The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 19
Number 1 *Parameters 1989*

Article 15

7-4-1989

NATO'S NORTHERN FLANK: A CRITIQUE OF THE MARITIME STRATEGY

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NATO's Northern Flank: A Critique of the Maritime Strategy

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For most of this decade, naval enthusiasts have championed the "Maritime Strategy" as the answer to the strategic malaise that characterized American foreign policy in the post-Vietnam era. Perceived American weakness and strategic incoherence undoubtedly contributed to the burst of Soviet adventurism beginning in Angola in 1974 and culminating most spectacularly with the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Yet the large military expenditures of the last seven years, which were intended to reverse the declining "correlation of forces" and reestablish US military power as an effective instrument of policy, were not rigorously submitted to the discipline of an articulated and integrated conception of national military strategy. In the scramble for defense resources each service advanced its own interests, but the sea services emerged clear winners, basing their requests for funds on the strategic necessity for a modernized, offensively oriented, greatly enhanced naval force structure. In the process, the Navy has largely succeeded in independently defining and marketing the very strategic framework by which its budget requests are evaluated. A case in point is the wartime defense of NATO's critical Northern Flank. Navy strategy there is bold, aggressive, and dynamic in every way. It may also be a prescription for failure.

After decades of neglect, the strategic significance of the Northern Flank is now receiving serious attention from NATO planners. Briefly put, control of the Norwegian Sea and the airfields in north Norway and Iceland could enable Soviet submarines and naval aviation to interdict NATO sea lines of communication (SLOCs) in time of war—potentially a war-winning strategy.[1] Apart from isolating Europe from the United States, control of the Scandinavian peninsula also would enable Soviet forces to exert pressure, in the form of air attacks, amphibious landings, and even conventional ground

attacks, in support of operations in the Baltic, the Low Countries, and the North German Plain.

Naval and amphibious operations on the Northern Flank occupy center stage in the various formulations of the Maritime Strategy as it has evolved in the last ten years.[2] Current strategy posits a phased naval campaign incorporating large carrier task forces, battleship surface action groups, amphibious warfare groups, and dozens of supporting surface and submarine combatants. Ground operations mounted from the sea are an important component of the strategy. Amphibious experts speak of the "forcible entry of the 55,000 men of a Marine Amphibious Force"[3] where "amphibious forces can play a key role" in the "tense drama" of battle in the far north.[4]

In the initial stages of the conflict, called by maritime strategists the "deterrence or transition-to-war phase," naval forces will be marshaled in the form of the US Striking Fleet Atlantic and deployed to the Norwegian Sea well before hostilities break out. This assumes that the problem of rapid response (always a concern with relatively slow-moving naval forces[5]) will be solved by an early political decision to commit military forces well before the crisis reaches its flashpoint. It is not at all clear, however, that the early deployment of very large naval forces close to the periphery of the Soviet Union would prove to be the obvious decision in a crisis,[6] because such a move might provoke the very response it was designed to forestall.

The Marine Corps' 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) is slated to reinforce north Norway in the early stages of this transitional phase. However, its prepositioned materiel, unlike the prepositioned stocks of full divisional sets of equipment in Europe, consists mostly of trucks and howitzers. Its helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, tanks, other heavy support equipment, and many of its tactical vehicles must still come from the continental United States.[7] Furthermore, the MEB arrival airfields and equipment storage sites are in Trondheim in central Norway, several hundred kilometers from the intended area of operations in Troms county. Finally, the addition of the three maneuver battalions of the MEB would not materially alter the balance of forces in north Norway. Although the MEB might serve as a significant indication of allied resolve, its presence would fall well short of being enough to secure north Norway from ground attack by the Soviet army.

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Phase Two of the Maritime Strategy is described as "seizing the initiative as far forward as possible."[8] This is amplified to mean that US attack submarines will "roll back" successive antisubmarine barriers in the Norwegian and Barents seas in order to scatter Soviet surface shipping and screening submarines. The ultimate objective is to attack and deplete the Soviet ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) force in its protected northern sanctuaries.[9] The antisubmarine campaign will contribute to SLOC defense by engaging Soviet attack submarines inside the Greenland-Iceland-Norway gap and alter the overall strategic balance by paring down Soviet SSBN strength.

Antiair and antisurface warfare will complement the antisubmarine effort both by providing fleet defense and by destroying enemy forces in

meeting engagements at sea. Implicit in this formulation is forward deployment of carrier groups inside the Norwegian Sea to conduct "aggressive, sustained forward operations."[10] MEB or Marine Expeditionary Force landings, perhaps in the North Cape area, are contemplated in Phase Two as an essential adjunct to the overall maritime objective of wresting the initiative from Soviet forces in the region.

