

## Strategy and Geopolitics of Sea Power throughout History

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The great master of naval strategy and geopolitics Rear-Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan famously stated: “Control of the sea by maritime commerce and naval supremacy means predominant influence in the world ... (and) is the chief among the merely material elements in the power and prosperity of nations.”<sup>1</sup> Some three centuries before Mahan, H. M.’s Servant Sir Walter Raleigh held that “he that commands the sea, commands the trade, and he that is lord of the trade of the world is lord of the wealth of the world.”<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, it may be said that even the final collapse of the essentially un-maritime and land-bound Soviet empire at the end of the long 20<sup>th</sup> century was simply the latest illustration of the strategic advantages of sea power.

Like most realist strategists Mahan believed that international politics was mainly a struggle over who gets what, when and how. The struggle could be about territory, resources, political influence, economic advantage or normative interests (values). The contestants were the leaders of traditional nation-states; military and naval forces were their chief instrument of policy.

Obviously, sea power is about naval forces – and coastguards, marine or civil-maritime industries and, where relevant, the contribution of land and air forces. Still, it is more than that; it is about geography, geopolitics, geo-strategy, geo-economics and geo-culture; it is about the sea-based capacity of a state to determine or influence events, currents and developments both *at sea* and *on land*. Or, as Sir Julian Corbett never tired of saying, the real point of sea power is not so much what happens at sea, but how that influences the outcome of events on land.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, indeed, there has been a marked shift in naval strategy and geopolitics’ attention from power *at sea* to power *from* the sea. Hence, “there is more to sea power than grey-painted ships with numbers on the side”!<sup>4</sup> Sea power also embraces the contribution that the other armed services can make to events at sea, and the contribution that navies can make to events on land or in the air. Further, sea power includes not only all non-military aspects of sea-use (merchant shipping, shipbuilding and

repair and so on) but also a broad spectrum of categories related to a nation's strategic culture, economy, political culture and political system.

This is a useful remark, since it provides a way out of dealing with questions such as whether, for example, the Soviet Union was a sea power or not. In a narrowly described sense it seems that it certainly was: In the Cold War era, under the astute guidance of Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, it had a first-class navy able to curtail the operations of the U.S. Navy; it had a large merchant marine, one of the leading fishing fleets of the earth, oceanographic and scientific knowledge about the sea of the first order and an impressive shipbuilding industry. Yet, the Soviet Union was not a sea power; quite on the contrary, it was a typical continental power, the very epitome of a *Kontinentalmacht* – not only, and not even firstly because of the relationship of the Red Navy to the other services, but because of its *Kontinentaldenken*, its continental thought characterizing its political system as well as its political and strategic culture.

Richard Harding has argued that, historically, sea power depended on a number of related factors, both inside and outside the navy: “The actual strength of a navy was heavily dependent upon finance, the capability of central administration, the quality and quantity of real maritime resources, the ships, seamen and officer corps, the maritime infrastructure and the quality of political and naval decision-making.”<sup>5</sup>

Padfield deals with the virtues of the kind of community produced by a maritime economy.<sup>6</sup> He claims that it creates the conditions in which countries can be influential and in which navies will prosper. Specifically a maritime community:

- Encourages an awareness of the importance of maritime trade in society and government, helping thereby to produce the conditions in which that trade will flourish.
- Elevates the merchant class socially and politically, encouraging thereby the development of a value system and a style of government that fosters trade.
- Facilitates the development of naval power partly because it is simply more efficient at raising the resources navies need and partly because the merchant classes naturally see navies as a means of protecting maritime trade, both directly and indirectly.

