

## MARITIME STRATEGIES BASED ON THREATS

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Threat-based maritime security strategies, depending on nation and culture, geopolitics and political-military developments at a given moment, can be interpreted differently, and it is important to know the entire theoretical spectrum and the historical-causal evolution of concepts that are interdependent. The presence of an explicit link between maritime security, threats and geopolitics is measured by the unequivocal emergence of the concept of geopolitics and the certainty that threats affect maritime security. The direct influence of threats and geopolitical factors on maritime security objectives is measured by the emergence of risks to maritime geopolitical interests and geographical positions when it comes to maritime safety objectives.

**Keywords:** maritime strategy; asymmetric threats; geopolitics.

Maritime strategy is designed to protect the state's maritime interests in peace and war. In addition, it has the potential to support national objectives, particularly in foreign policy. From a legal point of view, naval forces protect decisive points or, why not, centers of gravity. Using the term maritime strategy, at least historically and legally, shows us the direction toward a crisis or war situation.

Milan VEGO, in his book *Maritime Strategy and Sea Control: Theory and Practice*<sup>1</sup>, describes *sea control* as the concept that, after the Second World War, gradually replaced the concept of *command of the sea*, which seemed to be too absolute in significance. The *command* term seems to tend in semantics perspective towards an absolute situation, while *control* extends somehow the meaning of the concept. *Sea control* is limited in space and time. During a crisis situation between two super powers, no sea power will assume being able to *control the sea*, in a sea or region of it, for a long period of time, by none of them, simultaneously.

A simple definition of *sea control* would be the following: "the ability of a state to use the assigned sea / ocean region and associated airspace

for military and civilian purposes and to prohibit the enemy in case of war to use them. However, this definition does not take into account the fact that sea control has different forms and levels of implementation". This does not mean that enemy means and forces do not act in the area but that the enemy cannot use them to create a military or civilian advantage. An area of action can be considered under control when its own naval and air forces can operate unhindered and when maritime traffic can be safely executed without being attacked by the enemy without taking a considerable risk.

Sea control is defined by U.S. legislation thus: "A naval force has command of the sea when it is so strong that its rivals cannot attack it directly. Also, sea control is a dominance that can apply to its waters at a small distance from the seashore or it can extend far into the oceans. Having control of the sea, a country (or alliance) can ensure that its own military and commercial ships can move freely, while its rivals are forced either to stay in the port or try to execute masked actions. Sea control also allows amphibious operations to be executed at any time that expands the strategic options of land forces"<sup>2</sup>.

NATO's definition of the control of the sea is: "The condition that exists when someone has the freedom to act in an area of the sea for their own purposes for a period of time in submarine, surface and air environments"<sup>3</sup>. As we can notice, there are different definitions with multiple points

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of view, control of the sea being either a condition existing at a given moment, or a state characterized by evolution over time or a proper action.

Corbett defines maritime strategy as “the part that determines the actions of the fleet when the strategy has determined the role that it (the fleet) has to play in relation to the action of the land forces”<sup>4</sup> and its main role to “determining the mutual relations between the land forces and the naval ones in a war”<sup>5</sup>. He identified that there was no Navy that had fulfilled all its missions. By defining the command of the sea as the local control of maritime communications, for military or commercial ships, Corbett appreciated the importance of *local command of the sea* as the immediate objective of peace and wartime strategies. Thus, “naval war is composed not only of the methods that will lead to the accomplishment of the local command of the sea, but also of the methods by which we can use this command for strategic objectives”<sup>6</sup>.

Maritime strategy is an integral part of great strategy and the relationship between the two is defined by John B. Hattendorf: “In its broadest sense, a grand strategy is the comprehensive direction of the power to achieve certain national goals. ... The maritime strategy is the direction of all aspects of national power that is related to the interests of the nation at sea .... Maritime strategy involves other functions of the state power that include diplomacy, safety and protection of trade at sea, fishing, exploitation ... and the defense of the exclusive economic zone, the defense of the seaside, the security of the borders, the protection of islands, participation in regional and world concerns about the use of oceans, its related airspace and continental shelf”<sup>7</sup>.

