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THE FOUNDATIONS OF FUTURE NAVY PLANNING

A lecture delivered by
Vice Admiral Robert B. Carney, USN
at the Naval War College
September 13, 1949

Much has been written about planning, and there is good machinery now in existence at all levels for its accomplishment. Workable formats, techniques, procedures, and organizations for planning have evolved under the pressures of war and in the atmosphere of joint effort. Strategic planning is being geared to logistical considerations; the necessary industrial and economic aspects have been woven into the planning pattern; and, more recently, the all-important dollar has been introduced as the yardstick for strategic capability as well as logistical implementation.

Not that this is the planner's millenium; the need for improvement will always continue in some measure, and it can be safely assumed that, as the relationship of strategic, logistical and budgetary planning becomes more universally understood, methods will be susceptible of further improvement. Nevertheless, mechanisms and progress are reasonably well in hand.

Such being the case, it is well to pause from time to time to examine the philosophy and the precepts upon which our planning is predicated. Such introspection is always more or less in order, but there are added reasons for taking philosophical inventory at this particular time. This is a year critical in the annals of international developments, a year attracting the closest attention of economists and industrialists, and a revolutionary year in American military annals.

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With the signing of the Atlantic Pact and the consideration of military aid programs, the United States—and, for that matter, all of the allied world of like-thinking peoples—are embarking on a new concept (or re-embarking on the old concept) of security through mutual strength. The United States must now consider the potential strength—and weaknesses—of those nations associated with us in seeking security for civilization.

In the world of economics, the United States is confronted with increasing demands on its resources, while at the same time facing the probability of diminishing national revenues from which our obligations must be financed.

Narrowing the field of consideration to military matters, those who are responsible for fashioning the structure of military security are confronted with the tremendously complex problem of best relating ideal strategy, strategic capability, forces, and logistic support to the dwindling dollars available. Budgetary restrictions prevent us from achieving the ideal in the land, sea, and air strengths which would guarantee complete security. It is therefore necessary to determine the character and degree of emphasis that must be accorded each service and each weapon—and here there is an inevitable clash between the convictions of the advocates of differing viewpoints.

Further delimiting the area inspected, we find that within the Naval Establishment many important needs must of necessity be subjected to paring in order to conform to the limitations of the navy's purse.

The planners at the national level, the joint planners of the military establishment, and the planners in the military departments are all beset by problems of great gravity at this particular time; and, unless their respective plans are predicated on sound

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philosophy and assumptions, our future as a nation could well be jeopardized.

This year of 1949, then, being a critical year in international, economic, and military affairs, it behooves us to indulge in some unbiased and objective thinking. Perhaps, theoretically, we should wait until the philosophy of the nation and of the security organization are well crystallized before venturing to an appraisal of the Navy's thinking, but pressure of events denies us that breathing spell; moreover, there are many factors which we can profitably examine now and which brook no delay.

So, at the risk of overshooting the mark, I shall essay a vignette of the Navy's current position, some of the factors that have contributed to our position, and some thoughts concerning courses of action for the future.

Any appraisal of the Navy's present and future must be done against the backdrop of unification. Unification is here; the will of the people was expressed in the National Security Act of 1947, and it has been forcibly reaffirmed by the modifications enacted into law this summer. The pattern is established; should parts of the mosaic appear to lack perspective from the Navy's point of observation, nevertheless we are bound by the laws of our country and by the time-tested military proprieties. "Fighting the problem" is unintelligent and may even come to be regarded as something more serious than lack of intelligence. Reasoned disagreements must be entrusted to the democratic processes—they take time, but proof of their merit lies in the record of American achievement.

As a philosophical point of departure, then, face up to the *fait accompli* of centralized authority and the potent fiscal controls through which this new plan for national military administration is being effectuated.