Nicholas Rodger brilliantly and concisely summarizes the argument like this:

- “Absolutist monarchy was essentially a system of government for mobilizing manpower rather than money. More efficient in its way than the medieval constitutions, it was poorly adapted to meet the much greater strains imposed on state and society by a modern navy.
- For that, what was needed was a system of government which involved the participation by those interest groups whose money and skills were indispensable to sea power – not just the nobility and peasantry whom absolutism set to work, but the ship-owners and seafarers, the urban merchants and financiers, the industrial investors and managers, the skilled craftsmen; all the classes in short, which absolutist government least represented and least favored...”<sup>7</sup>

Hence, the famous quote by Lord Haversham: “Your Fleet and your trade have so near a relation and such mutual influence on each other, they cannot well be separated; your trade is the mother and nurse of your seamen: your seamen are the life of your fleet: and your fleet is the security and protection of your trade: and both together are the wealth, strength, security and glory of Britain.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Britain’s sea power did “lay not just in the navy or the battle fleet, but in the effective integration of her administration, political system, army, colonies and maritime economy towards the ends of the state.”<sup>9</sup>

The observation deserves consideration that a military regime could sustain itself by force, but a navy had to earn public support. *Autocracy* was adequate for an army, but *navies* needed consensus.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, Spain and France finally failed the naval – and strategy – test, in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century respectively, though they had been great naval powers for a long time; the Ottoman Empire as well. For this reason both Kaiser Wilhelm’s *Deutsches Reich* and Hitler’s *Drittes Reich* failed the naval – and strategy – test in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And for the same reason, both Czarist and Soviet Russia failed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well.

Historians have drawn clear distinctions between organic sea power which develops naturally (ancient Greek or mediaeval Italian city-states, Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway) from the artificial variety that is the product of the edict of an *Emperor*, *Czar*, *Khan*, *Sultan* or *Capudan Pasha* (the Arch-Admiral of the Ottoman Fleet). The latter is often said to be shallow-rooted and unlikely to last; the former is seen as preferable.

In fact, effective navies through out history have emerged from authoritarian, or even despotic countries and regimes: the *Armada Real* of Spain, the French Navy of Louis XIV or that of the Napoleonic France, the galley fleets of the Sultans and Capudan Pashas of the Ottoman Turks, the Barbary pirates, the Soviet *Red Navy*, the *Kriegsmarine* of the *Third Reich*. Yet, as Mahan put it, “despotic power ...has created at times a great sea commerce and a brilliant navy with greater directness than can be reached by the slower processes of a free people. The difficulty in (such a) a case is to ensure perseverance after the death of a particular despot.”<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, the Czarist Navy was the product of an imperial *ukase* usually issued out of a particular dynastic will, and so lacked permanence when circumstances changed. Peter the Great, for example, built a navy specifically to attract trade and occidental ideas, and even moved his capital to St Petersburg in order to accommodate all this. His navy was full of foreigners; he personally learned about shipbuilding in Amsterdam and Deptford. He did everything in his power to turn the continental, Eurasian power Russia into a naval power and a sea trade nation. Nevertheless, for many of his subjects and his successors this was all too much. Despite its periodic *gloria* (for example, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century under Catherine the Great and the brilliant Admiral Ushakov), the navy was considered by the ruling elites as essentially *un-Russian*, and a source of ideas dangerous to the existing authoritarian system as well – which, indeed, it was.

One irony of history can be noted, when Stalin shot most of his admirals in the late 1930s he was in one sense conforming to an ancient Russian tradition of eliminating possible sources of political, social and intellectual insurrection. It is not at all surprising that, under Stalin, the lethal effects of political incorrectness and the depressing impact of the political officers (the *zampolits*) forced Soviet naval personnel to “go by the book”. Tactical and operational initiative was limited and performance uninspired. In general, the Soviet case provide us with strong evidence of the “disastrous effects of trying to impose land-oriented strategic and operational concepts on naval forces”, according to Stuart Slade.<sup>12</sup>

To summarize, one could say that it is not liberalism and democratic principles in themselves that were, and are, decisive in the long-term development of sea power but rather administrative efficiency in raising money, and in spending it wisely. But, as a general rule, these qualities do

seem to have been particularly associated with a certain Aristotelian-Jeffersonian style of limited government and a liberal and anthropocentric style of society, based on a values system of Greek-Roman, Judeo-Christian, occidental origin.