Corbett identified the common war by stating the following: “We are accustomed, sometimes from convenience and sometimes because of the inability to think scientifically, to talking about naval strategy and military strategy as distinct branches of knowledge that have nothing in common. War theory is the one that highlights their intimate relationship ... the combination of the two is a more complex strategy that regards the fleet and the army as a single weapon that coordinates their action and indicates the lines that each should act in order to achieve the full power of the two”<sup>8</sup>. This principle was fully proven by the UK in the Falkland War, when the proper and

balanced application of maritime and land forces, in a synchronized campaign resulted in the British victory. In the Gulf War, the maritime component, aircraft carriers, and airborne components carried out perfectly synchronized missions against the Iraqi air force.

There are states or state actors who may try to exploit the sea for their own benefit by exerting deterrence or limiting the freedom of navigation. At the same time, other nations, through a permanent and active presence at sea, with modern forces and means, can carry out conflict prevention missions. Population growth, migration, rising energy demand, climate change, continued globalization, rapid urbanization and the exponential rate of change of technology are challenges of the maritime environment.

Maritime strategy is an extension of the land strategy and serves it. The strategic maritime objectives must be set in accordance with the objectives of the national policy. The nature of naval wars must be taken into account in the context of national and international policy. A navy cannot achieve a total victory in a battle, it must work closely with the ground forces, so that they can jointly fulfill the political purposes of a war. Given that people live on land rather than at sea, the final decisive battle must be on land. A successful maritime strategy must attach importance to the relationship between land and naval forces. Only through proper balance and proper use of the two can a victory be achieved.

Nearly a century after Mahan revealed the concept of sea power, during the Iron Curtain era, Admiral S.G. Gorshkov, CINC of the Soviet Military Navy, wrote in 1976 *The State Maritime Power*<sup>9</sup>. Admiral Gorshkov argued that the fundamental difference in the understanding of the sea power by the Soviet Union and the imperialist powers stems from its “class essence”. Sea power “also determined the objectives, the missions and the means of implementation ... especially the naval forces, which in the imperialist states had the role of world domination”<sup>10</sup>.

For the Soviet Union, the main objective was to build communism, and sea power was one of the important factors in consolidating its economy and strengthening its ties with its (communist) friends<sup>11</sup>. Like Mahan, Gorshkov pointed out that geography, economy and leadership determine sea power. He

defined sea power as “the ability of a state to explore the oceans and to capitalize on their wealth, to use the commercial and fishing fleet and their ability to meet the needs of the state, and to coordinate the navy, so that it to meet the requirements”<sup>12</sup>.

The importance of a powerful navy is a predominant theme in Gorshkov’s writings. He considered the navy as a guarantor of security. According to him, the state’s sea power is a system characterized not only by the links between its components (military fleet, commercial fleet and scientific or fishing research, etc.), but also by the inseparable union with the ocean. In his strategy, Gorshkov constantly compares the elements of the Soviet sea power with the imperialist ones, especially with the American ones.

### **US Maritime Strategy – A Cooperative Strategy for the 21st Century Seapower: Forward, Engaged, Ready (CS21R)<sup>13</sup>**

For the US, as a maritime nation, sea power is the most useful means of responding to crises, thus promoting its own and allies’ security, while keeping threats at distance so that it might fulfill its own interests. A naval defense requires a maritime strategy. The US faces a complex range of risks and threats to its own security. To continue to build US power and influence and to maintain an international order capable of overcoming the challenges of the 21st century, the United States have developed, besides the *National Security Policy*, another 21 strategic documents<sup>14</sup>.

We believe that the most relevant document that we need to further consider is *The Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy: Achieving U.S. National Security Objectives in a Changing Environment*<sup>15</sup>. It is obvious that starting even with title we can easily identify all the fundamental geostrategic elements that need further analysis. Of particular geostrategic importance is the fact that even the title answers the questions that any strategy needs to answer: who? (USA), what? (what it wants – Reaching National Security Objectives), where (Asia-Pacific), when (changing environment has here a temporal character, change can be assimilated to the passage of time).

As national security is increasingly tense, there is a need for a strategy to show the necessary actions (ways) to connect the ends with the means (the financial resources and the forces and the naval means to be built – means).

Colonel Art Lykke of the United States Army War College expressed strategy<sup>16</sup> as an equation, namely: “The strategy is equal to the Goals - Ends (those goals that we propose fulfilled) plus Ways - Manners - courses of action) plus Means (the means by which a certain purpose can be achieved)”<sup>17</sup>.

