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# NAVAL OPERATIONS

If the end of the Cold War can be summed up in terms of winners and losers, then it was a maritime alliance that won the war. This is not an unusual situation, as most major wars in history have been won through the successful employment of naval power, with victory achieved by the maritime nations involved. The Napoleonic Wars, First and Second

World Wars, as well as those in Korea and for the Falklands, illustrate this truism well.

Ironically, however, most of the West's politicians and public would have been unaware of the impact of their navies through the course of the forty-year Cold War struggle, let alone their key achievements by its end. For many the Cold War was waged

almost solely by the armies and air forces of the alliances on both sides of the Iron Curtain. However, at its heart NATO was and remains a maritime alliance; and its most significant member, the United States, is a maritime nation. There is, after all, a significant clue in NATO's title. Moreover since the end of the communist threat to Europe and the wider world in the late 1980s, Western and now, increasingly, governments globally have resorted to naval power to execute their foreign policies on both regional and world stages.

The former perception that the major threat posed to Europe was from a land offensive by the Eastern Bloc has been replaced by an understanding that current challenges to European security now arise from far further afield and are sometimes global in nature. Likewise many countries elsewhere in the



The British Royal Navy's Trident-armed SSBN *Vigilant* seen returning from a patrol in March 2014. Submarine operations dominate popular perceptions of Cold War naval operations although the reality was somewhat different. Indeed, there is still a widespread lack of understanding of the naval contribution to the Cold War, even though it was a maritime alliance in the form of NATO that 'won' the war. (Crown Copyright 2014)

world have come to the conclusion that, whilst their land and air forces might well be key to maintaining the integrity of their own borders, they can be very limited when supporting national interests beyond their territory and, certainly, their coastline. The attributes of maritime power have given 21st-century politicians worldwide the most versatile, politically and economically cost-effective and re-useable tool with which to execute their policies.<sup>1</sup> This has been demonstrated time and time again since 1989 and – given recent developments – is likely to continue into the future. However, it was not always this way.

COLD WAR NAVAL OPERATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

The roles and actions of naval assets during the Cold War were never properly understood nor portrayed. The limited public opinions held on naval power – the traditional view of Cold War naval operations – were dominated by the undoubtedly important role of submarines but with navies otherwise playing a peripheral role to armies and air forces. Air forces, particularly, were seen as providing a crucial military capability in the early stages of the stand-off due to their apparent near-monopoly on the delivery of nuclear weapons. The popular image was somewhat removed from the reality. Navies were often the first and only responses to Cold War crises, which were below the nuclear threshold. However, these crises were far removed from European eyes. Transport, logistics, power projection and maritime manoeuvre in the form of carriers, amphibious operations, fleet auxiliaries and naval gunfire support all executed government policy in a myriad of conflicts, but critically outside of Europe’s gaze. This is a situation which persists to this day.

Nevertheless, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, navies were increasingly seen as key players in the delivery of nuclear systems for both sets of super-powers and their allies. By the late 1960s, they were arguably the dominant ones. Aircraft carriers initially filled this role but soon both cruise missile and ballistic missile-armed submarines would be joined by the much more versatile, longer ranged and covert strategic nuclear-powered submarines (SSBNs), whose ballistic missiles could be fired at targets from thousands of miles away. Equipment priorities – and what could loosely be regarded as doctrine – were heavily influenced by this nuclear role. For example, much British Cold War naval investment was

focused on bombing the Soviet Union. The potential use of nuclear-armed Buccaneer strike jets in the 1960s simply evolved to the deployment of nuclear-armed Polaris missiles carried in *Resolution* class strategic submarines a decade later.

This strategic role continued to dominate much of the thinking of the key naval powers during the late 1970s and into the early 1980s. A good demonstration is the debate on the future importance of the size of US Navy aircraft carriers during the presidency of Jimmy Carter, a former nuclear submariner whose views had a significantly detrimental influence on the development of other United States’ naval capabilities during this time. Equally, in the United Kingdom, the Nott Defence Review of 1981 placed nuclear delivery at the forefront of British naval strategy at the cost of a balanced, globally-deployable force.<sup>2</sup>

Submarine operations also achieved a high profile because of the influence they had on other maritime forces. A significant proportion of NATO and Warsaw Pact maritime assets became focused on either hunting submarines – for example, to ensure North Atlantic communications – or protecting their own sub-surface capability, such as the Soviet Union’s defence of the waters of its strategic submarine ‘bastions’. This inevitably resulted in a force structure that was less appropriate for a new world order where the primary threat would not be from a vast, well-known military machine but from the re-emergence of a myriad of the historical, racial and social tensions that had been sublimated into prosecuting the Cold War but, with its conclusion, were released upon the world.

