1 Tradition and Innovation in Maritime Thinking
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FROM COLD WAR TO POST-COLD WAR

During the Cold War, the security environment on which Western naval planning was premised had a number of characteristics. The bipolar structure of the international system meant that East–West security relations were organized around two strong and opposing alliances – NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Against this strategic backdrop, the main tenet of Western defence strategy was deterring the threat posed by the Soviet Union. By the latter stages of the Cold War, planning assumptions were relatively stable because the ‘active deterrent role played by the military was well-defined and clearly understood’, and NATO force levels were based on threat-based calculations and configured primarily for high-intensity war-fighting roles. Collective security was based primarily on the NATO alliance; bipolarity meant that other multilateral organizations, including the United Nations (UN), the West European Union (WEU) and the European Union (EU), played only a marginal role in East–West security affairs.

In the maritime sphere, the major Western powers’ assumptions about bipolarity were reflected in naval force dispositions which were organized primarily for deterrence, achieving sea control and battle-space dominance. In light of the increase in Soviet blue-water naval capabilities during the 1970s, the NATO alliance prepared for the struggle for control of the sea and the containment of the Soviet Navy, reflected in forces capable of anti-surface, anti-air and deep-water anti-submarine warfare, as well as the ability to protect sea lines of communication for extended periods. The apogee of Cold War naval planning was the United States Navy’s 1986 document Maritime Strategy, which ‘will probably be remembered as the highwater mark of “blue water” naval thinking in the post-war era’. The emphasis of the Maritime Strategy was on offensive sea control and horizontal escalation using the USN’s command of the sea (for example, attacking the Soviet Far East if the
Soviet Union had attacked Europe). The primary task was war at sea through sea control. Indeed, throughout the Cold War period, the focus of Western maritime strategy was the containment of Soviet power at sea by Western sea control.\textsuperscript{6} NATO maritime forces were thus designed for high-intensity conflict and structured to contain, defend in depth and maintain the initiative against a specific blue-water adversary.

Since 1989, the end of the Cold War has had two major implications for the milieu confronting Western maritime strategy and naval planning. The first has been the dramatic decline in the blue-water threat presented by the former Soviet Navy:

Lack of funds; ships in deteriorating condition; loss of ports, shipbuilding and repair facilities and industrial suppliers; loss of manpower; under recruitment; loss of training establishments; the high cost of the nuclear disposal programme and enforced, continued retrenchment in overseas deployments: all of these circumstances have already reduced the Russian navy to a shadow of its former Soviet self. The prospect of regeneration in the near future is excluded by government defence and foreign policies which place overriding priority on the “near abroad” and therefore by implication on forces other than the navy, thus reaffirming the traditional emphasis on a continental rather than maritime strategy.\textsuperscript{7}

Even when residual capabilities are taken into account, the fact that the Russian Navy is so much smaller and less well equipped than the former Soviet Fleet has significantly reduced ‘the capabilities and skills needed to counter it, when compared to the levels obtained in the Cold War years’.\textsuperscript{8} The second implication is that security issues previously suppressed by bipolar stability, or at least largely neglected by strategists, during the Cold War have intensified. These include an increase in the relative salience of territorial disputes and regional confrontation following the drawdown of superpower presence in Asia,\textsuperscript{9} the growth in intra-state hostilities and confrontation clearly evident following the fragmentation of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia,\textsuperscript{10} the rise in nationalism and evidence of the proliferation of conventional defence equipment and weapons capable of mass destruction.\textsuperscript{11} Cold War ‘certainties’ in Western naval planning have been replaced by perceptions of a more diffuse set of risks on a global scale. As Till points out:

We are now witnessing quite radical change in the global security system… Even the continued dominance of the nation state can no