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An objective appraisal of the Navy's current fortunes can only lead to the conviction that the Navy's position has been weakened. Measured in terms of forces, appropriations, and capabilities, there could be no other conclusion. If roles and missions are used as the yardstick, we are confronted with the fact that majority sentiment favors less comprehensive Navy functions than was the case in the last war. It also seems to be the concensus of opinion that in the realm of public relations our position leaves much to be desired.

To say that the Navy's over-all status has been impaired seems to be a sound basic assumption. However, the true significance of the fact can only be derived when we regard our situation in conjunction with an examination into the trend of world affairs, the complexion of our economy, the evolution of strategic thinking, and the fortunes of our sister services. Only in that way can we hope to measure our existing strength in proper perspective.

The national military budget affords a good starting point. It is obvious that fewer dollars and rising costs necessitate reductions. It should be equally obvious that our vast VJ-day forces, pipelines, and installations could not and should not be maintained. On this account, then, shrinking should be expected, accepted, and accomplished.

Inter-service competition for dollars has been widely deplored, but dollars furnish a measure of capability. Dollar-wise, the Navy's budget is declining, and this in spite of the Navy's thirty-nine-billion-dollar material inventory and its widespread D-day commitments. This sort of reduction we can not regard with complacency.

An even more serious matter concerns the various pressures in behalf of restricting the Navy's roles and missions. In this connection, the very potent influence of dollar limitations should be

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noted—enforced defaulting on a responsibility through lack of appropriations to provide forces and facilities. Here again we must be alert to the need for disseminating the justification of Navy roles and missions.

At this point, it can be inferred that some of our reductions are right and proper, and that others, to our way of thinking, are not in the best interests of national security. The problem is to differentiate wisely between the logical and illogical.

Unfortunately, clear discernment is rarely a function of disappointment. The men who brought Naval Aviation from its beginnings to its peak find it bitter hard to see their life's work whittled down. Likewise, the leaders of the Marine Corps who built and fought the Corps through its new and greater traditions of World War II can not accept with equanimity any diminishing of the stature of our elite fighting corps. The same could be said for the men who conceived and fostered the Seabees—and even the poor old battleship admirals.

In virtually every segment of the service, people are witnessing a lessening of lustre and influence. Naturally, these people fight back and fight hard.

And yet, a certain amount of change is inevitable. International alignments, political objectives, scientific developments, the geography of strategy, the distribution of natural resources, the facts of economics—all of these things point clearly to the fact that should another war befall us, it is only reasonable to expect that the composition of our forces will differ in many respects from the armies, fleets, and air armadas of World War II. They would differ if for no other reasons than that the potentialities of the adversaries would be different and many new battlegrounds would be involved. An objective view of such factors as these can lead

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to recognition and acceptance of justifiable changes in our responsibilities. It will also serve to isolate proposals *not* consistent with sea power's verities.

The Navy reaffirms the need for naval attack aviation, the need for the Marine Corps as the masters of amphibious landings, the potency of the submarine, the essentiality of antisubmarine forces, the vital importance of seaborne commerce and seaborne movement, the need for navy-trained gunfire support and support-air operations for amphibious landings, the requirement that we control our own logistic support, and many other proven seapower principles and battle-tested techniques. Nevertheless, the character and geography of any possible opponents of the future are such as to make it most unlikely that an exact duplicate of our 1945 forces would again be required.

Without conceding the validity of any proposal to alter the basic functions and responsibilities of the Navy, common sense demands recognition of dollar realities and recognition of the fact that new tasks confront us in the future. By the same token, not every chapter of World War II will repeat itself in the history of the future.

The moral, at this point, is that in times of peace the tendency is to scale down all military activities, and that cutbacks of that sort are not *per se*, *prima facie* evidence of the abolition of roles and missions. Nicety of perception is called for in order to distinguish between wise economy and unwise efforts to handcuff the nation's ability to make full use of its capabilities for controlling the seas and denying it to our enemies.

In many respects, our most serious setbacks have been in the area of public relations. The causes are complex, deep-seated, and in many cases of ancient origin. Nevertheless, it is possible to

isolate and identify some of the happenings which influence thinking with respect to the Navy and sea power.

