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**STRIKE CARRIERS IN THE NEW LOOK ERA:
Deterrence or Intervention ?**

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January 2001

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Abstract

Strike Carriers were an important - some would say central - component of the United States Navy in the Post- World War II strategic environment. They are differentiated from other aircraft carriers by their offensive function, of projection of air power against enemy forces. They included the attack carriers of World War II, the CVs and CVBs, which were eventually reclassified as CVAs (strike or 'attack' carriers) by the US Navy, during the period referred to as the 'New Look Era'. This was a period which, by way of definition, took a 'New Look' at the defence policy of the United States, arguing in favour of more firepower (including atomic weaponry) as a cheap substitution for the manpower which the armed forces had been building up under the previous administration. This substitution helped coin the phrase 'more bang for the buck', and was designed to keep the US economy on a stable footing.

The strike carriers' role from WWII onwards increasingly involved "over the shore" strikes against inland targets, due partly to the post-war environment lacking a pre-eminently naval foe to counter at sea. This dissertation is an effort to define the role of the carrier in the period of the Eisenhower presidential administration (1953-1961) by dealing not only with the years of the administration itself, but the thoughts of both the naval leaders and the president - himself a member of the armed forces - in the years leading up to the two presidential terms. In essence, the influences of leading figures such as Arthur W. Radford will be examined as a spur to the development of 'supercarriers' : large, expensive models which this dissertation will contend were initially for use in delivering the atomic bomb, as is revealed in the 'Unification and Strategy' debates of 1949, but were later developed as 'multi-role' platforms for use in all sorts of strategic scenarios, all of which came under the national security policy of 'containment' of the main threat perceived by the United States : the communist Soviets and Chinese. Their expense was justified by their versatility in a time of fiscal stringency during the period in question.

It is important to note that the dissertation covers, to a substantial degree, the events leading up to the Eisenhower administration in an attempt to place that administration in the context of its immediate predecessor. The policies initiated

under Eisenhower have been seen as a reaction to those imposed on the US armed services and foreign policy under Truman's presidency. In for example, the 'containment' of communism was first officially proposed by George Kennan while Truman was in power, and the first supercarrier - *United States* - was cancelled under his administration. The first 'supercarrier' which was actually completed was being designed and built while a "limited war" was ongoing in Korea, under the Truman administration's direction, and its design was influenced by that conflict, as well as the technological advances which were advancing carrier design at great pace. "Limited wars" were not discussed as part of the Unification and Strategy hearings of 1949, but would play an increased role in naval thinking during the 'New Look', which sought alternatives to fighting other "Koreas".

Three distinctive roles emerge. The use of the strike carrier to directly support limited-intensity engagements - the prime example of this being the Korean War - referred to in the title as intervention; and the use of the carrier as part of the 'New Look' : The Eisenhower administration's plan to use the US atomic superiority to deter war with nuclear weapons and fight "general", all-out war with nuclear weaponry to counterbalance the Soviet preponderance in manpower - referred to as deterrence. This dissertation will contend that the President himself wielded great personal influence over the national strategy, as can be seen from his pre-administration thinking.

The third role, one which is stressed by the Navy and historians such as George Baer, is that of the traditional function of "sea control", which naval leaders saw as a necessary adjunct to the two missions described above: a mission this dissertation argues was required by the Navy for the security of the strike carriers before they were able to discharge either of the two missions outlined above.

The dissertation contends that the administration's ideas about the use of strike carriers were different from the Navy's, especially toward the end of the period, under the Navy's chief officer, Arleigh Burke, a critic of the "Massive Retaliation" style of deterrence advocated by the New Look's originators, and the man responsible for the building of the Navy's 'alternative' deterrent force, the Polaris missile-armed submarine fleet. It attempts to reach a decision on how the strike carrier's role emerged from the debate : whether the strike carrier was in

the end a “limited war” weapon as Arleigh A. Burke thought - for use primarily in low-level conflicts - or as a weapon of deterrence whose main role was as a part of the American strategic retaliatory force under the Eisenhower New Look, and a deterrent, “trip-wire” function equivalent to the US Army divisions in Germany.

Contents

<u>Introduction :</u>	page 1
<u>Chapter 1 : The Build-Up To The New Look :</u>	
<i>Post-war America And Unification: New Challenges:</i>	page 7
<i>New Carrier, New Strategy:</i>	page 12
<i>The Cancellation of the United States:</i>	page 15
<i>The Rise of Containment : NSC-68 and Korea:</i>	page 27
<i>The Carrier and Korea:</i>	page 34
<u>Chapter 2 : ‘New Look’ New Carriers :</u>	
<i>Eisenhower’s Foreign Policy: A New Look or a Step Back:</i>	page 41
<i>The Development of the Forrestal and the Navy’s Mission:</i>	page 56
<i>The Attack Carrier ‘versus’ Polaris:</i>	page 67
<u>Chapter 3: The Strike Carrier and Limited War:</u>	page 71
<i>Limited War Theory: Graduated Deterrence and Flexible Response:</i>	page 72
<i>Carrier On the Periphery : Deterrence or Containment:</i>	page 82
<i>Limited War, Limited Carriers:</i>	page 88
<u>Conclusions:</u>	page 91
<u>Appendix 1:</u>	page 95
<u>Appendix 2:</u>	page 100
<u>Bibliography:</u>	page 102

Introduction

The United States Navy, from World War Two to the present day, has invested heavily in, and counted heavily upon the support of naval aviation. This thesis is an investigation of a specific period which saw a rebirth of the carrier as part of the national strategy of 'containment', after the weapons system almost lost its way in the reorganisation of the U.S. military services under a new Department of Defense in 1947. By 1949, the situation had become so serious that the carrier itself seemed to be on the way out, after the cancellation of the Navy's newest, most expensive ever fleet centrepiece, the *United States*.

And yet by 1962, the Navy had 26 carriers in service, including six *Forrestal*-class supercarriers and the nuclear-powered *Enterprise*. Between 1954 and 1960 a modern attack carrier was built once per year, and in 1958 funds were set aside for the building of the most expensive ship ever built. That the Navy could lay claim to these funds was due to their argument that the carriers were far more flexible than the SAC's 'all-or-nothing' systems. However, it appeared that this 'second-honeymoon' period was over in 1960 when the Eisenhower administration refused to fund a second *Enterprise*. This thesis will examine the reasons behind the funding of these carriers, and ask whether they had been a wise investment, and in what capacity they proved themselves to be most useful, and more to the point, how were they actually used - as an alternative strategic striking force, a sea control weapon, or as a force for limited conflict or even 'gunboat diplomacy' ?

An apt comparison has been raised by Clark G. Reynolds about the role of the carrier in the 'New Look' era in Paul B. Ryan's book, First Line of Defense, wherein he parallels the United States Navy of the cold war with that of Britain's in the previous century :

Great Britain had since 1815 been using its Navy both to deter major war in Europe and to police the sea-lanes of the world on which its prosperity and indeed its democracy rested. The agent of its deterrence (a passive presence) was its battleship fleet; that of its policing (an active role) its gunboats. The former, glamorous and obvious, demanded the major share of the defense budget and the closest civilian control. The latter, unseen and unheralded, was administered at the tactical level by naval officers in remote seas

[A] striking parallel emerges between the above case and America's passive defense force of the *Polaris* submarine missile fleet and the active policing role of the aircraft carriers and

amphibious units... requiring tactical flexibility in the very real limited wars that the Navy has been fighting around the world since 1945. Of course, the roles often overlap and always defy simple solutions.¹

The roles of the carrier and the missile submarine certainly did overlap. Before Polaris, the strike carrier was arguably carrying out *both* the deterrence and intervention roles for the Navy. It was certainly taking up the ‘lion’s share’ of the Navy budget, the argument for it being that it would have both a deterrent effect - backed up by a capability to deliver atomic weapons - with its regard to its presence off a foreign power’s coast; a presence which the *Polaris* submarine could never openly achieve, its movements necessarily having to be hidden - and a ‘policing’ role very evident during the Korean War, where the carrier launched air strikes in open support of forces which Soviet Admiral S. G. Gorshkov termed “interventionists.”² Carrier presence in the Mediterranean and the Far East during the New Look era would also prove to be important for US interests. As Paul Ryan put it, they were “impressive national symbols” of the “*Pax Americana*”.³

This is an attempt then, to clear up the overlaps - and provide some solutions - to the question of the carrier’s role in the New Look era.

The first chapter of this dissertation details the years preceding the Eisenhower administration’s ‘New Look’ at containment, and at America’s defence policy. In essence, a debate arose within the US Navy about the role of the carrier. Many within the Navy’s aviation branch regarded the carrier as the capital ship of the fleet and demanded an air-atomic mission for it to strategically rival the Air Force. Although Dean Allard contends that “most naval leaders did not consider the ship’s nuclear capability to be a dramatic departure or an attempt to deny the air force in its primary role in waging strategic warfare. Rather it was a logical corollary of the service’s ... task of attacking land targets from the sea,”⁴ this chapter will examine the extent of the debate and the influential figures who might have carried on wishing for an increased strategic role. This chapter will detail the Navy’s development of strategy within the context of the atomic role. The Navy had to fight to keep control of its aviation from the hands of the new Air Force in the first place, before internally raising the possibility of an alternative strategy to the Air Force’s long-range level bombing with carrier-

¹ Clark G. Reynolds’ foreword in Paul B. Ryan, First Line of Defense, (Hoover Institution Press, 1980), p. x.

² S. G. Gorshkov, The Sea Power of the State (Pergamon, 1979), p240

³ Ryan, First Line of Defense, p. 7.

⁴ Dean C. Allard, “An Era of Transition”, in Kenneth J. Hagan, In Peace and War : Interpretations of American Naval History, 1775 - 1978 (Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 294.

based precision bombing. Within the Navy, two distinctively different figures emerge who would be instrumental to the formation of the 'New Look' Navy and the national strategy during the Eisenhower administration: Admiral Arthur W. Radford perhaps best represents the Navy's increasingly loud calls for a strategic carrier force in the run-up to the New Look. He would later be called upon to serve as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Eisenhower. Indeed, the term 'New Look' has in fact been attributed to Radford himself.

The other figure is Arleigh A. Burke, who wrote for the Navy's General Board previous to the cancellation of the Navy's first 'supercarrier', and urged the Navy to 'stick to basics' - tactical use of the A-bomb as part of a sea control mission ; the anti-submarine "attack at the source" role. As Chief of Naval Operations, his "Navy of the 1970-Era" would emphasise the utility of the carrier in limited wars. Under his tenure, the *Polaris* ballistic missile was developed, thus reopening the debate about the carrier's role.

One of the most important areas to be examined is the carrier's role as perceived by the administration and by the Navy itself - and the translation of that role to actual operations - both before and after the development of the *Polaris* missile and submarine. As will be shown, this was a serious attempt to develop what would be a system solely for the deterrent role, one that would be secured from a 'first strike' nuclear attack, and the first such system to seriously rival the carrier's delivery of the atomic weapon *within the Navy itself*, although the Navy would continue to push the carrier's atomic-delivery capabilities. The issue at the heart of the carrier's role was the priority assigned to deterrent weapons by the Eisenhower administration, according to Floyd D. Kennedy :

The navy sought to ensure that its carriers, as well as the Polaris submarines then on the building ways, would be included in the strategic forces ... because inclusion would mean assured funding as an element of the American strategic posture. Exclusion, on the other hand, could mean an insecure appropriations future.⁵

This was an attempt to keep the carrier in a deterrent role at the same time that the Navy's chief officer, Admiral Arleigh Burke, propounded that the "Navy of the 1970-Era" would be one in which the *Polaris* would indeed be a deterrent weapon, and the strike carrier too, in a backup role, while it also discharged the Navy responsibilities to any future 'limited wars' such as Korea. This vital memo and the administration's reaction to it will be vital to an understanding of the

⁵ Floyd D. Kennedy Jr., "The Creation of the Cold War Navy, 1953 - 1962", in Kenneth J. Hagan, In Peace and War : Interpretations of American Naval History, 1775 - 1978 (Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 307.

attack carrier's role. By way of contrast, George Baer has stated that the Navy of the New Look period forgot the basics of naval strategy at its peril :

Conceptually, sea control had to underlie all Navy missions. Sea control was the Navy's main reason for existence. Sea control validated the service to the public. It gave the service coherence. Officers forgot sea control at their peril.⁶

Also providing clues will be an examination of the design and deployment of the supercarriers *United States*, and the *Forrestal*-class carriers. Therefore the design and development of these carriers will be detailed, and connected to perceived roles and missions. Considering that one carrier type was never deployed and the other continued to see action throughout the New Look era and well beyond, it seems logical to conclude that these carriers were conceived under widely different circumstances and with different roles in mind. The Unification and Strategy Hearings which resulted in the so-called 'revolt of the admirals' and the dismissal of Chief of Naval Operations Denfeld, according to Harold Stein, are more interesting for what they *leave out* rather than what they contain.⁷ Both sides of the debate, according to him, concentrated on strategic bombing with the atom bomb almost as if they were talking about the strategic bombing of World War II. No mention is made of limited war, or of imminent Russian possession of the Atom Bomb in the hearings. These are things this dissertation will talk about though, putting them in the context of the carrier. There will be a perusal of the differences in carrier design and the effect on US Naval strategy which accompanied them, contending that traditional US Navy arguments of 'flexibility' were better served by the design of the *Forrestal* in a 'multi-purpose' role, rather than the narrower atomic strike role proposed for the *United States*. Floyd Kennedy, for example, has stated that the Korean War, during which the first *Forrestal* was designed, helped to shape the Navy throughout the 1950s and early -60s⁸, despite the Eisenhower administration's stated intent to shift national strategy away from further involvement in similar conflicts. The continued appropriation of supercarriers under that administration becomes increasingly intriguing in that light.

Finally, the carrier's role will be placed in the wider context of the 'containment of communism' strategy of the United States. This was the nation's

⁶Baer, George, *100 Years of Sea Power : The U.S. Navy 1890 - 1990* (Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 337.