On the other hand, it is true that navies were not the exclusive property or the invention of Europeans. After all, many of the navigational advances made towards the end of the European Middle Ages derived from contact with the Islamic world, even down to the use of the word “Admiral”, which in Arabic once meant the “Prince at sea”. Across the other side of the world, the Koreans deployed the first armored warship and, of course, China of the Song dynasty (from AD 1000-1500) boasted “the world’s most powerful and technologically sophisticated navy.”<sup>13</sup>

Still, what was distinctive about the European approach to sea power at this time was, first, the huge advantage derived from the close association between the military and the mercantile aspects of sea power; and second, the association of maritime supremacy with a certain system of beliefs and, consequently, a specific style of government.

The argument goes like this: “Seafaring and trade produce merchants. Merchants accumulate wealth, and then political power in order to defend and develop it. Often they will prevail in government, and enforce their ideas on others. These are the ideas that encourage trade in the first place: freedom of information and therefore of opinion, open and responsive government, fair taxation, social enterprise – all the liberal values so familiar today.”<sup>14</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, European diplomats marveled at the freedoms of the Dutch and reported on that “Strange freedom that all men took in boats and inns and all other common places, of talking openly whatever they thought upon all public affairs both of their own state, and their neighbors.”<sup>15</sup> The use of words reminds us of the way in which politicians and writers of the ancient Greece used to report on Athens; remember, in particular, the famous words of Pericles, cited in Thucydides’ *Epitaph*, praising the freedom of spirit then characterizing the predominant sea power (*Thalassocracy*) Athens. Pericles himself explained the supremacy of the Athenian sea power within the state system of that time in terms of political system and culture: the citizens of Athens used to fight to the end for their country, not because they were obliged to do so, nor because they

had been preparing themselves for this task during lifetime (as the citizens of the continental power Sparta had done, for example); they rather stood up and fought for Athens out of belief, being free men born and grown up in a free *polis*, in a liberal and democratic state.

Accordingly, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the famous French philosopher Montesquieu said much the same thing about England, calling it “the freest country in the world”. That freedom was both a product of naval, maritime enterprise and something that facilitated it. Nicholas Rodger makes the essential point:<sup>16</sup>

- Autocracies manage armies well enough, because that is primarily a matter of simply mobilizing manpower and the equipment it needs;
- On the other hand, Navies need consensus because they require the maximum involvement of seafarers, ship-owners, urban merchants, financiers and investors.

Hence the connections between sea power, liberalism, free markets and prosperity:

- To the extent that they could profit from the sea as a medium of commercial transportation and trade, the economies of the sea powers would boom;
- To the extent that they could exploit the strategic advantages of deploying decisive military power at sea and then projecting it ashore against the land-bound, continental enemies, their strategies would succeed.
- Because, therefore, the sea powers would generally prosper in peace and prevail in war, they would inevitably become great.

That is the only reasonable explanation for the success of small countries with limited land areas, populations and resources such as the ancient Greek *polis* (city-states), the late mediaeval and early modern Italian city-states, the Netherlands, Sweden, England and quite a few others. In Sir Julian Corbett’s view only sea power explained how it was “that a small country (like Britain) with a weak army should have been able to gather to herself the most desirable regions of the earth, and to gather them at the expense of the greatest military powers.”<sup>17</sup>

Points to note: Some systems, in view of the risk inevitably associated with sea power, have deliberately pulled up the drawbridge against its apparent advantages and opportunities:

- One Chinese emperor did that quite consciously. After nearly 500 years of deeply impressive maritime endeavor, the construction of all sea-going ships and foreign travel were banned because China's rulers did not know where it would all end.
- A little later, in Japan during the *Tokugawa shogunate* (1603-1867) the *Shogun* (Fieldmarshall) achieved in depriving the *Tenno* (emperor) from his substantial powers, and went on to turn Japan's back upon the sea, basing the social and political system entirely on land economy and a severe feudalistic structure characterized by the five classes: *kuge*, *daimyo*, *samurai*, *heimin* and *eta/hinin*.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Japan fell further and further behind global developments until their self-imposed isolation was shattered by US Navy Commodore Perry in 1853/54.<sup>19</sup>

