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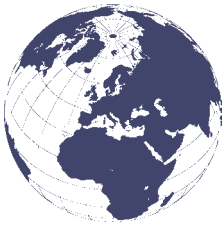

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THE NAVAL DILEMMA OF THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY

Hans Olav Stensli

The paradox that I refer to as "The Naval Dilemma of the early 21st century" can be expressed as follows:

> As the number of potential naval challenges are becoming more diffuse, more diverse and involve more actors – the navies of smaller western states are simultaneously becoming smaller and smaller due to the increased costs of high-tech naval platforms with capabilities to fight wars between states. The result is that modern navies are becoming less, not more, suited for tackling some substantial security challenges in the early 21st century, since the quality of these institutions cannot make up for the quantity required to deal with the "new" threats. This applies to the smaller powers in particular.

Most traditional supporters of strong navies will dismiss the theorem out of hand, but they should realise that the argument here is that flexible navies are required if the modern state is to continue to provide security. If this transformation is to acquire substantial meaning, "business as usual" simply will not do. Investing in, and operating, a high-tech version of old platform types alone is perhaps not the only or most cost-effective way ahead. Instead, one should critically examine what capabilities naval units should have, and whether the level of capabilities ought to be differentiated to a higher degree. In short, the question addressed here is whether or not navies in the Western world should attempt to build a limited number of very sophisticated platforms mixed with a larger number of cheaper vessels. The latter can nevertheless deal with some substantial risks in our security environment. The purpose of this paper is to discuss this neglected topic. The strength of the "theorem" presented above is that it allows us to examine three related sets of questions with great relevance to the Western states and indeed to the entire global system;

1. In what way are non-state actors a threat to the international maritime order based on a mix of the freedom of the seas and national sovereignty in coastal waters? Does this pose a challenge to western navies?
2. Are western states equipping their navies based on capabilities solely required for high-intensity warfare, and does this result in a quantitative reduction of naval forces?
3. Thirdly, does the current trend in naval shipbuilding, concepts and organisation match the broader threat assessments and priorities as adopted by governments throughout NATO?

Needless to say, each question requires and deserves a study of its own, but the point here is rather to conceptualize a major and largely unaddressed problem than to solve it. Therefore, I will address the two first questions in this article, and I believe the third will be illuminated by discussing 1. and 2.

1 "These colourful vagabonds of the sea"

One of the paradoxes of the "new world (dis)order" that followed the cold war was that non-state actors of violence reappeared on the oceans to a surprising degree. Images of piracy found in popular culture often forges our conception of this phenomenon, but much has changed since Conrad called the pirates colourful vagabonds of the sea. Today, the extent and character of some piracy activity has also blurred the distinction between piracy and terrorism. For example, The Economist in October 2003 reported on some "acts of piracy" that

"These attacks represent something altogether more sinister. The temporary hijacking of the Dewi Madrim was by terrorists learning to drive a ship, and the kidnapping (without any attempt to ransom the officers) was aimed at acquiring expertise to help the terrorists mount a maritime attack. In other words, attacks like that on the Dewi Madrim are the equivalent of the al-Qaeda hijackers who perpetrated the September 11th attacks going to flying school in Florida"[1]

While we should be critical of too wide definitions of terrorism, the scenario

that terrorist organisations indeed are planning an attack against shipping or offshore oil- and gas installations should not be dismissed too lightly. But in order to evaluate this as a security challenge, we must look into the vulnerability inherent in the maritime sectors. Secondly, we should address the potential damage that can be caused by non-state actors of violence at sea. While we do not attempt a thorough threat assessment in these pages, we need to grasp some particular qualities of the challenges to maritime security.

The Law of the Sea is highly complex and largely the achievement of the Third UN Conference on the Law Of the Sea (UNCLOS III) that culminated in 1982 (an attempt at achieving a "package deal" for the Law of the Sea). It was a result of a decade of international negotiations. The principle of a high degree of national jurisdiction within territorial waters, and sovereign rights in a 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ), was a high-mark of the formal equality granted to all coastal states. Remarkably, this was achieved in an international system where power was distributed very unevenly. While we do not have the space required to analyse this interesting process here, it is sufficient to say that the scope of coastal state jurisdiction- and –responsibilities increased, while international waters remained essentially free. Thus the historic legacies of *mare clausum* and *mare liberum* continued. For the superpowers, the right of passage through straits, the right of civilian ships to "free and innocent passage" in peacetime, and the continued status of international waters as a great commons were seen as a requisite for accepting the main innovations of the law of the sea. Without the freedom of transportation at sea, the world economy as we know it, cannot exist. During the last decade, some 80% of the total volume of transport in the world has been carried out on the seas.[2] There are no signs that this volume will decrease. The world economy is global, air transportation can carry a limited volume, and transport at sea is cheap and relatively friendly to the environment when compared to the alternatives.[3] Owners situated within the territories of The European Union, for example, controls 1/3 of the world's merchant fleets, and this is one major reason why the EU commission in 1997 set out new ambitious goals for the shipping policy of the union. Despite "globalization", the shipping tonnage in the major western countries is not decreasing, but has in fact increased significantly for

the West European countries during the first years of the new millennium.[4] Moreover, as the sinews of the world economy, the sea-lanes of communication are vital for inter-continental transport. Thus, also the major economies of North America, Australia, Japan, China and India all are dependent upon the steady flow of goods carried by sea. That this transport can take place in a secure environment in absence of major regional or world wars has more or less been taken for granted during the post-war era. And, if -as Martin van Creveld[5] and others have argued- wars between major powers belong to the past, then it made sense that "sea control" was given less attention after the Cold War. As a result, the role of the western navies increasingly came to be seen as a littoral one, supporting territorial interventions. Non-state violence on a large scale at sea has the potential of producing a modification of this priority. This is not entirely the feverish fantasies of theoreticians either. According to The Guardian, on August 6, 2004 *"The first sea lord, Admiral Sir Alan West, warned yesterday that al-Qaida and its supporters had added merchant shipping to their list of potential terrorism targets as they sought new ways to disrupt global trade".*[6] According to the UN Charter, regional organizations, such as NATO, are permitted to take measures to secure the territory of their member states. How "regional organization" should apply to some hot-spots beyond NATO territory is unclear, even more so in naval terms. But U.S. Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has claimed that *"the US would mount a maritime interdiction effort anywhere the benefits outweighed the costs".*[7] Thus, the problem of non-state maritime violence should not be dismissed as irrelevant.