⁷Harold Stein (ed.), *American Civil-Military Decisions : A Book of Case Studies*, (University of Alabama Press, 1963), pp. 565-566.

⁸ Hagan (ed.), *In Peace and War* , p. 305.

foreign policy throughout the period and was consistently a defensive strategy concerned with the avoidance of war, according to John L. Gaddis and Richard Smoke, two historians writing on US national security.⁹ The policies used to achieve 'containment' would change throughout the years though, from George F. Kennan's original formulation of the policy in 1946 and the publication of his views as 'Mr. X' in 1947, through the 'revamped' containment policies of NSC-68 which envisioned an expanded military role whereby the 'means' would be 'measured against the mischief', signalling the substitution of limited intervention rather than the all-out nuclear attacks the military had planned on. According to George Baer, for example, the decision to 'limit' war in Korea was strictly political.¹⁰

Lastly, Containment under Eisenhower moved through two distinct phases : the first was characterised by contemporaries such as Maxwell Taylor and Bernard Brodie as "Massive Retaliation" after the speeches made by John F. Dulles about retaking the initiative and making more substantial use of US strategic retaliatory power - although subsequent attempts have been made to signal subtle differences between the New Look and the Air Force's 'air power dogma' under Truman. For example, a larger defence budget in peacetime to cope with the 'long haul' of the fight against communism.¹¹ The second phase was a reaction to criticism made of 'Massive Retaliation' due to Soviet technological advances in rocketry and hydrogen weapons, resulting in the 'graduated deterrence' of the late 1950s, and the calls for a return to an NSC-68 - based strategy of 'flexible response', and an increased role for conventional forces. Increasing reliance on nuclear weaponry meant increasing the risks that went with employing weapons that might be termed 'mass destruction' weapons, even if they were of relatively low nuclear payload. In times of limited war, when one did not wish escalation, but planning was based on the use of nuclear weaponry, the armed forces had a problem. Would the Navy be allowed to use the weapon once it got hold of it ? As George Baer asks, "Would the United States actually back up its threat ? Strategists could never be sure."¹²

All these containment strategies are then the context in which the strike carrier must be placed to understand the reasons for its development and its role during the New Look era.

The essence of the problem for the Navy was how best to cope with the

⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, (Oxford University Press, 1982), p viii ; Richard Smoke, *National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma* (McGraw-Hill, 1983), p47

¹⁰ George Baer, *100 Years of Sea Power : The U.S. Navy 1890 - 1990* (Stanford University Press, 1994), p320

¹¹ Smoke, p67

¹² Baer, p341

administration's insistence on smaller task forces which substituted manpower for firepower as part of the 'New Look'. The armed services are not called services without a reason. They serve their administration. So the administration, arguably, is as responsible for the strategy of its services as much as the services themselves. Primary source material therefore comes from the Truman and Eisenhower administration's documents as much as from the US Navy's.

On the military side, important sources include the memoranda, memoirs and diaries of major 'players' in the US defence establishment, including General Maxwell Taylor, and Admirals Arleigh A. Burke and Arthur W. Radford, to aid an understanding of the position of the Navy especially, and the military in general.

The major questions to be answered by this dissertation are as follows : firstly and most importantly : how did the Navy want to use the atomic weapons they were finally given for their strike carriers? And how were the carriers themselves actually used?

Did the Navy have an interventionist, limited war role as advanced by Arleigh Burke, and if so, was it a different role after the early New Look policies changed with the coming of the Soviet hydrogen weapon?

Chapter 1 : The Build-Up to the New Look

Paradoxically, one can begin to reach an understanding of the difficulty the U.S. Navy had with how to use its carrier force by observing the means by which carriers were used during World War Two, the global conflict which many consider to be the aircraft carrier's finest hour. It is also an excellent example of the U.S. Navy's mission - Command of the Sea.

This then, is where the thesis will, begin, with a short history beginning with World War Two and continuing through the difficult immediate post-war years to the Korean conflict which changed many minds about United States foreign policy in general and the role of the carrier in particular.

Post-War America and Unification: New Challenges

“It is a matter of historical record, and not one that I’m proud of, that never before had such a mighty army, navy and air force been so quickly destroyed as were those of the United States in the Period August 1945 - July 1946.” Admiral Arthur W. Radford

What one has to remember is that before WWII, the carrier had been seen as an auxiliary to the battleship, which was expected to be the main provider of naval offensive power, at least against other navies. Even considering the attack on Pearl Harbor as a brilliant tactical offensive operation, the main targets were battleships. Japanese naval doctrine envisioned the battleship as the heart of the fleet. In fact, the biggest ship afloat at the time was a Japanese 'superbattleship'.

After Pearl Harbor, however, the U.S. Fleet had very little choice but to fall back on the carrier as its most important capital ship. They were the only major offensive platforms left.

The beginnings of the carrier’s strategic strike potential really only appeared later on during the Pacific war when, for the first time, US carrier aircraft struck at the enemy’s industrial facilities and other non-naval targets.

Carrier raids were still limited to objectives relatively close to the coastline, however, and also against specific targets, rather than the area bombing of the Army's heavy bombers. Precision strikes were necessary because the Navy's relatively small carrier-based strike aircraft couldn't carry enough bombs of sufficient size to do much great damage, and because the carriers themselves were too small to carry aviation fuel for more than a few days of sustained strikes. Naval planning therefore emphasised the use of a small number of bombs dropped on important targets due to the limitations on size of both the carrier and its warplanes.¹

Still, the way was prepared for Admiral Ernest King to advance naval doctrine by advocating the carrier for a more strategic role in the future in a report to the Navy Secretary in December 1945 :

Our fleet in World War II was not solely engaged in fighting enemy fleets. On numerous occasions a large part of the fleet effort was devoted to operations against land objectives. A striking example is the capture of Okinawa. During the three months that this operation was in progress our Pacific fleet - the greatest naval force assembled in the history of the world - was engaged in a continuous battle which for sustained intensity has never been equalled in naval history ; yet at this time the Japanese Navy had virtually ceased to exist - we were fighting an island, not an enemy fleet.²

In terms of power projection - an *offensive* mission made possible by the sea control won during 1942 - the Pacific campaign was a great success. Neither the U.S. Army nor its air wing would have had much say in Japan's imperial ambitions without the help of the navy. When the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, it was possible because Naval Air had first secured a base for the still relatively short-ranged B-29 bomber. Power projected into the Japanese sphere of influence had to be assured first by sea control - provided by the navy - and then by the support of its carriers as marine troops established a platform for the retaking of islands. As regards the upcoming Cold War, however, there was no offensive Russian navy to fight, and limited opportunity to project power onto continental Russia. The offensive navy would be pressed to find a new mission for its carriers. This was the mission hinted at by King when he stated that the greatest naval battle the USA had fought did not involve an opposing naval force.

The United States produced a grand total of 110 carriers, 33 of which were

¹ Norman Friedman, US Aircraft Carriers : An Illustrated Design History (US Naval Institute, 1983), pp. 18-19.

² Ernest J. King, U.S. Navy at War, 1941-1945 : Official Reports to the Secretary of the Navy (Washington DC ; Department of the Navy, 1946) , pp. 169-170, cited in Baer, p. 286.

strike carriers (CVAs) such as the *Essex*-class, which would continue to see service for years to come

After World War Two, the armed forces of the United States were drastically reduced in the effort to 'bring the boys home'. This was an extremely popular political move by the administration but one which horrified some in the military, who were beginning to see Russia as the next threat to national security even before the war's end.

Demobilisation, by 5 November, included a plan reducing the navy's attack carrier force to 3 CVB heavy carriers and 7 CV *Essex*-class carriers.³ These would later be modernised, with reinforced decks and improved catapults, to facilitate the new jet aircraft then in development. Admiral Arthur W. Radford, who would rise to the Chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of staff in later years, criticised the post-war plan as having too little striking power:

I am immediately struck by the lack of carrier air power. There are ten active CV-CVBs. Their total embarked aircraft will number 1,150. In one carrier task force, their offensive striking force would never total more than 800 aircraft and would probably be less - yet this is the force that is to "strike hard and promptly forestall at its beginning any attempt to disrupt the peace of the world" ...

Therefore, until the world settles down - until we know where we stand - the Navy cannot afford to be conservative in estimating its needs for air power.⁴

Radford recommended that the carrier-air force be doubled in size and that the strike carrier be made the official backbone of the fleet.

I believe that an *air-sea* Navy has a future, that a *sea-air* Navy is but a step removed from the transportation service that extreme proponents of air power envisage.

I believe that an early marriage with "Air" is essential to win the public confidence that is so necessary if the Navy is to continue as an important arm of the national defense. No more candy, flowers and promises, but a church wedding to which the public is invited.⁵

Those 'extreme proponents' were envisaging a future where 'Command of the Air' would supersede 'Command of the Sea', and long-range bombers would render the navy's power projection ability obsolete. In any case, the most likely future conflict would be with Russia, a continental power, and with the aid of the atomic weaponry the United States still had a monopoly on, the war probably

³Stephen Jurika (ed.), From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam :The Memoirs of Arthur W. Radford, (Hoover Institute Press, 1980) , p. 74-75 (hereafter referred to as Radford Memoirs).

⁴Op. Cit. p. 75.

⁵Op. Cit. p. 79.

wouldn't even last long enough for the navy to transport reinforcements to the battlefield ! A.P. Seversky's comments on sea power - made during WWII even before the explosion of the first atomic bomb, were gaining much weight with a public which desired a simple solution to future conflicts :

Clearly the time is approaching where even the phrase "sea power" will lose all real meaning. All military issues will be settled by relative strength in the skies. At that time, I dare to foresee, by the inexorable logic of military progress, the Navy as a separate entity will cease to exist. The weapons it represents will have atrophied to the point where it is, at best, a minor auxiliary of air power.⁶

At this time of great pressure for the navy, the National Security Act was just beginning to find its way onto the drawing board of Bill preparation. Included in this act, which would be passed in July 1947, would be the 'unification of the services under a new Secretary of Defense, who would supersede the Secretaries of the Army and Navy, and also the Air Force, which would finally gain independence from the Army.

In preparation for this act, the U.S. Navy set up SCOROR, the Secretaries' [of the Navy] Committee of Research on Reorganisation. This would be a small department of the navy (after 1947, under Arleigh Burke, a similar department of the Navy called Op-23 would perform much the same job), never reaching 100 personnel, whose job it would be to enhance the public relations of the navy and ensure it would be treated fairly in the upcoming hearings. The committee's job would be an extremely hard one, because the rest of the Navy didn't seem to feel the need for them, as Arleigh Burke relates :

Apparently the Navy thought that the overall requirement for control of the seas was obvious and well understood by the Army and the Congress, and also that it is patently evident to everybody concerned with national defense that control of the seas would require a strong navy capable of defeating any force the enemy might use to contest that control.⁷

In fact, the Navy was being naïve, as General Alexander Vandergrift of the Marine Corps was forced to say :

I feel that our Navy friends have rested too long on their laurels and the belief that no harm could come to them ... This is not the day when knighthood was in flower and it's more

⁶Alexander P. De Seversky, Victory Through Air Power, (Simon and Schuster, 1942), pp. 182-183.

⁷Arleigh A. Burke, The Reminiscences of Admiral Arleigh A. Burke. U.S. Navy (Retired), Vol. IV, (U.S. Naval Institute, 1979-83), p. 76.

like a street brawl than a tilting joust.⁸

The dearth of strategic thinking inside the Navy at this time is further indicated by George Baer, who recalls that, "in the Naval War College's copy of Vincent Davis's *The Admiral's Lobby*, at the place where the author argued the need for an effective public relations office in the Navy, a reader wrote, "A sailor's place is on his ship, a ship's place is at sea."⁹

Radford knew better. Particularly revealing is his account of a luncheon with General Carl Spaatz of the Air Corps before unification occurred :

"Tooey was frank. He wanted our naval aviation organisation in the new Air Force, which he felt would be set up in the near future. He intimated to me that we would be included whether we liked it or not, so he was really giving me a chance to voluntarily get in on the right side....

I ... told him that I simply could not accept his offer, for I felt too strongly that such an organisation would not be in the best interests of the United States and the armed services. I also regretted the situation I sensed was developing, a bitter fight between the Army and Navy over this matter of Air.... [T]he Air Corps had already embittered the vast majority of naval aviators by its tremendous propaganda campaign to prove it had won the war almost singlehandedly..."¹⁰

Ironically, James Doolittle, whose B-25 bombers had hitched a ride on the *Hornet* , was one of the Air Power propagandists' most vociferous anti-Navy spokesmen in the cause of atomic deterrence, stating at one stage that "We can't deter Russian aggression with Navy weapons" and that when the Air Force had completed its bomber program , "we will not need carriers."¹¹ Clearly, the new Air Force would want control of *all* warplanes, not just the strategic bombers that they proclaimed would win the next war for the United States. In the event that this happened with respect to naval aviation, the result would be disastrous for Navy Air, whose job would merely be to maintain floating airfields for use by the Air Force ; presumably the Air Force would have chosen the strategy and the targets for those planes too, in view of the new Air Forces' "Atomic blitz" strategy. Admiral Burke, in his Reminiscences, was referring to this when he states that Radford was worried about the danger to the Navy's capability to control the seas, let alone any future attempts to project force ashore. In essence,

⁸ Gordon W. Keiser, The US Marine Corps and Defense Unification, 1944-1947 : The Politics of Survival (National Defense University Press, 1982), p. 45.

⁹George W. Baer, 100 Years Of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy 1890-1990, (Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 278-279.

¹⁰Radford Memoirs, p. 82.

¹¹ Michael T. Isenberg, Shield of the Republic : The US Navy in a time of Cold War and Violent Peace (St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 149-150.

the Navy needed a sea-control mission. While Radford was alerting the Navy, congress and the public to the dangers of a navy stripped of its air arm, Vice Admiral Forrest Sherman was developing a new strategy which would combine a sea-control mission with offensive carrier missions : Attack At The Source.