Besides, sea power is not, and never has been, the exclusive property of a handful of Great Powers. Nor is the capacity to operate decisively at sea necessarily a function of size as it has been demonstrated by the experience and the strategic functions of the nineteenth-century navy of Chile, first in dealing with a threat from Spain in the 1860s and then in the conduct of the War of the Pacific (1879-84) with Peru. Thank its brilliant victory at the sea battle of Antofagasta, which occurred in October 1879, Chile succeeded in achieving command of the sea in the region.<sup>20</sup> The Naval History of the American War of Independence, the British-American War of 1812 and the Civil War (see, in particular, the case USS Monitor vs. CSS Virginia) also provide us with strong evidence of the operational capabilities of relatively small fleets.<sup>21</sup>

In the case of the Baltic nations, it is, undoubtedly, noteworthy that, after winning their independence, they began developing naval forces in order to maintain their hard-won freedoms. Thus, "during 1919 the small Estonian Navy cooperated with the British naval forces, now under command of Rear-Admiral Walter Cowan, in operations against the Bolsheviks. The Estonian navy fought its first action in June 1919, when its ships destroyed Russian artillery positions at Dunamünde, then forced their way up the Daugava River to assist a Latvian counterattack against Riga. The British and Estonian naval forces cooperated to land Estonian troops behind Bolshevik lines on several occasions..."<sup>22</sup>

Representing a nation is often a principal justification for having a navy in the first place. In some cases, the mere existence of a navy is considered to safeguard, strengthen or renew the historical and cultural identity of a

nation. The emergence and manifestation of the U.S. Navy during the Berber Wars evidently contributed to “shaping a nation”,<sup>23</sup> strengthening American national self-esteem.

Consequently, naval heroes like *Themistocles* or *Kimon* for Athens, Sir Francis Drake for England or Admiral Sir Horace Nelson for Britain, Admiral David Farragut or Commodore Oliver Perry for the United States, Constantine Canaris for the Greek War of Independence, Rear Admiral Paul Countouriotis commanding the Hellenic Royal Navy at the decisive sea battles of Helle (Straits) and Lemnos during the Balkan Wars (1912-13), Commodore Arturo Prat for Chile, or *el Caballero de los Mares* Miguel Grau for Peru, have contributed towards a country’s sense of itself.

Yet, while Mahan used to put “maritime interests in the foreground” of his analysis and to correct the widely spread “tendency to slight the bearing of maritime power upon events”,<sup>24</sup> John Mearsheimer and Paul Kennedy, on the other hand, insisted on defending the primacy of land power (and army) towards naval power and force.<sup>25</sup> Both arguments are undoubtedly well founded; nonetheless, it appears true to claim that, in modern times, sea or naval powers have persistently succeeded in solving the strategic problems posed by adversary continental powers.

The British case, in particular, virtually selects itself as the very epitome of geopolitics and strategy of a sea-based power. In the words of Sir Winston Churchill: “For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating Power on the Continent, and particularly to prevent the Low Countries falling into the hands of such a Power... Observe that the policy of England takes no account of which nation it is that seeks the overlordship of Europe. The question is not whether it is Spain, or the French Monarchy, or the French Empire, or the German Empire or the Hitler regime. It has nothing to do with rulers or nations; it is concerned solely with whoever is the strongest or the potentially dominant tyrant.”<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, the British record in managing sea power – landpower relations is so instructive that it warrants particular attention. After having used France against the Dutch in the 1670s Britain now went on using France to accelerate the decline of Spanish naval power, gaining profit from the Peace of Utrecht in 1713. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Britain successively

allied with Austria in the 1740s in the War of Austrian Succession (1740-48), and with Prussia in the Seven Years War (1756-63).<sup>27</sup>

After having persistently resisted, for more than 20 years, the emergence of a strong, unified European continental power dominated by republican or Napoleonic France, Britain spent plenty of energy, mind and money (and – at least in one case, Crimea – blood) during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, dealing with the now major geopolitical rival, land power (and potential naval power) Russia. Yet, Bismarck's successfully accomplished "Reichsgründung" of 1871,<sup>28</sup> and the subsequent profound change of European geopolitical environment due to the emergence of a new, considerable geostrategic actor, and most significantly the intensified attempts of the German land power under Kaiser Wilhelm II to become a naval power by building up a fleet and seeking for colonies<sup>29</sup>, made the hegemonic sea power of that age reconsider its priorities and approach its principal geopolitical rival of the past, Russia (as well as France) in order to face the new continental hegemonic aspirant, Germany.