But the fact remains that apart from a few incidents, we have no record of how to deal with terrorism at sea. In this respect, a closer look at how piracy has evolved during the past decades might be instructive. Piracy is defined as a criminal act separate from terrorism. However, there are some similarities between the two. Firstly, acts of piracy are carried out by non-state actors that do not seek any kind of military-technological symmetrical showdown with the western powers. This leads to a second parallel; pirates seek weak and largely unprotected targets, somewhat similar to the indirect approach applied by terrorists. Thirdly, pirates clearly thrive in areas of disorder, understood as weak states. While weak states may have problems in controlling their territory, they more often have even bigger problems in controlling the

waters under their national jurisdiction. These parallels make a look into the phenomenon of piracy worthwhile (one should also note that in so-called 4th generation warfare theory, piracy and terrorism are seen as two sides of the same coin).

The 1982 UN Treaty on the Law of the Sea defined piracy in article 101 a) (ii) as an act

(ii) Against a ship, aircraft, persons or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State;[8]

In many ways, the 1982 UNCLOS was unprepared for the fact that "failed states" might facilitate considerable problems for maritime safety. Thus, the increase of the scope of coastal state jurisdiction also increased the scope of the problems of failed states. It is no exaggeration to claim that the problems in some states increasingly became internationalised in the process. Between 1984 and 1999, the IMO has compiled data of 1587 attacks carried out by pirates world- wide, presumably the actual number is much higher since many incidents are not reported to the IMO.

It is important to note that piracy is a regional and even local phenomenon, although the consequences in many instances are global. Two waterways do much to illustrate this. In African waters, the Nigerian EEZ had the highest reported incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea. In average, 25 cases are reported each year. Indeed, Nigeria is an interesting example of how weak bureaucratic structures can lead to problems for the safety of transportation of oil and other essential goods. For all the aspirations of national sovereignty, it is not hard to see why the US doubts local and regional security capacities in these waters. As reported by Allafrica.com in February 2005;

"DISMISSAL from the Nigerian Navy of Rear Admiral Samuel Kolawole and Francis Agbiti as well as the demotion of the latter to the rank of Commodore, were drastic measures taken by government to punish dereliction of duty which led to the disappearance of the ship, MT African Pride. Prior to its disappearance with attendant embarrassment to national security, the vessel was in the custody of the Nigerian Navy, where it was being held for involvement in illegal oil bunkering, an economic crime which has continued to cause Nigeria painful losses in revenue".[9]

Another problem area is the Malacca Strait, one of the busiest waterways in the world. There were 28 acts of piracy in these waters in 1989, and 50 in 1991 alone. What made the Malacca Strait particularly important was the fact that it is one of the busiest waterways in the world, with more than 200 large ships passing each and every day making it a bottleneck between the Middle East and Asia. This makes the Malacca Strait –like most busy straits- interesting beyond the question of piracy. With energy and safe transportation being of outmost concern for the advanced economies, it is easy to see how non-state actors might strike against shipping in these waters. NATO realised this in the aftermath of the war in Afghanistan, and used naval forces to escort civilian shipping through the Eastern Mediterranean. But what body should take responsibility for the Malacca Strait? At present, there exists no international organisation that can assume responsibility in these waters through naval force, and Indonesia has not welcomed US military presence in the strait (While international law goes far in recognizing the right of any state to capture pirates in international waters, the problem is the pursuit of pirates in territorial waters, and especially in straits and oceans littered with islands).[10]

What then of terrorism at sea? One of the concerns regarding terrorism at, or from, sea in the wake of the 911 attacks, was the possibility that the enormous traffic of containers on ships could facilitate an attack with "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD). Although commentators outside the intelligence community can do little more than to speculate whether terrorist organizations are -or will be- in possession of WMD, the fact remains that as of today, the container traffic could indeed be a logistical system vulnerable to hostile intentions. The problems of physically searching the hundreds of thousands of containers that arrive in large ports would be substantial. Furthermore, maritime transports itself could be used in numerous ways. The terrorists could capture a large merchant ship, such as a laden tanker or gas carrier, and use the ship as a weapon, in a port or populated area. While un-inspected containers possibly could be transported from the port to the desired target, terrorists might calculate that the option of detonating the weapon while unloaded in the ship might be less risky. This prospect has led the United States to tighten security both in the container movements by scanning containers in foreign ports prior to shipping to America, and to stricter ship movement controls being implemented by the US Coast Guard

(US CG). Being an institution separated from the Navy (The US CG is located within the Department of Homeland Security), the US Coast Guard serves as an important addition to US crisis management capabilities. This is a clear example of how the US has the ability to combine high-tech naval forces with quantity. Secondly there is concern about the potential for an attack upon a ferry or large passenger ship, either caused by a bomb planted aboard, or an attack by an explosive-laden craft such as the one that caused devastating damage to the USS Cole. The damage to civilian infrastructure would be lesser than in the first scenario, but blowing up a cruise ship for example, could involve a symbolism attractive to fanatics.

Thirdly, it is not totally unfeasible that terrorists (or what some would refer to as 4th generation units of warfare), could attack offshore installations and pipelines. While this would require some equipment and trained personnel, the economic and environmental effects of such attacks could be grave.

