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THE RETURN OF GREAT-POWER COMPETITION

Cold War Lessons about Strategic Antisubmarine Warfare and Defense of Sea Lines of Communication

Bradford Dismukes

> *Great-power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary focus of U.S. national security.*
>
> SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JAMES N. MATTIS, 19 JANUARY 2018

These words of Secretary Mattis are momentous.[1] Great-power competition is recognized widely as having been the root cause of the First World War, a powerful contributor to the Second World War, and a core element of the Cold War.[2] Mr. Mattis raises the serious possibility that war with a major opponent lies on the horizon. Such a war might be fought for major, even existential, stakes; but smaller, indecisive wars among the great powers also could occur, as was the case during earlier centuries in Europe.[3]

An immediate, tangible expression of the new orientation was the reestablishment of the U.S. Navy's Second Fleet. When Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral John M. Richardson made the announcement in May 2018, he justified the need for the fleet as a response to great-power competition, specifically with Russia.[4] The fleet's area of responsibility (AOR) centers on the North Atlantic Ocean, whose Cold War lessons from history include the importance of strategic antisubmarine warfare (ASW) and defense of sea lines of communication (SLOCs). These would have constituted two of the original Second Fleet's three principal strategic missions had there been a war with the Soviet Union.[5] *Strategic ASW* meant attacking Soviet ballistic-missile submarines (SSBNs) to affect the superpower nuclear balance; defending SLOCs is a particular form of *sea control,* defined as being able to use the sea when, where, and for the purposes desired. In this case, defending SLOCs meant protecting shipping between North America and Europe—where unimpeded passage was a sine qua non for the Western alliance to succeed in war at the conventional level. Strategic ASW arrived on the scene in the mid-1980s; SLOC defense long had been a fixture of U.S. naval strategy, born of the searing experience of two world wars and from geostrategic

theories dating at least from the first half of the twentieth century.[6] SLOC defense has been the most enduring single construct in the Navy's strategic thinking, always in the back of the planner's mind—a kind of default position; as will be seen, even strategic ASW was put to its service.

The immediate aim of this article is to contribute to the historical understanding of intelligence and planning during the Cold War. The larger aim is to draw lessons that may be useful for Navy planning in the new world of great-power competition. (Readers whose main interest is less in the history of the Cold War are invited to fast-forward to the sections following "Lessons for Today.")

The Cold War is viewed, properly, as a historic success. Yet, paradoxically, several of the lessons drawn from the Navy's experience during it are negative ones—namely, what to avoid. That is because Cold War planning for both strategic ASW and SLOC defense experienced important failures, first in strategic intelligence, then in the way planners used that intelligence. Intelligence errors centered on varying levels of success in understanding Soviet strategic intentions—incorrectly, in the case of SLOCs, and too slowly, in the case of strategic ASW. Planning errors involved a failure to draw a bright line between the adversary that intelligence identified, as realistically as possible, and the one the planner contrived to fight. Planners carry multiple responsibilities—not all of which are related to the adversary. The first is to defend their own vulnerabilities, regardless of the strategic intentions imputed to the adversary. Planners also are responsible for promoting alliance solidarity and protecting Navy interests in interservice competition for the defense budget.[7] The crucial nexus between intelligence and planning will be examined in the concluding sections.

Any effort to understand the Navy's Cold War history must start with these two historically intertwined intelligence failures. In the case of strategic ASW, the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) ultimately was correct. But well over eight years elapsed between (1) 1973, when the Soviets assigned their SSBNs a critical role in their war plans, and simultaneously assigned their general-purpose-force (GPF) navy the mission of defending those SSBNs in sea bastions; and (2) the early 1980s, when the IC properly recognized those roles. Shortly after that, Navy planners responded with the *Maritime Strategy,* publicly announced in 1986.[8] But before the *Maritime Strategy* (i.e., between [1] and [2]), naval planning experienced approximately a decade of lost opportunity and misdirected effort.

This lengthy, if little recognized, intelligence failure was linked to a larger one. Intelligence about the SLOCs was simply wrong. From the beginning of the Cold War in the late 1940s until the mid-1980s, the Navy was convinced that in a World War III the Soviets intended to fight a "Battle of the Atlantic III." This was incorrect. The Soviet navy's primary mission was not to attack on the high seas

of the North Atlantic but to stay close to home to defend the motherland and, after 1973, its SSBNs in maritime bastions. Students of the Cold War U.S. Navy have known (from the work of Hattendorf and Ford and Rosenberg, published in the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century) that the top priority accorded the threat to the SLOCs was a mistake.[9] But the focus of these—the standard narratives of the period—was on the U.S. maritime strategy of 1981–86, and much less on what came before. If anything, the striking, widely recognized achievement that the *Maritime Strategy* represented served to redeem the Navy's previous errors, allowing an attitude of "all's well that ends well" to prevail.

Many might ask whether attention to the earlier period really is needed. This article answers yes, for two reasons. First, these mistakes had major, costly consequences, and you cannot learn from your mistakes by ignoring them. Second, if it happened once, it could happen again. And in this case, "once" means again and again over decades. When the behavior of a great institution that prides itself on intellectual rigor cannot be explained on strictly rational grounds, we have to ask why. To ignore this question is to risk unknowingly repeating yesterday's errors today or in the future. This is not a criticism of the Navy's Cold War leaders; they had to make hard choices to deal with a steadily burgeoning opponent, in the face of massive uncertainty—unlike the author, who has the benefit of hindsight.

NAVAL INTELLIGENCE

How did the notion that the Soviet navy's main mission was anti-SLOC become an idée fixe? Before 1974, there was no national intelligence estimate (NIE) on the Soviet navy; its capabilities and intentions were what the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) said they were, with the fairly uncritical approval of the Defense Intelligence Agency.[10] For ONI, the Soviet navy, serving an aggressive Communist ideology, was as offensively minded as its senior partner, the Soviet army. From this perspective, an inventory at one point approaching four hundred submarines—a far larger number than defense alone might seem to justify—could indicate only offensive intent. Its apparent focus was the SLOCs of NATO that connected the continents—representing a vulnerability that two world wars had shown to be close to indefensible.

However, these inferences, while highly plausible, were essentially abstract. Just about all the concrete evidence pointed in the opposite direction: that attacking the SLOCs was, at best, a secondary priority for Soviet planners. Uncertainty always attaches to intelligence. (As intelligence professionals remind their consumers, "If it's a fact, it isn't intelligence.") So the accounting below will identify, where possible, the topics about which the IC was reasonably confident and those where uncertainty prevailed.[11] First we turn to individual pieces of evidence from

standard intelligence sources, held at the time with fairly high confidence, and then to open-source analysis of Soviet military writings, about which confidence was low or perhaps nonexistent.

Evidence from Standard Intelligence Sources

In the early 1950s, Whiskey-class submarines dominated Soviet building programs. Norman Polmar has noted that, in the Soviet categorization of the time, these boats were intended to provide direct, "regional" defense of the USSR. The "oceangoing" Zulu class formed less than 10 percent of the inventory.[12] Soviet submarine designs in general were not optimized to perform the anti-SLOC mission; many classes had only small-capacity torpedo spaces. The standard load of conventional torpedoes for a Soviet diesel submarine was a fifty-fifty split between ASW and anti–surface ship weapons. The submarine force did not train to attack defended, maneuvering convoys.[13] Routinely, only a small fraction of the Soviet navy's order of battle deployed beyond home waters. The supporting infrastructure and logistics for distant operations were correspondingly weak.[14] No exercises of significant scale with an anti-SLOC theme ever occurred in the North Atlantic, or anywhere else.[15]

Anticarrier exercises, however, were a constant feature—often using U.S. carriers as training targets. These exercises were especially fraught when the Soviets employed them during crises in the Third World—the modern-day equivalent of training your guns on your adversary.[16] An assessment of intent—indeed, of Soviet capabilities—drawn from forces, training, operations, and exercises would have concluded anticarrier, yes; anti-SLOC, no. (The Soviets did show great interest in ASW, but were unable to develop capabilities to detect and engage their adversaries' much-quieter submarines.)

Evidence from Open Sources

In the 1960s and early '70s, analysis of Soviet public statements about military doctrine and strategy by Herrick, MccGwire, Blechman, and others showed that the Soviet navy was committed to defense, mainly preoccupied with protecting the homeland and supporting the seaward flanks of the Soviet army.[17] An important exception was Marshal Vasily D. Sokolovskiy's authoritative *Military Strategy;* its 1962 edition added anti-SLOC efforts as an important priority. However, the 1968 edition then downgraded that mission to being an "important" task, relevant only in the later phases of a broken-back nuclear war.[18] In general, when the Soviets did discuss SLOCs, they focused on action not on the high seas but against ports of debarkation, often emphasizing the efficacy of mines.

