

Why naval forces?

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Introduction

It is most demanding for a retired army general to address the future of naval forces. I will neither follow the Anglo-Saxon pattern of cracking a series of jolly good jokes nor the German model of limping from one Clausewitz quotation to the next.

What I will try to do is to cover my theme by discussing the following points:

- Is the traditional justification of naval forces and their role still valid?
- Which trends prevail today and what does this mean for the role of navies?
- Are there developments in NATO which reinforce or weaken the arguments for naval forces?
- What does this mean for the future of naval forces?

The traditional justification of naval forces

There is a long history ranging from ancient Carthago which challenged the emerging superpower Rome at sea to the late Soviet Union which tried to compete with the naval power number one of our days, the US, as a maritime power. This long history teaches us again and again that continental powers cannot succeed if they challenge maritime powers at sea. It also

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Op 22 juni 2001 vond op het Instituut Defensie Leergangen (IDL) in Rijswijk de conferentie 'Maritime Strategy Revisited, the future role of naval forces' plaats. Het 'keynote address' werd uitgesproken door generaal b.d. Klaus Naumann, voormalig voorzitter van het Militaire Comité van de NAVO. Wij danken de organisatoren van het symposium voor de suggestie en de redactie van het Marineblad voor de instemming om zijn gedachten ook aan onze lezers te dragen. De auteur ging accoord met deze tekst.

teaches that maritime powers have a better chance to prevail should there be a conflict between a continental power and a maritime power. You have seen this in your own history when you competed with the British for supremacy at sea. Despite the truly superb achievements of Admiral de Ruyter the UK prevailed at the end of the day since it could avail itself of all advantages of the more favorable geo-strategic position. Hence, even the provocative gesture of Admiral de Ruyter to have a broom attached to the top mast to indicate that the British Channel is swept free of British Men of War was not much more than a superb success at the tactical level but conflicts and wars are won at the strategic level.

Alfred Thayer Mahan said in his book *The Influence of Maritime Power on History* that a strong navy plus a favorable strategic position provides maritime powers with the unique advantage to project at their own will power to any place and to thus exert influence at any place within the sphere of influence. It was this capability of the US more than anything else which eventually led to victory in World War II, for which the battle of Midway was much more

decisive than the German defeat at Stalingrad, and it was again this combination of decisive factors which brought the Soviet Union eventually down. But with the Soviet Union gone and with Russia as a power in decline the world has changed dramatically and hence the role of naval forces may change as well.

As there is no longer anyone who can put at risk the sea lanes of communications of NATO or any of the NATO countries the navies are well advised not cry about a lost role but to find out what their future tasks might be. This requires to look first at the changed and still changing geo-strategic environment and then at trends which could affect the role of naval forces.

Trends affecting the role of naval forces

There is no need to present to you an assessment of the situation and it may suffice to say that the end of the Cold War did not bring about lasting peace and stability, on the contrary, war returned to Europe. It is a world in transition with many unresolved issues, with old tensions returning to the surface, with new reasons for conflict and with new actors entering the

scene. In sharp contrast to the gone world of the bipolar confrontation today's world is full of unpredictability, uncertainty and incalculability. This means that conflict and war will remain with us, unpleasant but faithful companions of us human beings. It is no longer a world in which we precisely know where tomorrow's conflict may take place but as we see

more and more international co-operation in a truly interconnected world there are no longer any conflicts which are not of interest for us. It flows from that that our nations will continue to need armed forces as the use of force and armed conflict will remain the last resort of international politics. To prove this assertion a brief outlook at the world in front of us.