New Carrier, New Strategy

While the 'unification' wrangles were ongoing, other developments were taking place within the Navy. By July, 1946, Admiral Marc Mitscher was working on a new carrier design, the so-called CVBX. It was to have a 'flush deck', with no island structure, and would be far larger than any other Aircraft carrier in the world at that time. The flush deck would permit far larger, heavier aircraft, with greater wingspans, to operate from aircraft carriers. The concern of the Army Air Corps was that the B-29 sized aircraft it could launch would be used for strategic air war fare, thus challenging the unborn Air Force's primary mission. The official proposal for the carrier came on December 28, 1945, in a memo from Rear Admiral H.B. Sallada, the head of the Bureau of Aeronautics, to the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Nimitz. The memo suggested that "serious consideration be given to the development of an additional type [of carrier] that will accommodate aircraft of about 100,000lbs with a 2000 mile radius. The ship may be rather radical in design with, for example, no island and no hangar. [The] flight deck would accommodate about 14 planes 500,000 gallons of gasoline would permit each plane about eight full-range flights."¹² Mitscher, as Deputy CNO (Air) suggested the accommodation of 16 to 24 aircraft with enough fuel to fly four to six missions each.¹³ The important point was that the ship was being designed around the aircraft and ordnance it was to carry, and these would be heavy bombers. The nuclear bombs to be carried were still of immense size and weight - early plans to modify existing carriers to carry nuclear ordnance would include provisions for handling a 'package' 15 feet long, weighing 16,000 pounds.¹⁴

The planning called for four battlegroups consisting of one of the new 'supercarriers' embarking its strategic bombers, to be escorted by a modified *Midway*-Class heavy carrier, two *Essex*- class carriers, and other surface escorts. These battlegroups would be deployed in the Mediterranean Sea on a rotational

¹² Friedman, US Aircraft Carriers, p. 241.

¹³ Op. Cit.

¹⁴ Op. Cit., p. 291.

basis, apart from one group based in the Pacific. Two groups were assumed to be involved in either maintenance or training, but the priority seems to have been to have one group available to strike from the Mediterranean at all times.¹⁵

Between 1946, and the beginning of construction in 1949, several modifications in design were thrashed out - for example, catapults and a hangar for the aircraft¹⁶ - but even though these changes would increase the overall size and expense of the carrier, all the design changes still left the carrier with its flush deck. The final design had the fully loaded carrier displacing 83,249 tons, 1088 feet in length, and with a 190 foot beam. The complement of aircraft would comprise 18 bombers weighing 100,000 pounds each, and 80 fighters. 2000 tons of aircraft ordnance would be carried, as well as 8 five-inch guns, 16 three-inch guns, and 20 twenty-millimetre guns for self-defence.¹⁷ In comparison with an *Essex*- class carrier of World War II vintage, at a fully-loaded 36,380 tons of displacement¹⁸, the *United States* would be truly huge.

At the same time, Sherman was developing a strategy that assumed that a war against the Soviet Union would involve more than a few days of atomic blitz. Worried that one single interpretation of future wars would unbalance the national strategy, Sherman proposed for the first time to use atomic bombs as *tactical* weapons, as part of naval warfare instead of a substitute for it. Keeping carriers at the centre of the fleet, and presenting atomic strikes in the context of a sea control mission, Sherman proposed to launch forward strikes to "attack at the sources of trouble", the bases of Russia's submarine force, which were of course, still conventionally powered in the 1940s and 1950s. Cut off their support, and the submarine menace and its endurance would be drastically reduced. Forward deployment of the expensive new carriers would have to contend with the land-based Soviet naval air arm too, so deep strikes against air-bases were also considered as part of the sea control mission. The Navy had found a way to tie carrier strike projection to sea control, and the mission did not interfere with the Air Force's strategic bombing mission against cities either. Sherman further envisioned support for army campaigns by strikes launched from the Mediterranean, thus giving the Navy a way to co-operate with the other services and hopefully, to lessen inter-service rivalry.

Importantly, this was a strategy which first signalled the use of the atomic bomb as a weapon just like any other kind of ordnance, which would mirror the stated policy of the Eisenhower administration in the years to come. In the words

¹⁵ Op. Cit., pp. 18-19.

¹⁶ Op. Cit., p. 242.

¹⁷ Op. Cit., p. 396.

¹⁸ Op. Cit., p. 394.

of Arleigh Burke, "A weapon can be either tactical or strategic depending on how it's used - not on the weapon itself."¹⁹

'Unification' passed Congress and became law with the Navy still holding on to its aviation. The Army lost its tactical air to the Air Force, though, and the tug-of-war between the services continued until , on 10 March 1948, the new Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal, decided to hold a press conference stating that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) would meet outside Washington for an extended debate on "who would do what with what. If they fail, I shall have to make my own decisions."²⁰

The Chief of Naval Operations - the Navy's foremost officer - was Admiral Denfeld. He took his recently promoted Vice-Chief, Radford with him to the meeting chaired by Forrestal at Key West, Florida. The results of the meeting finally cleared the way for the Navy to keep carrier-air :

"By Sunday morning the Chiefs were finally agreed on "certain broad, basic decisions."

1) For planning purposes the Marine Corps is to be limited to four divisions....

2) The Air Force recognizes the right of the Navy to proceed with the development of weapons the Navy considers essential to its function but with the proviso that the Navy will not develop a separate strategic air force, this function being reserved for the Air Force. However, the Navy in the carrying out of its function is to have the right to attack inland targets, for example, to reduce and neutralize airfields from which enemy aircraft may sortie to attack the fleet.

3) The Air Force recognizes the right and need for the Navy to participate in an all-out air campaign.

4) The Navy is not to be denied use of the atomic bomb.

5) Navy is to proceed with the development of an 80,000 ton carrier and development of high altitude aircraft to carry heavy missiles therefrom.²¹

Just before President Truman was to announce officially that the USSR was the main threat to national security, the Navy had won approval for its new 'Attack At The Source' mission and for the carrier and the aircraft to carry it out. The Navy might almost have been forgiven for resting back on its laurels, but

¹⁹Burke, Reminiscences, Vol. IV, p. 497.

²⁰Radford Memoirs , p.114.

²¹Op. Cit., p. 114-115.

events were to show that the challenge to keep that mission had only just begun.

The Cancellation of the *United States*

Although the wrangles involved with the ‘unification’ of the services appeared to have been dealt with by Secretary of Defense Forrestal, he was discovering that his authority was not sufficiently spelled out, and that the effect of unification was instead a kind of ‘triplication’.²² The question of ‘who would do what with what’ continued to haunt the armed services, especially regarding the use of aviation. The acrimonious disagreement over perceived Navy ‘duplication’ of the Air Force’s agreed-upon primary role of strategic bombing would result in the cancellation of the Navy’s newest carrier within five days, and the controversial ‘Unification and Strategy’ hearings in 1949,²³ chaired by Carl Vinson. Radford relates an example of how Forrestal’s efforts to gel the services could be undermined by one service’s rivalry with another in his memoirs :

With a very limited staff of his own, the Secretary would tell one of his assistants that he wanted to hear presentations on such-and-such a subject by two services in order to ferret out “duplications” he had been told existed....

On the afternoon of Wednesday 28 January, Army Brig. Gen. Leroy Lutes phoned to say that Secretary Forrestal had directed him to set up a presentation to be made sometime later that week ... on the capabilities of naval aircraft. The Air Force was to prepare a similar presentation for the same time. The idea was to give Mr. Forrestal information on the types of planes each service would buy if given additional funds...

The following day I received a telephone call from Mr. Larkin, also in Mr. Forrestal’s office, giving me a little more detail on what the Secretary wanted. The gist of his call was that Mr. Forrestal had been questioning the performance and capabilities of different types of aircraft, particularly big bombers...

From the two phone calls and memoranda that followed I prepared to do two things : first, if called upon... I would be ready to tell Mr. Forrestal what planes the Navy would buy if given additional funds for fiscal [years] 1949 and 1950. I would be prepared to give performance characteristics for these planes and estimates extending such a program to a total of five

²² Radford Memoirs, pp. 112-113.

²³ The National Defense Program - Unification and Strategy : Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 81st Congress, 1st Session (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1949), cited by Paul Y. Hammond, “Supercarriers and B-36 Bombers : Appropriations, Strategy and Politics”, in Harold Stein (ed.), American Civil-Military Relations : A Book of Case Studies (University of Alabama Press, 1963) pp. 514-537. (Hereafter referred to as Unification and Strategy Hearings, in Stein (ed.))

years....This presentation was an elaborate one and would involve at least four or five assistants as well as the presenter....²⁴

On the day of the presentation, Radford recalls how he entered Forrestal's office, but was only allowed inside for the conference on his own.

I was surprised to find a number of people in [the] office, mostly Air Force but also including Generals Gruenther and Lutes ... and several others I did not know. The Secretary, seemingly a little harassed, said that [assistance] could be brought in later but for now he wanted to get on with the presentations.

I sensed that the presentations had been going on, that the conference had started some time before, and certainly that the ground rules for attendance favored the Air Force. It did not seem to be the cosy little informal affair that Mr. Larkin had described....

The Air Force finished and Mr. Forrestal called on me to give the similar Navy information, which I gave. That over, Lieutenant General [Lauris] Norstad gave a strategic presentation based largely on the performance figures of the new aircraft that had just been described [by the Air Force - the B50C, which they expected to have in quantity by 1952, and the aircraft Doolittle referred to as making carriers obsolete] , which certainly left the naval air forces out in the cold. We were not counted in and very evidently not needed.

I was astounded. This was no small, informal presentation but a show staged with great skill and preparation

...Mr. Forrestal turned to me and asked if I had a strategic presentation to make. I said, "Mr. Secretary, I have given you the only presentation I was asked to prepare for you today. I will have a strategic presentation ready to give you next week but it will not fit very well with General Norstad's ideas, which you have just heard and which are in many respects new to me."

The room was very quiet after my statement. Mr. Forrestal hesitated a moment, then adjourned the meeting and left the room.... I was so mad I decided it was best to leave as quickly as possible and to find out later just what had gone wrong ... The Navy's contacts with the office of the Secretary of Defense were not good and must be improved - soon!²⁵

Radford, the next day, told his CNO , Denfeld, that "in Mr. Forrestal's office yesterday, the Navy was the country cousin, just asked to the party for the sake of appearances."²⁶

In short, the Navy was limiting its use of the atomic weapon to the sea-control function of 'attack at the source' whereas the Air Force, according to

²⁴ Radford Memoirs , pp. 109-110.

²⁵ Op. Cit., p. 111.

²⁶ Op. Cit., p. 112.

Radford, wanted even that use of the atomic warhead denied to naval aviation.

Both the Navy and the Air Force were developing strategies for use of the atomic bomb without political guidance at presidential level, and without that, the Secretary of Defense was limited in his authority to arbitrarily decide one way or the other without causing an uproar. The president decided when and where to use the Bomb, but not what service got to use it for what purpose.²⁷ By the time of the presentation just described by Radford, then, voices within the Navy were adding to the controversy by advocating the use of carrier-borne aircraft to usurp the Air Force's 'primary mission' of strategic bombing. One such voice was Rear Admiral (RADM) Daniel Gallery, who presented an argument early in 1947 to then-CNO Nimitz that the navy should be given responsibility for the initial delivery of the atomic bomb :

For the past two years our defense of the Navy has been based mainly on old familiar arguments about exercising control of the seas. Much has been said about antisubmarine warfare, naval reconnaissance, protection of shipping and amphibious operations. It has been assumed ... that the next war will not be much different to the last one. This assumption is basically wrong, and if we stick to it the Navy will soon be obsolete ... It seems obvious that the next time ... the outcome of the war will be determined by strategic bombing The war will be won by whichever side is able to deliver the atomic bomb to the enemy, and at the same time protect its own territory against similar delivery . I think 'the time is right now for the Navy to start an aggressive campaign aimed at proving that the Navy can deliver the atomic bomb more efficiently than the Air Forces [sic] can.' »²⁸

This memo was leaked to the press months later, and immediately disavowed by Secretary of the Navy John L. Sullivan²⁹ for fear of arousing Air Force indignation. But Gallery's was not the only controversial voice to be given a public airing. In December 1947, Nimitz himself, on the occasion of his retirement, gave an address insisting that Naval Air could be used for strategic attacks "on vital enemy installations" above and beyond any naval-related sea control mission.³⁰

Another Admiral, RADM Edwin Cruise, had reached the conclusion that the Navy could better deliver the atomic bomb because it had developed

²⁷ Baer, p. 293.

²⁸ Unification and Strategy Hearings, in Stein (ed.), p. 480.

²⁹ Baer, p. 295.

³⁰ Nimitz's farewell address as CNO in 1947 is cited in David A. Rosenberg & Floyd D Kennedy, Jr., US Aircraft Carriers in the Strategic Role pt1- Naval Strategy in a period of Change : Interservice Rivalry, Strategic Interaction, and the Development of Nuclear Attack Capabilities, 1945-1951 (Lulejian, 1975), pp. 40-41.

precision bombing techniques to do so, rather than the Air Force's area-bombing tactics :

Carrier attacks can be made not only on enemy urban and industrial targets, using mass destruction weapons, but with all types of weapons against the enemy's air forces and air bases ... Such attacks can halt enemy bombing more effectively than can the destruction of industrial targets. They can be carried out promptly by mobile carrier forces not dependent on prior acquisition of overseas bases.³¹

The argument here was that, in essence, the carrier was a better delivery system than the long-range bomber because it could not only deliver the bomb more accurately, but could do so from just off the enemy's coast, without relying on a foreign nation to base the bomber or a long-range, unescorted flight before delivery. Consistent with the thinking on accuracy was the fact that at this point, atomic weapons were still relatively scarce. Even by 1949, the US arsenal stood at 150 A-bombs weighing around 10,300 lbs.³² Would counter-value, or city-bombing, be enough? Or would it merely increase the willpower of an enemy who believed himself involved in a fight for survival only five years previously, and might believe it again ? Nimitz, and his successor, Denfeld, believed that strategic bombing alone would not be enough, and the Joint Chiefs agreed.³³ So did Forrestal, in a diary entry in October 1948 which might have heartened those within the Navy who were afraid he might be wavering in favour of the new air power doctrine:

I do not believe that air power alone can win a war any more than an Army or naval power can win a war, and I do not believe in the theory that an atomic offensive will extinguish in a week the will to fight. I believe air power will have to be applied massively in order to really destroy the industrial complex of any nation and, in terms of present capabilities, that means air power within fifteen hundred miles of the targets - that means an army has to be transported to the areas where airfields exist - that means , in turn, there has to be security of the sea lanes provided by the naval forces to get the Army there. Then, and only then, can the tremendous striking power of air be applied in a decisive - and I repeat decisive - manner.³⁴

Although Forrestal believed that the Air Force, upon the outbreak of war or shortly afterward, would "realize the diversionary possibilities" of the carrier

³¹ Op. Cit. , pp. 73-75.