In the first place, the public has never been made properly aware of the Navy's wartime accomplishments; this is largely attributable to ultraconservatism and a faulty evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of secrecy. In any event, we are still suffering from wartime anonymity.

There were irritations that grew out of the war—pulling and hauling in Washington—conflicting demands between theaters—unfortunate interferences between services—smarting after-maths in the wake of publicity difficulties—dissatisfactions rooted in matters of service or individual prestige.

In one respect, good performance has boomeranged. Through farsighted planning and successful execution, the Navy had achieved most of its goals and was well satisfied with its position in the military scheme of things. In a manner of speaking, we had become capitalists in this military world and were quite content to be left alone; there was little that we envied or coveted. On the other hand, there is no gainsaying the fact that from other vantage points some of our treasures looked like ill-gotten gains. The thought has been expressed that in certain fields we had usurped functions not properly belonging to a navy, and had been guilty of costly and unnecessary duplications.

Without attempting to determine the merits or demerits of the matter, we must recognize the existence of such thinking in order to understand history and so to see more clearly the best paths leading to the future.

Then there was "merger". For the purposes of this discussion, the subject deserves mention only as a factor which has a

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bearing on the evolution of public opinion. Around the postwar council tables, the Navy has frequently been in a minority of one. The public is not aware of the many points of agreement, and the public heard nothing of Navy proposals for changes for the simple reason that the Navy was not seeking changes; readers only heard of Navy dissent. *Ergo*, there flowered the impression that the Navy was constantly blocking unification.

Rightly or wrongly, people wearied of the argument—and wearied of a navy viewpoint which nurtured argument.

So, oddly enough, wartime accomplishment and some fine, postwar achievements were lost to sight in the outer darkness created by the focusing of the spotlight on other matters. Some of these latter-day jobs deserve mention.

Immediately upon the termination of war, a comprehensive and well-planned Naval Reserve program was instituted; today the Naval Reserve is a model civilian component program. The Navy had demobilization plans completed before VJ-day and carried out a rapid, disciplined, and orderly demobilization. The preservation of the reserve fleet was a high achievement in the field of technical planning and management, with the result that the Navy's reserve of weapons is preserved intact and available. The Navy's disposed of its surplus material in orderly fashion and retained the items that would be needed for the future; the things on the retention list were retrieved, overhauled, preserved, catalogued, and then put on the shelf as a part of an integrated war reserve program. The Navy established an integrated supply system. The Navy immediately instituted a modernization program for its fleet, and a shipbuilding program specializing in prototypes which would embody the accomplishments from the fields of research and development. We promptly established an operational development force to evaluate new weapons and techniques and to put them

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into workable shape for general fleet use. The Navy has maintained its combat efficiency in the face of every postwar obstacle.

These examples bespeak sound and effective thinking, planning, administration, and operational effort. Could it be that mere efficiency isn't news?

And now to briefly cast up the account.

We see the Navy position weakened.

We see logical reasons for some reductions in naval strength, and we discern other downward pressures which appear neither logical nor sound.

Organizationally, we have become a cog in a machine in which the other enmeshed wheels exert a continuous and interlocking pressure. Gone are the days in which we formulated our own concept of sea power, and, in collaboration with industry and the old naval affairs committees, blueprinted the composition and strength of the nation's fleets.

With an understanding of the past and the present, we can consider our plans for the future. With your indulgence, we will leave the details of planning to the planners; the *foundations* of our future planning are vastly more important.

Before worrying about our relative fortunes *vis-a-vis* the Army and Air Force, our first job is perfecting the Navy we have. I hark back to days after the first World War when we got down to 86,000 men, had only one active squadron of destroyers in the Pacific, and there was solemn conviction that the Navy had gone to hell. According to my best calculations, I would just about reach my hundredth birthday before achieving four stripes (I gave no thought to the age of the gentlemen on the selection board).

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Fortunately, some tough old characters took the wheel and restored discipline, efficiency, hope, and self-respect—the elements of the much-abused term “morale”.