All these scenarios and the countermeasures that were partly applied in the aftermath of the 911 attacks, nevertheless illustrate a dilemma. Precautions against all eventualities of terrorist attacks must be proportional, and if world trade is slowed down because of the level of precautions, then the terrorists have probably achieved one of their objectives. In sum then, the terrorist threat is partly constituted by what two former colleagues of mine dubbed a "terrorist-in-being"[11]; simply by maintaining a maritime terrorism risk, protection costs increase. In the past, a major concern has been the wide variation in levels of port security. With the container trades it is hoped that risk can be managed by dividing cargo into what comes from high-risk versus low-risk areas. Substantial efforts are being made to apply x-ray and other equipment that will enable containers to be scanned rapidly. In addition to the IMO regulations, NATO responded to "credible evidence" that terrorist groups planned attacks on civilian shipping in the Western Mediterranean. Therefore, "Operation Active Endeavour" also has consisted to a high degree of regular patrolling and escort of civilian merchantmen in the Gibraltar Strait. In fact, the more or less permanent increase of the use of NATO naval forces was extended to cover large parts of the Mediterranean by 2004.[12] In these waters then, the contours of a new "regime" were visible by 2004. Again, this operation demanded a fairly high number of naval vessels. It was not so

much that the role of navies was new. Rather, it returned to something very old and once familiar to every state navy; protection of transport at sea from non-state actors. The only problem, of course, is the cost of this activity. To the modern state, operating sophisticated naval platforms for these tasks comes at a high price. The question is how sustainable this level of effort is in the long run, and whether an acceptable level of security can be achieved with fewer dollars spent. One might reasonably argue that quantity would matter more than high-tech quality of the ships that are required in attempts at curbing terrorism at sea and piracy. The nature of the threat is very different from fighting the navies of other states.

Simultaneously, it is not infeasible that international terrorists will single out oil supplies as one of their major targets, since the western world is vulnerable on this point. Indeed, such attacks occurred during the US occupation of Iraq. A coordinated suicide attack on oil terminals off the coast of Basra took place in 2004. During the first year of the US occupation of Iraq, it has been estimated that about 100 attacks on the 4000-mile oil pipeline system took place. Does this risk have wider implications? An answer in the affirmative seems reasonable. Tamil Tigers separatists carried out a suicide attack with five boats on an oil tanker off the northern Sri Lanka in 2001. The French tanker Limburg was attacked off the coast of Yemen in 2002. The same year, a group of Saudi citizens was arrested for planning to sabotage Ras Tanura, the largest offshore oil loading facility in the world. Such an attack alone could perhaps cut the export of Saudi oil by as much as 50%. Neither does this scenario appear entirely far-fetched. Terrorist groups could also easily crash a smaller vessel into a super tanker in one of the busier waterways in the world. When ignited, or so the scenario goes, the super tanker could cause an area of burning oil that could shut down this choke point for several weeks, with grave implications for world markets.[13] The latter type of action does not seem unlikely. For the terrorists, it would demand limited resources, the number of targets is high, and the prospect of succeeding is not small. In an attempt to stop such actions, navies should be able to monitor maritime traffic in many busy waterways. The question then is whether the European states should re-evaluate their current naval priorities. After all, the US has the ability to combine high quality with naval quantity to a degree that no European coastal state has.

2 Navies; numbers, platforms and tradition

The modern naval force of the stronger sea power is a much more complicated organization, easier to direct from onshore headquarters, much more autonomous, much more strategic through range and striking capability, and in many ways more stealth and distant from the territories of its state, compared to those of earlier times. For more than four decades, the cold war gave major incentives for a technological effort to out beat potential adversaries, but in terms of *naval thought*, not so much changed during this period. It was certainly the case that the Soviet build-up of a fleet of strategic submarines with a nuclear striking capability spurred NATO to change some priorities, but as state *praxis*, the planning for and application of naval power did not change principally. Now, for the post-cold war era, one is tempted to ask whether current naval organization and -force structures are products of the past. While a comprehensive survey of all the western navies is unfeasible, a comparative perspective is nevertheless possible. We limit the further analysis to seven western states. The US and UK as large western naval powers naturally are included, in addition to Germany and the Netherlands-two continental members of both the EU and NATO. In order to be able to demonstrate possible differences between big and small naval powers, we also include the three Scandinavian states (Norway, NATO member but not member of the EU, Denmark, member of both organizations, and Sweden-member of the EU but not NATO).

For the US Navy, the 1990s and the first years of the new millennium represented more of a continuity than the changing international balance of power led some commentators to believe. At the level of security political assessment, the Quadrennial Defence Review Report (QDR-2001) of September 30th 2001 certainly did reflect an increased focus on what is labelled "new" threats, vulnerabilities and the tactics of terrorism.[14] However, in terms of platforms, weapon systems, personnel and tactics, not much has changed since the end of the cold war. In spite of the rhetoric of Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld in the administration of Bush the younger, the alleged need for reform has produced few innovations. What was new after the horrible terrorist attacks of 911 was an increased US sense of vulnerability. The oceans that for centuries had protected the "First New Nation" from the evil forces of Eurasia did no longer seem like

the buffers they had been. To an administration that initially showed traits of contempt for "Wilsonianism", the terrorist attacks suddenly presented the realities of a world of interdependence and a security environment where non-state actors added new threats to existing ones. It is interesting to note that the QDR-2001 displayed an immense interest in the coastal zones of Eurasia, and that of the Middle East in particular. There is no need to get conspiratorial about this. It remains a fact that a minimum of stability in this area was, and is, of vital interest to the US, partly due to the substantial energy resources in the region. Apart from this, the Pentagon documents were reflections of the necessities of national interests and the upholding of US values. To secure these goals, overseas presence of naval forces was perceived and formulated as being of outmost importance, and the ability to project power from the sea remains a cornerstone of US military power. Through the policy for its Navy alone, the US signalled a global commitment to shape the international security environment. The ability to project power in order to stabilize conflicts, deter belligerents and reassure allies, made the US Navy seem a most useful tool for the policymakers who perceived the US as an "indispensable nation" in a Hobbesian world. Nevertheless, this naturally did not transform the organization of the US Navy in terms of material, organization or personnel over night. As of 2001, the US Navy's and Marine Corps` operational capabilities rested with the following categories and numbers of platforms and with the following suggestions for the future force structure:

Table 1: Force structure of the US Navy and US Marine Corps[15]

Type/Unit	Status 2001	Proposed Force Structure 2015
NAVY		
Surface combat vessels (active/reserve)	108/8	99/8
Operational amphibious groups	12	10
SSN-attack submarines	55	49
SSBN-strategic submarines	18	18
Total number of vessels	318	Ca 300
Aircraft Carriers (CVS)	12	9
Flight Wings (active/reserve)	10/1	7/1
Operational airplanes	4000+	Uncertain at time of writing
Navy personnel on active duty (officers/sailors)	53807/323288	Total estimated to ca. 300000
MARINE CORPS		
Mef-Marine expeditionary Forces	3	3
Divisions (active/reserve)	3/1	3/1
Flight Wings (active/reserve)	3/1	3/1

The total impression of these figures should be divided into two groups of comments. Firstly, the naval and marine forces of the US were larger than corresponding organizations and platforms of any other state in the world. The US had inherited a colossus consisting of units from the Cold War through the US Marine Corps and the US Navy. In CVS capabilities alone, for example, no

other state or even potential coalition of states has any chance of matching those of the USA. When one adds the US Coast Guard (not included in table 1), the US indeed is the dominant naval power, with a maritime capacity for global commitments as well as homeland security.

Even more striking to the contemporary observer is the continuity represented by the force structure goals for the year 2015. The down-scaling of the number of platforms is not big (although the US Navy has gotten smaller since 1992). By and large, it is the same types of platforms that form the basis for future estimates.[16] Moreover, 911 gave new incentives for substantial allocations for ships, better weapons systems and overseas deployment. On the other hand, while the terrorist attacks seemed to increase support for naval spending, the increase in resources has thus far not produced any effort at ***fundamentally*** re-evaluating the way naval forces are to be used.[17] Inherent in the enduring mode of naval thought is also a fundamental continuity of beliefs.

It is not that the US necessarily asks other polities whether it has a right to defend the freedoms it holds for sacred, current US policymakers simply assume that the world must be made safe for democracy; however naïve Eurasian commentators may view such a policy. Neither can material factors be said to be the only plausible explanation for such a policy. While one can argue that a military-industrial complex does indeed exist in the US, this is not a sufficient explanation as to why the US takes upon itself such grandiose tasks. In sum, the extraterritorial dimension of the US was unique in both quantitative and ideological terms at the turn of the century. Moreover, it was a result of the peculiar US foreign policy trajectory. In the words of Andrew Bacevich;

"The politico economic concept to which the United States adheres today has not changed in a century: the familiar quest for an "open world", the overriding imperative of commercial integration, confidence that technology endows the United States with a privileged position in that order, and the expectation that American military might will preserve order and enforce the rules"[18]

The US MC and US Navy are embedded in this strong tradition, and are likely to be so for the foreseeable future. At the time of writing, the US is comparatively stronger in conventional, military terms than ever. The data

in this section shows this to a striking degree in naval capacities. In other words, it seems that the US is in a position to combine quality of weapons and information systems with quantity in a unique way by contemporary standards. It is also reasonable to assume that US policymakers looks beyond the "war on terrorism" when they approve naval funding. There is little doubt that US strategists keep an eye on the global balance of power, and in that sense, a large and highly sophisticated navy is perceived as a prerequisite to an enduring US hegemony.

The naval policies of Great Britain were based on similar threat assessments as in the US (although the security concept is somewhat broader than in the corresponding US documents). In other respects, there are clear differences between them.[19] A major similarity with the US exists in that the Royal Navy too has global assignments. These tasks are nevertheless described in less ideological terms than is the case in the US naval policy papers. The British Strategic Defence Review laid more emphasis on support of overseas territories and management of humanitarian operations and peace support operations (PSO). While the US documents also embrace support of allies in general terms, the British doctrines are much more outspoken in terms of support of multilateral institutions, notably NATO and the UN, to a lesser degree also the EU. Although 911 certainly influenced British thinking on security and naval priorities, there seems to be less of a juncture in British naval doctrine than in the US with the beginning of the "war on terrorism". This is not surprising when one considers the traditions in British foreign policy, so heavily influenced by the Imperial legacy. William Wallace has claimed of British foreign policy that *"the whole ethos of this country's foreign policy continues to be biased by ideological assumptions which date from the Edwardian era and before".*[20]
The imperial legacy (as in the form of the troubles in Northern Ireland) ensured that both British politicians, military personnel and the population in general have not been strangers to the effects of non-state violence on a large scale. The ability to carry out combined, joint operations is strongly emphasized in British naval policy, but as in the case of the US, there are few signs of radical rethinking of platforms and larger weapon systems, with the exception that strategic lifting capacity is increased.

In quantitative terms, the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines make up a much,

Table 2; Force structure Royal Navy and the Royal Marines[21]

Type/Unit	Status 2001	Proposed Force Structure 2015[22]
Amphibious vessels	2	6
Frigates and Destroyers	33	32
SSBN	4	4
SSN	12	10
Aircraft Carriers	3	2
Helicopter carriers	1	1
Mine warfare vessels	18	22
Total nr. Fighting vessels	72	73
Patrol vessels	32	30 (uncertain number)
Support vessels in Royal Fleet Auxiliaries (RFA)	15	15
Supply-vessels	10	12
Planes and helicopters	182	Current estimates indicate approximately the same number as in 2001
Royal Marines	7000	7000
Personnel, total	43562	Estimated at 43500

much smaller organization and capability of conventional naval force than those of the US, as can be seen from table 2.