These are ambitious objectives. The prospects for successfully achieving them are clouded by several factors, including the capabilities of Soviet land-based airpower, the effectiveness of the Soviet antisubmarine campaign, and the success or failure of the territorial defense of north Norway and Iceland.

At sea in the open ocean, carrier task forces are primarily concerned with defense against cruise-missiles and attack submarines. Screening vessels and the task force air umbrella virtually nullify surface threats. Within range of land-based aircraft the threat level greatly increases. Even in the North Atlantic, however, the threat can be managed. At the distances involved, the Backfire and Bear bombers of Soviet naval aviation operate at the limit of their endurance. They can be tracked and engaged coming and going, providing plenty of reaction time to generate air defense. Operating inside the Greenland-Iceland-Norway gap, however, they pose a dramatically increased threat to carrier forces. Medium-range aircraft now become threats; so do land-based missiles and even tactical aircraft. Reaction times are slashed, the loiter time for enemy air threats goes up, and the mere *survivability* of the carrier group, not its offensive function, becomes the priority.

The premise that NATO naval forces can defeat the Soviet submarine threat in the Norwegian and Barents seas is based almost exclusively on a presumption of qualitative superiority which cannot be verified short of actual combat. While we may accept the superiority of NATO systems and crews with some confidence, it is difficult to demonstrate that this qualitative edge is enough to overcome the numerical advantages of the Soviet Northern Fleet, which is designed and trained primarily for submarine and antisubmarine warfare,[11] and whose equipment, if not up to the best NATO standards, is nonetheless quite good.

Besides its 39 SSBNs (which do have organic self-defense measures, including torpedoes for protection against attack submarines), the Soviet Northern Fleet includes 119 attack and cruise-missile submarines.[12] This is more than the entire complement of attack submarines in the US Navy.[13] Pacific deployments, routine maintenance, and barrier operations to protect trans-Atlantic shipping would leave perhaps 30 US attack submarines to execute the strategy, at odds of roughly 1:5.[14]

The problem is magnified by the fact that the Soviet SSBN force can strike the continental United States by launching its MIRVed[15] nuclear missiles

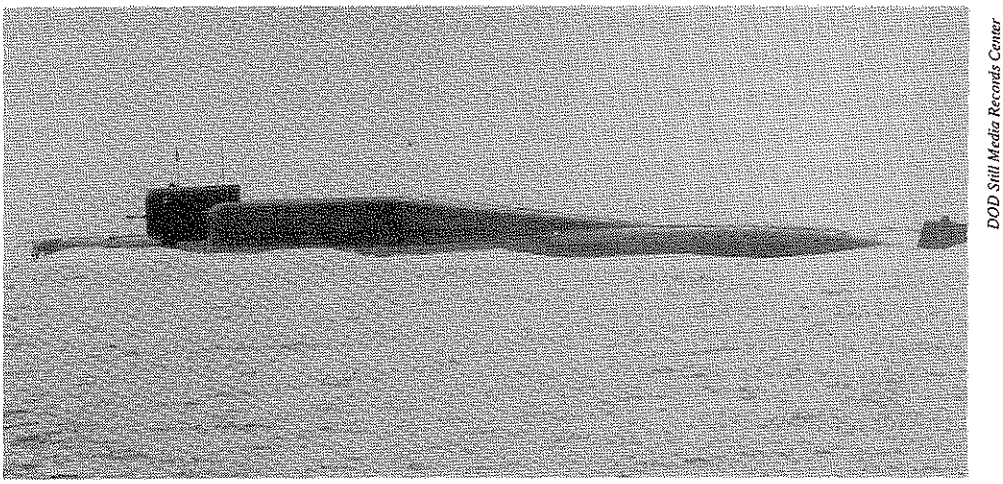
from underneath pack ice in the Arctic Ocean.[16] At the first sign of trouble they could deploy rapidly under pack ice, there to lie motionless and virtually undetectable.[17] Available NATO attack submarines,[18] operating in the ice without most of the complementary antisubmarine-warfare systems that normally aid them, would then have to discriminate between the target SSBNs and the Soviet attack submarines escorting them. Even if only ten percent of the SSBN force survives, its remaining countervalue-targeted missiles could devastate every large metropolitan city in the United States.[19] In short, the belief that NATO naval forces could carry off such an ambitious program seems to presuppose an absolute technological and human superiority that is more optimistic than either reasoned judgment or historical experience will support.