³² Baer, p. 294.

³³ Baer, pp. 293-294.

³⁴ Walter Millis (ed.), The Forrestal Diaries (Cassell & Co., Ltd., 1952), p. 480.

force,³⁵ it appears clear that he felt the main responsibility of the Navy was control of the seas, with the carriers called upon as auxiliaries for strategic missions when needed.

The problem was not only that the Air Force had already secured strategic bombing as one of its primary missions - a term Forrestal further clarified at the Newport conference of August 1948 as being the missions for which each service “must have exclusive responsibility for planning and programming”, but nevertheless, “in the execution of any mission all available resources must be used ... For this reason the exclusive responsibility and authority in a given field do not imply preclusive participation.”³⁶ - but also that within the Navy the calls for increased participation in the strategic role were by no means uniform. Arleigh Burke, on the Navy’s General Board at the time, wrote a report entitled “National Security and the Navy’s Contribution Thereto Over the Next Ten Years” in 1948. It called for a basic sea control mission that prioritised command of the seas ahead of strategic bombing :

Within the foreseeable future, it will be necessary for the United States to control the high seas if we are to project our offensive to the enemy in sufficient strength to be decisive. Sea or air raids will not likely bring about the defeat of a strong enemy. Sustained heavy attacks will be necessary which will require shipping to support. The Soviet Union can presently and within ten years challenge our control of the seas only by submarines and by air.³⁷

The report added the warning that “we must be wary of our national predilection for panaceas [i.e. atomic bombs] which tempts us to act as though future possibilities are today’s facts. Concentration upon a single concept of war, method or tool is an almost irretrievable act.”³⁸

The General board was not about to deny the air arm, though. It restated the attack-at-source strategy as vital to the sea control mission :

The submarine danger may become so great that the carrier task force initial effort may have to be devoted to destroying submarine bases or sealing submarine exits by atomic bombing or mining.³⁹

³⁵ Op. Cit.

³⁶ Cited in Radford Memoirs, p. 124.

³⁷ “Working Papers of CAPT A. A. BURKE on General Board, serial 315,” cited in Jeffrey G. Barlow and Barnett, “The Maritime Strategy of the US Navy : Reading Excerpts”, in Colin S. Gray & Roger W. Barnett (eds.), Seapower and Strategy (US Naval Institute, 1989), p. 328. (hereafter referred to as Gray & Barnett (eds.), Seapower and Strategy)

³⁸ Baer, p. 297.

³⁹ Op. Cit., citing James L. Lacy, Within Bounds: The Navy in Postwar American Security Policy (Alexandria Center for Naval Analyses, 1983), p. 109.

In short, the conclusion of the General Board was that the Navy should stick firmly to its own primary mission of sea control, which in any case would “place so many demands on the Navy for immediate operations in widely separated parts of the world that fulfilment of all its demands may well be beyond the capacity of the Navy in being.”⁴⁰

The Navy, in contrast to the Air Force, was torn between strategies of sea control and strategic warfare, but nevertheless desperate to gain an atomic capability. It tried to keep its intra-service debates internal, though, and as a result, the Air Force was pushing ahead in the ‘P.R. war’.

Eisenhower was being briefed by the services in connection with his role as an adjunct to the Secretary of Defense, and his briefing with the Navy indicated just how much the aviators were making in their push for air power, at least within the navy:

Have had two days briefing in Navy Department.

Interesting, and confirms impression that navy now views its mission as “projection of American air power” against enemy.

Control of Seas is not primary and exclusive function in this view...⁴¹

Having had this briefing on the Navy’s role, Eisenhower then proceeded to detail his thoughts on the usefulness of carriers, concluding that it would be wise to have them:

[General Vandenberg] will not agree navy needs any carriers larger than escort type. I feel that in first months of war a few big carriers might be our greatest asset. I want to keep ten in active service - about which six to eight should always be in operation.⁴²

Walter Karig, an experienced public relations man in the Navy, therefore wrote to Denfeld in 1948 with that explicit criticism. “The element of zeal, *esprit de corps*, all the devotion to a cause that the Air Force exhibits, is lacking.”⁴³

Burke’s reminiscences contain his account of a conversation with Truman about how “the Navy is very much in the same position with regard to public relations as a virtuous woman. Virtue is seldom spectacular .. and naval

⁴⁰ Baer, p. 298.

⁴¹February 2, 1949, Dwight D. Eisenhower : Diaries Miscellaneous (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, USA), taken from Ferrell, Robert H. (ed.), The Eisenhower Diaries (W.W. Norton & Co., 1981), p. 156. (henceforth referred to as Eisenhower Diaries)

⁴² February 9, 1949, Op. Cit.

⁴³ Baer, p. 299.

philosophy and maritime strategy are not spectacular either [in comparison to strategic air power theory] ... Success depends on long, dull hours of hard work and there's no action that's clearly decisive by itself."⁴⁴

Little wonder that some within the service had chosen to jump on the Air Force bandwagon which had so captured the public imagination, and did indeed seem a decisive way of both deterring and waging war to the vast majority of the US public. In fact, in October 1949, a Gallup poll was published in which 74% of the public believed that the Air Force would "play the most important part in winning another World War". The Navy polled 4% .⁴⁵ After World War II, the US public knew all about and cared little for the prohibitive cost in lives and money for conventional war, especially if there seemed to be an alternative. But if the Navy was being virtuous, its aviators were showing a little too much leg. It was about to be snapped off.

Leaked memos for the air force wolves to snap up were bad enough. They put the Navy in a bad light - trying to steal the Air Force's mission. But at least the Navy had Forrestal as a Secretary of Defense, which Radford was particularly thankful for, crediting him with the balanced build-up of US forces necessary after World War II, "almost singlehandedly ... I say singlehandedly because Mr. Truman, for reasons best known to himself, did not openly intervene to help out his Secretary of Defense."⁴⁶

Eisenhower decided to make comment on the situation in his diary in January 1949, accusing Truman of not doing enough:

I believe the president has to show the iron beneath the pretty glove. Some of our seniors are forgetting that they have a commander in chief. They must be reminded of this, in terms of direct unequivocal language.

If this is not done soon, someday we're going to have a blow-up... God help us if we ever have to go up in front of a congressional committee to argue our professional fights as each service struggles to get the lion's share of money.

The president could stop all this if he'd act now.⁴⁷

But Forrestal was to be replaced by Louis Johnson in March 1949, and Johnson, a long-time air power aficionado, having participated in the development of the B-17 during 1937-1940, took charge. He knew little about the Navy, and was keen to save money on the defence budget. It didn't take much

⁴⁴ Burke, Reminiscences, Vol 2, p. 241.

⁴⁵ Stein (ed.), p. 529.

⁴⁶ Radford Memoirs, p. 118.

⁴⁷ January 8, 1949 , Eisenhower Diaries, p .152.

nous to anticipate what would happen to the Navy : cuts.

At one point Johnson commented that “the Navy has built its last big carrier.” At another he joked that he would let the Navy keep one carrier “for the old admirals to ride around on.”⁴⁸ The McNarney board of three high ranking “budget deputies” had been slightly more favourable. General Joseph McNarney “announced that he saw little value in the carrier force,” according to Radford, “and would have recommended its elimination except that we had a national commitment to keep one carrier in the Mediterranean. He also realized that a deployed carrier had to return to the United States from time to time for overhaul and repairs. For that reason he was willing to agree that the Navy should be permitted to keep two carriers in active commission!”⁴⁹

The *United States* was expected to cost \$189 million⁵⁰ whereas a B-36 bomber, at \$5.7 million⁵¹, presented a cheaper individual investment. With an overall budget of only \$10.9 million to split amongst the services⁵², someone was going to suffer. The *United States* was cancelled on 28 April, 1949, almost immediately after Johnson entered office. He had not informed anyone in the Navy in advance of the cancellation.⁵³ The uproar began with the resignation of John L. Sullivan, the Navy’s Secretary, who submitted a strongly worded letter of protest.

I am, of course, very deeply disturbed by your action which so far as I know represents the first attempt ever made in this country to prevent the development of a powerful weapons system. The conviction that this will result in a renewed effort to abolish the Marine Corps and to transfer all Naval and Marine aviation elsewhere adds to my anxiety.⁵⁴

It must be highlighted that a member of the administration team, rather than a naval officer, was voicing these renewed concerns. The Navy once more began to feel outgunned by a combination of the Army and Air Force and this time by Johnson as well.

CNO Denfeld, described as a conciliator by historians such as Baer and Hammond, decided to go through official channels to defend the Navy against Johnson’s axe. He sent a memo protesting the cuts in the Fiscal Year budget of

⁴⁸ Isenberg, *Shield of the Republic*, p. 153.

⁴⁹ *Radford Memoirs*, p. 125.

⁵⁰ “Professional Notes”, *US Naval Institute Proceedings* (October 1949), pp. 1196-1198.

⁵¹ Daniel Ford, “B-36 : Bomber at the Crossroads”, *Air and Space Smithsonian*, (April/May 1996), pp. 42-61.

⁵² Isenberg, p. 153.

⁵³ Friedman, *US Aircraft Carriers*, p. 252-253.

⁵⁴ Paolo E. Coletta, “John Lawrence Sullivan”, in Coletta (ed.), *American Secretaries of the Navy*, Vol. II (US Naval Institute Press, 1980), p. 774.

1951 to the Secretary on July 27, 1949, in an attempt to convince him of the offensive value of seapower :

The major task of the Navy is not merely the protection of certain sea lines of communications, a defensive task. Instead, it is the broader task of gaining and maintaining control of the sea; i.e. the ability to use the sea for whatever purposes are necessary to us and the ability to deny its use to the enemy. ... Antisubmarine warfare limited to the defensive aspects is the most costly means of combating the submarine threat. In areas ... such as the Northeastern Atlantic and the Northwestern Pacific, enemy surface and air opposition may be expected; in the Mediterranean, control would probably be vigorously disputed by intensive air effort ... *We cannot cut our naval cloth to the pattern of only one type of enemy opposition.*⁵⁵

Burke came to the conclusion that “what we were trying to do was give a one-lesson course on seapower, and nobody learns anything in one hour.”⁵⁶

Burke’s next major involvement would come with the Unification and Strategy hearings, when he headed Op-23, the Navy’s equivalent to Radford’s SCOROR committee, which prepared witnesses for the hearings. Unfortunately, another inflammatory leak by Captain John G. Crommelin - then on an inter-service relations board, ironically enough, led to the New Navy Secretary, Francis Matthews, coming down hard on public announcements by naval officers. He issued a communiqué ordering that public statements be channelled through his office, further damaging the Navy’s public relations. Many inside the Navy would not trust a Johnson appointee to air their views.⁵⁷

Vice Admiral (VADM) G. F. Bogan wrote to Matthews expressing his view that “there is no cheap quick victory possible between any two nations or groups of nations each having strong if relatively unequal power. Yet at a time as critical as ever existed during our history, the public has been lured into complacency by irresponsible speeches by advocates of this [Air Power] theory. The result could be a great national catastrophe.”⁵⁸ Denfeld and Radford both backed up his statement with those of their own, Denfeld in particular focusing on the dangers of air force control of naval aviation, and “reduction of seapower by those not thoroughly familiar with its capabilities.”⁵⁹

Those “not thoroughly familiar” might have been taken to mean Johnson, and Secretary Matthews himself. Again, Crommelin leaked the Bogan statement

⁵⁵ “Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense: “Naval Forces for Fiscal Year 1951 Program,” 27 July 1949,” cited in Gray & Barnett (eds.), *Seapower and Strategy* p. 329. [italics added]

⁵⁶ Burke, *Reminiscences*, Vol.4, p. 656.

⁵⁷ Stein (ed.), pp. 508-509.

⁵⁸ Op. Cit. pp. 509-510.

⁵⁹ Op. Cit. pp. 511-512.

for fear that the Navy's views would be hidden from Congress. And so began the so-called 'revolt of the Admirals.'

During the Unification and Strategy Hearings themselves, Congressman Porter Hardy asked Matthews "what avenue a conscientious believer that a change is necessary in the interests of national security has to make his views known if he runs into a stone wall in his own department or if he gets blocked by the Department of Defense and can't make his position known."

Matthews' reply was that "I don't know how he could become blocked."⁶⁰

According to the New York Times, published on 8 October, that answer was followed by "a loud and jeering laugh of disbelief from his audience of naval officers."⁶¹

Criticism of the officers' testimony has tended to centre around the fact that there were several inaccuracies, one glaring example of which will be highlighted here, and that they should have attempted to present more of an alternative to the B-36 as a weapon rather than just denigrating it. According to Baer, the Navy was not ready to be put into the dock, and not prepared to respond to the news of the first Soviet atomic explosion. He criticises the Navy case as subject to constant political and technological change, and as a case that could be turned against the Navy. If Air Force bombers couldn't get through, then how could the Navy's ?