These figures give us a crude portrait of British naval developments in three dimensions. Firstly, even Britain as a major naval power is dwarfed by the US. Moreover, the crucial power-potential through US Marines, aircraft and the flexibility inherent in US carriers, is lacking any correspondence in quantitative terms in the British case.

Secondly, as in the case of the US, there are no dramatic discontinuities in

the British Naval organization. The Royal Navy and Royal Marines certainly are to be modernized in arms, and command- and control-apparatus. But the ships, Marine units and airpower platforms remain as the same type of representatives for one kind of naval tradition. In this respect, British naval thinking is similar to the dominant mode of thought in the US, although the strategic picture might be evaluated somewhat differently in London than in Washington. A rethinking of security threats and -vulnerabilities has not led to a significant change in the conceptual or material solution to protection of national interests through naval means.

Thirdly, I find reason to point out that there nevertheless is a considerable ambition behind the British plan for its maritime force structure for the coming years. Considering the almost astounding rise of costs in military technology, the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines remain as large and integrated corner-stones of the UK as a state. At the operational level, the British extraterritorial forces were used more extensively in distant waters than during the cold war. This is a main reason why the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines will remain more or less of the same size for some years to come. The intensive pattern of overseas deployment, it seems, made British strategists and politicians alike prone to see to that there be no reduction in the number of personnel and capital ships. In fact, the level of activity during the last years has stretched thin the resources of the Royal Navy to a degree that few predicted in the early 1990s. We can therefore safely conclude that these services will enjoy substantial funding also in the next decade. In terms of human resources and tactical know-how, this former imperial power possesses qualities that make it a first choice as an alliance partner in overseas operations.

Germany, The Netherlands and all the Scandinavian states were individually far less ambitious in their naval organizations. However, several of the countries listed below cooperated in an institutionalized way and in naval terms even more intensely by 2001 than they did during some periods of the cold war. It is in fact striking to note that these states cooperated on development and purchase of military equipment, and exercised jointly and combined to an unprecedented degree. Thus, the somewhat modest size of national navies should be seen in the light of increased genuine military cooperation among the European states. The variation among them is illustrated by table 3.

Table 3 Force structure of Navies in Germany, The Netherlands and the Nordic countries 2001[23]

Type units	Germany	The Netherlands	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
Conventional submarines	14	4	6	6	8
Frigates and destroyers	17	12	6	3	10
Corvettes	5	(classified as frigates by the Dutch Navy, and therefore included above)	3	_	(Classified as frigates above)
Mine warfare vessels	28	12	6	9	19
Fast patrol boats or patrol vessels, larger types	25 (Plus 30 Coast guard vessels various types)	Numerous coast guard vessels	16 +Numerous coast guard vessels	14 (Plus 13 coast guard vessels various types)	35 Numerous smaller vessels in the coast guard and coastal artillery
Supply vessels	8	6	6	1 (support vessel)	Only smaller vessels for support of littoral warfare units
Planes and helicopters	112		11	(2001: all aircraft under the Command of the Royal Norwegian Air Force)	0
Amphibious vessels	10	3		2 (later decommissioned)	Numerous small vessels for littoral warfare in the coastal artillery
Personnel	27000	12130 Marines: Approximately 3100 in 3 Mariniersbataljon	4060	4950	9500

Clearly, the Netherlands and Germany are far closer to being naval powers of significance than any of the Scandinavian states. Moreover, apart from the littoral warfare units of Sweden and Norway that traditionally were equipped for defence of national territory, the Netherlands is unique in this category of states in having a substantial Marine force consisting of three *Marinersbatallions.*

Nevertheless, Germany is a considerable naval power in a regional perspective, especially if we take into consideration new naval vessels that are currently under construction. As in the case of the Netherlands, Germany does have a substantial number of aircraft designed to execute air to surface warfare at sea. Moreover, it has a considerable capacity for littoral warfare through its missile boats, mine warfare ships and amphibious vessels. The Netherlands too has significant capacities in this respect. However, there is no point in concealing the fact that in quantitative terms, they are behind the UK, and are minor naval powers indeed when compared to the US. As a matter of fact, even if we ***combine*** the capacities of these European states, the sum is nevertheless modest compared to the capacities of the US.

The two Scandinavian NATO members Denmark and Norway have small navies, both in number and displacements of platforms as well as in manpower. This is all the more striking considering the scope of their claims to extraterritorial sovereignty in northern waters. Clearly, the solid foundation of thought established during the cold war that their navies were designed for regional operations and that allies would come to their assistance in a crisis, has not been replaced by a strengthening of naval platforms in quantitative terms. Furthermore, it is only by the year 2006 that a substantial modernization will materialize through new, modern ocean-going surface vessels. When operational, the new vessels will nevertheless provide improved capacities, although the investment comes at a high cost. The Danish and Norwegian navies have become small indeed. If one considers the full spectrum of naval tasks that faces these states through missions in northern waters and participation in international operations, one wonders how the new force structure can be adequate.

In purely quantitative terms, Sweden surprisingly appears to be the largest navalist of the three Scandinavian states, although this difference is shrinking. The legacy of neutrality partly explains the particular Swedish capabilities, since Sweden focused on the defence of its littoral zones during the cold war to an even larger degree than Denmark and Norway. This largely resulted in very considerable Swedish coastal artillery, including mobile units, which partly has survived to this day. The sea-going navy was in a very different position during the cold war; "for the entire post-war era the Swedish navy has been a service in search of a mission".[24] From 1945 till 1958, the Swedish navy was assigned the dual purposes of defending against enemy invasion and securing sea-lines of communications, but Swedish authorities increasingly came to perceive surface vessels in the Baltic as too vulnerable. In fact, by 1970, Sweden had decommissioned the last of its destroyers and almost all its submarines. By 2001, however, international deployments became more of a priority, and the *Visby*-class corvettes were seen as expedient tools for such purposes.[25]