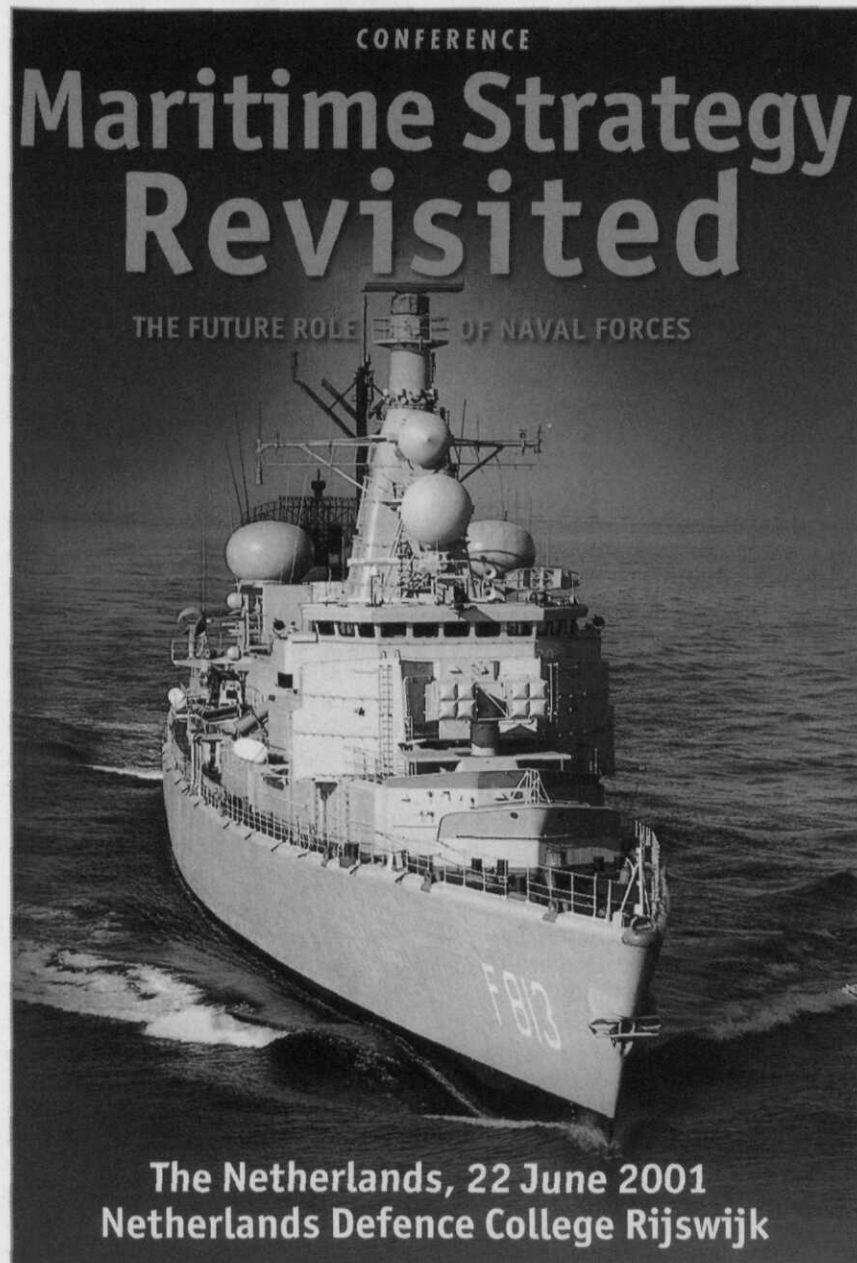
The environment

The end of the rather stable and calculable Cold War Era triggered a global transformation of unknown duration and results. We have not seen the advent of a new world order, we have not even seen the blueprint of such an order but we are struggling to prevent our world from falling into disorder. We will for quite some time live in a world in which there will be only one truly global player, the United States of America, but we will continue to hear the claims of many nations that we already entered a multi-polar world. In my view these claims are the result of wishful thinking at this moment which does not mean that we will not see such a multi-polar world in the future.

At this time there is in addition to the US only one player clearly visible as a power which could play a global role credibly and that is the European Union provided the Europeans were able to get their acts together. The two other players who could emerge or re-emerge as powers whose influence goes beyond their individual regions are China and Russia. Both countries, however, are facing huge domestic problems and will not be too keen to project power for quite some time to come unless they were driven into action.

To develop the geo-strategic context further I would like to discuss a few global trends first. Four issues in particular could shape the future security environment in new and challenging ways: politics, how the state plays its role in the global environment; demographics, as populations help determine demand for resources and economic development; economics, crucial to understanding international dependencies; and technology, the means for building capabilities to meet national security objectives.