Above all, there was no public defence of the Navy's sea control function.⁶² Instead the Navy concentrated on rubbishing the 'atomic blitz strategy.' Radford's testimony is a good example :

I do not believe the threat of atomic blitz will be an effective deterrent to a war or that it will win a war. I do not believe that the atomic blitz strategy is generally accepted by military men. However, if after careful study of all sides of the question, the retaliatory atomic blitz were to become the determined and studied policy of the United States, then ... we are today capable of procuring more effective and more efficient planes for the task than the B36.⁶³

What sort of planes Radford thought might have been better than the B-36 he did not say. Neither did he offer a strategic alternative to the 'atomic blitz theory' which he so roundly dismissed as a "fallacious concept."⁶⁴

Paul Hammond's take on this was that it seemed probable that Radford,

⁶⁰ Unification and Strategy Hearings, in Stein (ed.), p. 516.

⁶¹ Unification and Strategy Hearings, in Stein (ed.), p. 516.

⁶² Baer, p. 311.

⁶³ Unification and Strategy Hearings, in Stein (ed.), p. 517.

⁶⁴ Op. Cit.

“while aware of the needs of limited war, felt that Congress would appropriate money for carriers only if convinced that carriers would be an important tool in blitz warfare.”⁶⁵

As it was, his complaint that the carrier’s cancellation should have never been allowed for the reason that it was an unproved prototype, and the B-36 was similarly unproved, yet being procured in great numbers, fell down on the fact that there could be no real test short of war.⁶⁶

Other witnesses, such as John H. Sides, a specialist in guided missile development for the Navy, spoke of the Soviet capability to bring down the B-36, without talking up the Navy’s ability to protect carriers against opposing bombers⁶⁷, and Capt. Frederick Trapnell, an aviator, presented a statement on the Banshee interceptor and its ability to take down the B-36, yet did not translate his attack on the Air Force weapon to a reason for the utility of the *United States*.⁶⁸ The Navy’s argument therefore appeared to be tinged by sour grapes.

Without doubt, the most contentious testimony was given by Commander Eugene Tatom, an aviation ordnance specialist, playing down the destructiveness of the atomic bomb in an attempt to steer air power strategy toward the naval precision bombing technique :

You could stand in the open at one end of the North-South runway at the Washington Airport, with no more protection than the clothes you now have on, and have an atom bomb explode at the other end of the runway without serious injury to you.⁶⁹

Radford, in his memoirs, remembers realising , “as soon as I heard the statement about standing in the open at Washington National Airport that it would cause great controversy and possibly vitiate the rest of Commander Tatom’s excellent testimony.”⁷⁰ In fact, it did far more damage than that. Johnson accused the Navy of a “campaign of terror,” Melvin Price, on the Joint Atomic Energy Committee, accused the Navy of “surprising ignorance” of the effects of the atomic bomb.⁷¹

The Senate’s leading authority on Atomic Energy, Brien McMahon, told the Senate that “it is dangerous to over-emphasize the importance of the atomic weapon, but God knows it may be fatal to under-emphasize it.” He further

⁶⁵ Op. Cit., p. 519.

⁶⁶ Stein (ed.), pp. 517-519.

⁶⁷ Stein (ed.), p. 523.

⁶⁸ Radford Memoirs, p. 185.

⁶⁹ Unification and Strategy Hearings, in Stein (ed.) , p. 170.

⁷⁰ Radford Memoirs, p. 194.

⁷¹ Stein (ed.), p.522.

accused the Navy of trying to usurp the Air Force role for its carrier, but “now, when the issue of the supercarrier has been decided adversely, the Navy finds the atomic bomb of small destructive force.”⁷²

Air Force Secretary Symington retaliated at the Hearings by saying that the Air Force had been troubled by Nimitz’s statements in January 1948 about the navy’s strategic role, and reminded the Armed Services Committee that the Joint Chiefs had already approved strategic bombing as an instrument of war and had assigned it to the Air Force as a primary mission. The Joint Chiefs, of course, including Nimitz and his successor Denfeld. He then proceeded to charge the Navy with imperilling the security of the nation :

It was bad enough to give a possible aggressor technical and operational details of our new and latest equipment. In my opinion it is far worse to have opened up to him in such detail the military doctrines of how this country would be defended. We have given the military leaders of any aggressor nations a further advantage in developing their strategic plans by telling them so much about our own.⁷³

General Omar Bradley, then the Chairman of the JCS, was also particularly scathing of the Navy. “The careless detractions of this [atomic] weapon have done national security no good, and may have done our collective security, in these precarious times, untold harm.”⁷⁴

In conclusion, the Navy may well have been justified in regarding the other armed services as having joined forces against it. Indeed, the committee report “deplore[d] the manner of the cancellation of the aircraft carrier USS *United States*”, but included no recommendation that a replacement be built.⁷⁵ Denfeld was forced into retiral from the position of CNO, having disagreed with his Secretary’s testimony. Radford was sent to the Pacific command in Hawaii, symbolically as far away from Washington as possible, and Burke was actually held under arrest for some hours while the Op-23 office was checked for ‘sensitive materials’. Matthews tried, but failed to stop him being promoted to Rear Admiral.⁷⁶

In conclusion, the hearings were a sorry episode for the Navy. No supercarrier, and no relief from Johnson’s cuts in favour of the Air Force resulted. The Navy’s break with the national policy of deterrence was firmly

⁷² Congressional Record, XCV (October 12, 1949), pp. 1183-1184, cited in Stein(ed.), pp. 522-523.

⁷³ Unification and Strategy Hearings, in Stein (ed.) , p. 407.

⁷⁴ Unification and Strategy Hearings, in Stein (ed.) , p. 526.

⁷⁵ Quoted from the Unification and Strategy Report, in Stein (ed.), p. 551.

⁷⁶ See Baer, p. 313; Paolo Coletta, “Francis P. Matthews”, in Coletta (ed.), American Secretaries of the Navy Vol. II, pp. 808-809.

reined in. The ‘revolting’ Admirals had made a serious mistake in attempting to undermine what Colin S. Gray has referred to as “*the security guarantor for Rimland-Eurasia [the countries friendly to the US, and upon whom it relied for collective security] against Soviet continental conquest or domination.*”⁷⁷ It was a lesson well learnt for Radford and Burke especially, as will be detailed later on. Not only them, though. Eisenhower’s diary contains a scathing criticism of the whole debate, characterising it on 14 October 1949 as a “bitter fight... , with the Navy still cursing the other services. The whole performance is humiliating - I’ve seriously considered resigning my commission, so I could say what I pleased, publicly.”⁷⁸ He would not oversee such a split as president himself.

On the bright side, if this was the Navy’s darkest hour, an old saying springs to mind : ‘It is always darkest just before the dawn.’ The ‘dawn’ would arrive in a war fought on and around the inappropriately named ‘Land of the Morning Calm’: Korea.

The Rise of Containment : NSC-68 and Korea

In order to understand the foreign and national security of the USA in the period concerned, one must go back to 1946, and examine a telegram sent by one George F. Kennan in response to the increasing puzzlement of his superiors back home at a rise in Russian vehemence toward the US in their leaders’ speeches. The reply was startling to say the least. In the words of John Lewis Gaddis, “rarely is it given to one individual to express, within the compass of a single document, ideas of such force and persuasion that they immediately change the course of a nation’s foreign policy. That was the effect though, of the 8000 word telegram sent by Kennan on February 22, 1946.”⁷⁹ It was later to be expanded upon for publication in the infamous ‘Mr. X’ article in *Foreign Affairs*, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”.⁸⁰

In summary, Kennan told the State Department back home that the Soviet regime relied on the presence of an external threat to remain viable. The disappearance of the threats of Germany and Japan left the West, and particularly

⁷⁷ Colin S. Gray, “Seapower and Western Defense”, in Gray & Barnett, *Seapower and Strategy*, p. 279.

⁷⁸ October 14, 1949, *Eisenhower Diaries*, p. 164.

⁷⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 19.

⁸⁰ ‘X’, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”, *Foreign Affairs*, XXV (July 1947) , pp. 566-582, see also Thomas H. Etzold & John Lewis Gaddis, (eds.), *Containment : Documents on American Foreign Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 84-89, and pp. 50-63 for the ‘Long Telegram.’

the United States, to fill the gap.⁸¹

A note to the State Department on 20 March, 1946 has almost comic overtones today, but was deadly serious at the time :

We have come to the conclusion that nothing short of complete disarmament, delivery of our air and naval forces to Russia and resigning of [the] powers of Government to American communists would even dent this problem [of disarming Soviet suspicions] : and even then - and this is not facetious - that Moscow would smell a trap and would continue to harbor the most baleful misgivings.⁸²

Just before the publication of the ‘Mr. X’ article in July, Kennan became the head of new Secretary of State George Marshall’s ‘Policy Planning Staff’ in May, 1947.⁸³ He had begun calling for a realisation that, under Truman’s austere post-war budgeting, interests should be contracted to fit means. He argued for ‘particularism’ in American foreign policy, because the US was not strong enough - could not be strong enough - to hold the entire world under its sway and enforce its interests in that manner. This kind of thinking he took with him into office :

... To do so would be to call upon our people for sacrifices which in themselves completely alter our way of life and our political institutions....

Unpleasant as this may be, we may have to face up to the fact that there may be instances where violence somewhere in the world *on a limited scale* is more desirable than the alternatives, because those alternatives would be global wars in which we ourselves would be involved, no one would win, and in which all humanity would be dragged down.⁸⁴

Two points need further comment here. The first is the warning against altering the American way of life and its political institutions by excesses in trying to affect the course of world events. This warning would be repeated in many of the national security documents of the Eisenhower period as a fundamental reason for not meddling with the economy and trying to preserve national security as cheaply as possible.⁸⁵ The other is that Kennan raises the

⁸¹ Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 20.

⁸² Cited in Op. Cit., p. 20.

⁸³ Op. Cit., p. 25.

⁸⁴ Op. Cit., p. 27-28. [italics added]

⁸⁵ See for example, “NSC-162/2”, p. 1: “to meet the Soviet threat to US national security ... [but] “In doing so, to avoid seriously weakening the US economy or undermining our fundamental values and institutions”, in Marc Trachtenberg, (ed.) The Development of American Strategic Thought : Basic Documents from the Eisenhower and Kennedy Periods (New York, 1988), p. 39; see also “NSC-5602/1”, p. 2, in Trachtenberg, Basic Documents, p. 126, “NSC-5810/1”; p. 2 in Basic Documents, p.

need for awareness that even in an era of American nuclear monopoly, limited conflicts will still have to be fought. The question was one of lines, and where to draw them. Kennan called for the maintenance of friendly regimes in areas “at least favorable to our continued power and independence of our nation”, and went on to list areas including :

- A. The nations of the Atlantic community, which include Canada, Greenland and Iceland, Scandinavia, the British Isles, western Europe, the Iberian peninsula, Morocco and the west coast of Africa down to the bulge, and the countries of South America from the bulge north;
- B. The countries of the Mediterranean and the Middle East as far east as, and including, Iran; and
- C. Japan and the Philippines.

The prevention of hostile governments in these areas Kennan put forward as “an irreducible minimum of national security.”⁸⁶ On the other hand, areas outside those mentioned above were to be accorded as not vital to national security and, if necessary, given up to the powers of Communism. Places like Japan and the west of Europe were vital industrial sectors of the world, and centres of power. Places such as the mainland of southeast Asia were not.⁸⁷ Kennan also took care not to place too much influence on ideology when it came to national security, as can be seen by his treatment of Communism as a complication, rather than as a disease:

Our opposition to Communist expansion is not an absolute factor... It ... must be taken in relation to American security and American objectives. We are ... certainly not always against it to the same degree in every area.⁸⁸

Kennan was therefore a supporter of the aid to Turkey and Greece, who were having trouble with communist uprisings in 1947, and an early advocate of the Far East ‘defensive perimeter’ concept, which called for the defence of island strongholds such as Okinawa, the Philippines and Japan. Commitments on the mainland were a different kettle of fish altogether, though. In line with his thoughts on keeping intervention limited to prioritised areas, instead of inviting every nation “[to start] coming to you with his palm out saying, ‘We have some

194.

⁸⁶ Gaddis, p. 30

⁸⁷ Op. Cit.

⁸⁸ Kennan to the Secretary of the Navy’s Council, December 3, 1947, cited in Gaddis, p. 41.

communists - now come across ... That obviously wouldn't work."⁸⁹

The original policy of 'containment' then, was merely about keeping certain important areas of the world out of hostile hands. In keeping with this, Kennan refined the concept of perimeter defence from his 'X' article - which spoke of the need "to confront the Russians with unalterable counter-force at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world"⁹⁰ - to one which Gaddis describes as 'strongpoint' defence.⁹¹ This seems to have developed along with the idea that the US was taking a 'calculated risk' with military force levels in the interests of helping the free world recover economically from World War II. What might have been taken to mean an unbroken line around Asia by many people was misleading. 'Containment' was originally meant to ensure that rivals to the US, principally Russia, could not challenge US allies until they recovered sufficiently to become forces to be reckoned with on their own once again; in essence, that they would be independent centres of power allied to the US.⁹² It was assumed that, sooner or later, once the Soviets realised that the nations surrounding them were leading the way in quality of life, they would come to the bargaining table and put their suspicions and excesses of totalitarianism to one side. As one White House advisor observed, the world had to be convinced "that we have something positive and attractive to offer, and not just anti-communism."⁹³ This was the reasoning behind the cutbacks in military strength at the same time as the Marshall Plan was transferring aid to the war-torn nations of Europe.⁹⁴ In his 'state of the union' address in January 1948, President Truman told Congress that, "We are moving toward our goal of world peace in many ways. But the most important efforts which we are now taking are those which support world economic reconstruction."⁹⁵

The problem was that the perception of the threat was very much present to the nations immediately next to the Iron Curtain. This was where containment hit a snag. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was something Kennan had deep reservations about, considering his, and the country's goal, of the eventual peaceful withdrawal of both US and USSR forces from the heart of Europe, leaving a friendly collection of states, strong enough to be an independent power

⁸⁹ Gaddis, p. 41.

⁹⁰ 'X', "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", p. 581, cited in Etzold & Gaddis, Containment Documents, p. 88.

⁹¹ Gaddis, p. 59.

⁹² Gaddis, p. 56.

⁹³ Op. Cit., p. 66.

⁹⁴ Op. Cit., p. 29.