In the early 1970s, open-source analysis at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) delivered a conclusion that further ruled out anti-SLOC intent. The Soviet adversary now had radically new strategic priorities: SSBNs, forming a strategic

reserve; the rest of its navy was characterized as "pro-SSBN."[19] Structured and trained for the mission of bastion defense, the Soviet navy could not be committed at the same time to a campaign against the North Atlantic SLOCs.[20]

It seems nearly certain that the bastions became operational in 1973. That year the Delta I–class SSBN, carrying the Soviet navy's first intercontinental-range missile, the SS-N-8 Sawfly, entered service.[21] For the Soviets, the SS-N-8 was a gift of technology that brought a revolutionary new military use of the sea. The SS-N-8 (and its successors) became the foundation of the Soviet nuclear reserve.[22]

It seems inconceivable that the strategic-reserve/bastion-defense missions were established any later than 1973. One would have to believe—as few familiar with it do—that the Soviet general staff lacked thoroughness and foresight, that it initially ignored possible threats to its SSBN reserve, and that it only later improvised a response to a U.S. ASW threat that it perceived sometime after 1973. As Perse has shown, starting as early as 1970, statements by successive CNOs and other USN officials had given the Soviets strong reason to believe the United States intended to attack their SSBNs.[23] In addition, the Soviets were well aware, from their day-to-day operational experience and their own human intelligence, of the acoustic advantage that American and other Western submarines enjoyed over their own.[24]

Intelligence errors centered on . . . understanding Soviet strategic intentions—incorrectly, in the case of SLOCs, and too slowly, in the case of strategic ASW.

Further, 1973 was exactly the time that Soviet navy chief Sergey G. Gorshkov was "announcing" the new Soviet strategy in a series of eleven articles (1972–73) in *Morskoy sbornik,* the Soviet navy's equivalent of the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings.*[25] Expressing ideas as sweeping as those of Sir Julian S. Corbett and Alfred Thayer Mahan, Gorshkov's articles described a role for sea power never before seen in the modern era. The Soviet navy had become the ultimate guarantor of the Soviet state. When a war moved to the nuclear level, as the Soviets believed likely, their navy's missiles would be withheld from initial nuclear strikes. They would stand as a force in being to deter (further) nuclear attacks on the Soviet Union, deal with defeated enemies and erstwhile allies, and dictate the terms of the postwar peace. It was a stunning message of self-importance, self-congratulation—and defiance of the West. Gorshkov was saying, in effect: We have our bastions. We know you are going to attack them. *We will defeat you.*[26]

Unfortunately, for many years the U.S. Navy did not get this message. It did not recognize the existence of the bastions until 1980–81, when an extraordinary breakthrough in special compartmented intelligence (SCI) confirmed in every detail the validity of the conclusions that open-source analysts had been describing since 1973.[27]

THE RECKONING

In the meantime, in 1974, the first NIE with an exclusive focus on the Soviet navy concluded that the Soviets viewed anti-SLOC as a secondary priority, with the possible exception of when a war became unexpectedly prolonged. The NIE underlined the deep historical roots of this judgment by observing that the anti-SLOC mission had exerted no observable influence on Soviet shipbuilding programs.[28] Because shipbuilding is a process often measured in decades, this implies that the anti-SLOC mission never held an important priority for the Soviets during the Cold War. This assessment would seem to be borne out by Polmar's observations regarding the Soviets' categorization of their submarines built in the 1950s.

However, the 1974 NIE was silent on the bastions/strategic-reserve missions. Indeed, in a discussion of the variety of measures the Soviets might be taking to protect their SSBNs, the idea of employing their GPF navy for that purpose was simply absent. The IC remained blind to the Soviet navy's main missions until the SCI breakthrough of 1980–81.[29]

Office of Naval Intelligence

During this period, ONI fought a rearguard action, petitioning the IC to reconsider and reverse the low priority accorded the anti-SLOC mission—to no avail. Evidence indicates that ONI continued to pursue this goal even after the (Navy-derived) SCI breakthrough clearly revealed that bastion defense was *the* critical mission of the GPF navy, one that no other branch of the Soviet armed forces could carry out.[30]

In 1978, a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)–authored document—of lesser standing than an IC-wide NIE—stated that the GPF navy had been assigned the mission of defending SSBNs. However, it did not indicate whether this judgment arose from new evidence or simply from a revised reading of the logic of the situation, as seen from the Soviet vantage point.[31] A second NIE, prepared in 1982, corrected the IC's error about the strategic reserve and clearly stated the top priority assigned to the GPF navy for its defense.[32] Tellingly, nothing uncovered in the post-Soviet period has given reason to question the accuracy of the second NIE's conclusions.

The question arises: Why did ONI reject the bastion/strategic-reserve concept for so long? Indeed, why did it not investigate it as a secondary hypothesis worthy of exploration via upgraded collection priority or concentrated analytical focus? One possibility is that the conviction that the Soviet navy would surge forward on D-day to attack the SLOCs ruled out contemplation of any other possible strategic role for it. Another is that ONI was affected by a totally incorrect suspicion, often encountered within the Navy at large, that conclusions drawn from open sources, as CNA's were, could not be trusted, because the source materials from

which they were drawn were riddled with Soviet "disinformation." *Disinformation* was and is a real thing (the word entered the English lexicon in the late 1940s from the Soviet/Russian *dezinformatsiya*). But while use of disinformation may have been widespread in Soviet propaganda, as it is today in Russia, disinformation never was injected into Soviet doctrinal writings.[33] No information that has come to light since the fall of the Soviet Union has suggested otherwise.

However, evaluation of factors such as these does not seem to have played an important role in ONI's attitude toward the bastion / strategic reserve. Rather, the reality was more prosaic: insights that CNA and others drew from open sources simply were ignored. In 2007, Richard L. Haver, a civilian former deputy director of ONI, looking back at events thirty years before, put it as follows: "I would also say, and to give people their due, there were people like Bob Herrick, Brad Dismukes, and Jamie McConnell . . . who were reading what the Russians were saying . . . who told us for nearly fifteen years that we had it wrong. And, frankly, the system ignored them."[34]

Navy Planners

If ONI "had it wrong," so, to a lesser degree, did Navy planners, whose senior position always gives them the last word. Regardless of contrary conclusions emanating from the IC, fixation with an offensive-minded, anti-SLOC enemy maintained its hold on Navy thinking. According to Hattendorf, Admiral Thomas B. Hayward (CNO 1978–82), on first being briefed about the bastions in August 1981, "found the concepts of Soviet strategy so completely different that he expressed disbelief that the Soviets could possibly operate their navy in such a [defensive] manner."[35]

However, once the validity of the "new" Soviet strategy was accepted, the Navy delivered its riposte with an alacrity rare in large organizations. In January 1986, Admiral James D. Watkins (CNO 1982–86) publicly announced the *Maritime Strategy* in the Naval Institute *Proceedings*.[36] His tightly reasoned article described a new "war termination" mission for the Navy: by attacking the bastions and putting the strategic reserve at risk, the United States might gain strategic leverage over the Soviets before nuclear escalation occurred. In other words, the U.S. Navy would prevent its Soviet opponent from achieving its assigned mission, which was nothing less than to affect the course and outcome of the war as a whole. The Navy itself would take up that role, through achievement of command of the (under)sea.

Attention to this extraordinary claim—that the Navy might have made a decisive contribution to the outcome of a World War III—has been muted, for at least two reasons. First, the CNO's article immediately drew sharp criticism from advocates of the strategic doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD), who argued vigorously that threatening Soviet SSBNs was dangerously escalatory.[37]

A second possible reason is that after announcing the war-termination mission the article addressed the SLOCs—with a logic that is difficult to follow. On one hand, it stated that attacking Western SLOCs would be, for the Soviets, "secondary, at least at the war's start," and protecting the bastions was, for the Soviets, a "critical . . . role." On the other hand, it stated that by threatening Soviet SSBNs the U.S. Navy would "*force* Soviet submarines to retreat into defensive bastions . . . den[ying] . . . the option of a massive, early attempt to interdict our [SLOCs]."[38]

From the beginning of the Cold War in the late 1940s until the mid-1980s, the Navy was convinced that in a World War III the Soviets intended to fight a "Battle of the Atlantic III." This was incorrect.