ALL CHANGE

Thus, as of the mid-1980s, the equipment and strategy of the major navies, especially those in NATO and the Warsaw Pact, were mostly centred upon conducting a limited range of operations, largely deploying, hunting or protecting submarines.<sup>3</sup> Yet, in reality, many of these navies continued to perform more traditional, balanced naval roles that have now increasingly become the norm. This has suggested to many commentators that the years of the Cold War were actually years of aberration with respect to the fleet structures developed on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

**The Falklands War (1982):** There had already been hints, in fact more than hints given a number of

naval operations in the 1980s, that the significant limitations inherent in the narrowly-focused fleets of the Cold War era were increasingly recognised. For the United Kingdom, the Falklands War of 1982 was probably a key turning point. It brought the realisation that the Royal Navy specified by John Nott’s defence review was incapable of supporting national policy beyond Britain’s coastline unless nuclear weapons were to be unleashed; a totally unrealistic proposition. For the United Kingdom, the result was a reversal of many of the defence review’s cuts and a commitment to a balanced navy with significant power-projection capabilities that has broadly endured.

The 74-day war – that saw the recovery of the



A map of the British operation to retake the Falkland Islands in 1982, showing the main theatre of operation’s vast distance from the home base. The operation resulted in a commitment to maintaining a navy with significant power-projection capabilities that has broadly endured. (US Military Academy West Point)

remote British South Atlantic colony after an initially successful Argentine invasion – demonstrated the wide-range of conventional, balanced naval capabilities required to conduct a successful out of area operation, far from a home base. These included the almost total reliance placed on sea-based transportation and logistics, as well the need to gain both sea and air control – even if the latter was a little limited – prior to conducting an amphibious operation. It witnessed the projection of carrier airpower, the deployment of amphibious forces, the use of naval gunfire support and, ultimately, the prosecution of a naval-backed land campaign to successful fruition. It also produced lessons – for example, the importance of airborne early warning and control; the inadequacy of existing area and point defence anti-air systems; and the need to enhance damage control and survivability – that have had a marked effect on both fleet structures and warship design up to the present day. It also provided an important demonstration of the significance of naval airpower that was quick to be recognised internationally.

**Late Cold War Operations:** The expeditionary style of war represented by the Falklands Conflict has been repeated on numerous occasions subsequently.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the later years of the Cold War saw a resurgence in the use of naval power by governments exerting their foreign policy at a distance, as seen in the deployment of Western navies in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq tanker war, as well as off the coast of the Lebanon. Additional examples include the United States’ invasion of Grenada, its various actions against Libya and the toppling of the Noriega regime in Panama. A similar pattern of operations can also be seen in the actions of other navies. Some, it could be argued, would become blueprints for the twenty-first century.

Underpinning many of these operations was the US Maritime Strategy of the 1980s. This essentially committed the US Navy to a more offensive naval strategy to counter Soviet naval power, reinforced by a willingness to invest in a ‘600-ship fleet’.<sup>5</sup> Whether viewed as a scam to bankrupt the Soviet Navy or a realistic offensive strategy – the views of commentators differ widely – the new policy provided both the thinking and the equipment by which many of the US Navy’s operations over the past twenty-five years have been conducted.