If I exhume the good old days, it is only by way of reminding ourselves that a fighting navy can, did, and will overcome every obstacle to preeminence.

And now to convert philosophy to plain talk.

We of the Navy are American citizens, members of the Department of Defense, professional experts in the business of sea power, and practitioners in the art of leadership. As such, we have a multiple obligation to the citizenry, to the American military team, to our naval seniors, to our subordinates—and to ourselves. None of those obligations must be evaded.

Being a military service, we properly draw inspiration from our traditions, but the story of the past must be screened to find lessons useful for the future. We can look to John Paul Jones for the criteria of a fighting gentleman's character without letting contracts for sisterships of the *Bon Homme Richard*. Don't confuse the weapons and techniques of past glories with the basic principles of sea power, for, although the fundamentals of sea power are immutable, its tools change.

The past yields lessons and traditions, but do not bemoan its passing. Devote yourselves to finding quicker, cheaper, and better solutions to the myriad problems of the present and future.

Perfect yourselves in every job to which assigned. Learn the art of command by seeking opportunities to lead, and by sitting attentively at the feet of experience. Knowledge is the foundation of strength, usefulness, and leadership.

Work unceasingly to perpetuate the Navy's rightful pride in its thoroughness, integrity, loyalty-up, and loyalty-down.

Learn all you can about the Army and the Air Force; unification is a fact of life, and there are countless new tangencies with the other services.

Do the best you can with what you have. If circumstances give the Navy less than you think is needed, find new ways of maintaining our high and uncompromising standards.

Subordinate your corps or specialty to the general welfare of the Navy.

Subordinate your Navy partisanship to the laws, rules, and regulations of unification in furtherance of the American military team. Competition is healthy and *esprit de corps* is vital to a fighting organization, but good judgment is needed to prevent *esprit de corps* from degenerating into unproductive isolation.

Adhere to the sound tenets of sea power's credo. The Navy needs the tools to defeat any obstacle to our control of the sea, whatever those tools may be. As experts in sea power, we are convinced that this is so, and we should unswervingly adhere to our convictions. Your country must not be beguiled into giving up one of its great and dearly-bought power aces—sea supremacy. Your loyalty to sea power is loyalty to your country and deserves your keen, constant, and articulate support.

Be frank and fearless in your considered counsels. No valid exception can ever be taken to forthright and mature opinion; there need be no inconsistency between honest belief and loyal compliance with the dictates of constituted authority.

Unceasingly study the possible threats to sea power and seek to devise new means of exercising it for our own benefit and

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denying its use to enemies. By so doing, we will not only solve the future's problems, we may well shape the future itself.

Do these things and the country need have no fear for its supremacy at sea. Do these things and you need have no fear for the Navy's future—you will be too busy.

Gentlemen, twice in my lifetime I have been through periods of demobilization. Once, I observed a decline of American sea power resulting from a weary world's hope of finding peace in disarmament. I have witnessed the crumbling of Germany's and Japan's sea power as a sure prelude to their defeat. In American history, we find even drearier chapters telling of the utter desuetude to which our Navy came early in the nineteenth century and again after the Civil War. Today—and I am being completely frank—there is again apparent a tendency to minimize the need and importance of sea power. In such times the Navy is put to its greatest test.

There must be no folding up—the challenge must be accepted. Disappointment is no acceptable signal for discouragement—that would be betraying our traditions.

There is boundless opportunity for the individual in the Naval Service—and boundless opportunity to serve the United States by continuous, intelligent, and courageous advocacy of the Navy's proper goals. The opportunities for distinguished service did not pass with the distinguished servants of the past.

There is a job to be done—a job that requires the epitome of brains, industry, leadership, and missionary work. The job is an all-hands maneuver. If every man does his bit unremittingly, cheerfully, and to the best of his ability, we will always be able to take pride in the fact that this country has a Navy second to none—and that the Navy is occupying its proper place in the scheme of national security and world peace.