Physical occupation of North Norway and Iceland by the Soviets, together with Jan Mayen and Bear islands and the Svalbard archipelago, are essential for effective prosecution of the Soviet antisubmarine-warfare effort, and indeed of their effort to control the Greenland-Iceland-Norway gap itself. Primarily for this reason, many experts now consider these areas to be already "behind" Soviet lines from the psychological perspective of Soviet planners. In peacetime these areas provide key facilities for NATO maritime patrol aircraft; seabed sensors; navigational, target acquisition, and communications systems; and naval bases. Without question, they are prime targets for early seizure.

Other issues also complicate the maritime thesis. The rationale for automatically attacking the Soviets' only protected second-strike nuclear deterrent is unclear, since Soviet land-based first-strike systems are not targeted for immediate destruction in the absence of a nuclear exchange.[20] This approach might inadvertently place Soviet decisionmakers in a "shoot 'em or lose 'em" position, with momentous consequences.[21]

The final phase of the Maritime Strategy is "war termination." It is characterized by the exertion of global pressure against the Soviet Union; the total destruction of the Soviet navy; supporting the land battle by preventing redeployment of enemy forces, insuring NATO resupply and sustainment, and directly applying carrier and amphibious forces; and termination of the conflict through direct attack against the Soviet homeland or altering the nuclear correlation of forces.

In theory, the strategic application of maritime forces in the north during this phase will take place only after the Soviet Northern Fleet has been substantially eliminated. Direct attack against the Kola infrastructure and the Soviet homeland itself is postulated; therefore, we must assume that the Soviet naval forces that might prevent closure to within striking ranges of these targets have been destroyed. It is at this point that the Navy's power projection capabilities will take effect and the combined weight of carrier aviation, cruise missiles, surface action groups, and amphibious landings will be brought to bear to force a decision on land. For the Marines, the likely objective is North Cape.[22]



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"Even if only ten percent of the Soviet SSBN force survives, its remaining countervalue-targeted missiles could devastate every large metropolitan city in the United States." Pictured here is a Soviet Delta III class submarine, featuring the more advanced MIRV-capable SS-18 missile.

For the Navy, it is the huge and costly naval and air facilities of the Kola peninsula—the home anchorage of the Soviet Northern Fleet.[23]

Though serious criticism of US capability to conduct large-scale opposed landings from the sea against Soviet forces is only sparsely represented in the literature, the requirement for almost total sea and air dominance gravely complicates the operational feasibility of such landings.[24] The Marine Expeditionary Force, coming in amphibious warfare groups which are observable by satellite reconnaissance, cannot contend with active opposition from land, sea, and air during its vulnerable transition from ship to shore. The implied desiderata for a large amphibious assault in this scenario are formidable: the virtual destruction of the Soviet Northern Fleet and its supporting air component; no diversion of Marine combat or assault shipping assets to other theaters; and the arrival of the amphibious assault groups from the United States intact.

The validity of the concept of direct attack against Soviet targets ashore, a fundamental part of the philosophy behind the Maritime Strategy, is open to question even in the unlikely event that all of these enabling assumptions are realized. Publicists often describe Marine units as though the entire complement functions as combatants. The ringing claim—"forcible entry of the 55,000 men of the MAF"—is representative. In a recent issue of the *Naval War College Review*, one author writes that a four-carrier battle force and a Marine Expeditionary Force could deploy over 50,000 combat soldiers and 900 tactical aircraft anywhere between Norway and Turkey in a matter of days.[25]

Statements like these can be misleading.[26] In point of fact, the Marine Expeditionary Force includes a very large air wing and forward service

support group, as well as many service support troops within the division itself. In terms of maneuver units—the fighting core of the force which seizes and holds ground—the Marine Expeditionary Force fields only nine infantry battalions and a single tank battalion[27]—roughly the equivalent of a US Army light division. Fifty-seven percent of the "tactical aircraft" referred to are not combatants at all, while only a third can be used against targets ashore.[28]

Without questioning the qualitative edge of these forces, which must be rated high, we have to recognize that a quantitative comparison with enemy forces ashore fails to meet a reasonable test of sufficiency. Soviet forces earmarked for the region, the "Northwest TVD" in Soviet parlance, are thought to consist of an airborne division, an air assault brigade, a naval infantry brigade, a naval *spetznaz* brigade, and 11 heavy divisions, including two border divisions equipped with over-snow vehicles and trained for amphibious operations.[29] After mobilization, the Norwegians can deploy four brigades in Finnmark and Troms counties, assisted by several allied battalions from the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force and the United Kingdom/Netherlands Amphibious Force, if available.[30] In short, without substantial ground forces to follow up the assault landing of the Marine Expeditionary Force,[31] the prospects for success, even in a best-case scenario, do not inspire confidence. Without denigrating the moral and psychological effect of an amphibious landing on Soviet soil, it is not at all certain that the modest threat posed by the activities of an amphibious contingent operating in the far north would cause the Soviets to redirect meaningful resources away from the Central Front—a stated objective of the final phase of the Maritime Strategy.