Iraqi tanks lie abandoned in Kuwait in the aftermath of Operation ‘Desert Sabre’, the short ground offensive that liberated the country from Iraqi invasion. Although the offensive was a successful demonstration of the US Army and Air Force’s ‘Air-Land Battle’ doctrine, it was naval forces that provided the logistical support and sea control that set the scene for victory. (US Department of Defense)

**The Gulf War (1990–1):** A major test of the concepts behind the US Maritime Strategy occurred just as the Cold War ended, when Iraq unexpectedly invaded neighbouring Kuwait. The subsequent Operations ‘Desert Shield’ (the defence of Saudi Arabia), ‘Desert Storm’ (the six-week air and naval bombardment to dislocate Iraqi defences) and ‘Desert Sabre’ (the four-day ground offensive) were undertaken by an international, US-led coalition to liberate Kuwait. This coalition saw contributions from over forty countries, many of which provided naval forces. As might be expected, these forces were dominated by the US Navy, with a spearhead of no fewer than six aircraft carriers.<sup>6</sup>

As in the Falklands War, these operations demonstrated the value of expeditionary naval forces. In addition to the deployment of the carrier strike groups, the Gulf War saw the first operational Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) launches conducted by the US Navy, a major amphibious feint (rather than the full assault suggested by the Maritime Strategy) and numerous Special Forces

insertions. Perhaps most significant of all was the successful completion of an enormous maritime logistical undertaking. Ultimately, it was the successful employment of the US Army and US Air Force’s ‘Air-Land Battle’ strategy, originally developed for NATO’s Central European Front, against Saddam Hussein’s land forces that concluded the war. Yet it was the mass movement of forces by sea, effective blockade and embargo operations, and the neutralisation of the Iraqi sea-denial forces that set the scene for victory in 1991.

WAR’S A DIRTY WORD

Thus, as the Cold War ended, the use of naval power had once again become a key part in the response to global crises. The end of the ‘conflict’ inevitably saw the shape and size of the major protagonists’ naval forces change considerably, mostly shrinking in terms both of manpower and ship numbers. However, this was often accompanied by a process of modernisation, with a loss of submarines and anti-submarine escorts but a growth in the quantity and

quality of power projection forces. Equally, the recent past has seen growth in the size and capabilities of many other navies around the world, as well as significant expansion in their operational deployment.

Certainly navies in the post-Cold War era have found themselves busy, arguably far busier than in the 1970s and 1980s. There has been a constant stream of operations ranging from humanitarian and peace-keeping missions through anti-terrorist and anti-piracy deployments to actual warfighting as instability has increased following the end of the bipolar world order. Arguably, navies have been consistently employed throughout this period due to their inherent flexibility compared to their land based counterparts. Strangely, one major role of naval power in the immediate post-Cold War environment was rarely discussed; that of actual war. In fact many missions were described as ‘operations other than war’ or even ‘peace support’ operations; terms that could be seen to be-all encompassing without mentioning the fighting that normally constituted part of the operation.

Perhaps the euphoria surrounding the Cold War’s end and the swift implementation of cuts under the so-called ‘peace dividend’ blinded many politicians from considering the concept of war in the future. Certainly, at the start of the brief ‘New World Order’ that followed the Berlin Wall’s collapse, any idea of naval forces existing for war was a concept held quietly by both navies and governments. Yet, as the twenty-first century has progressed, warfighting has once again become a staple role for the world’s navies and one increasingly accepted by decision makers. The change can be illustrated by looking at the development of Royal Navy maritime doctrine. When the new *The Fundamentals of British Maritime Doctrine BR1806* was first published in 1995, much of the text concerning the roles the navy was associated with were operations below the threshold of war.<sup>7</sup> The navy’s warfighting function was certainly not explicit as many would have expected. By 2011 however, the fourth edition, now re-branded as *Joint Doctrine Publication 0-10, British Maritime Doctrine*, placed warfighting as the first role of naval power. This is supported by ‘maritime security’ and ‘maritime engagement’. Warfighting is now a visually explicit and politically acceptable term for navies to employ. This is clearly justifiable since so many navies have found themselves in so many conflicts since the end of the Cold War.

**Post-Cold War Naval Warfighting:** In fact navies have found themselves in a succession of warfighting operations since 1989. Two types of warfare have remained constant over this period, viz. inter-state wars and intra-state conflict. Recent inter-state warfare includes the 1990–1 Gulf War already referenced, which was followed closely by the wars in the Balkans throughout much of the 1990s. These include the conflicts in Bosnia and, later, Kosovo with Serbia the target of Western military action on both occasions. Naval forces were involved in the Bosnia crisis as part of Operation ‘Sharpguard’ (the arms embargo placed upon the protagonists), Operation ‘Deny Flight’ (no-fly zone policing) and later Operation ‘Deliberate Force’. This was the bombing campaign against the Serbs to force them towards negotiations which led to the Dayton Peace Accords. The 1999 Kosovo mission was Operation ‘Allied Force’.