In 1986, one could not *force* an opposing navy to play what has just been described as its critical role—the role for which much of it in fact had been created. The notion seems particularly inapt when the mission in question was one the Soviet navy had been executing for over a dozen years at that point. Nor does it seem reasonable to seek to deny the adversary an "early attempt" to execute an option described as merely "secondary" in its priorities "at the war's start."[39]

This criticism is not an idle historical "gotcha." The idea of threatening the reserve to force the Soviets to defend it, and thereby to protect the SLOCs, is found even in recent references. In an April 2018 book review in *Foreign Affairs,* Stephen P. Rosen repeated Admiral Watkins's formulation.[40] This may be seen today as just badly told history, but the disjointed connection between the two strategic missions has proved enduring. Indeed, SLOC protection held sway when the Navy's *Maritime Strategy* soon was taken up at the national level. The National Security Strategy of the United States, signed by President Ronald W. Reagan in January 1987, did not mention war termination. Its announced intent to threaten Soviet "submarines" was justified solely on the grounds that doing so would "minimize the wartime threat to the reinforcement and resupply of Europe by sea."[41] In this way, "attack the bastions and defend the SLOCs" entered the national discourse at the highest level. Thus did a depiction of a Soviet adversary that posed a threat to the SLOCs march on into the late 1980s—fifteen years after the IC had concluded that such a use of the Soviet navy was unlikely.

An anti-SLOC Soviet adversary may not have comported with reality—but it did fit other needs of Navy planners to a T. As noted previously, prudence dictates that planners defend their own vulnerabilities. In the abstract—and in the popular mind of Americans at large—the United States had no greater maritime vulnerability than the North Atlantic SLOCs. Defense of the SLOCs was centrally important in dimensions unrelated to the Soviets: showing solidarity with NATO allies—especially the British, whose intelligence leaders shared ONI's views about

the threat to the SLOCs—and supporting the Navy position in interservice budget rivalries. A Navy shaped to defend Western SLOCs drew staunch U.S. Army and Air Force support. And the importance of "getting the troops to Europe" hardly faced critical doubt on the Hill.[42] So, for Navy planners the idea of an anti-SLOC Soviet navy was a perennial winner, one not to be relinquished lightly, and indeed to be defended—however unsupportable that defense might become.

A MISUNDERSTOOD ENEMY? SLOC DEFENSE—WHAT DIFFERENCE DID IT MAKE?

What difference did a misunderstood enemy make for force-employment plans and for planning the future force structure? American operational planners were planning to employ forces to defend the SLOCs; their defensive script paralleled that of their Soviet opposites, resulting in centers of gravity the mutually defensive warring forces foresaw for themselves that were nearly 1,500 miles apart, as shown in the figure.

Whatever its overall shape, a Third World War seemed highly unlikely to involve a Battle of the Atlantic III.[43] Until the *Maritime Strategy* emerged in the

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC III?



The gray diagonals, right, show where Soviet bastion/homeland-defense forces were expected to concentrate; the light gray area indicates where Soviet screening forces would seek to deny entry to NATO surface forces. NATO SLOC-defense forces could be expected to concentrate below the GIUK gap as shown by the diagonals on the left.

Source: Adapted from NIE 11-15-82D, p. 17.

mid-1980s, the two great navies might not even have been "ships that pass in the night." Employment plans for the U.S. Second Fleet, intended to counter Soviet submarines flooding south on D-day, were aimed at a shadow. They were essentially pointless, except for possible use in dealing with Soviet "spoilers" sent into the Atlantic on a one-way mission to tie up larger American forces on the defense.[44]

Force-structure plans, which aimed at countering an anti-SLOC Soviet navy at the time and into the future, are more complicated to assess. This is because the aircraft carriers, while immensely potent, played little role in SLOC defense (or strategic ASW).[45] And the rest of the Navy's platforms and systems were inherently multipurpose. ASW and air-defense capabilities developed for one combat scenario could perform well in others. Nonetheless, particular investments in ships or other systems optimized for convoy defense against massed submarine and air attack well may have been misdirected effort. A prominent candidate in this regard was the fifty-ship FFG-7, *Perry*-class frigate program. Billions of dollars invested in it might have been spent better on forces optimized for carrier screening, countermine warfare, or other missions, such as attacking the bastions or striking ashore.

Some might argue that, despite these errors, U.S. defense efforts nonetheless deterred the Soviets from attacking the SLOCs. Such a view does not seem logical. There should be little ground for taking satisfaction in deterring an anti-SLOC "threat" that was essentially abstract. The actual Soviet navy that existed during the Cold War had not seriously contemplated attacking the SLOCs; had not bought forces for that mission; did not train or exercise to carry it out; and was not up to the task, in the highly unlikely event that it tried to accomplish it.

A MISUNDERSTOOD ENEMY? STRATEGIC ASW—WHAT DIFFERENCE DID IT MAKE?

In the case of strategic ASW, how history will view the consequences of the lengthy delay between the Soviets' adoption of the bastions and the U.S. Navy's development of plans to attack them will depend mainly on whether strategic ASW is seen as a bad idea or a good one. For those in the MAD camp or those who simply thought the prospects for success in an antibastion campaign were close to nil, the delay was an accidental blessing for the nation. From this point of view, the lengthy interval was a period during which the nation luckily avoided planning to do something that could have led to catastrophe.

For others, the delay in developing plans to threaten the bastions was a great strategic opportunity forgone. Consider assessments from two officials deeply involved in the decisions of the time. Former Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI) Rear Admiral Sumner Shapiro said that the *Maritime Strategy* "had a lot

to do with helping end the Cold War."[46] Former Navy Secretary John F. Lehman has gone further, crediting the Navy with a major role not just in "ending" but in "winning" the Cold War.[47] From this point of view, the nation surely would have been served better if the bastion defense / strategic reserve had been recognized for what it was soon after it appeared in 1973. The *Maritime Strategy*—with its anti-SSBN component—then might have been developed in the mid-1970s; that is, under the leadership of Admirals Elmo R. Zumwalt and James L. Holloway (CNOs 1970–74 and 1974–78, respectively), to be perfected under Hayward and Watkins.

This historical section must conclude with an important question, at best partly answered: If bad decisions were made (SLOC defense) and good/bad ones delayed (strategic ASW), did it really make a decisive difference in the history of the era? After all, the powerful, multipurpose Navy acquired during the Cold War did underwrite the nation's alliances and successfully countered (this author believes defeated) the Soviet navy's unprecedented attempt, in the early 1970s, to carry out a peacetime political mission "to protect the state interests of the USSR on the seas and oceans."[48] But success in a peacetime political mission says little about likely success in the number one task: achieving victory had there been war. And it says nothing at all about the uneven quality of the processes through which the Cold War Navy was brought into being.

LESSONS FOR TODAY

Our attention now turns to planning for today and for the future, drawing on the history just reviewed.[49] The article will look, first, at what Cold War history may mean for SLOC defense, and then for strategic ASW.[50] It will suggest specific ways in which repetition of the strategic errors of the Cold War might be avoided, and offer concluding thoughts about the broader meaning of what has been examined.

SLOC Defense Today

Today's planning for the wartime security of lines of communication in the North Atlantic shows a strong continuity with that of the Cold War, expressed in historical metaphor redolent of that continuity. The mission statement of the new NATO Joint Force Command in Norfolk includes that the command will "help protect sea lines of communication between North America and Europe, in a 'Fourth Battle of the Atlantic.'"[51] Recent comments by senior Navy officials have made clear that, if there should be a "Fourth Battle of the Atlantic," it will be fought against the Russian navy, which obviously would have to come out to fight it.[52]

Unfortunately, this line of argument comes dangerously close to echoing the errors of the Cold War. The Soviet navy never was coming out to fight, and the

smaller, less capable Russian navy is even less likely to do so.[53] One presumes that the aim of stating, nonetheless, the existence of a possible, even likely, concrete Russian threat to the SLOCs reflects non-threat-related objectives: to promote alliance solidarity and build political and public support in the United States for needed Navy programs. These objectives remain as legitimate as they were during the Cold War. However, seeking to promote them by deviating from reality-based planning is unlikely to be effective. First, public support may be difficult to sustain in the face of criticism that the Navy is distorting reality on behalf of the service's self-interests.[54] Second, the time-honored principle that the planner above all must defend his own vulnerabilities provides fully sufficient grounds for acquiring needed forces and exercising them to maintain their readiness.[55] The greatest American vulnerability at sea continues to be control of the North Atlantic (with regard to SLOCs, undersea cables, and possible future strategic conventional or nuclear threats to the continental United States). Moreover, that control remains an essential condition for the integrity of the alliance.

Most importantly, the emerging strategic situation provides an alternative, offensive strategic use for forces that complements and promotes traditional SLOC defense. The rapid globalization of the world economy has made Russia far more dependent on the sea than in the past for the growth of its economy, in keeping with its aspirations as a great power.[56] This suggests that the United States and its allies should adopt a blockade strategy in response. Neither Russia nor any other nation can use the surface of the world ocean except at the sufferance of the United States and its allies.[57] In this sense, the West can be said to enjoy global command of the sea.