Let me turn to these four trends. The increasing role of international corporations and organisations on the political scene is likely to alter traditional thinking about national boundaries



CONFERENCE

Maritime Strategy Revisited

THE FUTURE ROLE OF NAVAL FORCES

The Netherlands, 22 June 2001
Netherlands Defence College Rijswijk

Thinking about tomorrow

and the importance of territories and their control. While international commercial interests may be counted on to influence national planning to an increased degree, however, states will likely remain the key actors. Furthermore, one will probably see transnational risks emerge which could lead to trans-national responses thus reducing the role of the state with regard to security and defence.

Trends in global demography for the next decades forecast a continued shift in the global population toward Asia. Today, all major Asian states are at replacement level or below, with the exception of India.

Demography will become a more potent influence on states' decision making, as many powerful states (most European countries, US, Japan, China) age rapidly, thereby requiring trade-offs in spending between social security and national security. Russia's demographic situation will remain unfavourable as well. The population will in twenty years be smaller than today and above all, the health of Russia's working population is diminishing rapidly. Health problems will also have a severe impact on Africa's population. Entire countries will be ravaged by AIDS, depleting populations of some states by up to fifty percent. Uneven economic growth could possibly result in tensions and crises.

There is some likelihood that the American economy will remain the strongest although some minor setbacks would not come as a surprise, especially in the ageing industrial sectors of the US. Europe will remain a strong competitor for both the US and Asia. Increased coordination of fiscal, trade and monetary policy between European countries is likely. Within the European Union and neighbouring states, economic inter-relationships will increase as joint ventures and multinational corporations based in Europe form to partner and compete with Asian and American companies. Asia's economies will continue to grow with growth in the order of 6-8 percent per year in China and India



Above and below

whereas the outlook for Russia seems to be bleak with stagnation, at best. Technologically, the global environment is changing at a furious pace.

Information technology, the development of new energy sources and niche technologies such as nano-technology and biotechnology are expected to advance rapidly over the next two decades. It seems safe to predict that fifty percent of the technology the armed forces of industrialised countries will use in 25 years time has not yet been invented. These trends suggest that we will live in a world in which three different forms of societal development will simultaneously exist, the pre-modern, the modern and the post-modern society. Obviously, this means that the forms of conflict which are typical for each of these societies will also exist in parallel thus creating unprecedented challenges for the range of employment options future armed forces will have to cope with and for the training of the forces. It is a world which is inter-

connected and intertwined through modern communication. No event can be seen as a local event any longer, most developments will be of regional interest, at least. But it seems to be a world in which the discrepancies between the rich and the poor will grow, in which the competition for scarce resources will increase and in which we might see new reasons for conflict as well as new forms of conflict.

Reasons for conflict

There is a high probability that allegiance to nationalities or ethnic groups could become the prime reason for conflict in the years to come. Religious fanaticism could add fuel to these fires. There are 143 nationalities living on the territories of two or more states. Many of them feel the desire that the time has come to establish a state of their own or to join their brethren living in a neighbouring country. Some of these secession

processes might be resolved calm and peaceful, others may lead to violence, intra-state or inter-state wars. These conflicts were traditionally seen as a domestic issue of a sovereign state and most of the states will continue to believe that the principles of territorial integrity and national sovereignty will allow them to do everything they see as being necessary to stop independence or secession movements. In such conflicts Human Rights will not be seen as the priority issue. Other nations, however, in particular Western nations, will not be prepared to tolerate blatant violations of Human Rights and genocide and a even bigger group of nations will not accept such conflicts as domestic issues if there is a risk of spill-over into neighbouring countries or into a region. These considerations may lead to interventions and the need to intervene for humanitarian reasons will probably be the issue which will be debated most in the years to come. It

will be the litmus test for the UN. The UN will have to face the challenge of sanctioning interventions through a UNSCR or, in the case of self blockades of the UNSC, to see that coalitions of the willing will act without a mandate in cases of blatant violations of Human Rights or genocide. Thus, the need for humanitarian intervention could become another reason for conflict. Another reason for conflict is and will be the access to or the control of vital natural resources.