The 1990s also saw further actions against Iraq. This was followed by Operation ‘Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan’, the 2001 intervention in Afghanistan, and Operation ‘Iraqi Freedom’, the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The former should be remembered as seeing a unique and successful amphibious operation. Although Afghanistan is a landlocked nation, the forces – troops and aircraft – involved flew from carriers and amphibious ships, backed by air support from a multinational carrier force. Even during the later counterinsurgency campaign naval forces made an enormous contribution, especially those of the United States Marine Corps and the Royal Navy. The latter service provided half of Britain’s forces on three occasions.<sup>8</sup>

All these operations witnessed naval power being used as a first responder to the crises. Sometimes, perhaps cynically, this was to demonstrate a degree of action on the part of governments wishing to avoid the complications of land basing and host-nation support that more comprehensive intervention would require. In other words, governments could be seen to be doing something but still avoid actually doing anything. However, the ability to send messages from international waters is a key component of naval power. Ultimately, for example with respect to Bosnia, some of these crises resulted in mission creep and the deployment of ground and air forces, supported from the sea.<sup>9</sup> In Bosnia, the naval forces initially deployed for maintenance of an arms embargo and then for peacekeeping eventually found themselves heavily involved in warfighting. As



The advent of the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) has a marked impact on naval operations from the 1990–1 Gulf War to the present day. This picture shows the cruiser *Anzio* (CG-68) launching a TLAM during Operation ‘Iraqi Freedom’ in 2003. (*US Navy*)

on other occasions, the eventual success of land-based contingents relied heavily on naval logistical support and the use of naval airpower. In Kosovo, this was supplemented by US Navy and Royal Navy TLAM strikes, the latter using cruise missiles in combat for the first time.

Meanwhile, intra-state wars have resulted in long-term counter-insurgency campaigns in Somalia, Sri Lanka, various South American countries, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, to name but a few. Naval forces – whether national government, terrorist or those belonging to external powers – have been involved in all of them. The international dimension of these conflicts often resulted in ‘coalitions of the willing’ waging large-scale and, sometimes, lengthy wars for humanitarian and stability reasons. Often naval intervention has commenced for humanitarian

A US Marine Corps CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter operating from Camp Rhino, a forward base in Afghanistan, in December 2001. The initial intervention in Afghanistan saw a unique and successful amphibious deployment into a land-locked country. (*US Marine Corps*)

reasons – maritime forces can be used both to protect aid being delivered to an area of conflict and also provide expertise that other governmental and non-governmental agencies lack. However, such intervention does not necessarily ensure the peaceful conclusion to a mission and, on a number of occasions, direct military force has been employed. This can have mixed results; for example, the United States-led forces in Somalia in the 1990s ultimately failed to achieve their objectives. However, the failures have been outweighed by the successes, as evidenced by the following examples:

- **East Timor (1999):** The UN supported and Australian-led multinational peace enforcement mission to return East Timor to stability – after a referendum supporting independence from Indonesia provoked a violent reaction from pro-Indonesian militia – relied heavily on naval expeditionary and logistic forces. The operation achieved its objective with minimal casualties, whilst demonstrating a need to bolster the Royal Australian Navy’s amphibious capabilities.
- **Sierra Leone (2000):** Large-scale British intervention in support of the government during the country’s civil war – following earlier deployment of a frigate – relied heavily on the carrier *Illustrious* and an amphibious task force. The deployment of forces and the demonstration of carrier power as part of Operation Palliser quelled opposition and led to stabilisation of the country over the following few years.
- **Libya (2011):** The 2011 intervention in Libya’s civil war relied heavily on carrier-based air power and TLAM strikes for its ultimate success in degrading the Gadaffi regime’s ability to quell opposition forces. The disproportionate contribu-

A US Marine Corps Osprey tiltrotor landing on the British aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* during an exercise in 2010; a Harrier STOVL jet is seen in the foreground. Expeditionary operations involving naval amphibious and air power have become common from the later years of the Cold War onwards. (*Crown Copyright 2010*)



tion of carrier-based aircraft compared with more numerous land-based aviation assets was particularly notable.<sup>10</sup>

Most recently, operations in Iraq and Syria have often entailed significant naval commitment, especially the use of carriers to prosecute the air campaign against Islamic State forces. In fact American and allied carriers have provided much of the aerial capacity for these operations.

