 1999, pp. 59–76.
18. Not for the first time, I am much in debt to the writings of Sam J. Tangredi. On the "Monterey School," see his unpublished paper, "Beyond the Sea: Naval Strategy for a World Without Navies," September 2000. Also see Jan S. Breemer, "Naval Strategy Is Dead," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, February 1994, pp. 49–52; and, for the "golden age" formulation, James J. Wirtz, "QDR2001: The Navy and the Revolution in Military Affairs," *National Security Studies Quarterly*, Autumn 1999, pp. 43–60. In addition to those stimulating works, there is much to chew on in Edward Rhodes, ". . . 'From the Sea' and Back Again: Naval Power in the Second American Century," *Naval War College Review*, Spring 1999, pp. 13–54; and Sam J. Tangredi, "The Fall and Rise of Naval Forward Presence," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, May 2000, pp. 28–32.

19. Johnson, *Navy Strategic Planning Guidance*, p. 3.
20. See Colin S. Gray, "Clausewitz Rules, OK? The Future Is the Past—with GPS," *Review of International Studies* (UK), Special Issue (December 1999), pp. 161–82, which tackles the old question of whether there is, or can be, progress in international relations.
21. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (1890; repr. London: Methuen, 1965), p. 25.
22. The "grammar" of war is a most useful notion. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 605.
23. Donald Kagan, *The Fall of the Athenian Empire* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987); Holger H. Herwig, *"Luxury" Fleet: The Imperial German Navy, 1888–1918* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Ashfield, 1987).
24. Phrased with help from Tangredi, "Beyond the Sea," and Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, esp. pp. 15–6.
25. Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987).
26. J. S. Morison and J. F. Coates, *The Athenian Trireme: The History and Reconstruction of an Ancient Greek Warship* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), chap. 2.
27. The concept has an attractive ring. See Peter Padfield, *Maritime Supremacy and the Opening of the Western Mind: Naval Campaigns That Shaped the Modern World, 1588–1782* (London: John Murray, 1999), esp. p. 6.
28. The title of a conference in 1992 at the Naval War College has remained with me. James Goldrick and John B. Hattendorf, eds., *Mahan Is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond* (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, 1993).
29. For an interesting theory on the measure of U.S. responsibility for the Soviet defeat (did the USSR collapse, or was it pushed?), see Norman Friedman, *The Fifty-Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2000).
30. Tangredi, "Beyond the Sea."
31. For the key predictions, see Richard D. Kohout et al., *Looking Out to 2020: Trends Relevant to the Coast Guard* (Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, May 1997); and Office of Naval Intelligence and U.S. Coast Guard Intelligence Coordination Center, *Threats and Challenges to Maritime Security, 2020* (Washington, D.C.: ONI and USCGICC, 1 March 1999).
32. Robert Suro, "Navy Plans High-Powered New Destroyer," *Washington Post*, 7 January 2000, p. 3. The attention-getting sail-to-steam analogy was offered by Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig. Scott C. Truver, "Origins of the All-Electric Navy," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, October 1999, pp. 50–4, provides a helpful technical, tactical, and strategic explanation.
33. On STREETFIGHTER in strategic context, see Arthur K. Cebrowski and Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., "Rebalancing the Fleet," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, December 1999, pp. 31–4; and Hughes, "22 Questions for Streetfighter." The eponymous "streets" are the enemy's home waters.
34. Admiral James M. Loy, remarks to the American Shipbuilders Association, Sea Power Forum, 24 February 1999, p. 2 of transcript.
35. By "deepwater" the Coast Guard refers to tasks conducted more than fifty miles from shore.
36. Quoted in Scott C. Truver, "A Navy–Coast Guard Renaissance?" *Armed Forces Journal International*, November 1999, p. 30.
37. Admiral James M. Loy, "Readiness: The Reality behind the Numbers," speech to CNA Readiness Conference, 1 December 1999.
38. For example, when dealing with an article submission of mine on the Coast Guard, the editorial staff at the *National Interest* initially did not know even truly basic facts about the service. The journal had never published an article about the Coast Guard and probably had never previously even considered one. I was given the impression that the journal viewed the subject as so extraordinary as to be near the exotic! See Colin S. Gray, "Keeping the Coast Guard Afloat," *National Interest*, Summer 2000, pp. 83–7. In some ways this episode speaks well for the journal, since it proved willing to step "outside the box" of what it had regarded typically as significant policy topics.

39. James Kitfield, "Interview: The Stepchild Steps Out: Commandant Admiral James M. Loy," *National Journal*, 2 October 1999.
40. "Go-fast" boats account for 85 percent of maritime drug smuggling into the United States. Their use increased tenfold from 1995 to 1998. See John G. Roos, "Drug Busters," *Armed Forces Journal International*, October 1999, pp. 34–40; Mike Emerson, "Coast Guard Helos: A Call to Arms," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, October 1999, pp. 30–3; and Bruce Stubbs, "Launching the Real Maritime Security Force," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, October 2000, pp. 72–5. "Go-fast" boats are usually thirty to forty feet long, have a couple of powerful outboard motors that can propel the vessel at speeds in excess of forty knots, and are austere in the extreme. They are designed, or adapted, simply to carry perhaps a metric ton of drugs at very high speed on runs of several hundred miles. Because these boats can outrun Coast Guard cutters, and because the Navy lacks legal powers of arrest, by far the best hope of stopping them is by nonlethal interdiction from the air.
41. Arthur K. Cebrowski and John J. Garstka, "Network-Centric Warfare: Its Origins and Future," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, January 1998), pp. 28–35.
42. The Navy's proposal to increase the fleet from its current level of 316 ships to 360 was supported publicly by then-Secretary of Defense William Cohen. See Tangredi, "Beyond the Sea," p. 21.
43. Scott C. Truver, "Tomorrow's U.S. Fleet," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, March 2000, pp. 102–9, is particularly useful.
44. Lest anyone be confused about this matter, the relevant legal authority for the Coast Guard is as follows: 14 U.S. Code 1 specifies the Coast Guard as a military service; 14 USC 2 requires the Coast Guard to be ready to operate (and 14 USC 3 requires the Coast Guard so to operate) in the Navy in time of war; 14 USC 141 authorizes the Coast Guard to assist the Department of Defense in performance of any activity for which the service is specially qualified.
45. Kim Malmin et al., *Future Coast Guard Cutter Study: Candidate Cutters and Their Costs*, CRM 96-91.100 (Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, August 1996), is fundamental.
46. For an example of such divergence, see Rachel Canty [Lt., USCG], "The Coast Guard and Environmental Protection: Recent Changes and Potential Impacts," *Naval War College Review*, Autumn 1999, pp. 77–90.
47. Donald Kagan and Frederick W. Kagan, "While America Sleeps," lecture at the Union League of Philadelphia, 2 November 2000, p. 4 of text. Also see their *While America Sleeps* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).