⁹⁵ Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1948 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office (GPO), 1961-1966), p. 8, cited in Gaddis, p. 62.

and willing to deal with America.⁹⁶ As Kennan pointed out :

By asking the Europeans to go in for economic recovery before achieving military security, we were in effect asking them to walk a sort of tightrope and telling them that if they concentrated on their own steps and did not look down in to the chasm of their own military helplessness we thought that there was a good chance that they would arrive safely on the other side. And on this basis we made our economic aid available...

[Unfortunately] a lot of people have been not been able to refrain from looking down.⁹⁷

Kennan was disgruntled that the goal of changing the Soviet concept of foreign relations was being usurped by the policies originally intended to achieve it. Encircling the Soviets with military alliances was not the way to rid them of their suspicions about the West! Kennan, as originator of the policy, noted that “what was conceived as an instrument became , little by little, an end in itself. What was supposed to become the servant of policy became its determinant instead.”⁹⁸

Another problem was the vastness of the Asian mainland. By 1949, “The Year of Shocks” which rocked the American sense of security, not only had the Soviet Union exploded an atomic weapon, but also the Chinese Civil War had resulted in a victory for the ‘Reds’.⁹⁹ A line of reasoning emerged akin to the geopolitical theory of Halford Mackinder’s ‘heartland’, or ‘World Island’.¹⁰⁰ Theoretically, if a single communist power could control Eurasia, an “area of great potential power which, if added to the existing strength of the Soviet world would enable the latter to become so superior in manpower, resources and territory that the prospect of survival for the United States as a free nation would be slight.”¹⁰¹

Eight months later the president approved NSC-20/4, which concluded that “Soviet domination of the potential power of Eurasia... would be strategically and militarily unacceptable to the United States.”¹⁰² In 1947, Forrestal had said that “ as long as we can outproduce the world, can control the sea and can strike inland with the atomic bomb, we can assume certain risks otherwise

⁹⁶ Gaddis, p. 73.

⁹⁷ Kennan Naval War College lecture, 1948, cited in Gaddis, pp. 73-74.

⁹⁸ Gaddis, quoting Kennan, p. 79.

⁹⁹ Richard Smoke, National Security and The Nuclear Dilemma (McGraw-Hill Inc., 1993), pp. 53-54.

¹⁰⁰ For more on Mackinder’s geopolitics see Halford J. Mackinder, Democratic Ideals and Reality (W. W. Norton & Co. , 1962)

¹⁰¹ “NSC-7” (March 30, 1948), US Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1948, Vol.I, (Washington DC : GPO, 1974-1996), p. 546.

¹⁰² “NSC-20/4” (November 23, 1948), FRUS, 1948, Vol. I, p. 667.

unacceptable.”¹⁰³ But by 1949 those risks were becoming too unacceptable to be left alone. Truman’s call for a review of national security policy was produced in 1950, and the Korean War erupted almost right after its completion.

NSC-68 regressed from the ‘strongpoint policy’ of Kennan back to the original concept of ‘perimeter’. There was a call for a move away from the excessive reliance on weapons of mass destruction as part of the American armed response, especially considering the Soviet atomic explosion which shook America’s monopoly of the Bomb. There would have to be a more conventional build-up because if not, America would have “no better choice than to capitulate or precipitate a global war”¹⁰⁴ which the containment policy was contrived to avoid.

In contrast with Kennan’s comparative optimism that the Soviets could be ‘brought around’, however, NSC-68 took a more ideological stance on the Cold War. “The existence and persistence of the idea of freedom is a permanent and continuous threat to the foundations of the slave society; and it therefore regards as intolerable the long continued existence of freedom in the world.”¹⁰⁵ Another pessimistic argument was that the Soviets had not tried war yet only because they weren’t sure of winning, and that by 1954, if the US was still comparatively militarily weak, then it might suffer a surprise attack.¹⁰⁶ Before 1954, though, the estimate was that local aggression - ‘war by proxy’- might be the greatest danger. “Piecemeal aggression” might be used, the result of which, assuming US reluctance to employ its atomic deterrent unless directly threatened, would be might be “a series of gradual withdrawals under pressure until we discover one day that we have sacrificed positions of vital interest.”¹⁰⁷ There could be, then, no tiers of priority as Kennan had envisioned; rather, “in the context of the present polarization of power a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere.”¹⁰⁸ ‘Containment’ was defined as the blocking of further Soviet expansion “by all means short of war”, and also “a retraction of the Kremlin’s control and influence.”¹⁰⁹ Whereas earlier ‘containment’ policies under Truman and Marshall had concerned themselves with the aid process as a priority, NSC-68 stressed the military as having been left to wither on the vine for too long, making the blunt statement that “without superior aggregate military strength, in being and readily mobilizable, a policy of ‘containment’ is no more than a policy

¹⁰³ Gaddis, p. 62.

¹⁰⁴ “NSC-68”(April 14, 1950), FRUS, 1950, Vol. I, p. 264. The full document covers pp. 234-292.

¹⁰⁵ “NSC-68”, p. 245.

¹⁰⁶ Op. Cit., pp. 251, 267.

¹⁰⁷ Op. Cit., pp. 264, 290.

¹⁰⁸ see Op. Cit., pp. 237-239.

¹⁰⁹ Op. Cit., pp. 252-253.

of bluff.”¹¹⁰

There was also an attempt to justify the extra spending on the military economically speaking. The document contained the reasoning that “one of the most significant lessons of our World War Two experience was that the American economy, when it operates at a level approaching full efficiency, can provide enormous resources for purposes other than civilian consumption while simultaneously providing a higher standard of living.”¹¹¹ Ways of expanding the defence budget came from civilian economic advisors lead by one Leon Keyserling, soon to become chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors. He would argue that the budgetary ‘pie’ could be expanded if the government would increase its ‘management’ of the economy. ¹¹² As Gaddis puts it, “to its earlier assertion that there *should* not be distinctions between peripheral and vital interests, NSC-68 had now shown with seductive logic that there *need* not be.”¹¹³

One of the most important statements in the document was one which foresaw the application of limited military force in a world where the US no longer had a monopoly of nuclear weaponry, and connected it to a phrase Eisenhower would later make his own :

“The means to be employed must be proportioned to the extent of the mischief.” The mischief may be a global war or it may be a Soviet campaign for limited objectives. In either case we should take no avoidable initiative which would cause it to become a war of annihilation, and if we have the forces to defeat a Soviet drive for limited objectives it may well be to our interest not to let it become a global war. ... [Our] capabilities for the application of force should, therefore, *within the limits of what we can sustain over the long pull* be congruent to the range of tasks which we may encounter.¹¹⁴

Importantly for the Eisenhower period, NSC-68 specifically approved the decision to build a hydrogen bomb, and rejected out of hand the concept of “no first use”, which might be interpreted by the Soviets as “an admission of great weakness and by our allies as a clear indication that we intend to abandon them.”¹¹⁵ The nuclear deterrent would continue to be the great guarantor. The means being measured to the extent of the mischief would mean a great deal to the services fighting in Korea, though. It would be a war which NSC-68 was practically written for: limited in scope, in terms of weaponry used, and in terms

¹¹⁰ Op. Cit., p. 253.

¹¹¹ Op. Cit., pp. 256-258.

¹¹² Gaddis, pp. 93-94.

¹¹³ Gaddis, p. 94.

¹¹⁴ “NSC-68”, p. 244. [italics added]

¹¹⁵ “NSC-68”, pp. 267-269.

of territory fought over. It would also be a war ‘by proxy’, fought by a client state of the Soviet Union rather than America’s main foe.

The Carrier and Korea

The ‘polarisation’ of the two power blocs, as has been mentioned above, had gone too far for the authors of NSC-68. With the signing of a treaty between Red China and the Soviets in February 1950, alarm bells were ringing in the National Security Council. A report in December 1949 used language which would be echoed by Eisenhower’s ‘domino-effect’ simile later on in 1954 :

“If Southeast Asia also is swept by Communism we shall have suffered a major defeat the repercussions of which will be felt throughout the world, especially in the Middle East and in a then critically exposed Australia.¹¹⁶ The policy of containment was expanded to the Far East later that month.¹¹⁷ The Navy, still struggling with imposed cuts, had proposals for the defence of Taiwan from mainland invasion rejected by the JCS because the United States simply did not have enough forces to send there, even though it was of obvious value as part of a ‘strong-point’ defence, let alone the perimeter defence just proposed in the Far East.¹¹⁸ As it was now policy to challenge all further communist expansion wherever possible, the North Korean invasion of their Southern neighbours meant US involvement.

The Navy was of paramount importance to the US intervention in Korea. Carriers aside, re-commissioned surface shipping was vital for supporting US troops fighting on the side of the South Koreans ; indeed, for shipping American forces over to the island in the first place. As Radford pointed out, 98 out of every 100 pounds transported to Korea went by surface shipping.¹¹⁹ After July 5, 1950, the Navy was directed to blockade the Korean coastline to prevent the movement of enemy troops and equipment by sea, and also to restrain hostilities in the Formosa Straits, acting as a buffer between Chinese Nationalists and the Communists on the mainland.¹²⁰

As for the war itself, When North Korea invaded the South on June 25, 1950, the US Navy possessed the only forces capable of rapid intervention. Air Force jets in Japan were too short-ranged to be very suitable for flyovers of

¹¹⁶ Cited in Baer, p. 318.

¹¹⁷ Op. Cit.

¹¹⁸ Baer, pp. 318-319, citing Paul Nitze, “The Development of NSC-68” in International Security (Spring 1980), p. 175.

¹¹⁹ Radford Memoirs, p. 232.

¹²⁰ Dean C. Allard, “An Era of Transition, 1945-53”, in Kenneth J. Hagan(ed.), In Peace and War : Interpretations of American Naval History, 1775-1978 (Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 299.

Korea, and because of the great speed at which the North Koreans advanced, it was impractical to set up extensive land bases for US aircraft on the mainland.¹²¹ In July and August, South Korean forces and the US 8th Army sent to bolster them were pushed back into the “Pusan perimeter” in the southeast of the country. The only carrier available to the US Navy at the time was the USS *Valley Forge*, a *Ticonderoga*- class carrier of World War II vintage.¹²² Her aircraft went into action on 3 July, conducting raids on targets around Pyongyang, in the North, while the enemy pushed back friendly ground forces.¹²³ The immediate lesson learned was that carrier independence from the land was invaluable in a rapidly changing limited war scenario. The aircraft launched from US carriers could perform a wider array of operations than Air Force jets and land-based heavy bombers, and could react more quickly to regional conflicts.¹²⁴ Tactical aircraft became more important than those strategic bombers the Air Force was so proud of having procured, especially since Truman would not authorise the use of nuclear weaponry during the conflict. Off the coast of Korea, the US Navy operated virtually unopposed, freeing up the carriers for more onshore strikes. The carrier was able to provide ideal support for ground troops thanks to its ability to remain close at hand. Close-air support, combat air patrols and precision strikes on enemy supply lines were missions called for in the situation at hand, requiring flexible weaponry, rather than long-range, pre-planned area bombing which took time to organise. The front lines boomeranged up and down the country until the period of stalemate, after Chinese intervention after the first year of the war. Even then, carrier-based close-air support proved more flexible than the Air Force’s due to the more flexible nature of its organisation, as Arleigh Burke revealed :

Army and Air Force close air support relied on a headquarters control system. It wasn’t really close air support. ... They just hadn’t been trained to take out enemy troops very close to our own positions under the direct control of the ground officers on the spot ... who knew what the situation was. Naval air - and marine air was so organised and trained

Close air support was developed by Marine Corps people and the Navy accepted their development absolutely ...

The Army was amazed in [the] Korean War when they found that the Marine Corps were getting such very good close air support and they were not.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Isenberg, p. 180.

¹²² Baer, p. 318, and see Appendix 2 for more information on *Valley Forge*.

¹²³ Isenberg, pp. 182-183.

¹²⁴ Op. Cit., p. 337.

¹²⁵ Burke, *Reminiscences*, pp. 490, 686.

What CNO Sherman noted in his diary in August 1950 after a conversation with MacArthur before the Inchon landings seems to back this statement up :

[MacArthur] praised the Navy and spoke in glowing terms of its future. ... He ... [c]riticised Air Force and blamed them for poor support of troops.¹²⁶

General Maxwell Taylor further commented in 1960 that “Navy leaders have viewed with some amusement, I am sure , the unhappiness of the Army in its relations to the Air Force, and have tended to say “I told you so” to the Army chiefs who struggled so hard for unification to the ultimate detriment of their role in sustained ground combat,” with reference to the two forces’ attempt to wrestle naval air away from the navy, and that, “Since 1947, the Army has been reliant upon the Air Force for tactical air support ... and ... has been a dissatisfied customer, feeling that the air force has not fully discharged its obligations.”¹²⁷

The US carriers were not limited to tactical support roles, however, and signs that new carriers could handle a strategic role in the future became evident as the war progressed onto its stalemate phase after the Chinese intervention. A prime example, in June 1952, saw the Navy taking part in a strategic raid on the Suiho electric power-plant complex in North Korea, the largest of which had a capacity of 300,000 kilowatts and was supposedly the fourth largest in the world.¹²⁸ The Navy’s newest AD-4 Skyraider attack bombers were to play an important part in the raid, undertaken jointly with the Air Force. The story of the raid can be found in James A. Field’s documentation of the war :

... since damage to Suiho offered a method of making trouble in Manchuria without crossing the border, approval from Washington was forthcoming.

... not since the strikes on the Sinuiju bridges in November [1950] had the carrier attack planes crossed Korea to hit targets in MIG Alley. The Suiho strike was to be a joint operation in which the carrier pilots had the place of honor... the other attacks were timed to follow it by a few minutes.

On 23 June the carrier force began launching 35 ADs with 4,000 and 5,000 pound bomb loads for the Suiho attack...

...and then, keeping low to the mountains to avoid radar detection, headed straight for the target. Fifty miles from Suiho they were overhauled by 35 F9Fs (jet fighters) which had taken off

¹²⁶ Clark G. Reynolds, “Forrest Percival Sherman” in Robert W. Love, Jr., The Chiefs of Naval Operations (US Naval Institute Press, 1980), p. 223.