Three conclusions flow from that:

First: War will remain an instrument of politics for those who live in the pre-modern and modern society but those rulers who will use it may choose to fight against post-modern societies by using asymmetrical responses;

Second: NATO and the EU will not succeed to stay out of all conflicts. They will have to intervene to keep con-

flicts at a distance which means to commit forces far away from home in a situation in which the national interest may not be obvious at the first glance. No intervention will be free of casualties. It would be a deadly illusion to believe that one could fight and win wars from a distance without losing lives. No technology will allow to wage 'La Guerre des zero morts';

Third: The military of post-modern societies have to be prepared for an unprecedented range of missions ranging from traditional close combat man against man to fighting in the cyberspace.

Looking at the world from a European perspective I believe that European nations will have to cope with four categories of risks and uncertainties: Risks emerging from incomplete transition processes; risks of regional instability; risks at the periphery, and new risks.



At distance

Risks emerging from incomplete transition processes

The most prominent example for that is Russia whose transition process into a true democracy and a market economy will continue for quite some time to come. The outcome is totally unpredictable at this time. Russia could reemerge as a big power within the next 25 years or so but it could also see a further reduction of its role and influence. To manage Russia's weakness and to influence her transition into a healthy but benign big power is the big challenge for both the US and Europe. This means, first, that there is no alternative to Western cooperation with Russia and, second-

Russian power means also that the US are and will remain indispensable as the ultimate guarantor of European stability.

The risks of regional instability

We see in today's Europe a simultaneous renaissance of nationalism and religious fanaticism and we realize in Europe that most of the problems stemming from the demise of the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires have never been resolved. The events in the former Yugoslavia may just be the tip of the iceberg. To prevent further conflicts we will have to stay in the Balkans for some years

economic development but there is every likelihood that fundamentalism will continue to grow and that the quest for weapons of mass destruction will remain undiminished. Europe should therefore devote some of its resources to stability of that region, should initiate efforts to curb proliferation and should look into possibilities to counter weapons of mass destruction and the growing missile threat. Instead of divisive debates on mass destruction Europe should seek cooperation with the US which could include Russia as well to counter that threat which will by the way be felt first and foremost by deployed expeditionary forces of both NATO and the EU.

The new risks

Modern technology, societal developments and the attempt of some to counter Western superiority through the denial of access and through asymmetrical responses may lead to new risks. Our societies are increasingly vulnerable to electronic attacks against the various distribution systems such as the banking system which can be disrupted by information operations which both state and non-state actors can launch.

Furthermore our societies are extremely vulnerable to the use of biological weapons by terrorists or criminals. Moreover, we may see a continuation of the mushrooming of private companies which offer military capabilities for hire. The most prominent example of that type of new business is the London based South-African company Executive Outcome which has seen action in some 30 countries so far and which offers for instance some 24 helicopter gunships for one million dollar a day. These trends plus all types of asymmetrical actions ranging from terrorism to stage-managed migrations or expulsions constitute risks for which we are at best marginally prepared and for which we need to find appropriate answers.



Eyes from above...

ly, that the Russian issue is far from being solved which means that instability will prevail in Europe for quite some time to come. But as we seek cooperation and partnership we must never forget the reality that this huge country still possesses the means to destroy the world. Hence we need to continue our two track approach: Reduce the risk through cooperation but remain prepared for the unexpected. The task to manage the decline of

to come and we will have to develop and to implement a coherent concept for stability in Southeastern Europe.

The risks at the periphery

Europe's southern and southeastern periphery will remain unstable for quite some time to come. There are little prospects for a favourable eco-

Having discussed the challenges let me turn to the answers. It seems to be me that three conclusions can safely be drawn:

First: There is and will remain a clear need to protect our societies against these risks which is, at least in Europe, no longer possible in a national effort. International organisations such as NATO or the EU are best suited to cope with these multifaceted and multidirectional threats provided they avail themselves of all instruments of politics to prevent conflicts; Second: Nature and dimension of the

probably be coalition efforts which will include the US for some time to come.

This glance at the situation should convince everyone that we continue to need well trained and modern equipped forces. Increasingly and more than ever before we have to be prepared for the unexpected. This means that we need the capability to flexibly project power. Who is better placed to meet these requirements than the navies and which concept would be better than 'onward from the sea'? It is the prevailing situation

clear signal of resolve and could thus play an important role in preventive crisis management.