In this final phase of the struggle, some of the NATO naval forces in the region, primarily battleship surface action groups and perhaps a carrier, would support amphibious operations. The bulk of the fleet, however, would concentrate on the destruction of the remnants of the Soviet Northern Fleet and move in for direct attacks against the Soviet homeland itself. The richest prize is the Kola peninsula, probably the most heavily militarized area in the world. Here is where the ability to project naval power ashore is intended to pay off.

The general intent is to move into the Barents Sea and launch concerted air and missile strikes against the Kola. Navy F/A-18 Hornets and A-6E Intruders will spearhead these attacks with precision-guided munitions and cruise missiles, backed up by cruise missile strikes from submarines and surface platforms.[32] Maritime Strategy proponents insist that by exerting such "direct pressure" against sensitive flanks, "fear, uncertainty, and paralysis" can be induced in the mind of the aggressor, thereby relieving pressure on the Central Front in some undefined way.[33] At the outset, the naval air strike components of this proposed force can muster, assuming total availability of pilots and aircraft, perhaps 160 aircraft[34]; the remaining fleet aircraft are dedicated to protecting the fleet. In fact, virtually the entire carrier task force, with its Aegis cruisers, frigates, destroyers, escort submarines, and fast

support ships, exists to support the 40 strike aircraft on each carrier. If the target must be attacked at night or in bad weather, the effectiveness of the strike force is further reduced, since only the A-6E Intruders currently have an advanced all-weather/night-attack capability.

In peacetime, the Kola is defended by more than 225 modern Soviet air defense fighters of all types, dispersed over 16 major airfields and many smaller ones. These are supplemented by the land-based bombers and fighters of Soviet naval aviation based there. In wartime, and particularly in response to a direct threat to the Kola, these forces would be stiffened considerably.[35] Closing at top speed, the carriers of the striking fleet will still be vulnerable to attack by various elements of these forces for two days without being able to respond with their own strike aircraft.[36] The Soviet air defense effort is further supported by more than 100 surface-to-air missile installations, as well as numerous radar tracking sites for target acquisition and ground control of defending aircraft.[37]

The underlying premise in this scenario—that sea-based airpower can compete with and overcome land-based airpower—is difficult to sustain in the face of these ratios.[38] Though the carriers will constantly reposition, they cannot hide from Soviet tactical and satellite reconnaissance indefinitely. They will be especially vulnerable while launching and recovering aircraft, while the strain of round-the-clock air operations for fleet air defense will mount quickly. Soviet ground-based air defense squadrons can easily out-sortie, out-resupply, and out-reinforce the carrier air wings because of the intrinsic advantages of land bases and by simply flying in personnel and spares from the interior. The Kola peninsula is a very large, very hard target, well protected and defended, and invulnerable to destruction from the air by anything less than a sustained, heavily weighted aerial campaign.

What are the potential consequences of a mismatch between sea-based and land-based airpower in the north? The first and most obvious is the loss of one or more carriers. A defeat of this kind would be a serious material blow and a spectacular psychological coup for the Soviets. Aircraft carriers have come to be symbols of almost mythic proportion; much more than mere floating airfields, they symbolize national prestige, military potency, and strategic reach. To be effective they must be put at risk, but only where the potential returns justify it. The gamble here is a poor one, and no claims of Soviet submarines sunk, enemy aircraft downed, or airfields knocked out would soften the impact of such a severe psychic blow.

Another potential problem is the unintended threat of nuclear escalation. The primary naval weapons for strikes against shore targets, the strike aircraft and cruise missiles, are dual-capable.[39] Whether they are used in a conventional or nuclear mode is impossible to determine prior to use. The Tomahawk cruise missile in particular has a high potential for destabilization

because of its range, accuracy, and survivability. It may be assuming too much to bet that Soviet decisionmakers will initiate nuclear warfare at sea only after suffering a sea-launched nuclear attack themselves. After detecting inbound missiles and aircraft, they may well respond with nuclear weapons while they still have the capacity to do so.