¹²⁷ Maxwell D. Taylor, The Uncertain Trumpet (Steven and Sons Ltd., 1960), p. 168.

¹²⁸ Radford Memoirs, p. 282.

50 minutes earlier. Eighteen miles from the target the group commenced a climb to 10,000 feet, with one jet squadron going up to 16,000 feet as combat air patrol. Two miles from the target a high speed approach was begun.

The first squadron of F9Fs dove on the anti-aircraft gun positions on the Korean bank of the Yalu river, closely followed by the ADs and the other flak-suppression jets ... Within a space of two and one-half minutes the attacking aircraft delivered 81 tons of bombs. At the power house, which was the main target, red flames filled the windows, secondary explosions were reported, and photographs taken by the last ADs to drop showed smoke pouring from the roof. ... No plane was lost, and the only Skyraider to suffer serious damage made a successful wheels-up landing at Kimpo Airfield (near Seoul). Everyone else was back aboard ship by dinner time.

... the attack continued ... but - while the Antung field is only 35 miles from Suiho ... no enemy MIGs put in an appearance ...

These efforts were followed up the next day by carrier, Air Force and marine attacks on all ... complexes. ... Then the picture taking and photo interpretation began, but in North Korea and Manchuria the lights had already gone out.

The results appear to have been first class. Something in the neighbourhood of 90 percent of North Korean power production had been disabled; for two weeks there was an almost complete black-out in enemy country; even at the year's end a power deficit remained.¹²⁹

Obviously, one *Essex-class* carrier would not be enough to sustain that kind of striking power during a war's course, and the *Valley Forge* did not fight a carrier-air war alone. Sixteen days after the invasion, the JCS voted to stop reductions in carrier levels. On 12 July, Defense Secretary Johnson, much humbled, promised his CNO, Admiral Forrest Sherman, that "I will give you another carrier when you want it."¹³⁰ The Navy's shipbuilding budget was enhanced by the carrier's performance in Korea, and according to the recommendations of the military build-up in NSC-68. The budget approved by Navy Secretary Matthews on 30 October, 1950 for Fiscal Year 1952 contained a new heavy carrier and two carrier modernisations to help plug the gap made by Johnson's pre-NSC-68 cuts.¹³¹ Throughout the conflict, the Navy had to rely extensively on "mothballed" ships and reactivated aircraft left over from World War II. During the first year of the war, the Navy expanded by two-thirds to 1100 ships, and naval aircraft in operation from 4300 to 5400.¹³² In 1950, the carrier force had consisted of only seven ships. After changes due to the Korean War,

¹²⁹ James A. Field, Jr, US Naval Operations : Korea (Washington DC : Department of the Navy, 1962), pp. 437-439.

¹³⁰ Friedman, US Aircraft Carriers, p. 256.

¹³¹ Op. Cit.

¹³² Hagan (ed.), In Peace and War, p. 300.

NSC-68 called for 12 attack carriers to be in service by 1952. Even this goal was surpassed, with 16 carriers being in service by the end of that year.¹³³ In total, 24 aircraft carriers were recommissioned before the war's end (or commissioned for the first time in the case of USS *Oriskany*).¹³⁴ Carrier and Marine Corps actions at places such as Inchon and Hungnam were invaluable to the war effort. So much so that, in the words of George Baer, "naval air and the marine corps played such conspicuous and valuable roles that their future as part of the Navy was never again challenged, and the conceptual and operational value of sea power in a limited, protracted war was confirmed."¹³⁵ At Inchon, a breathtaking amphibious landing was carried out by the marines at the request of General MacArthur. Malcolm Cagle and Frank Manson, in their study of the Navy's involvement in the conflict, have said that "history records no more striking example of the effectiveness of an amphibious operation."¹³⁶ Soviet Admiral S. G. Gorshkov stated in the 1970s that, "Thanks to the use of the fleet, the Americans were able to create in a narrow portion of the front a powerful strike grouping of forces enabling them to avoid total defeat in Korea."¹³⁷ That operation was the spur for United Nations forces to outflank and push the North Koreans back to within their own borders. After the intervention of the Chinese, at the end of November 1950, U.N. forces had to be withdrawn and evacuated at Hungnam in December. Approximately 1700 sorties were flown to keep back the advancing Red Chinese, and at one point 4 attack carriers, a battleship, 2 cruisers and 22 destroyers were providing cover. Had excessive casualties been taken, or the US forces involved trapped and destroyed, the war might not have been kept limited. The seas offered freedom to depart as well as to invade.¹³⁸ The Navy's 7th Fleet also kept a diplomatic function in the limiting of the war by keeping Chiang Kai-Shek from becoming involved.¹³⁹

The Korean War then, strengthened the argument for an interventionist maritime policy based on the relatively limited intensity of the war. Although it was certainly more than a "police action" by its end, no nuclear weaponry was used. Maxwell Taylor wrote to General Matthew Ridgeway after the armistice that, "In the end, by a tacitly agreed, mutually cancelling out of special weapons, we may be forced to rely again on conventional means."¹⁴⁰ Despite the troubles in

¹³³ Friedman, *US Aircraft Carriers*, pp. 20-21.

¹³⁴ Hagan (ed.), *In Peace and War*, p. 305.

¹³⁵ Baer, p. 315.

¹³⁶ Malcolm Cagle and Frank Manson, *The Sea War in Korea* (US Naval Institute Press, 1957), p. 75.

¹³⁷ S. G. Gorshkov, *The Sea Power of the State*, (Pergamon, 1979), p. 240.

¹³⁸ James A. Field, Jr, *US Naval Operations : Korea* (Washington DC : Department of the Navy, 1962), pp. 305, 367.

¹³⁹ Baer, p. 323.

¹⁴⁰ Taylor, *Uncertain Trumpet*, p. 16.

the Far East, though, US military planning was still mostly concerned with, “an all-out air-atomic, central-front war in Europe,” according to George Baer.¹⁴¹ This was nothing new, of course. James L. Lacy criticised the military establishment for failing to recognise the fact that “virtually nothing in pre-Korea US political strategy had anticipated the kinds of military challenges Korea posed became a quickly lost fact.”¹⁴² As far as US forces were concerned, the limits were applied by statesmen and not generals, or admirals for that matter. One such, Admiral J. J. Clark, is quoted as saying that, “You shouldn’t be in a war if you don’t want to win it.”¹⁴³ Matthew Ridgeway, who succeeded MacArthur after the latter had campaigned for an escalation to the war, said of pre-war planning that “the concept of ‘limited warfare’ never entered our councils.”¹⁴⁴ In 1960, his successor on the JCS, General Maxwell Taylor spoke further on the subject when he spoke of the fact that “many military polemicists” found limited war a hard fact to swallow, in view of the fact that the US had “an absolute monopoly” of nuclear weaponry at the time. “They can only belabor the folly of having accepted the conflict on such restricted terms.”¹⁴⁵

The reasoning behind keeping the conflict limited was that US policy-makers still saw the Soviet Union as the main threat and the Red Chinese as a diversion - the “junior partners of Soviet Communism” to quote a State Department report of June 1950.¹⁴⁶ In fact, a further document from mid-December concluded that war with the Soviet Union was not far away : “[B]y the present estimate, for our defense moves we have left to us only days and hours, not months and years.”¹⁴⁷ A measure of the preoccupation with the Soviet Union was that the greatest single Navy loss during the time of the war occurred in the North Atlantic, when the carrier *Wasp* rammed a minesweeper and sank it for the loss of 176 sailors in rough seas off Norway in 1952.¹⁴⁸ Dean Acheson revealed that, “From the very start of hostilities in Korea, President Truman intended to fight a limited engagement there. In this determination he had the staunch and unwavering support of the State and defense departments and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Such a war policy requires quite as much determination as any other kind. It also calls for restraint and fine judgement, a sure sense of how far is enough; it

¹⁴¹ Baer, p. 320.

¹⁴² James L. Lacy, *Within Bounds : The Navy in Post-War American Security Policy* (Alexandria : Center for Naval Analyses, 1983), p. 145.

¹⁴³ Malcolm Cagle and Frank Manson, *The Sea War in Korea*, p. 471.

¹⁴⁴ Matthew Ridgeway, *The Korean War* (Doubleday, 1967), p. 11.

¹⁴⁵ Taylor, *Uncertain Trumpet*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ *FRUS, 1950*, Vol. 6, p. 349.

¹⁴⁷ “Moscow-Peiping Timetable for War,” *FRUS, 1950*, Vol. 1, p. 481.

¹⁴⁸ Field, *History of US Naval Operations : Korea*, pp. 398-401.

may involve, as it did in Korea, a good deal of frustration.”¹⁴⁹

In fact, the days and hours of 1950 did turn into frustrating months and years, thus the US wanted to prevent enlargement of the war, which was tying up too many resources in such a remote, secondary arena. Europe was the primary strategic theatre, and the Soviets the primary foe. Bernard Brodie therefore characterised the war after 1950 as “one long story of earnest desire to disengage from China.”¹⁵⁰ Omar Bradley, chairman of the JCS, told Congress that war with China in 1951 was “the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time.”¹⁵¹

It was, however, a good war for the Navy; a war which saw the Navy expand its role from the pre-Mahanian task of patrol to that of offensive power projection once again, even if not in the nuclear sense. It started the thinking on limited war which would affect the Navy’s policies in the years to come. Floyd D. Kennedy put it very succinctly when he said that “a combination of NSC 68, which stated the official case for a reversal in the downward trend in American military power, and the Korean War, which accelerated the policies designed to fulfill that requirement, shaped the Cold War navy of the 1950s and early 1960s.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation : My Years in the State Department (W. W. Norton & Co., 1969), p. 416.

¹⁵⁰ Bernard Brodie, War and Politics (Macmillan, 1973), p. 115, cited in Baer p. 326.

¹⁵¹ Baer, p. 326.

¹⁵² Floyd D. Kennedy, Jr., “The Creation of the Cold War Navy, 1953-1962”, in Hagan (ed.), In Peace and War , p. 305.

Chapter Two : ‘New Look’, New Carriers

While the Korean War revealed the usefulness of the carrier in a peripheral, limited engagement, and also showed an example of its continuing ability to strike at strategic targets, the US Navy was still clamouring for something more: the role that had been denied them with the cancellation of their supercarrier in 1949. When Johnston told his Chief of Naval Operations that he could have another carrier, a supercarrier was once more on the drawing boards. This was to be a pivotal moment for naval-air proponents. The carrier, named after James Forrestal, would be the largest ever built, although smaller than the *United States* and significantly redesigned, due to factors of technological advancement which shall be detailed in this chapter. First though, there must be an examination of the policies of the Eisenhower administration which halted the Korean conflict and then fell back on a ‘New Look’ at the ‘containment’ and defence policies of the United States.

Eisenhower’s Foreign Policy : A ‘New Look’ or a Step Back ?

As Acheson has said in his State Department memoirs, the Korean War was a frustrating experience for the American public and their armed forces. ‘Jocko’ Clark’s outburst about winning wars was the tip of the iceberg. In the Army, a group of high-ranking officers became known as the ‘Never Again Club’, due to their misgivings about fighting wars on the Asian mainland. Dwight D. Eisenhower had stated in his campaign of 1952 that if elected, “I will go to Korea”. He was the man who, in the American popular imagination, had “put down Hitler”, according to Richard Smoke, and was elected as President in November of that year by a landslide majority. Within six months the Korean War had been brought to a negotiated armistice.¹

Eisenhower’s memoirs are a great help in outlining his thinking on the military establishment, which he demanded be structured on the basis of “never starting a major war” :

¹ Smoke, National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma, pp. 63-64.

So long as we were to allow an enemy the initiative, we would have to be capable of defeating him even after having sustained the first blow - a blow that would almost certainly be a surprise attack and one that would make Pearl Harbor ... look like a skirmish...

The second guideline was that since modern global war would be catastrophic beyond belief, America's military forces must be designed primarily to deter a conflict, even though they might be compelled later to fight...

A third was that national security could not be measured in terms of military strength alone. The relationship, for example, between military and economic strength is intimate and indivisible.

A fourth consideration was that our armed forces must be modern, designed to deter or wage the type of war to be expected in the mid-twentieth century. No longer could we avoid the folly... of beginning each war with the weapons of the last...

The fifth important guideline was that United States security policy should take into account the need for membership in a system of alliances. Since our resources were and are finite, we could not supply all the land sea and air forces for the entire free world. The logical role of our allies along the periphery of the Iron Curtain therefore, would be to provide (with our help) for their own local security ... while the United States, centrally located and strong in productive power, provided mobile reserve forces of all arms.²

Eisenhower's diaries also provide some excellent insight into the formulation of his new administration's policies, and the opinions of the Chief Executive before and after his election go a long way to explaining and summarising his new policies. For example, as early as September 1947, Eisenhower had formed strong opinions on the containment policy of the US, and where the line of Soviet expansion should be drawn. There seems to be a great deal of enthusiasm for a more universal policy of containment :

[Soviet military expansion] is the problem that can only be solved by the maintenance of adequate American military strength. We must hew to the line of principle and be in position to sustain our positions. Anything less will mean merely a succession of new Munichs, finally war under conditions least favorable to us.³

As for the Korean War, Eisenhower seems to have agreed with those in the armed services who disliked the limited nature of the conflict. Just after the start of the war, a visit to the Pentagon produces an opinion that perhaps Eisenhower

² Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years (2 Vols.), (Heinemann, 1966), vol. 1, p. 446.

³ From the papers of Kevin McCann, Eisenhower aide and speech-writer, in Robert H. Ferrell (ed.), The Eisenhower Diaries (W.W. Norton & Co., 1981), p. 143.

would make more use of nuclear weaponry to avoid stalemate and over-extension:

They [the army generals] seemed indecisive, which was natural in view of the indecisiveness of political statements. ... It happens I believe we'll have a dozen Koreas soon if we don't take a firm stand, but ... my whole contention was that an appeal to force cannot, by its nature, be a partial one ...