Remember the days of the Kosovo crisis in 1998/1999 to understand what I want to say. Milosevic did not believe that NATO was serious since he did not see that NATO was deploying forces which were strong enough to do what the alliance was threatening to do. Had NATO had a couple of nations prepared to deploy a couple of Rotterdam Class ships to the Eastern Mediterranean our threats would have been more credible and Milosevic could have taken us seriously.

The same logic will apply in most of the future crises NATO or the EU will face. The less an alliance or a nation depends on access rights the greater its flexibility in crisis management will be. Naval forces can provide this flexibility whereas air and ground forces depend to a large degree on basing and overflight rights. To deny access is at the same time a very efficient way to compensate the superiority of western forces and therefore those who wish to oppose what they will increasingly see as illegal intervention will probably embark on a deny access strategy. One way to counter that is to rely even more on an onward from the sea strategy on our side. Consequently, nations are well advised not to neglect their navies.

Moreover, the deployment or re-deployment respectively of naval forces allows to visibly escalate and de-escalate as appropriate which adds flexibility to crisis management, another tremendous advantage of naval deployments. In addition, naval forces can also provide exit options in cases where the access to airfields is no longer possible. Looking at the globe and the hypothetical conflict areas one can say that approximately eighty percent of them are less than 200 miles away from a coast line which means that most of them are within reach of naval task forces which dispose of embarked ground and air forces. Naval forces are thus



...and nearby

challenges we are confronted with require a continued American commitment to Europe since the end of the Cold War does not mean that there is stability in Europe;

Third: The probability of conflict outside the NATO Treaty Area remains high. This will require increased efforts of conflict prevention which have to apply all instruments of international politics including the military tools. These efforts will most

of uncertainty and incalculability plus some of the characteristics of naval forces which make blue water navies to be a superb instrument of conflict prevention and crisis management. Naval forces do not depend to the same degree than air and ground forces on access rights and there is no need to ask anyone for permission if a nation or an alliance wishes to deploy forces on the high seas in the early phases of a crisis. On the other hand such deployments could give a very

the most flexible instrument of power projection and the ideal instrument in the early phases of crisis management but also throughout the crisis.

Should one day missile defense enter the implementation phase naval forces could play an important role as well since they may provide the best launch pads for boost phase attack interceptors and boost phase attack, although not yet mature enough, is still the presumably most efficient way to shoot down a launched missile.

These examples of the growing importance of naval forces in the emerging strategic environment of NATO and the EU indicate that the priorities of force planning have to reflect the dramatic changes of the strategic setting after the Cold War: it is no longer the air-land battle which is dominant but the capability to deploy joint task forces as flexibly and as quickly as possible to the periphery of the NATO Treaty

Area and beyond will determine success or failure.

This means that naval forces will be much more in demand than hitherto but not really the navies we knew from the days of the Cold War.

First, the navies must understand that an independent maritime operation does not make much more sense than an independent land or air campaign. Joint and combined operations that is the key to success in the future. All of us talk about it since a decade or more but not too much progress has really been made. The result is that there are still superfluous redundancies between the services, that there are still overlaps in force planning which could perpetuate these redundancies and that there are service - driven egoisms in our minds which we simply must eliminate.