Other important issues intrude as well. Because of such large US forces deployed in an offensive sea control mode inside the Greenland-Iceland-Norway gap, the Atlantic SLOCs would be denuded of most of the available at-sea air cover and many of the surface and subsurface antisubmarine-warfare platforms needed to insure resupply for Europe. Sea control of the Atlantic must remain the linchpin of the maritime contribution to the conventional defense of the West. Maritime strategists play down this requirement by insisting that SLOC interdiction is not a real Soviet priority (despite the fact that the Soviet Union touts the submarine as the primary conventional and nuclear striking arm of its navy)[40] and by criticizing SLOC defense strategies as passive approaches which leave the initiative to the enemy.[41]

Further evidence that the Soviets have a genuine interest in sea denial in the North Atlantic is provided by a simple analysis of Warsaw Pact naval force structure:

> [T]he Pact's major sea goal will be to deny the Allies the use of the sea lanes. This consideration is reflected in the composition of Pact naval forces. The Warsaw Pact has 145 long-range attack submarines, NATO some 68. Since 1983 the Soviets have introduced four new classes of nuclear-powered attack submarines, further emphasizing their commitment to large numbers of sophisticated sea denial units.[42]

In short, the hard evidence that Soviet strategists have abandoned any hopes of strangling the Alliance with a vigorous sea-denial/SLOC-interdiction campaign is just not there. If merely defending ballistic missile submarine sanctuaries has become the raison d'etre of the Soviet Northern Fleet, prudence would dictate the deployment in large numbers of cheaper, quieter, modern versions of the diesel-electric SS boats. Such has not been the case. The rationale for pressing an intensive surface and sub-surface campaign in northern waters, predicated on an assumption that SSBN protection is the first priority for Soviet attack subs, is simply not compelling.

Heavy US losses in the Norwegian Sea, which cannot be ruled out even by the most optimistic advocates of the Maritime Strategy, must therefore represent a corresponding diminution of assets that could be used to fight the next "Battle of the Atlantic"—a battle that literally would spell life and death to those who must fight the decisive land engagements in central Europe. And the balance of forces in the north, coupled with the fact that the Soviets are rapidly deploying another secure second-strike deterrent in the form of land-based mobile ICBM launchers,[43] suggests that many modern attack and cruise

missile submarines will be available to conduct sea-denial/SLOC-interdiction missions in the open ocean. In the final analysis, there is no such thing as a naval strategy that realistically accommodates both SLOC defense and early forward deployment of the bulk of the Atlantic Fleet.

From a joint perspective, the assumptions and priorities that lay behind the Maritime Strategy as applied to the Northern Flank emphasize naval solutions to problems that have important and substantive land and airpower dimensions as well. Concerned observers note that maritime forces and land forces are effective against each other only at the margins where they meet, not well inside their respective mediums. As one analyst points out:

> The US Maritime Strategy and the US Navy can contribute to a denial of Soviet objectives on land in Europe, but they cannot substitute for conventional force or doctrinal deficiencies relative to the land battle. As Admiral Isaac Kidd is reported to have said, someone must take the land and say "this belongs to me." Navies cannot do that, whatever else they may do. It would be wrong and misguided in the extreme for US maritime strategists to offer their forces as substitutes for increased supplies of ammunition or additional operational reserves in Europe.[44]

The naval solution, emphasizing naval air power and amphibious forces that can be projected ashore, is a partial one at best because naval aviation is both relatively short-ranged and vulnerable and because Marine forces are not capable of sustained land combat against large, armored Soviet forces unless the Marines are supported by a strong Army contingent.

The Maritime Strategy is also suspect because it is designed to generate heavy requirements in terms of ships, men, and materiel. It demands resources because it is highly resource-consumptive; it proposes to engage enemy forces as aggressively, as far forward, and as directly as possible, conceding important geostrategic and force-ratio advantages to the Soviets. Perhaps nowhere else is the combination of Soviet naval strength and NATO vulnerability so telling as in the Norwegian and Barents seas. Yet the Maritime Strategy purports to play to this strength virtually from the opening bell.

The contradictions that inhere in the Maritime Strategy stem from the fact that maritime power, for all its flexibility and range and power projection capabilities, has limited utility against land forces. The Soviet Union is a mighty continental power which relies on its ground and air forces as its primary instruments for conventional warfare. The United States, on the other hand, has traditionally emphasized seapower as its primary strategic weapon of choice. Since the Second World War, carrier aviation has dominated US naval strategic thought, at least in the conventional sense. It is therefore not surprising that, the nature of the threat notwithstanding, traditional ideas about force structure and

the use of seapower should be applied to the problem of how best to compete with the challenge posed by the Soviet military.