Though presenting a beacon of liberalism, parliamentarism and civic culture according to its own self-perception, Britain went on to align herself with Russia, a country steadily accused by English opinion leaders and intellectuals of autocracy, despotism etc for the most part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, conservative Britain entered an alliance with Soviet Russia in 1941.

Certainly, it may be objected that the case of Britain was rather an extraordinary phenomenon than an exemplar. Yet, the objection seems to be beside the point. For, there are many and profound differences between Britain and America, to put just an example, the first being a continental-size naval power, not a small off shore island; yet, the practical continuities in geopolitics, strategy and statecraft are undoubtedly impressive: notably the theme of a *balance-of-power* policy towards *Eurasian* continental *hegemonic* aspirants entirely dominates the Anglo-American geopolitical and strategic experience.<sup>30</sup>

Being once a *continental* power which then succeeded in transforming itself into a *naval* power, the United States has acted three times during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to restore or sustain a balance of power in Eurasia and deter the supremacy of a continental power in the Eurasian *Heartland* – to put it in Sir Halford J. Mackinder's terms – when British sea power and balancing

seemed, for the same purpose, inadequate: 1917, 1941, 1947. Even NATO's eastwards expansion after the end of the Cold War as well as the build-up of American military presence in post-communist Balkans is perceived and being followed by the policy makers as a strategy of *preventive balancing* targeting post-Soviet Russia, though this shall never be officially declared.<sup>31</sup>

It seems that sea power, maritime supremacy, and strategic control of both the oceans and the *Rimland* (the Earth's Ring according to Sir Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman) always remain the key of success for the occidental, Anglo-Saxon naval powers; airpower and nuclear weapons are just added to the stew.

Certainly the last observation may sound embarrassing, since the strategic significance of particular features of geography has greatly varied through out history due to endless social, political, cultural and, most particularly, technological development of every kind. Yet, to put an example forward, the maritime defiles connecting the Aegean and the Black Seas, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, retained a strategic importance – and a pretty major one – which has defied time, technology, and changing politics and ideologies: Those defiles were critical to Hellenic security against Persia; vital for Athens' food supply from the Crimea; provided refuge for the “*basilikon ploimon*”, the Royal Fleet of the Eastern Roman (“Byzantine”) Empire, and served as the protected central hub from which the Byzantine Greeks flexibly could choose to concentrate in the Aegean or the Black Sea (Euxinus Pontus). Thus, both mediaeval Greeks and, later, Ottoman Turks gained considerable geostrategic profit, one after the other, from maintaining a two-sea fleet on the cheap, thank geography. Besides, in late mediaeval and early modern times, the same maritime defiles were crucial to the security of Venetian and Genoese trade with Asia.

Through out modern history, notably since the emergence of Britain as a sea power, the famous Straits have proved to be the golden key to keeping Russia out of the Mediterranean, prohibiting Russian continental power from becoming a serious naval power, thus securing British maritime supremacy – and this meant, to some extent at least, global hegemony. Hence, the impressively persistent British support for maintaining the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire (*nota bene*: at cost of all Christian peoples of the Empire) as well as London's steadily strong

interest in institutional reforms and political “Europeanization” (or “Westernization”) of Turkey through out the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were perceived as the best means to secure Ottoman territorial integrity and avoid ethnopolitical partition alongside the wishes of the national liberation movements of Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Armenians and so on.<sup>32</sup>