Other limited military operations have also taken place since the Cold War, particularly the creation and implementation of safe zones and no-fly zones. For example, Operation ‘Haven’ to protect Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq was initiated after ‘Desert Storm’. Although a land-locked operation, Britain’s contribution was largely provided by Royal Marines and Fleet Air Arm helicopters, all supported from fleet auxiliaries based in Turkey.

### IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT WAR

Other naval humanitarian missions have gathered pace over the last twenty-five years. Naval forces have always been employed in the evacuation of nationals in response to wars and natural disasters but increased global instability is seeing these types of operation grow exponentially. They are also drawing in a much greater range of navies than hitherto. For example, the onset of the Libyan conflict in 2011 saw the traditional Western powers being joined by ships from China, India and South Korea in evacuation activities. More recently, in 2015 in Yemen, China’s PLAN undertook the evacuation of foreign nationals for the first time. The importance attached to these operations has even resulted in navies acquiring ships which have been part or even wholly funded by national disaster relief funds, relieving strain on defence procurement budgets.<sup>11</sup> Naval evacuations also continue to take place in response to natural disasters; for example after the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 and even the Icelandic ash cloud of 2010. The latter saw the British Royal Navy’s larger ships deployed to assist the recovery of stranded tourists.

Natural disasters also see navies being used to insert humanitarian aid into the appropriate areas. More often than not disaster responders find the internal infrastructure of a nation destroyed or inoperable, with immediate access to a devastated nation only possible by helicopter or over a beach. Amphibious and naval aviation assets are clearly

particularly valuable in such scenarios; for example the Italian Navy deployed its new carrier *Cavour* to carry aid and helicopters to Haiti on its first ever operational mission after the earthquake of 2010. The new Japanese helicopter carrier *Hyuga* (DDH-181) and the locally-deployed US Navy carrier *George Washington* (CVN-73) were both heavily involved in disaster relief operations after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami.

**Organised Crime:** One other aspect of naval power that has gained renewed prominence in the twenty-first century has been international policing operations against organised crime, most notably drug cartels, people smugglers and pirates. Piracy, particularly, has emerged as a major influence on naval operations in recent years. Often well-organised and equipped, pirates have become the scourge of seas ranging from West Africa through the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea to South East Asia. Indeed, pirates can be found almost anywhere there is navigable

water, including riverine areas such as the Amazon basin.<sup>12</sup> The costs of piracy run into several billion dollars each year through expenses associated with insurance, security and the additional fuel used to avoid high-risk areas.

However, one positive result of the pirate threat to international shipping has been increased cooperation on the high seas to tackle the menace, sometimes between unlikely naval partners. This has been particularly the case in the Indian Ocean, where actions to combat Somali pirates have included the establishment of European Union (under Operation ‘Atalanta’), NATO (under Operation ‘Ocean Shield’) and international (Combined Task Force 151) standing forces. The last-mentioned has been the most remarkable in so far as ships from the ‘usual’ Western allies have been joined by vessels from other – particularly Asian – nations, whilst there has also been cooperation with independently-deployed national task groups. The combined mission to deny access to international

shipping and contain the pirate threat – including the use of ships, maritime patrol aircraft, other aviation assets and targeted operations against pirate strongholds – has been time consuming, laborious but ultimately successful. Indeed, no reports of piracy incidents were recorded off Somalia or in the Gulf of Aden in the nine months to September 2015. However, piracy continues to be a major threat elsewhere in the world, with current hotspots including the Gulf of Guinea off West Africa and the waters of Indonesia.

Naval operations against other organised crime groups, particularly the global drug cartels, have also gathered tempo. Besides employing traditional smuggling methods such as the use of container ships and fishing vessels, the cartels have deployed more innovative methods, including experiments with homebuilt submarines. The support of extra-regional naval forces in areas such as the Caribbean has been important in combatting trafficking, as they bring capabilities unmatched by most local forces and immune to the influence the cartels can sometimes exert over national security services. The important role played by the larger and more capable navies in training and mentoring some of the less experienced fleets is also worth mentioning at this point.