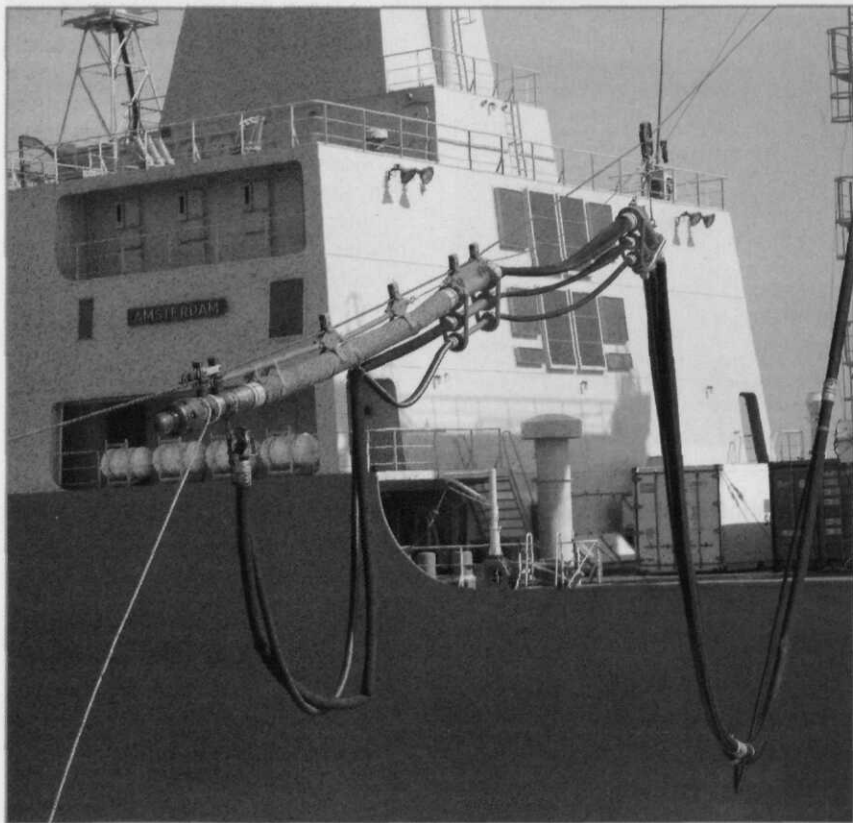
My proposal is therefore that the concept onward from the sea be translated into an operational tri-service con-

cept which would then constitute the first step towards joint force planning. This might allow to concentrate the scarce resources on the modernization of those elements which are most badly needed to implement the concept onward from the sea and it could help to either eliminate programs which really do no longer correspond to the necessities or do not reflect the possibilities of our days. I do not want to dwell at length on the details of this approach but I have to add that it must be driven by the desire to implement to the extent possible the revolution in military affairs which would at the same time help to close to some extent the gap of capabilities which continues to grow between the US and its European allies day by day.

This brings me to my question number three, are there trends in NATO which reinforce or weaken the arguments put forward so far.

This means first and foremost to look at the emerging policies of the new US administration. There is some likelihood that the defense review will lead to a stronger orientation towards Asia and a greater emphasis on long-range projection forces. Europe, while remaining important, is likely to receive less emphasis in US defense planning than in the past. Some reduction or restructuring of US forces in Europe seems likely and this would require military adjustments by America's European allies. It is too early to speculate what this could mean but one should not forget that the US forces in Europe are the best deployable forces of NATO. Should they be reduced NATO has to consider seriously how to compensate for the loss in order to remain able to execute its strategy of keeping risks at a distance from the NTA. This could have an impact on naval forces.

A trend which seems to influence the administrations policymakers and defense specialists is their growing conviction that potential American adversaries have embarked upon efforts to field a range of capabilities designed to severely impede the US



Logistical concepts

capability to project substantial military power into contested theaters in the event of a major regional conflict. They point at efforts of China, Iran and others to acquire quiet coastal submarines carrying modern torpedoes, ship-borne and shore-based anti-ship cruise missiles and a variety of anti-ship mines as the key navy-related elements of this anti-access strategy. American defense analysts anticipate that opponents will make every effort to keep naval forces at bay and to neutralize forward deployed forces. Confronted with this asymmetrical anti-access/area denial strategy the US is focused on developing new operational concepts to overcome this challenge. The options for naval forces under consideration include precise attacks by next generation cruise missiles launched from surface ships and submarines, including converted Trident subs, combined with carrier – based air strikes and ballistic missile defense provided by Aegis-equipped ships. There have been indications that the new administration may skip a generation of technology in major weapons systems but it is not yet clear what that will mean. For the navy it could well mean that the US Navy will be required to stop building huge aircraft carriers and to start designing instead a new smaller carrier that is less vulnerable to missile attack. The key priorities of the Bush administration are likely to be: creating a more agile, lethal, deployable and sustainable force; achieving greater jointness; enhancing C4ISR in order to obtain and exploit dominant battle space awareness; reducing the logistics footprint; and improving space – based capabilities.