After several decades of uncontested world leadership, the United States once again faces a two-world competition, China and Russia, which is increasingly under constraints and limitations imposed on maritime trade, and of world finances. Both China and Russia are improving and renewing their naval forces, acting aggressively simultaneously against neighboring countries<sup>18</sup>. In addition, both nations turn their attention to naval operations executed far from their own coasts designed to promote national interests that are in contradiction with those of international organizations or the United States.

Since the introduction of the US Maritime Strategy, the importance of maritime Asia for world trade and the economic growth of the whole region has been mentioned<sup>19</sup>. The Asia-Pacific region has a key role for the US Navy, for regional peace, stability and security, remaining out of the conflict for years, and allowing all nations to benefit from the maritime sector<sup>20</sup>. The South and East China Sea is the place where, due to huge quantities of fish, petroleum and natural gas, many nations have territorial disputes and / or claims of natural wealth. For example, in the South China Sea there are three major disputes over territories. The first is the dispute between China, Taiwan and Vietnam over the Paracel Islands, the second is the Taiwan - Philippine contest on the Scarborough reef, and the third is the multinational struggle over the island of Spratly for which China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines are fighting<sup>21</sup>. In the East China Sea, China and Japan have disputes regarding the delimitation of the continental shelf. In the Indian Ocean, there are also disputes between India and Pakistan regarding the delineation of the border along the Creek River<sup>22</sup>.

The Maritime Security Strategy has a fundamental role to play in meeting the US objectives<sup>23</sup> in order to eliminate all types of threats. The US Department of Defense, in cooperation with its partners and allies, is engaged in a comprehensive maritime security strategy, focusing on four lines of effort, namely:

strengthening US military capabilities in maritime domain, increasing the allies and partners' maritime capacity, stimulating military diplomacy to reduce risks and enhance transparency, and strengthening the development of an open and efficient regional security architecture. The main line of effort is to strengthen military capabilities to successfully discourage conflicts and to respond to any threat when necessary.

The US Department of Defense is increasing US capabilities to project sea, air and under water power<sup>24</sup>, and considers investment of any kind, but especially in the Asia-Pacific military capabilities, to be of strategic importance for its own interest. The Maritime Strategy has highlighted the fact that the United States will maintain its military presence and capabilities, to protect its own interests and those of its allies and partners against potential threats, to maritime Asia and to respond decisively when needed. The Department of Defense modernizes and develops the best aero-naval capabilities anywhere in Asia in order to operate where international law permits, and invests in flexible capabilities, that will allow a rapid and effective response to the widest possible range of potential maritime challenges.

Spykman, a prominent representative of geopolitical realism, is found in this strategy, particularly through the balance of power US want in the Indo-Asian region. David Shear, the assistant secretary of security for the Asian-Pacific Security Affairs, told the Pentagon on the occasion of promoting the US Maritime Security Strategy that "the US is strengthening its military capability in the region to discourage conflicts and to respond decisively when it is needed"<sup>25</sup>.

Spykman emphasized that US security is aimed at preventing a hostile power or a coalition of powers dominating the Old World, and that the ocean would become a highway rather than a barrier (economic, political or military). According to him, America's main concerns about security were in *Rimland*. This region comprises the majority of population and resources and is connected through marginal seas. The US Maritime Security Strategy supports the idea that the most serious threat to the overall balance of power would arise if a single power or coalition of powers were to dominate Rimland.

From the analysis of this Strategy we could easily infer that it is trying to stay one step ahead of the evolution of the maritime security environment

in the Asia-Pacific region in order to guarantee the continuity of freedom of navigation, to discourage conflicts and to promote respect for international laws and standards. From the Indian Ocean to Northeast Asia, the US seeks to strengthen its military capability to promote stability and quick responses to threats, to address its allies with the challenges of the region, and to enhance the use of civilian and military diplomacy to promote confidence, stability, and capacity building for regional organizations to addressing maritime security issues in common.