But these traditional notions can inhibit comprehensive analysis. In the context of the Northern Flank, seapower is of course an essential part of the answer—but it is far from a total solution. Even if deployed in time, naval forces will have difficulty preventing the early loss of airfields in Iceland and north Norway. They certainly cannot retake them. And if this is true, then they cannot deter the Soviets from seizing the opportunity to strike decisively at the SLOCs.

Marine amphibious power, for its part, can be effective in support of ground operations in Nordic Europe. Even so, substantial US and allied ground units will be required to provide the kind of force ratios needed to contend with Soviet forces there. This will require hard decisions about resourcing, pre-positioning, training, lift assets, and so on, as well as joint/combined training and joint/combined command and control arrangements. The pure application of sea power is not likely to make a difference against the ground forces of the Soviet Union, and we should not be misled into thinking that it can.

My purpose here is not to advance a comprehensive alternative strategy for the defense of the Northern Flank, but a few comments about possible approaches may serve to demonstrate that the Maritime Strategy is not the only option.

For the reasons enumerated above, carrier group operations well inside the Norwegian Sea and amphibious landings in the North Cape area do not appear feasible except in the latter stages of a protracted conflict, when the Soviets are facing the prospect of defeat. They are thus unlikely to have much to do with securing Nordic Europe from Soviet control at the outset. The problem, then, is to provide sufficient forces to retain control of north Norway and the Norwegian Sea, along with the capability to deploy them early enough to make a difference.

Prepositioning, though not without political problems, offers a solution to the problem of introducing ground forces rapidly into the region. US and European civil aviation assets could then be used to ferry ground troops based in the continental United States without crippling the Military Airlift Command's lift to the Central Front. Dedicated ground reinforcements from Britain and the United States could form the NATO reinforcing echelon, without which defense of these areas by local forces is problematic.[45] These forces must be complemented by tactical air forces bedded down in Iceland and in central and north Norway. Fortunately, rapid deployment of these assets is well within existing capabilities.

The naval campaign in the north is critically dependent upon who owns the air space over the Norwegian Sea. If ground forces can ensure the retention of NATO airfields in the far north, Soviet aircraft will be forced to operate from the Kola, with a resulting loss in range and flexibility. In this scenario, a

combination of land-based and carrier-based aviation can contest control of the airspace over the Norwegian Sea with good prospects of success.

Given a reasonable balance of forces in the air and containment of the Soviet air threat to the vicinity of its Kola airfields, surface operations to gain and maintain control over the Greenland-Iceland-Norway gap should succeed. This is important for three reasons: to ensure continuous resupply by surface shipping to Norway and Iceland; to support continuous antisubmarine operations in the Norwegian Sea for SLOC defense; and to support ground operations. Surface battles in the Norwegian Sea could thus be supported with carrier strike aircraft operating from more survivable postures beyond the range of much of the Soviet air threat.

This approach offers a more tangible and responsive agenda for action in defense of the territorial integrity of Nordic European NATO members. It more fully integrates the contributions of all services in support of NATO interests and objectives. It retains the deterrent effect of ever-present nuclear retaliatory forces operating below the level of strategic exchange, without pushing nuclear escalation to extremes. It suggests that national and coalition needs can be met at reasonable cost without unreasonable risk.

It is important to distinguish between criticism of the Maritime Strategy and criticism of seapower in general. There is nothing intrinsically unfair about large naval budgets and emphasis on seapower as a vital element in a comprehensive national military strategy. There is a potential for error, however, in unilaterally framing both force structure and war-fighting intent in terms that neglect the political objectives which must drive the strategymaking process. Does NATO really intend to force the nuclear issue at the outset of a conflict? Must such a conflict be enlarged throughout Europe and even the world, and made to include automatic and direct attacks on the Soviet homeland even if Soviet forces are not engaged and the continental United States has not been attacked? Does the Maritime Strategy really contribute to enhanced deterrence or war-fighting capability in Europe?

The arguments I've advanced challenge the fundamental assumptions that order and inform the Maritime Strategy, within the context of the defense of the Northern Flank. To date, the debate has largely been a dialogue between senior serving naval officers and a handful of concerned analysts in the academic, policy analysis, and media communities. But perhaps it is time for the other services to enter and participate in the debate, for at issue are the tone and substance of the strategic vision that must guide all our forces into the next century.