In the case of Russia, its assets at sea are mainly economic in nature: those engaged in cabotage, international hauling, general commerce for the merchant fleet (the second largest in the world, after the Chinese), and liquefied natural gas (LNG) and grain exports; a large fishing fleet; and scientific-research ships and the like.[58] The potential vulnerability of these assets should be exploited—for deterrence; for crisis response; or, if war is unavoidable, to fight and terminate it successfully. Let us examine briefly two examples of a blockade strategy in action—recognizing that blockade is likely to be more effective in "small war" situations, where the political stakes and the scale of military operations are limited.

First, in peacetime, to buttress deterrence, the West would make clear that Russian aggression against a NATO ally will be met with blockade at sea as well as with ground and air forces ashore.[59] Specifically, whatever the form or timing of NATO's response on land, the United States and its allies immediately would deny Russia the use of the world ocean.[60] Russia would face a choice between, on the one hand, seeking or holding on to territorial or political gains on its western

periphery and, on the other hand, forgoing the payoff from the vast investments it has made in LNG exports. Second, during a crisis, these sea-denial measures might be implemented gradually. It may be possible to calibrate these measures to correspond to the intensity of Russian threats, including ambiguous threats of "hybrid warfare," in both its now-familiar forms and some perhaps still to be seen. Through marking, shadowing, and the like—without firing a shot—the United States and its allies could pose a tangible threat to Russian assets at sea, wherever found.[61]

Employment plans for the U.S. Second Fleet, intended to counter Soviet submarines flooding south on D-day, were aimed at a shadow. They were essentially pointless.

The blockade concept would seem to deserve careful examination as the Navy continues to develop plans for the new era. The idea likely has an even richer potential against China, which already is heavily dependent on seaborne imports of energy, raw materials, and even foodstuffs.[62] Navy planning for Second Fleet's AOR obviously must be integrated globally across all AORs. The *Maritime Strategy* of the mid-1980s might be seen as an exemplar with respect to planning on a global scale across all phases of conflict, from peace to war termination and into the postwar world.[63] Whatever form a twenty-first-century maritime strategy may take, it likely should include a blockade component, on behalf of SLOC defense and to exploit its larger potential.

Strategic ASW Today

Strategic ASW is also an obvious candidate methodology for exploiting Western sea power today, as it was during the Cold War. This is not merely an abstract possibility; the Navy recently let it be known that it contemplates using its submarine force to "deny the bastions": that is, to attack Russian SSBNs.[64] (While it would seem reasonable to presume that the stated intention reflects the existence of an operational capability to execute it, no such capability was stated specifically, nor do the remarks that follow here so presume.)

Strategic ASW is a complex subject deserving more extensive exposition than space allows.[65] But it can be said without qualification that executing the strategic ASW mission today would be one of those rare cases in which failure would be far better than success. First, success almost certainly would trigger the firing of Russian nuclear ASW weapons—to which the United States lacks the capability to respond in kind at sea, and in response to which it would have no incentive to escalate ashore. Second, it likely would result in nuclear ecological consequences of unknown but possibly catastrophic scale. Third—and of the highest possible importance—the mortal intercontinental nuclear threat to which successful strategic ASW would subject the nation would be suffered on behalf of no clear or feasible strategic objective.

The logic of strategic ASW during the Cold War cannot be applied to the new strategic situation against Russia. The United States should avoid threatening Russian SSBNs in almost all conceivable circumstances. As it did during the Cold War, the Navy should take the lead in framing strategy regarding the adversary's SSBNs—paradoxically, no longer to maximize, but today to minimize, the threat that U.S. forces may pose. The Navy should seek explicit national-command-authority approval for the appropriate policy.[66] The United States should adjust its declaratory policy, its military-to-military diplomacy, and the Navy's own operational behavior accordingly.

In this last respect, Navy developmental and training exercises in the Arctic, such as the ICEX series, should be reviewed carefully. Their roots lie deep in the Cold War. Propelled mainly by the momentum of technical development, operational routine, and an established bureaucratic structure, they seem to have been continued since the end of the Cold War without conscious attention to their strategic effects. But in fact they convey a strong strategic message in the language of action: the *only* possible targets that exist for U.S. under-ice torpedoes today are Russian submarines, obviously including SSBNs.[67] Faced with this reality, Russian planners are likely to prove hard to convince that the United States intends to give their SSBNs a wide berth.[68]

Avoiding Yesterday's Mistakes

It would seem logical to base measures aimed at avoiding yesterday's mistakes on a deep understanding of why those mistakes were made. The author has found no satisfactory single explanation, and not one that suggests effective corrective measures. Not surprisingly, an intelligence-planning mistake that persisted for over forty years had many complicated, interacting causes.[69] These must be left to others to explore and prioritize.

What does seem certain is that internal Navy self-corrective processes were absent or did not kick in with sufficient force. This article will suggest three specific process-oriented measures that may hold promise for minimizing the chance that today's planning repeats the Cold War–era mistakes. They are advanced in a most tentative manner because of the radical differences between the Cold War's binary simplicities and today's multipolar mix of state and nonstate actors, in a milieu of the most rapidly accelerating technological change humankind has ever experienced. Let us look first at intelligence, then planning, and finally the nexus between the two.

Intelligence. Homespun wisdom long has held that it's not what you don't know that gets you into trouble; it's what you're surest of. Despite its humble origins, this maxim suggests a key self-corrective measure: intelligence professionals and their consumers should be most skeptical of the conclusions about adversaries that the IC holds with the highest confidence and for the longest time. The Cold

War experience suggests that a certain bureaucratic inertia attaches to intelligence conclusions at the strategic level. On the intelligence side, analysts and the organizations they serve become associated with a particular reading of an adversary's intentions, and so are inclined to resist accepting alternatives. During the Cold War this tendency hampered, even prevented, an unblinkered search for what the adversary actually intended. Intelligence analysts (and their consumers) must remain open to the possibility that the adversary may contemplate novel employment concepts, based on alien strategic priorities.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to establish internal procedures within the IC to critically review and question its own "official truth." During the Cold War Richard K. Betts showed how extraordinarily difficult it was to arrive at valid estimates in the first place.[70] Independent assessment by outside groups is likely to remain the best means to confirm whether the IC's depiction of the adversary is valid. The work of the most accomplished planner is likely to be useless if it is based on a spurious understanding of the world.

Planning. That planners always must defend their own vulnerabilities is a truth that stands without any reference to a potential adversary. There is an important difference between saying "I have a crucial vulnerability and I will defend it" and saying "I have a crucial vulnerability, and my adversary intends to attack it." The first is always true; the second was not true during the Cold War, nor is it likely true today. This seems counterintuitive, because attacking the enemy's biggest vulnerability is what an American planner would do, and it seemed logical to expect that the Soviets/Russians would do the same. But the Soviets did not see it that way, and for the United States that meant years of misdirected effort, and lost opportunity ensued.

Today, the characterization of adversaries should reflect as closely as possible reality-based planning. It would seem particularly important to avoid letting an abstract vulnerability such as the North Atlantic SLOCs become reified into a concrete Russian threat—no matter how useful such a public depiction might be.

The Intel-Planning Nexus. During the Cold War, Navy planners and ONI saw the same enemy. Planners never had to hedge against Intel's uncertainties, because, when it came to the Soviet anti-SLOC mission, there were none. Planners saw the worst case as the most likely one. Thus the Cold War afforded little experience in the important business of hedging against Intel's inevitable uncertainties; nor did the period after the Cold War, because of its chaotic strategic landscape and the focus on the amorphous threats that arise when the adversary is defined as "terrorism."

In the current era, the planning process must be especially cognizant of the distinction between Intel's job and that of the planner. The two intersect when defining the terms of reference for studies of future-force requirements. This—the

crucial first step in any such study—brings together Intel and planners to define study objectives, depict the nature of the adversary, and determine which uncertainties are being hedged against, why, and how.[71] The enemy being engaged in a study of future-force needs might turn out to have much the same shape as the one that is driving today's force-employment plans—but that conclusion should be reached only after thoughtful, explicit, and systematic consideration of the matter.

Broader Lessons from the Cold War

The Cold War experience seems to yield two broader messages as well. First, the Soviet bastion/strategic-reserve missions were a product of technological innovation: the development of an SSBN carrying missiles of intercontinental range. It seems quite likely that the next revolution in maritime affairs also will arise from technological innovation. An obvious candidate in this regard continues to be nonacoustic detection of submarines, but many other technological developments are possible. Second, analysis of open sources seems likely to remain the earliest and best means of insight into an adversary's strategic intent. This implies the need to pay the closest possible attention to public statements by Russian (or Chinese) spokesmen about new technology affecting sea power. Statements regarding purely technological matters deserve top priority, but statements regarding the practical employment of new technology—so profitably exploited during the Cold War—should not be far behind.