Quite characteristically, when the “Sick Man at Bosphorus” was confronted with the most serious Russian threat against his very existence, in the early 1850, British sea power reacted energetically;<sup>33</sup> in spite of her traditional suspicion towards large-scale infantry expeditions, Britain went on to send a corps to Crimea, along with France – while at the same time entering the Baltic. The fall of the magnificent Russian naval fortress of Sebastopol on 8-9 September 1855 as well as the subsequent Treaty of Paris (1856) bear proof of Anglo-Saxon determination to prevent Czar’s continental power from becoming a naval power, thus effecting the end of a four-hundred year long Columbian Era characterized by the preponderance of sea power over land power – the nightmare of strategists such as Sir Halford J. Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman, Henry Kissinger or Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Most recently, during the Cold War, the strategic significance of the maritime defiles has anything but disappeared – in spite of unconceivable technological development and strategic changes, including military technologies, nuclear strategies and so on. The Straits turned out, once again, to be crucial within the framework of the occidental, Anglo-Saxon sea power’s strategy aiming at the confinement of the (Soviet) Russian Black Sea Fleet.

At this point, the objection might be registered that air power has greatly reduced the strategic importance of the guarding of Bosphorus and the Dardanelles; yet, under careful examination this objection appears to be no sound; one should remind of the acute power and influence antagonism between occidental sea powers and nations of the Rimland, on the one side, and Eurasian, Soviet continental power, on the other side, over the Straits and the Aegean Sea from the very beginning of the Cold War era to its end. Besides, from a strategic point of view, sea power and air power are “indivisible”.<sup>34</sup>

In fact, a lesson learned from history and geopolitics, if any, is that, much to our own surprise, some factors were as relevant for occidental, Anglo-Saxon sea powers and nations of the Rimland dealing with Eurasian continental powers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century AD (and they still remain in the 21<sup>st</sup> century) as they were for Athenian sea power facing Spartan land power in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Albeit all impressive changes having occurred during the last twenty-five centuries regarding military, transportations and other technologies, ancient “Prussian” land power Sparta was not able to oppose effectively the system of war devised by sea power Athens, at least not until it began to think in terms of naval power and act as such, during the last phase of the *Peloponnesian War (Deceleian War)* – nor was the *Kontinentalmacht* German Reich capable of facing the threat posed by a hostile sea power guarding the Straits of Dover on the flanks of its *Kontinentalblock (Festung Europa)*.

The fact that Sparta finally prevailed in the Peloponnesian War could not be considered as a strong argument in favor of continental power supremacy since Sparta was able to solve its strategic problem only after the Athenian rival had widely overreached himself with the fateful *Sicilian Expedition* (415-413 BC) – and after Sparta began to think, plan and operate as a naval power, building an impressive fleet under the brilliant command of Admiral *Lysander* and applying such “classic” sea power strategies as naval blockade of Attica, forward defense inside the enemy’s own territory and so on.

To put an analogy forward, one should not blame land power for Germany’s defeat in the Eastern Front. Andreas Hillgruber has made an essential point proving that the “*Unternehmen Barbarossa*” was actually the desperate attempt of a strategically baffled Germany to deal with the fact (not expected by Hitler) that England persistently went on rejecting all his famous “generous offers” of summer 1940, even after France had collapsed.<sup>35</sup> In fact, the fatal “*Flucht nach vorne*” eastwards was undertaken by the German Reich –actually, by Hitler himself– in order to escape its coming strategic encirclement (*strategische Einkreisung*), though not few responsible officials within the military and the administration were aware of the fact that this adventure was going far beyond the logistic reach of both the *Wehrmacht* and the *Reichsindustrie*. Thus, the strategic situation with no exit that the German Reich faced in 1941 could rather be considered as additional evidence of the long-term strategic advantages of Anglo-Saxon

sea power. To put it with the words of Field-Marshal Viscount Montgomery: “From the days when humans first began to use the seas, the great lesson of history is that the enemy who is confined to a land strategy is in the end defeated.”<sup>36</sup>

All this should not be taken to mean that the maritime powers always prevail – for they do not. Being maritime brings vulnerabilities as well as opportunities. Many argued at the time of the Cold War that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had such dangerous vulnerabilities too. As its name suggests, it was an alliance of sea nations and nations of the *Rimland* as much separated by the ocean as it was joined by it. Its strategic coherence and economic survival depended on sea-based transportation, which sometimes seemed dangerously exposed to the Soviet Navy and land-based air-forces.