There is much to suggest that the historical conundrum of seapower vs. landpower still contributes to a dislocation of strategic thought in America. In truth, the question has never been one of continental vs. maritime strategies, because global war between superpowers simply transcends such categories. The joint application of balanced land, sea, and air forces capable of achieving

their strategic objectives within the context of an intelligent national military strategy is the ultimate goal. The issues raised herein suggest that we can do better than the narrow prescriptions called for in the Maritime Strategy.

NOTES

1. Kenneth Myers, *North Atlantic Security: The Forgotten Flank?* The Washington Papers, Vol. 6, No. 62 (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1979), p. 64.

2. The most authoritative source document, still largely accurate as an expression of prevailing thought, is *The Maritime Strategy*, published in January 1986 as a supplement to the January edition of *US Naval Institute Proceedings*. See also Michael A. Palmer, *Origins of the Maritime Strategy: American Naval Strategy in the First Postwar Decade* (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1988).

3. James D. Watkins, *The Maritime Strategy*, p. 12. In 1988 the "amphibious" designation was replaced with "expeditionary"; the latter is used hereinafter.

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

5. Steaming time for the Strike Fleet Atlantic from the east coast to the North Atlantic is reckoned at seven days, not counting the time needed to collect the shipping and man the fleet (Watkins, p. 10). Deployment of a single Marine Expeditionary Force would take six weeks and require virtually every unit of amphibious assault shipping in existence (Michael Leonard, "Planning Reinforcements: An American Perspective," in *Deterrence and Defense in the North*, ed. Johan Jurgen Holst [Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1985], p. 164).

6. The decision to commit large naval forces early, the hinge on which the Maritime Strategy turns, is a subject of some confusion. "All of our war games, all of our exercises . . . indicate that in fact we will not make the political decision to move early" (Admiral James Watkins, speaking in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in 1984, cited by Jack Beatty, "In Harm's Way," *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1987, p. 37).

7. Harry J. Stephan, "USMC To Bolster Norwegian Flank: 4th MAB Ready To Deploy In a Crisis," *Armed Forces Journal International*, August 1987, p. 34.

8. Also described as "establishment of sea control in key maritime areas as far forward as possible." The Norwegian Sea is specifically mentioned as an operational arena for carrier task forces in this phase. See Linton F. Brooks, "Naval Power and National Security: The Case For the Maritime Strategy," *International Security*, 11 (Fall 1986), 65.

9. See D. B. Rivkin, "No Bastions For the Bear," *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, April 1984, pp. 36-43.

10. Watkins, p. 12.

11. John Mearsheimer, "A Strategic Misstep," *International Security*, 11 (Fall 1986), 37.

12. These forces are supported by 145 antisubmarine-warfare aircraft and 71 principal surface combatants, almost all of which are configured for antisubmarine operations. *The Military Balance, 1988-1989* (London: International Institute For Strategic Studies, 1988), p. 41.

13. Ibid.

14. Mearsheimer, p. 37.

15. Multiple Independently-targeted Reentry Vehicle. This technology allows a single missile to deliver a number of warheads to different targets.

16. By the end of the decade, the mainstays of the Soviet SSBN force, the *Delta III* and *Typhoon* boats, will be armed with SSN-20 (8300-km range, six to nine reentry vehicles) and SSN-23 (8300-km range, ten reentry vehicles) submarine-launched ballistic missiles. See Edward B. Atkeson, "Fighting Submarines Under the Ice," *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, September 1987, p. 82 .

17. Ibid., p. 83.

18. It is important to include the submarine forces of the allied navies in the balance of forces in the north. Many of these, however, are diesel boats configured for coastal anti-shipping operations. It is unclear to what degree British, Norwegian, and German submarines would participate in anti-SSBN operations north of the Arctic circle. Their presence, in any case, represents only a marginal increase in the force of attack submarines, probably insufficient to change the equation much one way or the other.

19. Ibid., p. 82.

20. Some analysts recognize this inconsistency but dismiss it with vague references to "competitive substrategies" such as the use of stealth platforms to strike at Soviet land-based ICBMs. There is, however, no publicly expressed intent to automatically target these systems for destruction while the conflict remains conventional; the existence of a theoretical capability to do so in no way implies such intent. See F. J. West, "The Maritime Strategy: The Next Step," *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, January 1987, p. 41.

21. Lawrence Freedman, "Concluding Remarks," in *Britain and NATO's Northern Flank*, ed. Geoffrey Till (London: The MacMillan Press, 1988), p. 181.