The incremental changes in doctrine, equipment and organization of naval forces is also distinct in the case of Norway[26], and to some degree also Denmark. One political scientist has identified the sources of this incremental change as a direct result of a peculiar Norwegian "defence tradition". According to this interpretation, history was written in a manner that strengthened the army over the Navy.[27] To a lesser degree, a similar mechanism influenced the Danish military tradition, where the historic wars with Germany reinforced this Danish foreign policy culture throughout the 20th Century.[28] In a very long perspective, Norway historically had had Sweden, while Denmark had both Sweden and Germany as neighbouring states with which they had ambiguous historic relations. For both Denmark and Norway, one indirect result of this seems to be a navies of very modest ambitions, when one considers the range of naval tasks facing these coastal states (again, compared to Sweden, both Denmark and Norway claim sovereign rights over great ocean masses and very large continental shelves). This historic legacy came under considerable pressure when forces were to be modernized for meeting "new" security challenges. The latter development, restructuring the navies for the purposes of being able to deploy naval forces in combined, joint frameworks in operations beyond

local and regional waters, became a point of convergence in political rhetoric in all the above countries, especially after 2001. How extensive impact this rhetoric and these goals will have on the use of navies and marines, and whether it will change naval doctrines principally, is too early to tell. The main point in the empirical material summarized in this chapter is that the quantitative reductions of navies are not drastic in the ***major*** western sea powers. On the contrary, especially the US, but also the UK and to some degree Germany and the Netherlands, uphold large navies during a material modernization process. The picture is quite different in the smaller states. Denmark and Norway in particular are now entering a phase with very modest navies when one compares naval strength with national maritime interests.

3 Lost in translation? Naval capabilities as foreign policy instruments.
Modern navies are complex organizations with powerful platforms and a variety of capabilities. If one assumes a radical position, however, the question is whether the western states today have great ships but too small an enemy. In other words, one cannot escape the gnawing feeling that our naval capabilities are being too slowly "transformed", and that the direction of this transformation seems debatable.

One possible explanation for this phenomenon is perhaps that navies are symbols of national pride as much as they are instruments of state policy. Thus, nation building mythologies also influence navies. Winston Churchill, for example, in "*The World Crisis*" characteristically wrote;

"For consider these ships…All our long history built up century after century, all our great affairs in every part of the globe, all the means of livelihood and safety of our faithful, industrious, active population depended upon them.".[29]

As one Norwegian admiral said of a class of Fast Torpedo Boats, *"they are as Norwegian as brown Cheese"*, meaning that they presumably were so indispensable to national security that their continued existence hardly needed any justification whatsoever. In the US, since Woodrow Wilson managed to create the Naval Act of 1916, with its explicit goal of a US Navy "second to

none",[30] US Naval strength was seen as a central pillar of Foreign Policy. It was as if "peace through strength" should be taken literally by a President that by realist scholars has been erroneously labelled a naïve idealist.[31] In short, nation building influenced military institutions in ways that a rationalist explanation cannot fully explain. When one adds the incremental change that large military bureaucracies undergo due to resistance to change during peacetime, it is not so difficult to grasp why "transformation" so far seems to lack novel content in the naval services. Indeed, two prominent professors at the US Naval War College concluded in 2003 that "For the Navy, it seems that thus far transformation means business as usual…there is no evident generation-skipping".[32] They are not alone in this judgement. Two retired US admirals have said of the Sea Power 21 US Navy that the envisioned "family of ships is really a 21st-century version of the high-low mix of the 1970s"[33]

Still, one might plausibly argue that for the US, the naval capabilities still are so formidable that the threat of violence at sea carried out by non-state actors is not unmanageable. It is evident that the US really has a navy second to none. It is so much stronger in both quantitative and qualitative terms than any other navy, that when dealing with state to state tensions, the US Navy will make for a strong contributor to US foreign policy objectives. However, the question remains whether current US naval efforts are *optimal* for the sum of challenges in the present security environment. In this respect, US allies should not be surprised if North America finds new ways of dealing with asymmetrical conflict at sea. One possible outcome of the balancing act between quantity and quality might be to single out vessels and compose entire task forces specifically equipped to deal with surveillance and inspection of the sea-lanes. Especially in choke points, such forces should also consist of troops specialized in non-compliant and opposed boarding. An alternative is to compose Combined Task Forces (CTF), where different nations provide different capabilities to a common mission in a region. This, of course, has already occurred, as in the CTF 150 in the North Arabia Sea. If this becomes a model for future operations to assure sea control and safeguard civilian shipping in troubled regions, the smaller European countries might give significant contributions to a cause that should be in their interest. On the other hand, it will be a hot political topic in these countries to what extent their navies should be *specialized f*or such

tasks, especially so, since their navies are becoming quite small. By using too much effort at providing "niche capacities", their ability to protect national interests in their home waters might be impaired in the long run. However, a differentiation of capabilities ultimately will be the only feasible option for the smaller states, given the current trend of cost increase. For the smaller western states, the ability to maintain a national navy capable of dealing with aggression from other states seems to be vanishing. Furthermore, these states will have a formidable challenge if they in the future will want to dampen the threat from terrorism at or from the sea, since their navies are shrinking as the investment and operation costs of modern navies are increasing. In other words, in naval terms these states will become more dependent upon the US if current doctrines are applied. They will be dependent upon the US if wars break out that threatens their national interests, and they will be dependent upon the US to maintain order in the maritime realm in absence of major wars, for example if terrorism goes to sea. Apart from the military and intelligence challenges of seeking for the needle (i.e. terrorists) in the haystack (i.e. the oceans), there are multiple political challenges as to how these threats should be met. This clearly is the reason why the US and other major maritime powers are pressing countries to ratify the 1988 Convention for the "Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation". The convention extends the rights of maritime security forces to pursue terrorists, pirates and maritime criminals into foreign territorial waters. In addition, important steps are being taken at the time of writing to monitor maritime transportation and making the vast international container traffic more secure (The US has taken the lead in this respect). In the naval realm, however, there seems to be a failure to grasp how naval forces should adapt to these new challenges. This seems to be a quite fundamental problem, and it is not likely at the time of writing that a clear solution exists. One will never achieve complete security, but what level of risk is acceptable in the maritime realm then becomes a central issue. Not to respond by naval means to the maritime security challenges covered here will keep transaction costs low in the absence of terrorism at sea. But it seems reasonable that this will produce too tempting opportunities for those who see their interests furthered by striking against the civilian maritime infrastructure.