The work of the most accomplished planner is likely to be useless if it is based on a spurious understanding of the world.

The *Maritime Strategy* of the mid-1980s showed that the Navy—despite the errors cataloged in this article—is more than capable of conducting sound, comprehensive planning based on a valid understanding of the adversary and of the strategic environment. The emerging twenty-first-century version of that strategy should combine aggressive offense with judicious restraint: offense, to exploit the West's global command of the sea through blockade, and so to defend the SLOCs and gain leverage against a continental adversary; and forbearance regarding the strategic ASW mission, execution of which would be a colossal mistake.

The Cold War U.S. Navy, like its predecessor in the first half of the twentieth century, was the most powerful the world had ever seen. It cannot be said with confidence that, in general over a forty-year period, this came about through effective intelligence or acutely rational strategic planning. Such shortcomings as were experienced in those areas were overcome through massive material investment, exploitation of technological advantage—and perhaps a measure of good fortune. Whether in the twenty-first century—in this new era of great-power competition—the Navy can succeed through reliance on superior investment

and technology is an open question. The author respectfully submits that more-careful and better-integrated intelligence-planning processes—of the kind that guided the *Maritime Strategy*—would improve our chances greatly.

NOTES

This article is drawn from remarks delivered at a panel discussion held on 7 November 2017 at the CNA Building, Arlington, Virginia. While the views expressed are solely those of the author, they are indebted to the work of his Cold War colleagues James M. McConnell and Robert G. Weinland and, for contemporary advice and encouragement, to Capt. Peter M. Swartz, USN (Ret.), Bruce F. Powers, and Thomas E. Anger.

1. James Mattis, "Remarks by Secretary Mattis on the National Defense Strategy" (speech delivered at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins Univ., Washington, DC, 19 January 2018), available at dod.defense.gov/. The transcript uses initial uppercase for "Great Power." Mr. Mattis was announcing the recent release of the National Defense Strategy, the summary of which uses the less-specific term *interstate competition.* U.S. Defense Dept., *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: 2018), p. 1, available at www.defense.gov/.
2. Injudiciously pursued preparations for major war can make such a war more likely; it is recognized widely that this was the case with World War I. Of the considerable body of literature on this subject, see Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914* (New York: Humanity Books, 1988), and more recently, Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013).
3. This possibility scarcely can be ruled out, given the absence of deep ideological competition or territorial disputes whose resolution the parties regard as vital. U.S. military planning henceforth should be oriented to deal with both a large war—approaching the scale of the Cold War—and wars of a much smaller scope. The latter, perhaps in a series over some years, would put a premium on judicious commitment of forces and the fleet-in-being concept. The presence of China as a potential opponent, along with Russia, also dictates careful attention to the conservation of forces.
4. Navy Office of Information, "CNO Announces Establishment of U.S. 2nd Fleet," *America's Navy,* 5 May 2018, www.navy.mil/.
5. A third strategic mission—bringing carrier tactical aviation (tacair) forward to bear on the flanks of the war in Europe or on Soviet territory proper—will not be addressed. This was an important part of the Navy's *Maritime Strategy* (see note 8) from the U.S. viewpoint. In the author's opinion, however, the Soviets saw carrier tacair as considerably less significant than the threat of strategic ASW. When the *Maritime Strategy* is discussed herein, assessments will be framed mainly with reference to strategic ASW. Two Russian writers have offered a different view—that the Soviets were more concerned with USN strikes from the sea than with the threat the Navy posed to their SSBNs. Vladimir Kuzin and Sergei Chernyavskii, "Russian Reactions to Reagan's 'Maritime Strategy,'" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 2 (April 2005), pp. 429–39. But Kuzin and Chernyavskii also say that Soviet planners gave a high priority to SLOC interdiction as well—a proposition that is manifestly untrue. Nonetheless, the possibility that Navy tacair could have destroyed Soviet SSBNs in port and the logistic and maintenance infrastructure that supported them—and thus contributed to the success of the strategic ASW mission—cannot be dismissed out of hand. That question, like the possibility that Navy attacks on the Soviet flanks might have relieved pressure on NATO on the central front, simply lies beyond the boundaries of this investigation.
6. The return of great-power competition, after a generation of its absence—on top of two previous generations colored by the unique

characteristics of World War II and the Cold War—suggests that strategic thinking also should return to its primal elements. The Dutch American scholar Nicholas John Spykman took into account the second Battle of the Atlantic, still very much in progress at the time of his writing, to offer counsel on the shape of the postwar peace. He saw control of the oceans between the United States and the "rimlands" of Eurasia as mandatory. Control of the rimlands might itself give the United States a dominant position in world politics and, in any case, would be necessary to contain a single power that might dominate the continental "heartland." Nicholas John Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace,* ed. Helen R. Nicholl (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944). Spykman drew heavily on, and also was a critic of, Sir Halford Mackinder. See Halford John Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (New York: Holt, 1919), available at archive .org/. The power and persistence of this idea were reconfirmed recently by historian Robert Kagan. After the Second World War, Americans were convinced that "their way of life could not be safe in a world where Europe and Asia were dominated by hostile autocratic powers." Robert Kagan, *The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World* (New York: Knopf, 2018), p. 124. However unlikely it may seem today, the United States, at some future point, could withdraw to a "Fortress America" protected by two oceanic moats. In this case, there would be no SLOCs to defend. Nonetheless, as in the centuries before the twentieth, American seaborne commerce might well require protection.

7. The complex responsibilities of the planner, who must counter the threat that intelligence identifies, defend his own vulnerabilities, and also cope with non-threat-related concerns, such as the Navy's position in the never-ending Defense Department budget battle, will be addressed several times in the narrative below. The term *planner* as used here refers to Navy officers carrying that designation and special study groups and others assigned planning functions. Planners rarely are anything other than unrestricted line officers, supported by long-serving Navy civilians, and are always the leaders in multidisciplinary groups. In the Navy hierarchy, the CNO is the chief Navy planner. This article does not delve into the organizational dynamics of Navy planning. It also refers to planners as masculine, reflecting the author's experience during the Cold War—with apologies to any in more recent times who may prefer the *his/her* locution.

8. James D. Watkins [Adm., USN], "The Maritime Strategy," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 112/1/995 (January 1986), pp. 1–17. The *Maritime Strategy* had been expressed earlier in an extended internal Navy briefing in 1984, revised in 1985. John B. Hattendorf and Peter M. Swartz, eds., *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1980s: Selected Documents,* Newport Paper 33 (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2008), docs. 2 and 4.

9. Christopher A. Ford and David A. Rosenberg, "The Naval Intelligence Underpinnings of Reagan's Maritime Strategy," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 2 (April 2005), pp. 379–409; this was republished in expanded form as *The Admirals' Advantage: U.S. Navy Operational Intelligence in World War II and the Cold War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014). John B. Hattendorf, *The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy, 1977–1986,* Newport Paper 19 (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2004), chap. 2 (first published in a classified version in an unrelated but identically named series as Newport Paper 6, 1989).

10. This article occasionally will use "Intel" as an alternative way to refer to ONI.

11. This is such an important discriminant, so let us look at a place—northern Norway—where uncertainty prevailed then, as it may well today. If the Soviets had intended an anti-SLOC campaign, they obviously also would have wanted to prevent the West from using the Norwegian littoral to bring its defensive forces to bear as far forward as possible: air defense against antiship missile–armed, long-range aircraft and, more importantly, ASW forces against Soviet submarines making the 1,200-mile transit to and from the presumed North Atlantic battle zone. But how might the Soviets go about seizing and occupying a sizable part of Norway? Would they violate Finnish or Swedish neutrality? While the IC pronounced its early assessment with apparent confidence (i.e., no Soviet initial plans for operations south of Finnmark), even its views evolved over time.