22. Kelley and O'Donnell, p. 26.

23. "The most valuable piece of real estate on earth" (John Lehman, quoted by Michael Gettler, "Lehman Sees Norwegian Seas As Key to Soviet Naval Strategy," *The Washington Post*, 29 December 1982, p. 4).

24. Mearsheimer, p. 25.

25. Dennis Blair, "The Strategic Significance of Maritime Theaters," *US Naval War College Review*, 41 (Summer 1988), 38.

26. The US Marine Corps is justifiably proud of the combat skills of its support troops, but these skills translate into a more effective capability for rear area protection and self-defense, not a capability to use support units in maneuver roles.

27. Approximately 7000 men, with perhaps another 3000 in combat support roles such as reconnaissance, artillery, air defense, and combat engineer.

28. The Marine Expeditionary Force standard air wing fields 333 aircraft, of which 152 can be classified as combatants (AV-8, F/A-18, A-6E, and AH-1). The standard complement for the carrier air wing varies but normally includes only 40 strike aircraft (A-6E and F/A-18). The rest are designed for fleet air defense, electronic warfare, search and rescue, antisubmarine warfare, or refueling and cannot be used to attack shore targets. See *Sea Power*, 31 (January 1988).

29. The border divisions and all the specialized units listed are category I (*Deterrence and Defense in the North*, p. 103). It is estimated that there is enough commercial shipping in the Kola ports at any time to lift and deploy two heavy divisions as a landing force in support of amphibious operations in north Norway (Edward Fursden, "The Kola," *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, 118 [April 1988], 179).

30. II Marine Expeditionary Force, the United Kingdom/Netherlands Landing Force, and Allied Command Europe Mobile Force are not solely dedicated to north Norway. Iceland, Denmark, Turkey, or the Mediterranean are other contingency areas for these forces. Norwegian force structure is discussed by Tonne Huitfeld in *Deterrence and Defense in the North*, p. 175.

31. A conservative estimate of the forces needed to follow up a Marine Expeditionary Force landing is an Army corps. Mearsheimer estimates that at least five heavy divisions would be needed (cited in Beatty, p. 46).

32. The newest *Seawolf*-class attack submarines, when deployed, will carry 50 vertical cruise missile launchers, up from the ten now fitted on front-line *Los Angeles*-class attack submarines (Lawrence R. Nilssen, "Nordic NATO in Transition," *Air Power Journal*, [Summer 1988], 71).

33. Kelley and O'Donnell, p. 26.

34. A more realistic estimate for sustained combat operations is 100-120 aircraft due to attrition, pilot casualties, maintenance down-time, and fatigue.

35. It is now estimated that the number of operational aircraft in the Kola can be doubled without notice (Fursden, p. 79).

36. George Thibault, cited in Beatty, p. 44.

37. *The Military Balance, 1988-1989*, p. 40.

38. "The Navy, if it is serious about launching a large-scale air offensive against the Kola, would surely have to augment its forces with significant numbers of land-based fighters and bombers" (Mearsheimer, p. 38).

39. "Maritime forces can influence [the nuclear correlation of forces] both by destroying Soviet SSBNs and by improving our own nuclear posture through the deployment of carriers and Tomahawk platforms around the periphery of the Soviet Union" (Watkins, cited in Ronald O'Rourke, "Nuclear Escalation, Strategic Anti-Submarine Warfare and the Navy's Forward Maritime Strategy," Congressional Research Service Report No. 87-138 F, 27 February 1987, p. 8).

40. Victor Suvorov, *Inside the Soviet Army*, (2d ed.; New York: Berkely Publishing Co., 1984), p. 102.

41. "Sea lane interdiction is a lower priority than protecting sea-based strategic forces or homeland defense" (Brooks, p. 71).

42. Karsten Voight, "Alliance Security," in *The State of the Alliance 1987-1988* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988), p. 71.

43. The Congressional Research Service estimates that the Soviets will have deployed between 1950 and 2850 mobile ICBM warheads by the early 1990s (O'Rourke, p. 15).

44. Stephen J. Cimbala, *Improving Extended Deterrence in Europe* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1987), p. 173.

45. Airborne forces from Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States are particularly well suited for this task due to their air-transportability, forced-entry capability, and quality. The US airborne and air assault divisions retain a considerable antiarmor punch (unlike the light divisions) with their battalion heavy antiarmor companies and AH-64 battalions. They also enjoy good tactical mobility through the use of organic assault and medium-lift helicopters. The 9th Infantry Division (Motorized) also fields impressive high-mobility antiarmor forces which could be effective in a Nordic European scenario. See the author's "The US Army in Nordic Europe," forthcoming in *Military Review*.