Clearly, both US policies and regulations taken up by the IMO and NATO

indicate that western politicians are not prepared to do nothing. On the other hand, the complexity of the maritime sectors make too high ambitions seem questionable in the sense that it will produce very high protection costs, and therefore increased transaction costs in the world economy. Even under an international regime of highly developed maritime surveillance and reaction forces, every port and every nautical mile of busy waterways cannot be secured. While improved and shared intelligence certainly will help, even modern techniques will provide limited safety. This is a dilemma, and it touches upon the theorem that we introduced at the outset. Especially for small western economies, it will be impossible to combine increased naval quantity with the current rate of increased investment costs involved in building warships. This also is of importance to the trans-Atlantic relationship if the US comes to see European states as too reluctant in addressing the need for deployable forces. One possible solution could be to build different naval vessels, and to divide efforts at building and operating high-tech systems with forces of a lower quality (quality defined in a high-intensity perspective). After all, although major wars between states cannot be excluded as a possibility in the future, military forces should also be able to meet current challenges that are less intensive, but still very substantial. Moreover, one has completely missed the point if one sees the protection of civilian maritime infrastructure as safety measures that only serve "capitalists" or the wealthiest nations. For the developing countries, an increase in the transaction costs in the global system might prove particularly severe. As Ole Gunnar Austvik has reminded us in this publication series earlier, no one was hit harder than the developing countries by the oil crisis in the 1970s.[34] Although I do not want to smuggle cosmopolitan preferences into the analysis, there is no doubt that upholding the sea-lanes of communication and maritime infrastructure indeed provides humanity with a common good. Therefore, we should ask some radical questions as we start to approach the entire problem complex of maritime security. Would it be impossible to equip multilateral naval task forces with material and qualified personnel to monitor and protect the maritime sector better? Realizing that such efforts never will be able to provide shipping and the energy sectors with perfect safety, some measures are less unrealistic than one might think.

It seems appropriate therefore, to conclude in a somewhat optimistic manner.

Firstly, getting states into naval cooperation in a given region is in no way impossible. Again, CTF 150 in the North Arabia Sea is a current example, where a multinational task force with units from Australia, Canada, France, The US, Germany, Italy, Pakistan, New Zealand, Spain and UK patrol and inspect civilian vessels. NATO remains a long-standing tradition of multinational naval cooperation. The naval services of nearly all western countries have considerable experience in international cooperation. To include states from other continents could be a feasible way of bolstering maritime security in the home waters of the latter countries, and would provide increased legitimacy of such task forces. Information-sharing and exchanging know-how would be added benefits.

Secondly, if the intention is to curb maritime terrorism, piracy, illegal drug- and weapons-smuggling at sea, then such task forces need not necessarily have state-of-the-art, high tech weapon- and sensor systems. They will need some units with high speed, combatant boarding teams and very conventional weapons, but they need not meet the criteria of naval vessels required to fight World War III. By combining some very sophisticated platforms with less sophisticated ones, the overall cost will be lower than if a task-force consists of the most advanced platforms. And different platforms should be mixed to produce the most efficient set of capabilities. Boarding teams, for example, do not need a highly sophisticated mother ship. This kind of organisation should be something of an overseas Coast Guard[35]-it should be a simple, but very robust, system with teeth that are *proportional to the task in question.* Even the smallest western navies should be able to contribute significantly in such operations, and this contribution partly escapes our theorem: I see no reason why these capabilities could not be suited to both home waters and international operations, and in the priority according to specific challenges.

Thirdly, while no number of multinational task forces can cover all sea-lanes, the naval intelligence capacity of the modern sea powers is sufficient to tell us which straits and channels are most risky for shipping. One therefore will have to concentrate available naval forces in these choke points, which will be a step in the right direction rather than succumbing to complexity in a way that produces paralysis.

Fourthly, these kinds of naval operations would not necessarily involve a perverse "securitization" of piracy, terrorism or other criminal acts at sea if the principle of proportionality is applied. Rather, increased naval monitoring of "troubled waters" will secure a common good and bring about a positive side effect; namely that the human suffering brought about by piracy, illegal drug- and weapons smuggling and human trafficking is reduced. Above all, maritime infrastructure is indeed a weak spot in the global system. Therefore, naval priorities will be of outmost importance in the next decades, for small states and major powers alike.