For many others, Soviet strategic intentions on the Northern Flank remained a matter of deep uncertainty throughout the Cold War. Concern about Russia's intentions regarding NATO's Far North clearly is alive today. During the Cold War, NIEs of the period 1979–85 showed an evolving view of Soviet intentions. NIE 11-14-79 stated there was "no evidence" of Soviet plans to attack through Finland or Sweden. Central Intelligence Agency, *Warsaw Pact Forces Opposite NATO,* NIE 11-14-79, vol. 2, *The Estimate* (31 January 1979), pp. IV-31 to IV-32, FOIA Collection, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC, available at www.cia.gov/. Two years later, NIE 11-14-81 of the same title added, "The Soviets probably would be deterred from [moving farther south by restricted terrain and] the potentially strong NATO resistance." Central Intelligence Agency, *Warsaw Pact Forces Opposite NATO,* NIE 11-14-81 (7 July 1981), pp. 28–29, FOIA Collection, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC, available at www.cia.gov/. The 1985 version of this NIE revised the estimate, stating that the Soviets would attack Norway "from the USSR and through Finland to seize the NATO bases or to deny their use, and to facilitate Soviet naval operations in the Norwegian and Barents Seas." Central Intelligence Agency, *Soviet Strategy and Capabilities for Multi-theater War,* NIE 11-19-85D (1 June 1985), p. 10, FOIA Collection, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC, available at www.cia.gov/. For examples of dealing with this uncertainty, see Robert F. Kernan [Cdr., USN], "Norway and the Northern Flank: Wartime Prospects," Air War College Research Report (defense analytical study, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, AL, May 1989), and John Lund, *Don't Rock the Boat: Reinforcing Norway in Crisis and War,* RAND Report R-3725-RC (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, July 1989).

12. This insight was provided by Norman Polmar. Norman Polmar, e-mail to author, 10 February 2018. The author is indebted to Mr. Polmar for raising the question that triggered this article: When did the Soviets decide to give a low priority to attacking Western SLOCs? He posed the question during a question-and-answer session (Q&A) at the November 2017 conference at CNA cited at the beginning of these notes. Polmar recently has provided his own answer: that the Soviets *never* intended to attack the SLOCs. Norman Polmar, "Why 2000 or Even 400 Submarines," *Naval Submarine League Review* (June 2018), pp. 140–46. The article adds the intriguing evidence that U.S. intelligence officials from the late 1940s through the mid-1950s turned to ex–World War II German specialists on the Soviet navy to understand Soviet purposes. It is not known how influential German views became, but it is hard to imagine a more biased departure point for the first generation of ONI's Soviet analysts. The Germans had just had experience not only with their nearly successful offense against the North Atlantic SLOCs but also with the defense of their own Black Sea SLOCs against Soviet attack. For them, SLOCs were what modern naval warfare was about. See also Norman Polmar, "To Understand Russian Submarines, Think outside the Box," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings,* 145/10/1,400 (October 2019).

13. Central Intelligence Agency, *The Soviet Attack Submarine Force and Western Sea Lines of Communication,* SR 79-10038 (National Foreign Assessment Center, 1 April 1979), doc. no. 0005499486, 1 April 1979, CIA Analysis of the Soviet Navy, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC [hereafter CIA Analysis], available at www.cia.gov/.

14. "Comments on Navy Review of Revised OSR SLOC Paper," memorandum, doc. no. 0005533608, 25 January 1979, CIA Analysis; "Soviet Fleet Logistics: Capabilities and Limitations," doc. no. 0005532898, 1 August 1976, CIA Analysis.

15. There should have been no uncertainty about this point. The Soviet navy simply never practiced performance of the top mission the U.S. Navy ascribed to it. The Soviets' largest-ever exercise, the global-scale OKEAN in 1975, did involve simulated attacks on small numbers of Soviet merchant ships, which some construed to be an anti-SLOC scenario. Watson and Walton, both serving intelligence officers, limited their interpretation of those maneuvers to the Soviets "seemingly" attacking SLOCs. B. W. Watson [Lt. Cdr., USN] and M. A. Walton [Lt. Cdr., USN], "Okean-75," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings,* 102/7/881 (July 1976). The CIA saw the merchant ships involved as simulating Western amphibious ships heading toward a landing on the Soviet littoral or on the Soviet army's maritime

flanks. "Comments on Navy Review of Revised OSR SLOC Paper."

16. See Stephen S. Roberts, "Superpower Naval Confrontations," in *Soviet Naval Diplomacy,* ed. Bradford Dismukes and James M. McConnell (New York: Pergamon, 1979), chap. 2. Specific examples from the October War are in Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., *On Watch: A Memoir* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1976), p. 301ff.

17. Robert W. Herrick, *Soviet Naval Strategy: Fifty Years of Theory and Practice* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1968); Michael M. MccGwire, "Naval Power and Soviet Oceans Policy," in *Soviet Oceans Development,* ed. John Hardt and Herman Franssen (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), a study by the National Ocean Policy Study staff for the Senate Committee on Commerce; Barry M. Blechman, *The Changing Soviet Navy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1973). Herrick was a USN intelligence officer. His book was drawn from research begun at Columbia University's School of Russian Studies. The publisher inserted a "Publisher's Preface" (pp. xi–xii) that questioned the book's findings that the Soviet navy "is still basically a defensive military force."

18. See Robert G. Weinland et al., *Admiral Gorshkov's "Navies in War and Peace"* (n.p.: Progressive Publishers, n.d.), a reprint of CNA Research Contribution 257 of the same name (Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, December 1974). The reference to Sokolovskiy is from the contribution by James M. McConnell, p. 81. Also of interest is James M. McConnell, with Susan Clark and Mary Fitzgerald, "Analyzing the Soviet Press—Spot Report No. 1: The Irrelevance Today of Sokolovskiy's Book *Military Strategy,*" Research Memorandum CRM 35-85, May 1985, available at cna.org/.

19. Hattendorf, *The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy,* chap. 2, provides an extended discussion of CNA's work. (Because much of the author's work and that of other CNA analysts of the period remains classified, citations are necessarily to Hattendorf.) Bradford Dismukes, "Evolving Wartime Missions of the Soviet General Purpose Force Navy," Center for Naval Analyses 001061-73, June 1973, cited in Hattendorf, *The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy,* p. 24; James M. McConnell, "Strategy and Missions of the Soviet Navy in the Year 2000," in *Problems of Sea Power as We Approach the Twenty-First Century,* ed. James L. George (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978), which provides a delayed restatement of McConnell's earlier classified and unclassified publications.

20. In preparing this article, the author encountered considerable curiosity about the methodologies that CNA's open-source analysts used, particularly how they yielded accurate insights about Soviet strategic intent years before standard sources of intelligence did so. Because of their relevance to this narrative, I have posted a discussion of this subject on my blog. Bradford Dismukes, "CNA's Open Source Analysis of Soviet Military Writings," *Clio's Musings: History and 21st Century US Naval Strategy* (blog), 9 January 2020, cliosmusings.blog/.

21. The Delta I continued in service until 2005 and spawned the Delta II, Delta III, and Delta IV, some of which reportedly are still in service. *Wikipedia,* s.v. "Delta-class submarines," en.wikipedia.org/.

22. Road- and rail-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles have roots in the earliest days of Soviet intercontinental rocketry. Fully operational systems—the SS-24 Scalpel and SS-25 Sickle—were fielded by 1987. Nikolai Sokov, "Russia: History of Soviet/Russian ICBMs," *Humus,* win.progettohumus.it/. (Dr. Sokov, currently affiliated with the Martin Center for Non-proliferation Studies, Middlebury Institute for International Studies at Monterey, California, was a researcher in the 1980s and early '90s with the Soviet Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada in Moscow.) MccGwire argued that these could have served as the nuclear reserve, or at least part of it, making its sea-based component less critical. Michael M. MccGwire, "The Changing Role of the Soviet Navy," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 43, no. 7 (September 1987). However, land-based missiles fell under the purview of the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRFs). The SRFs, for reasons described in Dismukes, "CNA's Open Source Analysis of Soviet Military Writings," were not designated in Soviet military writings as providing reserve capabilities. In any case, the Soviets continued to build growing numbers

of SSBNs of ever greater capability, as have their Russian successors.

23. John Perse, "U.S. Declaratory Policy on Soviet SSBN Security: 1970 to 1985," Research Memorandum CRM 84-29, 1986, available at cna.org/.

24. The most infamous Soviet intelligence penetration exposing information on Navy operational capabilities was the John Walker case. See John Prados, "The Navy's Biggest Betrayal," *Naval History* 24, no. 3 (June 2010).

25. Sergey G. Gorshkov [FAdm., Soviet navy], Commander in Chief of the Soviet Navy, "Navies in War and Peace," *Morskoy sbornik*. There were eleven monthly installments (with two missing), starting with no. 2 in 1972.

26. This is the author's interpretation. Gorshkov has generated an ample literature in the West. The Naval Institute Press has published translations of his works and several interpretive books about him, the latest and most definitive being Norman Polmar, Thomas A. Brooks, and George E. Fedoroff, *Admiral Goshkov: The Man Who Challenged the U.S. Navy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019).