**Terrorism:** Maritime terrorism is far from being a new phenomenon. Viet Cong activities from and at sea were experienced by the Americans in the 1960s, whilst British and Irish security forces had to deal with Irish Republican terrorists employing the sea during ‘The Troubles’ in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and the 1980s. Mediterranean nations had to deal with Arab terrorists – particularly the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) – acting against Israeli and Western interests at around the same time. More recently, attacks against shipping such as those on the French tanker *Limburg* and the US Navy destroyer *Cole* (DDG-67) have highlighted the vulnerability of potential ‘status targets’. However, the most notable development is, perhaps, growing evidence that many terrorist groups have learned the attributes of maritime power – such as mobility, flexibility and access – that have traditionally been the preserve of governments. Consequently, terror groups are increasingly moving vital equipment by sea and, increasingly, using the sea to launch attacks. Examples include the operations of the now defunct Tamil Sea Tigers in the civil war in Sri Lanka



A US Navy Sea Hawk helicopter unloads supplies of food and water in Jalan, Sumatra, in the aftermath of the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Naval forces often provide the only immediate means of access to stricken areas after natural disasters. (*US Navy*)

(1983–2009) and, more famously, the terror attacks on Mumbai in 2008.

The Sea Tigers are worthy of particular note. Beginning initially as a means of smuggling equipment and personnel into Sri Lanka, they quickly evolved an offensive role, employing a powerful force of attack and suicide boats, as well as Special Forces-type units such as frogmen. They proved capable of conducting a series of successful attacks – including amphibious operations behind government lines – and engaged in large-scale battles with the Sri Lanka Navy. The latter adopted the Sea Tigers’ swarm tactics but employed larger, faster and more powerful attack boats. These ultimately outclassed the Tigers, regaining control of the sea for the government. The Sri Lanka Navy was also successful in utilising longer-range patrol vessels to interdict Tamil supply routes beyond the range of Sea Tiger vessels, assisted by improved surveillance techniques.<sup>13</sup>

The Sea Tigers ceased to exist with the loss of

their bases during the Sri Lankan government offensive that ended the civil war. However, the tactics adopted by both sides remain relevant in the face of the continued threat posed by well-organised terrorists. For example, India’s heavy investment in a network of coastal surveillance radars – that extends to the shores of friendly states in the Indian Ocean – as well as the *Car Nicobar* high-speed patrol vessels appear to reflect key lessons learned from the conflict.

**Other Constabulary Duties:** In spite of the high profile inevitably attached to operations against piracy and terrorism, it is important to stress that more routine ‘bread and butter’ patrol activities to ensure the maritime security of domestic territorial waters remains the most important function of many of the world’s navies. Extended Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) containing vital resources such as food and energy are increasingly seen as requiring naval protection. This has spurred consid-



The 2011 international intervention in Libya’s Civil War relied heavily on naval power, including carrier-based and cruise missile strikes. This image shows a US Marine Corps Harrier jet operating from the amphibious assault ship *Kearsarge* (LHD-3) in the early stages of the intervention. (*US Navy*)



erable growth in demand for offshore and coastal patrol vessels to safeguard these resources and contribute to the protection of the broader maritime environment. There can also be maritime boundary rights to protect; a particularly live issue in areas such as the South China Sea.

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, the impact of the Cold War had some-

thing of a stifling effect on many navies, particularly in the West. Undue focus on what appeared to be the key naval weapons system – the submarine – narrowed operational focus and associated procurement. Although navies remained the first responder of choice for many of the era’s crises, their true flexibility was appreciated by few.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall brought about a period of retrenchment and reorganisation in the

fleets of many of the Cold War’s protagonists, although growth continued elsewhere. Even more significantly, there were subsequently few moments of rest for the major navies. A series of wars consistently demonstrated the importance and flexibility of naval power-projection and logistics. Likewise, frequent humanitarian interventions – whether peaceful or armed – showed the versatility of naval forces in achieving access, often when other forces



The Royal Netherlands Navy’s offshore patrol vessel *Holland* is seen operating with a US Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry maritime surveillance aircraft in the Caribbean during an at sea interdiction when drugs with an estimated wholesale value of US\$24m were recovered. Navies have been at the forefront of combatting threats such as terrorism, piracy and organised crime in the post-Cold War era. (US Navy)

The European Union Naval Force Somalia’s then flagship, the F-100 class air defence ship *Méndez Núñez*, undertaking a boarding operation in February 2013. The collapse of a bipolar world order has meant that the stabilisation capabilities navies can provide have been in increased demand. (European Union Naval Force Somalia)



could not. Navies have also been at the forefront of combatting the threats to regional and global security posed by terrorists, piracy and organised crime. Meanwhile, the extent of more routine policing activity has also greatly expanded.