It has been well said that “historically, maritime forces have tended to be associated with state power, competitive security concepts and the pursuit of national interests”.<sup>37</sup> As a realist strategist, Mahan was skeptical about the capacity of most states to cooperate peacefully with each other, but none the less concluded that a transnational maritime consortium (“a community of commercial interests and righteous ideals”),<sup>38</sup> in this case comprising the United States and Britain, would be needed to defend the security of a large and expanding system of international trade. Neither country, he thought, had the resources to perform the task on their own, but together they could do the job. Moreover, because, by definition, particularly maritime countries are the most vulnerable to disruptions to the system, they will tend to be at the forefront of global consortia attempting to supply security to the regions that need it.

Whether a “*Reluctant Hegemon*” or not, the United States is, for the time being, the most likely leader of any coalition dealing with rogue states, failed or failing states, and international outlaws. In the United States itself, sea power is sometimes considered as an almost de-nationalized, common and public good – the United States being, in the internet phrase, a kind of “*systems administrator*” for the global trading system. Its function is to defend the system against maritime crime, local disorders and wars, as threats to the common maritime interest of all. It is noteworthy that the origin of such ideas goes back to Theodore Roosevelt (by the way: Th. Roosevelt had met Mahan as a fellow scholar during his time as a Visiting

Speaker at the Naval War College in Newport, long before he was elected a President of the United States).<sup>39</sup>

The NATO concept of a “*framework nation*” is a variant of the same idea. This is a country which its allies agree should set the agenda regarding a regional security issue and then be responsible for driving the process forward by securing political agreement as to the threat, and what should be done about it. It will only be possible to locate the leader and to engage in effective maritime cooperation if there is general agreement on the political aims of the exercise; differences of opinion at the level of grand strategy will tend to filter down, finding expression in such things as different rules of engagement which complicate and confuse coalition operation and tactics. One already had plenty of these things in the past; and it is well known that so called coalition interoperability problems are often essentially political in origin.

It has been said by Professor Donald Stoker that “collective security arrangements do not inevitably produce peace. No system of security is successful if its members are not willing to support it. Their will to participate in defense must exist; intention is never enough.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover, here are needed highly qualified leadership, confidence, trust, experience and well defined, rational and pragmatic political goals.

It must be assumed as a plain fact that the international system will continue to be characterized by what the great Hans J. Morgenthau once called *Machttrieb* (power instinct). Conflicts are to be expected – conflicts of interests with emerging continental powers and conflicts of values and identities, particularly in view of ongoing *Islamofascism*.

Hence, for the foreseeable future, it will be an imperative necessity to maintain an efficient coalition of great, middle and small sea powers, maritime nations and nations of the *Rimland* defending international order and the core values of the occidental, Aristotelian-Jeffersonian heritage – in particular because the EU is not (and will never become) a great strategic power.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in William E. Livezey, *Mahan on Sea Power* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981) 281-282.