### **Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation until 2020<sup>26</sup>**

The Russian Navy<sup>27</sup> is more and more challenging in performing shows of force. In 2017, a navy exercise took place in the Baltic Sea in common with Chinese Navy ships and Russian navy sent the largest war ship, Kirov – class battle cruiser Pyotr Velikiy and the world's largest submarine, Dmitri Donskoi, from the Baltic to participate in the Russian Navy Day parade on, July 30<sup>28</sup>. Vladimir Putin approved a new Russian Maritime Doctrine<sup>29</sup> just a few days before the celebration of the Russian Navy Day<sup>30</sup>. The doctrine promotes a vision of a resurrected Russian Navy capable of maintaining its superiority over the new sea power, China, and even posing a serious threat to the American Navy in certain combat environments. This doctrine seems to be optimistic, with an endowment program that is more than ambitious (in the conditions of an economy that would hardly support it) and with an ambition level at the limit between unrealistic aspirations and palpable desires<sup>31</sup>.

From a geo-strategic point of view, the Russian doctrine highlights the ambition of some countries, mainly Washington and its strategic partners, to control blue waters, the Arctic Ocean, and to show overwhelming superiority with their naval forces<sup>32</sup>. Other threats relate to territorial claims on maritime and coastal areas, the efforts to stop Russia's access to the natural resources of the continental shelf and oceans, and trying to fade Russian control over the Arctic and North Sea.

Three potential threats are listed in the document. The first is a sudden fall in the political-military initiative that leads to the use of military force in maritime areas that have a strategic interest for Russia. The second is the deployment

of high precision strategic non-nuclear weapons and defense against ballistic missiles inside of the territories and maritime areas adjacent to Russia. The last one is the use of military force by other states in ways that threaten Russia's national interests. In addition to the Arctic, the document emphasizes the relevance of securing free access to oil in the Middle East and the Caspian Sea, expressing concern about the negative impact of regional conflicts on international security, and emphasizes the piracy danger in Guinea Bay, Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. Strengthening the Black Sea Fleet and the Russian forces in the Crimea, as well as maintaining a steady naval presence in the Mediterranean are considered the most critical geographical priorities for the future development of the Russian Federation Navy.

The doctrine seems to focus in particular on the role that Navy can play as a deterrent. Russian leadership is particularly concerned about the militant US Military Prompt Global Strike, which would use hypersonic sliding vehicles to reach targets anywhere in the world about an hour after launch.

For Moscow, special attention is paid to the geostrategic field that could be of great importance to Russian decision-makers. The first and probably the most important geostrategic area discussed is the Atlantic area. Here, Russia's policy is conditioned by the *unacceptable* movements of NATO to develop a military infrastructure up to Russia's borders and plans to carry out global missions in the area.

The Atlantic region is broadly defined, comprising the maritime area from the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea. Very little attention is given in the document to the North Atlantic, an area of action that would require a blue ocean naval forces to affirm Russia's interests. The doctrine focuses on areas closer to Russia highlighting the need to further develop the economic and natural potential of the Baltic resources.

Particular attention is paid to Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea. There is a wide range of objectives in the Black Sea, including the strengthening of the military forces in the region to ensure Russia's sovereignty over Crimea, accelerate efforts to exploit offshore natural resources, reintegrate Crimea into the Russian economy, and

support the development of a robust shipbuilding industry in the Crimea.

In the Mediterranean, the message of the doctrine is exclusively of a military nature. The Arctic is important because of the role it plays to ensure Russian Fleet access to Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The region's natural resource reserves and exploitation potential, as well as the importance of the North Sea lanes of communications, highlight the military dimension of the Arctic<sup>33</sup> in order to reduce threats to national security and ensure strategic stability in the Arctic.

Russia considers the US aspiration to dominate the Planetary Ocean as a threat to its national security. This thesis is included in the *Fundamentals of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Field of Maritime Activities until 2030*. Article 24 of this document<sup>34</sup> states: "There are new risks and threats to the Russian national security in the Planetary Ocean, the main of which being: the desire of some states, especially the (USA) and its allies, to dominate the World Ocean, including the Arctic, and to gain overwhelming superiority of their naval forces".

A geostrategic assessment of this document is highlighted in Article 27, which mentions that the need for the Russian Federation's naval presence in strategic areas of the World Ocean is determined on the basis of several threats. These include: increasing the number of countries wishing to access the hydrocarbons resources in the Middle East, the Arctic and Caspian basins; the negative impact on the international security of conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, Middle East, South Asia and Africa; and the possibility of escalating the existing and emergence of new interstate conflicts.