The reasons for this veritable explosion in naval activity since the early 1990s need to be explored. Certainly, the instability arising from the demise of a bipolar world order has meant that the capabilities provided by naval forces have been in greater demand. Equally, it appears that governments around the world have been both willing and able to deploy naval power to respond to the crises that have arisen. This recognition of the inherent flexibility, mobility and usability of naval forces is only likely to grow in the decades to come.

Notes

1. A fuller explanation of the Attributes of Maritime Power can be found in *Joint Doctrine Publication 0-10, British Maritime Doctrine* (Shrivenham: The Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, Ministry of Defence, 2011).

2. The United Kingdom’s controversial 1981 Defence Review was led by Defence Secretary John Nott, a former merchant banker. Given the priorities attached to renewal of the strategic submarine force with Trident missile-armed boats and increased investment in the United Kingdom’s air defences, cuts had to be made elsewhere. With the then British Army of the Rhine effectively untouchable, it was the Royal Navy’s surface fleet – particularly expeditionary assets such as carriers and amphibious assault ships – that were slated for cuts.

3. Clearly this applied to only a limited extent to the US Navy, which retained a balanced set of naval capabilities that were to be significantly expanded during the Reagan era. France’s *Marine Nationale* also maintained significant expeditionary capabilities in spite of the high cost of its strategic nuclear submarines.

4. Interestingly, most subsequent British operations have involved deployments far from a home base, albeit allied facilities have sometimes been available. An exception has been recent actions against the Islamic State where, for once, a British base in the form of the sovereign areas in

Cyprus was in close proximity to the theatre of operations.

5. A detailed description of the US Maritime Strategy is beyond the scope of this chapter. For further details see John B Hattendorf and Peter M Schwartz (eds), *US Naval Strategy in the 1980s: Selected Documents* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2008).

6. The Royal Navy having the second largest contribution as part of Britain’s Operation ‘Granby’.

7. See *The Fundamentals of British Maritime Doctrine BR1806* (London: Ministry of Defence, 1999). It replaced the previous *The Naval War Manual*.

8. The 2003 Iraq invasion also saw a successful projection of maritime power from the sea, partly due to the limited host-nation support available for this operation. Saudi Arabia, key in 1991, declined use of its territory very early on. Emphasis then shifted to Turkey, from where an air and land thrust would be launched in conjunction with a small naval holding force in the south of Iraq. However, Turkey’s parliament rescinded its co-operation and the plan was reversed, with an expansion of naval forces in the northern Persian Gulf key to the invasion’s successful execution alongside land forces deployed in Kuwait.

9. The Bosnian crisis is a good example of this, as most

Western governments initially wished to avoid intervention at all costs.

10. The 3,000 plus sorties by the land-based Royal Air Force resulted in 600 targets being attacked. Meanwhile, 1,500 sorties by the French carrier, *Charles de Gaulle*, resulted in some 785 attacks. Similarly, the Italian Navy’s Harriers represented just a seventh of their nation’s deployed combat strength, yet they flew a fifth of the Italian missions, dropped half of the total ordnance and did so for a tenth of the cost of Italy’s land-based Tornados and Typhoons.

11. The third *San Marco* class LPD was funded by the Italian disaster relief fund. Meanwhile, the Thai aircraft carrier *Chakri Naruebet* was funded by three departments, the Royal Thai Navy, the disaster fund and the royal household, the last because it can also act as the royal yacht, with a suite of rooms set aside for the King.

12. Colombia has even set up a centre of excellence for training other navies in riverine skills.

13. A good overview of the Sri Lanka Navy’s role in successful countering the Sea Tigers and helping to bring the Sri Lankan civil war to an end is contained in Tim Fish’s ‘Sri Lanka learns to counter Sea Tigers’ swarm tactics’, *Jane’s Navy International – March 2009* (Coulsdon: IHS Jane’s, 2009), pp.20–5.