27. Hattendorf, *The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy,* p. 32. The story of how this USN-born breakthrough came about has been described widely in the public press. It is a remarkable tale of valor, technical skill, and operational proficiency in its own right. Sherry Sontag and Christopher Drew, with Annette Lawrence Drew, *Blind Man's Bluff: The Untold Story of American Submarine Espionage* (Washington, DC: PublicAffairs, 1998).

28. Central Intelligence Agency, *Soviet Naval Policy and Programs,* NIE 11-15-74 (23 December 1974), pp. 14, 22, FOIA Collection, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC, available at www.cia.gov/.

29. The phenomenology of the intelligence world means that something does not exist until it is observed and duly reported. But when a new thing does appear, the IC usually tries to trace down its origins to determine whether and how it might have been detected earlier. If the IC has done this in the case of the Soviet navy's bastions /strategic reserve, it has not been reported publicly yet.

30. Letter from DNI Rear Adm. Sumner Shapiro, referenced in "Comments on Navy Review of Revised OSR SLOC Paper." The letter itself is not provided. Hattendorf, *The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy,* p. 34, observes that "[a]t the same time, ONI set out to get the intelligence community to produce a National Intelligence estimate which would endorse the ONI analysis of Soviet force employment concepts [i.e., assigning a high priority to the anti-SLOC mission]. In November 1981, the Intelligence community completed an interagency Intelligence memorandum on 'SOVIET INTENTIONS AND CAPABILITIES FOR INTERDICTING SEA LINES OF COMMUNICATION IN A WAR WITH NATO' [uppercase in the original]." This document reconfirmed the "secondary" priority accorded to the anti-SLOC mission.

31. Central Intelligence Agency, *The Soviet Attack Submarine Force and Western Sea Lines of Communication.* The author is grateful to Steven Wills for this citation.

32. Central Intelligence Agency, *Soviet Naval Strategy and Programs through the 1990s,* NIE 11-15-82D (2 February 1983), FOIA Collection, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC, available at www.cia.gov/. CNA's interpretations played no role in the formulation of this NIE. However, the author has been given to understand by former DNI Rear Adm. Thomas Brooks, USN (Ret.), that they were, in his generous phrase, "invaluable" as an aid to SCI analysts "connecting the dots" from incoming intelligence to draw broad conclusions about their meaning. Thomas Brooks, e-mail to author, 10 September 2018.

33. Dismukes, "CNA's Open Source Analysis of Soviet Military Writings."

34. Richard L. Haver, "How Submarine Intelligence Collection Made a Difference" (lecture hosted by the Naval Submarine League, Naval Historical Foundation, and Naval Historical Center, U.S. Navy Memorial, Washington, DC, 11 April 2007). Transcript pages unnumbered; Mr. Haver's remarks came during a Q&A at the seminar's conclusion.

35. Hattendorf, *The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy,* pp. 32–33. Hattendorf further recounts the considerable effort that ONI had to expend to convince

skeptical USN planners and operators of the veracity of the bastion/strategic-reserve missions. As a CNA briefer on these topics from 1975 to '81, the author encountered disbelief among a few Navy Staff planners that such alien strategic concepts even could exist.

36. Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy."

37. See, for example, John J. Mearsheimer, "A Strategic Misstep: The Maritime Strategy and Deterrence in Europe," *International Security* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986), pp. 3–57. For a second critique and a cogent rebuttal thereto, respectively, see Barry Posen, "US Maritime Strategy: A Dangerous Game," and Roger W. Barnett, "US Maritime Strategy: Safe and Sound," both *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 43, no. 7 (September 1987). While on active duty, Captain Barnett had been one of the principal drafters of the final version of the *Maritime Strategy.* A general critique is in Donald C. Daniel, *Anti-submarine Warfare and Superpower Strategic Stability* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986).

38. Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy." Emphasis added.

39. Ibid.

40. Stephen P. Rosen, "Future Fights: Planning for the Next War," review of *The Future of War,* by Lawrence Freedman, *Foreign Affairs* 97, no. 2 (March/April 2018), pp. 162–67.

41. *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: White House, January 1987), p. 30, available at nssarchive .us/. Although the mission clearly received the commander in chief's imprimatur in 1987, it never again appeared in subsequent presidential national security strategy documents. While there is little doubt the mission was approved at the highest levels, publicly available information does not indicate how it did or did not pass through the standard Joint Chiefs of Staff or Office of the Secretary of Defense planning processes. It is hoped that emerging evidence can permit future historians to illuminate fully these uncertainties regarding a top mission of the submarine service of the U.S. Navy—often called the "silent service," or sometimes the "service within a service." The author is indebted to Rear Adm. Thomas Brooks, USN (Ret.), and Capt. Peter Swartz, USN (Ret.), for enlightening e-mail exchanges (conducted January–March 2019) on these matters, reflecting their own hands-on experience. Of course, they are not responsible for the author's interpretations.

42. Although the Navy's critics might argue otherwise, there is nothing illegitimate about seeking to bolster alliance solidarity, nor about answering the demands of inside-the-Pentagon policy processes. The point here is that a faulty version of the anti-SLOC threat was being used.

43. Note that this says nothing about a "Battle of the Norwegian Sea" pitting NATO sea power in support of the Northern Flank against Soviet sea-denial forces, nor a similar "Battle for Denmark and the Danish Straits." As observed in note 11, the 1979 NIE saw the initial Soviet threat to Norway as being limited to Finnmark, while later NIEs revised upward the scale of Soviet intentions and commitment of forces against Norway. Addressing Denmark, an NIE of 1981 (NIE 11-14-81, p. 26) concluded that Jutland would be threatened from the south by Warsaw Pact ground forces thrusting westward toward Hamburg and the Channel ports—the critical terminals for the Atlantic SLOCs.

44. The NIEs of 1974 and 1982 on the Soviet navy both indicated that the Soviets might send submarines into the Atlantic in hopes of finding and attacking American SSBNs, particularly as they entered or exited their home ports. And indeed, Soviet writers always emphasized the high desirability of preventing American SSBNs from launching their missiles. But, as noted, the Soviets were well aware of the acoustic disadvantage their submarines faced. At the least, it is uncertain that they would have committed important submarine assets to a mission they seemed unlikely to be able to execute.

45. The exception is the ship type designated CVS, a carrier configured for ASW, which saw duty mainly in the North Atlantic, in the 1960s and '70s.

46. Interview with Rear Admiral Shapiro, 8 January 2000, in Ford and Rosenberg, "The Naval Intelligence Underpinnings of Reagan's Maritime Strategy," p. 402 and note 128.

47. John Lehman, introduction to *Oceans Ventured: Winning the Cold War at Sea* (New

York: W. W. Norton, 2018). Mr. Lehman also raises the possibility (p. 273) that the Soviet SSBN-protection zone might grow southward over time and so pose a threat to NATO SLOCs.

48. James McConnell, citing Soviet spokesmen, in *Soviet Naval Diplomacy,* ed. Dismukes and McConnell, p. 6.

49. Attention is confined to plans for the employment of forces currently in operation or entering service in due course. Acquisition of new forces or capabilities is not addressed.

50. Although the focus is on the Cold War, the aim of this article—returning to primal strategic principles—dictates that attention also encompass earlier eras. To do otherwise would mean excluding from consideration such historic strategic-employment concepts as the fleet in being, which dates from the late eighteenth century. See, for example, John B. Hattendorf, "The Idea of a 'Fleet in Being' in Historical Perspective," *Naval War College Review* 67, no. 1 (Winter 2014), pp. 43–60. Another example is economic blockade. For a magisterial treatment, see Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century,* 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 241, 375–83.

51. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Brussels Summit Declaration," press release (2018) 074, 11 July 2018, www.nato.int/. This release states that a to-be-established "Joint Force Command [in] Norfolk [will] focus on protecting the transatlantic lines of communication." Earlier announcements had stated that the Norfolk command was being "created to help track submarines and protect shipping lanes across the ocean." Aaron Mehta, "US, Germany Likely Home to New NATO Commands," *Defense News,* 14 February 2018, www.defensenews.com/. The author thanks Capt. Peter Swartz, USN (Ret.), for these citations.

52. Recent characterizations of strategic requirements in the North Atlantic have implied that Russia intends to attack the sea-lanes. Regarding the major Northern Flank exercise TRIDENT JUNCTION in October–November 2018, Adm. James Stavridis, USN, stated beforehand that "there will be a U.S. Carrier Strike Group . . . operating in the . . . waters of the Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom 'gap,' the body of water that NATO would have to control to cut off Russian naval forces in the event of a war." James Stavridis [Adm., USN (Ret.)], "NATO Is in the Middle of an Expensive and Dangerous Military Exercise. Here's Why Those War Games Are Worth It," *Time,* 29 October 2018, p. 1, available at time.com/. Former CNO Adm. Gary Roughead has indicated that "[t]he reactivation of the U.S. Second Fleet on August 24, 2018, is a prudent and timely recognition of again having to deal with an increasingly capable and assertive near-peer Russian navy in the operational space of the Atlantic Ocean and its critical sea-lanes linking the United States to its NATO allies." Gary Roughead [Adm., USN (Ret.)], "The Trident Returns: Reactivating the U.S. Second Fleet and Revitalizing Anti-submarine Warfare in the Atlantic," *Center for Strategic and International Studies,* 26 October 2018, csis.org/.