Other threats to Russia's security include: territorial claims of some states regarding coastal areas and areas adjacent to the Russian Federation's seacoast; increasing the number of states with strong naval forces, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and new generation missile technologies; limiting Russian Federation's access to Planetary Ocean resources and vital shipping communications; and, international economic, political, legal, and military pressures on the Russian Federation to reduce its effectiveness in the Planetary Ocean and to weaken its control over the maritime routes in the North Sea, which, according to tradition and history, are established as being the Russian National Federation's SLOC's<sup>35</sup>.

In this doctrine, a strategic evaluation is observed reaching all three elements of the equation: *Strategy = Objectives + Action + Means*. Thus, strategy becomes more of an art than a science. Russian strategy can follow a rational formula, but maintaining this doctrine requires the intuitive sense of an experienced supreme commander in integrating all elements of Russian national power, social and political consensus, and the compromise between an impotent economy and grand navy ambitions.

The relationship between means and goals is essential but, for Russian critics, there is a clear disparity between stated ambitions and real naval capabilities. One should therefore take into account the extent of the financial and technological constraints that could impose limits on Russian naval capacities in the future. Although the pace of economic growth in Russia has slowed down in recent years<sup>36</sup>, total Russian military spending has risen rapidly as the modernization of Russian armed forces has become a key political priority. Against the backdrop of an ambitious plan to modernize equipment used by Russia's military forces (incorporated in the State Endowment Program 2010-2020), military spending was directly proportional to Russia's GDP, with an average of 58 billion dollars.

### Conclusions

The paradox of the Russian strategy is that, after a profound analysis, one can deduce that one side of the Russian naval forces is built and adapted to the specifics of the cold war, and the other side is strategically directed towards a new approach, namely on the projection of the sea power. Thus, the Russians are positioned in a major discontinuity between goals and means. A recent statement by the Russian Ministry of Defense<sup>37</sup> shows that four Bulava inter-continental ballistic missiles have been launched.

First of all, the need to continuously develop the technology foundation to ensure the exploration and exploitation of the Arctic's fuel and energy reserves is expressed by the desire to develop a nuclear icebreaker and a modern infrastructure for their use. Moscow believes that all four of Russia's main Fleets will have to be equipped with modern and capable warships as well as supporting ships. Thus, the four Fleets should have the capabilities

to perform long-range operations at long distances far from oceanic seashores, both in peacetime and in crisis situations. Starting this new type of fleet, which will meet Russia's ambitious goals, will always be a challenge, given the severity of spending cuts. The state armament program to run from 2011 to 2017 but extended until 2020<sup>38</sup> provided for the construction of new models of corvettes, frigates and submarines, and the modernization of obsolete ships and submarines. Until the mid-2020s, it is predicted that nuclear and diesel-electric submarines, as well as destruction, frigate, corvettes, could be launched. Such a fleet would provide Russia with such capabilities to meet its strategic objectives in the maritime strategy.

To summarize, the Russian maritime doctrine is an ambitious and ample, surrealistic and unrealistic documentary that includes, besides the elements of state power, political and social objectives related to Russia's maritime policy, which extends from the Arctic Ocean to the Antarctic Ocean and Atlantic Ocean at Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, Baltic and Black Sea. However, although these regions are on an equal footing, there is a sense of prioritization in this doctrine. By correlating this document with other official security strategies and foreign policy strategies published in recent years, much of the military threat to Russia is presented as originating from the western direction, especially from Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea. The Arctic Ocean is also identified as an area where military conflict may become more likely in a more or less distant future. Analyzing it more closely, we can say that the doctrine suggests that Russia's fundamental interests are projected near its shores.

Great thinkers, though seemingly outdated, still find resources to keep their works close to the truth of the modern age in which we live. Mahan and Corbett's opinions contain strong points and weak points as well. The different stages of history seem to validate or question different parts of their theories and their arguments. Their reputation changes with time, but Mahan and Corbett are and will remain outstanding figures in the history of strategic studies, with both strategies having redundant points of view.

Maritime Security Strategies are crystallized when the global maritime context is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by global geopolitics, threats and the emergence of a

multipolar global order. The emergence of new emerging powers, the increasing economic interdependence and the shift of the geostrategic pivot to Asia ensure a maritime security context radically different from that of the time or after the cold war. In view of the increasing intensity of asymmetric threats, sea power, more than ever, focuses on securing critical global flows.

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