Endnotes

[1] http://www.economist.com/business/displayStory.cfm?story_id=2102424.
[2] The estimates vary; see http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/19/60/33949698.pdf for a less conservative estimate (90%). Note that the growth of the Chinese economy is likely to increase the volume of goods transported at sea.
[3] Thus, environmentalist groups have strongly recommended a further switch away from long-distance road transport to the use of large ships with their formidable loading capacity. The challenge to a sector where flags of convenience has become common, is the security standard of ships, both in material terms and in human resources.
[4] http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/19/60/33949698.pdf
[5] See especially Creveld, 2003
[6] http://www.guardian.co.uk/gibraltar/story/0,11525,1277486,00.html
[7] "Terror lurks on high seas", The New York Daily News, 21 September 2003.
[8] UNCLOS Official text. Resources on Piracy from 1990 are scarce. Some books on the theme have been published by journalists and popular writers, but these to large degree present anecdotal evidence.
[9] http://allafrica.com/stories/200501311363.html
[10] For data on recent developments in piracy, see my brief "Maritime Security – The Achilles Heel of Western Society", DNAK Security Brief 2-2005
[11] The term "terrorist-in-being" was, to my knowledge, first used by two midshipmen at the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy in 2003. In a project thesis, midshipmen H.P. Rakvåg and G. Johnsen elegantly argued that the rise in protection costs was the major effect of the maritime terrorist threat, and that the terrorists thereby achieved one of their chief purposes.
[12] http://www.nato.int/docu/briefing/terrorism_at_sea-e.pdf
[13] For an introduction to the possibility of Al-Qaeda maritime terrorism, see the article by C. Dickey "High-Seas Terrorism", Newsweek, January 27, 2003: 4
[14] This presentation is heavily based on the following US primary sources: QDR-2001, Pentagon, Department of Defence, The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 17th September, 2002, 2000 Posture Statement, Department of the Navy, "Naval Forces in the 21st century", The United States Navy "Vision-Presence-Power", 2000 edition, "...From the Sea, Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st century, A New Direction for the Naval Service, Combined vision of the US Navy and the US Marine Corps", Secretary of the Navy, 1994, "Status of the United States Navy as of March 11 2002", Department of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations statement - Senate Armed services Committee, March 7th 2002, Commandant of the USMC statement, Senate Armed services Committee, March 5th 2002
[15] QDR-2001: 22 , CNO Statement -Senate Armed Services Committee, March 7th 2002, Commandant of US MC statement - Senate Armed Services Committee, March 5th 2002. For an updated version of current forces, see The Military balance, IISS, 2004-2005. Note that the numbers for the proposed force structure 2015 should be seen as tentative.
[16] The US navy also could demonstrate that even its CVS were not necessarily obsolete platforms in the war on terrorism:"As example, on 11 September 2001, ***USS Enterprise*** (CVN 65) had just been relieved from being on station in support of ***Operation Southern Watch***. She was heading south in the Indian Ocean, beginning her trip back to homeport in Norfolk, Va., when, on television, they saw the live coverage of attack on the World Trade Center, then on the Pentagon. ***Enterprise***, without an order from the chain of command, put the rudder over, executed a 180-degree course change and headed back to the waters off Southwest Asia. ***Enterprise*** then remained on station in support of ***Operation Enduring Freedom***, launching air attacks against al Qaeda terrorist training camps and Taliban military installations in Afghanistan. For approximately the next three weeks, aircraft from ***Enterprise*** flew nearly 700 missions in Afghanistan, dropping hundreds of thousands of pounds of ordnance." http://www.

chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/ships/carriers/cv-why.html

[17] Indeed, the reluctance in the US Congress when it comes to the concept of sea bases illustrates how the US Navy's version of transformation is debated and contested.

[18] Bacevich, 2002: 6

[19] The analysis of British extraterritorial policies is based on the following primary sources: Strategic Defence Review 1998, Ministry of Defence, directorate of Defence Policy, presented in Parliament in July 1998 and revised on November 12th 2001, Royal Navy Strategy Plan 2001, The Next Fifteen Years, 2002, The Future Navy, Admiralty Board Paper 2/00

[20] Wallace, 1991: 70

[21] Based on Royal Navy Strategy Plan 2001, The Next Fifteen Years, 2002

[22] Again, the numbers for proposed force structures for 2015 are very tentative.

[23] Sources: Jane's Fighting Ships 2001-2002, The Military Balance 2004-2005, IISS, Den Norske Atlanterhavskomite "Nordisk Sikkerhet-Militærbalansen, 2002-2003", Oslo, DNAK. One should note that there have been some substantial reductions in personnel numbers from 2001 to 2005. For updated numbers see The Military Balance, IISS, 2004-2005. As always, the classification of vessels in different categories remains difficult across state navies. This is especially the case for the smaller navies in Northern Europe. One can discuss for example, whether the new SKJOLD class surface vessels in the Norwegian Navy should be called patrol boats or "coastal corvettes". Likewise, some Swedish vessel types are not easily grouped into clear-cut categories.

[24] Kruzel, 1989: 81

[25] The 5 Visby class corvettes will be useable in trans-oceanic deployments. It is an interesting class of ships with respect to the new security challenges sketched here.

[26] One remarkable exception to incremental change was the transformation of the formerly stationary coastal artillery into a unit of coastal rangers, although this unit, (KJK) so far has not participated in international operations.

[27] See the important study by Ulriksen, 2002. Ulriksen demonstrates his thesis on the basis of the study of texts on Norwegian defence priorities. Although some might argue that the selection of these texts is somewhat biased, Ulriksen manages to demonstrate the striking fact that this particular coastal state (with some 1/3 of the European coastal shelves under its jurisdiction at the time of writing) did not give the navy a particularly clear priority.

[28] See Unwin, 1996: 208-212, and Østergård, 1992.

[29] Cited in Massie, 1991: 788-9

[30] See Thompson, 2002: 117-118 and Howarth, 1999: 303-4 notes that "Not even Theodore Roosevelt or Admiral Mahan had asked for that much**".** See also Baer, 1993: 59-61

[31] Potter, 1981: 226

[32] Dombrowski et al, 2003: 117

[33] Mutin et al, 2003: 32

[34] Austvik, 2004: 11

[35] This is not novel either. The Netherlands Antilles has a coast guard of its own, combating smuggling and organized crime. This force is commanded by Netherlands Commander Antilles.

There are without doubt valuable experiences to be found from this force.

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Short summary:
The paradox that I refer to as "The Naval Dilemma of the early 21st century" can be expressed as follows:

As the number of potential naval challenges are becoming more diffuse, more diverse and involve more actors - the navies of smaller western states are simultaneously becoming smaller and smaller due to the increased costs of high-tech naval platforms with capabilities to fight wars between states. The result is that modern navies are becoming less, not more, suited for tackling some substantial security challenges in the early 21st century, since the quality of these institutions cannot make up for the quantity required to deal with the "new" threats. This applies to the smaller powers in particular.

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