These trends implemented will lead to consequences for the forces of the NATO allies as well since without some adaptation on their side interoperability problems will increase. Moreover, the changes underway in the US could lead to the evolution of a new operational concept which does no longer aim at an opponent's attrition but at the paralysation of his

nerve centers and critical nodes. Taking into account that this may be part of a much more comprehensive new approach towards strategy which could attempt to amalgamate defense, deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment it could lead to a new conceptual framework for defense planning. At this point in time, however, it is too early to speculate.



Ready to act

What can be taken into account, however, is the fast growing detection capability which will impact on force planning. Everyone has to assume that it will be possible in ten years time to detect, locate and identify everything which is bigger than 0.5 m on every spot of our globe at day and at night, to transfer the obtained data instantaneously into a C4-system and to task a standoff weapon system to destroy it.

The degree to which this will lead to changes in the composition of naval forces or merely to the need to seek

new ways to design surface combatants cannot be assessed at this time. One thing is for sure, however, there will be changes which will affect the navies as well. But these changes will not lead to the conclusion that the necessity to dispose of capable, potent and deployable navies could be called into question. The strategic factors which I discussed earlier on and

which lead to the conclusion that the navies will gain in importance since they contribute substantially to the flexibility, mobility and deployability needed for crisis management operations remains valid. Hence, it is not difficult at all to justify the necessity to have and maintain modern naval forces in the future as well.

Final observations

But this does not mean that question number four 'What does this mean for naval forces?' has been answered. I



In all dimensions

suggest to the navies of the NATO nations to consider four consequences:

- To think through what it means to embark almost exclusively on a power projection strategy conducted by task forces with and without Americans.
- To consider whether there are possibilities to reduce overhead cost and to benefit from synergies if the European navies found task sharing formulas.
- To assess which of the existing or planned units has a chance to survive under the conditions of dominant battlefield awareness and what options exist or may soon exist to deny any opponent that capacity, and
- To put much more emphasis than hitherto on jointness.

I do not have the intention to do your homework by offering you answers to all of these questions and I believe I have proven so far to be a truly altruistic landlubber, or better put a con-

vinced promoter of jointness but I will elaborate a little on question number two and four. I believe the time has come to consider the pooling of naval assets in multinational EU component forces there where small numbers of units do no longer justify the existence of national squadron, flotilla etc headquarters. Whether the solution will be a pooling of national components under a common roof or whether the solution will be deep integration along the lines of the NATO AWACS Component Force remains subject to careful analysis case by case. But I am convinced that there are better solutions at hand than to insist on small and inefficient national components. I am also convinced that the necessary transfer of small parts of national sovereignty to a body such as the EU is, first, politically manageable and it will, secondly, deepen the cohesion of the European nations. Furthermore it could enhance transatlantic co-operation since the Europeans could offer contributions which will matter.

The second issue I would like to elaborate on is jointness. This has to be addressed immediately since it means to start education in the early days of tomorrow's officers. We all need to understand that the conditions prevailing in tomorrow's operations will not demand to address them by carefully selecting navy, air force or army assets. The only thing which matters is to bring the right mix of assets at the right time and place to bear. It is the function and the efficiency which counts and not which service contributed what. This means that we will see the end of outdated concepts such as independent land, air or naval operations and with that you will understand why I said we have to start very early in an officer's career to make her or him to think joint. Of course, this will also lead to a changing role of the services' commands. They will no longer be responsible to run operations, this will be done by joint headquarters. They will be responsible for training and for the provision of forces to a national or multinational task force. I do hope that most of you will say: General, you are carrying coals to Newcastle, that it is what we are doing. If so the better, if not then it is time to begin otherwise we will not stand the test on tomorrow's battlefield and we will waste resources which we will need so badly to cope with the requirements of modernization and the implementation of the revolution in military affairs.

I hope I provided some food for thought for you. You are about to enter interesting times and you know that the Chinese regard this as curse. I do not, since I believe that the winds of change are as necessary as some salt in a tasty soup. I do hope that you grasp the challenge and regard it as a chance since I am as convinced as I was throughout my military career that it is still true what was said long ago: *Navigare necesse est*. I take this opportunity to wish the Royal Dutch Navy well: fair winds and following seas.