53. Beyond this history, the logic of the strategic situation also militates against a Russian decision to attack at sea. The most likely scenario for a NATO-Russia war—an article 5 defense of a NATO Baltic member—means Russia would enjoy local military superiority on the ground and would have no reason to expand the war to the sea, where it is inferior to its adversaries.

54. It seems improbable that the Navy could keep two sets of strategic "books," an internal, private one reflecting a valid understanding of the threat Russia posed and a public affairs version in which that threat is exaggerated.

55. It is a given that if the United States and its allies were to let their capabilities to control the waters of the North Atlantic atrophy, they might indeed be inviting attack. That does not mean, however, that the Russians are otherwise poised to pose such a threat.

56. This is a crucial assumption. The specific degree of Russian dependence on use of the sea for international and internal (e.g., the Northern Sea Route) commerce needs to be established through careful analysis. Blockade was rarely, if at all, mentioned in Navy expressions of strategic purpose during and after the Cold War and essentially has been ignored in the post–post–Cold War years. Access via the sea by the United States to the world's raw materials and trade is one of the objects of overcoming an opponent's antiaccess/area-denial defenses. But the idea

of preventing another nation from engaging in such commercial activities did not appear in any of the seven documents that Tangredi recently reviewed as expressions of current Navy strategic thinking. Sam J. Tangredi, "Running Silent and Algorithmic: The U.S. Navy Strategic Vision in 2019," *Naval War College Review* 72, no. 2 (Spring 2019), pp. 129–65. Till notes that both the attacking and defense of merchant shipping have disappeared from the planning of most other nations as well. Till, *Seapower,* p. 245.

57. This characterization is based on a broad reading of relative capabilities. To the author, the advantage in numbers and quality of the West's globally mobile forces versus those of Russia (or China) seems evident today and likely to grow as U.S. building programs bear fruit and NATO defense budgets increase. Of course, this matter also would need careful analysis. For elaboration on the blockade concept, see Bradford Dismukes, "Global Blockade vs. Russia," 17 April 2020, and "Global Blockade vs. China," 18 April 2020, both *Clio's Musings: History and 21st Century US Naval Strategy* (blog), cliosmusings.blog/.

58. Russia's new LNG carriers are part of a multibillion-ruble program to exploit the nation's vast reserves of natural gas. Key elements of the program are the Yamal LNG project in the Arctic and the Sakhalin II LNG project in the Pacific. Andrew E. Kramer, "Polar Thaw Opens Shortcut for Russian Natural Gas," *New York Times,* 24 July 2013, p. 1; Henry Foy, "Russia Ships First Gas from $27bn Arctic Project," *Financial Times,* 8 December 2017, available at ft.com/.

59. Most assessments of the ability of NATO ground forces to come through the Suwałki gap to aid a threatened Baltic member are fairly unfavorable. See Nikolai Sukov, "How NATO Could Solve the Suwalki Gap Challenge," *National Interest,* 1 May 2019. Bringing NATO sea power to bear through a counterthreat of blockade would make use of forces that already exist.

60. Note that a blockade would threaten neither Russian territory nor the regime, and thus the approach is in keeping with NATO's self-definition as a defensive alliance. It would not be a substitute for action ashore but instead would be its asymmetrical complement—showing that NATO is an alliance of navies as much as of armies and land-based air.

61. An ideal capability for this and later phases of conflict would be a propulsion-disabling (PD) weapon, a small torpedo-like device that would deprive a ship of its mobility without sinking it or causing significant casualties. A brief outline of the PD concept can be found in the author's "Propulsion Disablers: Opportunity and Threat," *Clio's Musings: History and 21st Century US Naval Strategy* (blog), 16 April 2020, cliosmusings.blog/. PDs are likely to have even more appeal to our adversaries, and when they appear they will pose a major threat to U.S. and other Western surface ships.

62. "China's Economy Might Be Nearly a Seventh Smaller Than Reported," *The Economist,* 7 March 2019, economist.com/; "China's Top Commodity Imports & Exports," Commodity.com.

63. Hattendorf and Swartz, *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1980s.*

64. Jeffrey Barker (remarks delivered at a forum entitled "The Arctic and U.S. National Security," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, 4 December 2018). Mr. Barker is deputy branch head for policy and posture in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (Op 515B). The forum was streamed in real time, and the record is available from the center as a webcast. Mr. Barker's remarks were not a part of his prepared presentation. In part 1 of the webcast, starting at 2:09:39, during a Q&A, Mr. Barker observed that the purpose of bastion denial was "[s]o that the Russians don't have bastions to operate from defending the homeland." And "what we [the Navy] are doing [strategic ASW] aligns with the National Security Strategy." First reported by Richard R. Burgess, "Navy Must Be Agile but Sustainable," *Seapower,* 4 December 2018, seapowermagazine.org/. It is not known how authoritative Mr. Barker's remarks were; presumably they reflected the thinking of officials in at least some parts of the Navy. Strategic ASW apparently has an enduring attractiveness. In 2019, it was advanced as worthy of "careful consideration" by the United States and NATO allies, along with a number of other "principles" guiding strategy in the North Atlantic in the twenty-first century.

Magnus Nordenmann, *The New Battle for the Atlantic* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019), p. 201. The book's contents—including the reference to strategic ASW—were quoted extensively in subsequent online commentary by Adm. James G. Foggo, USN, at the time Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces Europe / Naval Forces Africa and Commander, Allied Joint Force Command Naples. James G. Foggo, "The Fourth Battle of the Atlantic, the Nordics, and the Direct Defense Challenge," *Second Line of Defense,* 17 August 2019, SLDinfo.com/.

65. For a brief assessment of the mission today, see the author's "Strategic ASW in 2020—a Stunningly Bad Idea," *Clio's Musings: History and 21st Century US Naval Strategy* (blog), 17 February 2020, cliosmusings.blog/.

66. As observed in note 41, during the Cold War it was not clear whether or how this was done. It does not seem desirable that decisions regarding a matter of this gravity to the nation should be made by one of the military services.

67. Official explanations of the need for such exercises include quite plausible strategic objectives, such as protecting shipping lanes (seldom absent, as has been seen, when the Navy speaks of its strategic purposes) and the American exclusive economic zone in the Arctic. ASW, the mission of greatest interest to the Russians, is not mentioned. "ICEX 2018 Briefing Book," 8 March 2018, pp. 1–12, available at navylive.dodlive.mil/.

68. The inventory of sixty-plus of the world's quietest nuclear attack submarines (SSNs) comprises a fleet in being that seems guaranteed to keep the Russian navy in a defensive posture, whether or not U.S. SSNs execute the strategic ASW mission. (For elaboration on the possible contemporary meanings of a *fleet in being,* see the author's "Fleet in Being: The 17th Century Calls Out to the 21st," *Clio's Musings: History and 21st Century US Naval Strategy* [blog], 6 February 2020, cliosmusings.blog/.) Whether, when, and how to exploit this undersea advantage on behalf of cooperative, as well as competitive, engagement with Russia should be the subject of further analysis. For a creative example in this regard, see Vince Manzo, *Nuclear Arms Control without a Treaty? Risks and Options after New START,* IRM2019-U-019494 (Arlington, VA: CNA, March 2019).

69. Polmar, "Why 2000 or Even 400 Submarines," provides a plausible listing. More recently, see Brian Hayes [Lt., USNR], "Naval Intelligence, the CIA, and the Soviet-Russian Threat: The Cold War and Beyond," *U.S. Naval Institute* (blog), 5 July 2019, blog.usni.org/. Hayes adds explanations at the psychological level of human perception.

70. Richard K. Betts, "Analysis, War and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures Are Inevitable," *World Politics* 31, no. 1 (October 1978), pp. 61–89. According to Betts (e-mail to author, 14 September 2019), the definitive treatment is his *Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge and Power in National Security* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2007), chap. 2.

71. Although this process has occurred countless times in the past and remains a staple of planning today, to the author's knowledge little attention appears to have gone into systematizing it. It might be useful to survey, say, a dozen senior directors of recent force-structure studies to learn what commonalities and differences have marked the way in which study terms of reference have handled hedging at the intelligence-planning nexus. During the Cold War, as noted, this problem never arose—for the worst reasons.