- <sup>2</sup> Cited in Peter Padfield, *Maritime Supremacy and the Opening of the Western Mind*, (Woodstock and New York: Overlook Press, 1999) 1-2. On Raleigh see Hermann Kinder / Werner Hilgemann, *dtv-Atlas zur Weltgeschichte*, Band I. (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991) 277.
- <sup>3</sup> See Sir Julian Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, with an introduction of Eric Grove, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988), first published 1911, 67.
- <sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Till, *Sea power* (London / Portland: Frank Cass, 2006), first publ. in 2004, 2.
- <sup>5</sup> Richard Harding, *Sea power and Naval Warfare, 1650-1830* (London: University College Press, 1999) 121.
- <sup>6</sup> Padfield, *ibid.* 3.
- <sup>7</sup> N. A. M. (Nicholas Andrew Martin) Rodger, *The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain*, vol. I, (London: HarperCollins, 1997) 433.
- <sup>8</sup> Herbert W. Richmond, *Sea Power in the Modern World* (London, Bell, 1934), 38.
- <sup>9</sup> Harding, *ibid.*, 286.
- <sup>10</sup> Rodger (1997), 433-4.
- <sup>11</sup> Cited in Till, *ibid.*, 80.
- <sup>12</sup> J. Cable, *The Political Influence of Naval Force in History*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 22-23.
- <sup>13</sup> Paul C. Forage, "The Foundations of Chinese Naval Supremacy in the Twelfth Century" in Jack Sweetman *et al.* (eds.), *New Interpretations: Naval History 10<sup>th</sup> Symposium*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 6; cited in Till, *ibid.*, 19.
- <sup>14</sup> Till, *ibid.* 21.
- <sup>15</sup> Cited in Padfield, *ibid.* 69.
- <sup>16</sup> Rodger (1997), 432-433.
- <sup>17</sup> Corbett (1988), 49.
- <sup>18</sup> Hermann Kinder / Werner Hilgemann, *dtv-Atlas zur Weltgeschichte*, Band (vol.) II (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991), 369.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 393.
- <sup>20</sup> Kinder / Hilgemann, *ibid.* II, 371.
- <sup>21</sup> Ilias Iliopoulos, *Introduction to Naval History: Sea Power, Naval Strategy, Maritime Geography, Command of the Sea*, (officially accepted as a Hellenic Naval Academy's textbook on Naval History), Athens: Dounias, 2008), 97. Further see Bern Anderson, *By Sea and by River: The Naval History of the Civil War*, (New York: De Capo, 1989).
- <sup>22</sup> Donald Stoker, *Britain, France and Naval Arms in the Baltic 1919-1939. Grand Strategy and Failure*, (London / Portland: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 27.

- <sup>23</sup> Joshua E. London, *Victory in Tripoli. How America's War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation*, (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005).
- <sup>24</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (London: Methuen, 1965), first pub. 1890, v & viii.
- <sup>25</sup> See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, (New York: Random House, 1987).
- <sup>26</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. 1: The Gathering Storm* (London: Guild, 1985), first publ. 1948, 186-187.
- <sup>27</sup> Kinder / Hilgemann, *ibid.*, Bd. (vol.) I, 269, 283.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 387-88.
- <sup>30</sup> See Halford J. Mackinder, *Britain and the British Seas*, (Oxford, 1906 & 1915); *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, (New York, 1942 & 1962). Also see Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Die einzige Weltmacht; Amerikas Strategie der Vorherrschaft (The Grand Chessboard; American Primary and Its Geostrategic Imperatives)* (Frankfurt a.M., 1999); „A Plan for Europe“, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1995. Also see Henry A. Kissinger, *Die sechs Säulen der Weltordnung*, (Berlin, 1994); *Die Vernunft der Nationen (Diplomacy)*, (Berlin, 1996).
- <sup>31</sup> See Brzezinski, Kissinger, Mearsheimer *et al.*
- <sup>32</sup> Edgar Hösch, *Geschichte der Balkanländer; Von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1988), 114-15.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123-29.
- <sup>34</sup> Eric Grove, *The Future of Sea Power* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 138.
- <sup>35</sup> See, particularly, Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie, Politik und Kriegführung 1940-1941* 3. Auflage (Munich: Bernard & Graefe Verlag, 1993).
- <sup>36</sup> Quoted in Admiral Sir Peter Gretton, *Maritime Strategy: A Study of Defense Problems* (New York: Payer, 1965), 43.
- <sup>37</sup> Michael Pugh (ed.), *Maritime Security and Peacekeeping: A Framework for United Nations Operations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 237.
- <sup>38</sup> Mahan, A. T., *Retrospect and Prospect*, (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1902), 177.
- <sup>39</sup> Iliopoulos, *ibid.*, 148.
- <sup>40</sup> Donald Stoker, *Britain, France and Naval Arms in the Baltic 1919-1939. Grand Strategy and Failure* (London / Portland: Frank Cass, 2003), 12.