Remember, in a fight we (our side) can never be too strong, we must study every angle to be prepared for whatever may happen, even if it finally came to the use of an A-bomb (which God forbid).⁴

Although good for the Navy, the war was something of an embarrassment for the US as a whole. In the words of Radford, "We had tied down in that "little" war almost half our army, navy and air forces. We did not look too good as a military ally."⁵ Especially considering the admission that there were bigger fish to fry in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the NSC's primary concerns.

Well before the election results were in, major criticisms from American politicians such as Robert A. Taft had surfaced concerning US foreign policy and defence preparations. He argued that there was a definite limit "to what a government can spend in time of peace and still maintain a free economy..."

[A]n all-out war program in time of peace might mean the final and complete destruction of those liberties which it is the very purpose of the preparation to protect. ...

An unwise and overambitious foreign policy, and particularly the effort to do more than we are able to do, is the one thing which might in the end destroy our armies and prove a real threat to the liberty of the people of the United States.⁶

Taft was adamant that the US should not meddle with the economic liberties which defined American domestic policy for the sake of the world outside. He was not alone in his criticisms. John Foster Dulles, in the State Department under the Truman administration before the election of 'Ike' and his subsequent promotion to Secretary of State⁷, broke with the administration and published his own ideas on American foreign policy in Life magazine in 1952.

Like Taft, he argued against "gigantic expenditures" which were producing negligible results.

⁴ June 30, 1950, Eisenhower Diaries, pp. 175-176.

⁵ Radford Memoirs, p. 307.

⁶ Robert A. Taft, A Foreign Policy For Americans, (Garden City, 1951), pp. 68-70, 78, 101.

⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, (Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 120-121.

Our present negative policies will never end the type of sustained offensive which Soviet Communism is mounting; they will never end the peril nor bring relief from the exertions which devour our economic, political and moral vitals.

Unlike Taft, Dulles produced an alternative policy which would keep US means in line with interests, proposing to use the US nuclear arsenal in a new type of way :

[T]he free world [must] develop the will and organize the means to retaliate *instantly* against *open aggression* by Red armies, so that, if it occurred anywhere, we could, and would strike back where it hurts, by means of our own choosing.

Instead of having nuclear weapons developed for the purposes of an all-out war, they would be used as a psychological weapon as well, and at cheaper cost to the nation. All-out war with such weapons would be a “catastrophe”, but an avoidable one :

If that catastrophe occurs, it will be because we have allowed these new and awesome forces to become the ordinary killing tools of the soldier when in the hands of the statesman, they could serve as effective political weapons in defense of the peace.⁸

The “Boldness” policy sat better with Eisenhower than Taft’s comparative isolationism⁹, hence Dulles’ promotion, and the Eisenhower administration aligned its foreign policy around his ideas. Eisenhower was rather more cautious about bandying about terms such as ‘retaliatory striking power’. “I’ll be damned if I run on that,” he told aides at a Chicago convention.¹⁰ Eisenhower was attempting to strike a ‘middle ground’ with regards to defence expenditure and foreign policy. He felt the Truman administration had swung from one extreme to another. Writing in his diary in 1952, when still the commanding officer of NATO - and thus charged with keeping his political views private - Eisenhower felt the need to reiterate to himself the “horns of the dilemma” facing America :

This morning’s paper states that the president’s budget, just submitted to Congress, amounts to something over \$85 billion with a contemplated deficit for the year of \$14 billion.

⁸ John Foster Dulles, “A Policy of Boldness”, *Life* (May, 1952), pp.146-160, cited in Gaddis, pp. 121-122. [italics added]

⁹ Gaddis, p. 127.

¹⁰ Cited in Gaddis, p. 128.

Only in two of the years of World War II has an American budget equalled this figure - it is a record for peacetime. Of the budget, the paper states that approximately \$65 billion is to be applied to military preparedness, including help for our allies.

I am very greatly afraid that certain basic truths are being forgotten or ignored in our public life today. The first of these is that a democracy undertakes military preparedness only on a defensive, which means a long-term basis. We do not attempt to build up to a D-day because, having no intention of our own to attack, we must devise and follow a system that we can carry as long as there appears to be a threat in the world capable of endangering our national safety....

Eisenhower goes on to comment on conversations with James Forrestal, wherein the two appear to have agreed that excessive meddling with the civilian economy would lead to disastrous consequences. They were trying to defend the American way of life, not just property, territory and homes.

As a consequence of this purpose, everything done to develop a defense against external threat, except under conditions readily recognizable as emergency, must be weighed and gauged in the light of probable long-term, internal, effect. For example, we can and do adopt in time of war restrictive practices that, in time of peace, would constitute serious damage to the system of government set up by our Constitution....

This need for avoiding damage to our system markedly influenced Jim [Forrestal] and me as we approached the development of estimates as to military requirements. No argument is necessary to show that excessive expenditures for non-productive items could, in the long run, destroy the American economy... At the other extreme, the traditional tendency in our country in time of peace has been to neglect the armed services to the extent of folly. ...

Now I am afraid that we are risking damage from the other horn of the dilemma - that is , the danger of internal deterioration through the annual expenditure of unconscionable sums on a program of indefinite duration, extending far into the future....

Reasonable men have no recourse except to plan on the basis of stable, relatively assured income and outgo. To do otherwise is adventure far beyond the point of reason. ...

Only two or three years ago, the president told me very solemnly that an aggregate national budget of more than \$42 billion would spell unconscionable inflation in the United States. Today we talk about \$85 billion and apparently mean it to be indefinitely prolonged into the future (Incidentally, I might remark that I am one of those who believe that we did the right thing in defying and opposing the communist advance into South Korea. While it is manifestly an awkward place in which to fight, and there seems to be no satisfactory conclusion to the struggle, yet it is my own opinion that, had we allowed the South Korean republic, which was sponsored by the free nations, to go under, we would have by this time been kicked out of Southeast Asia completely, and it would be touch and go as to whether India would still be outside the Iron

Curtain).¹¹

Eisenhower and Dulles were certainly agreed on one thing: the economy was paramount. They were not in favour of the economic arguments of Keyserling, for example. Although admittedly not an economist, Eisenhower was not afraid to openly criticise one, and preferred the language of plain common sense to do so. Gaddis quotes him as saying in 1955, "I read... that... Mr. Keyserling has a plan for spending a good many more billion dollars, for reducing taxes, and balancing the budget at the same time. That I would doubt was a good economic plan."¹² In an official document, Dulles made his feelings on the subject very plain as well : "If economic stability goes down the drain, everything goes down the drain."¹³

Publicly, the tone was the same. In May 1952, Truman had dismissed fears about the country's economic situation as a "bunch of hooey"¹⁴, but Eisenhower's view was that excessive defence spending was waste, considering the alternative purchases one could make. He expressed this in a speech in April 1953 :

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. ...

We pay for a single fighter plane with a half million bushels of wheat.

We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people.¹⁵

These principles were to be backed up in the budget of that year. Eisenhower told his budget director that those same guns, ships and rockets were not equivalent to lasting security if the system behind them was failing its people; "The most they can do is protect you in what you have for the moment."¹⁶ He directed that savings be made on the defence side of the budget and a corresponding increase be made in other domestic projects. And as was stated in the previous chapter, the NSC documents of the 'New Look' period also backed up this public and official preference for a strong and independent economy as

¹¹ January 22, 1952, *Eisenhower Diaries*, pp. 209-213.

¹² Gaddis, p. 134.

¹³ US Department of State, *Department of State Bulletin (DSB)*, XXVIII (May 25, 1953), p. 737.

¹⁴ Gaddis, p. 122.

¹⁵ Eisenhower Speech to American Society of Newspaper Editors (April 16 1953), cited in Gaddis, pp. 133-134.

¹⁶ Op. Cit., p. 134.

the basis for the Eisenhower administration's America. They take an especially sceptical stance on governmental control of the economy, stating a preference of avoiding "inflationary borrowing" and "repressive taxation".¹⁷ NSC-162/2 called instead for "a sound economy based on free private enterprise" as the alternative.¹⁸ This was in keeping with early containment policy, and with Eisenhower's and Taft's ideas too. In 1956, another document stressed the need to avoid calling upon the people for excessive sacrifices that turn the US into "anything resembling a garrison state."¹⁹

But if having taken away some of the means, Eisenhower proved in his inaugural address in January 1953 that he was not an isolationist with respect to US interests abroad :

Conceiving the defense of freedom ... to be one and indivisible, we hold all continents and peoples in equal regard and honor. We reject any insinuation that one race or another, one people or another, is in any sense inferior or expendable.²⁰

Using this language, Eisenhower signalled an official intention to keep the universality of NSC-68, as well as its 'perimeter' containment of communism. It was certainly a rejection of the 'particularism' of Kennan. Concomitant with the speech was the insinuation that no further 'victories' for Communism were to be allowed. His 'dominoes' theory²¹ was not an isolated incident. "Where in hell can you let the Communists chip away anymore ? We just can't stand it," he told Congress in 1954.²² It is John Gaddis' opinion that Dulles believed that instead of controlling the American economy, the US might *actually have an interest* in being threatened, if through that process US citizens could be goaded into doing what was necessary to preserve their way of life.²³ Thus Dulles would quote Soviet ideology for this purpose, and Soviet leaders' own take on the advancement of Communism to 'whip up a storm', so to speak :

The Soviet Communists are planning for what they call "an entire historical era," and we should do the same. They seek, through many types of maneuvers, gradually to divide and weaken the free nations by overextending them in their efforts which, as Lenin put it, are "beyond their strength, so that they come to practical bankruptcy." Then, said Lenin, "our victory is

¹⁷ "NSC-162/2" (October 30, 1953), p. 15, in Basic Documents, p. 53.

¹⁸ Op. Cit., p. 14.

¹⁹ "NSC-5602" (March 15, 1956), p. 17, in Op. Cit., p. 141.

²⁰ Public Papers of the Presidents : Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953 (Eisenhower Papers) (Washington DC : G.P.O., 1960), p. 6, cited in Gaddis, p. 129.

²¹ Eisenhower Papers, 1954, p383, cited in Gaddis, p. 131.

²² Cited in Gaddis, p. 131.

²³ Op. Cit., p. 137.

assured.” Then, said Stalin, “will be the moment for the decisive blow.”²⁴

This was restated for emphasis in Foreign Affairs ²⁵ in 1954.

This is highly ironic, considering the fact that the *Soviets*’ proclivity for conjuring up external threat was the basis for containment in the first place. Dulles was drawing lines on the map, and Eisenhower appears to have gone along with this presentation of ‘the Communists’ as scheming, calculating foes. In 1954, for example ; “I do say that when [a Communist government] permits anything to happen, ... it does it deliberately and with a deliberate purpose.”²⁶

Dulles, in 1955, went even further with the domino theory than Eisenhower though, placing emphasis on the loss of islands such as Quemoy and Matsu as the beginning of the Communist “objective of driving us out of the western Pacific, right back to Hawaii, and even to the United States!”²⁷

So what was the New Look, and how would it overcome the imbalance which resulted from taking away means from the nation’s armed forces, and preserving the nation’s interests abroad?

According to Eisenhower, it was a means of regaining the initiative and avoiding more expensive peripheral wars like Korea. “No foreign policy really deserves the name if it is really the reflex action from someone else’s initiative,” he announced in May 1953.²⁸ That the Truman-era policies *were* a series of reactions was admitted - more or less - by Truman himself, after his retreat: “The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the North Atlantic Pact [sic], the mobilisation program and the action by the United States in meeting the aggression in Korea were steps dictated by a series of emergencies.”²⁹

To avoid this ‘dictation’, if the free world might remain outnumbered in the field, it would have to get ‘more bang for the buck’. As early as 1951, Eisenhower had been thinking about a cheaper military which was more efficient to maintain. He was still thinking in terms of industrial mobilisation as the way to counteract massive peacetime spending, too :

I think we should go clear back to methods of damaging the enemy in any possible war of the foreseeable future. Then let us examine ways and means of inflicting that damage. The most

²⁴ John Foster Dulles, “The Evolution of Foreign Policy”, Department of State Bulletin (DSB) (January 25, 1954), p. 107.

²⁵ John Foster Dulles, “Policy for Security and Peace”, Foreign Affairs, Vol. 36 (April 1954), p. 355.

²⁶ Eisenhower Papers (Dec 2, 1954), pp. 1074-1075, in Gaddis, p. 140.

²⁷ Cited in Andrew H. Berding, Dulles on Diplomacy (Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 63.

²⁸ Eisenhower Papers, 1953, p. 265, in Gaddis, p. 146.

²⁹ William Hillman (ed.), Mr. President: The First Publication from the Personal Diaries, Private Letters, Papers and Revealing Interviews of Harry S. Truman (Farrar, Straus and Young, c1952), p. 249.

economical and efficient means should be evolved. We might find out just where in the world the several kinds of tactical organizations would be most efficient and thus we might begin to get a clear idea of real efficiency in peacetime organization ...

Industrial mobilization could save our nation (if properly planned for) when our whole peacetime military strength might cost us ten times as much and largely fail ... In 1941, our peacetime navy took a terrible blow on the first day of the war, but the navy built after the war started did a great job in both oceans, particularly against Japan, where it really, with air force help, won the war.³⁰

“More efficient methods” were eminently possible, as coinciding with the New Look were certain technological breakthroughs which eliminated the relative scarcity of atomic weaponry, and also allowed a dramatic reduction in the size of atom bombs. The B-47 intercontinental bomber was becoming available, and the B-52 was on the drawing boards - a jet which could strike at the Soviet Union directly from bases in the United States.³¹

Nuclear weaponry then, would be the great equaliser for the US armed forces. Eisenhower lost no time in presenting them as once more the great weapons of the future for the US, boasting of the American nuclear arsenal in the Department of State Bulletin in 1953 :

Today, the United States’ stockpile of atomic weapons, which, of course, increases daily, exceeds by many times the explosive equivalent of the total of all bombs and all shells ... of World War II. ...

In size and variety, the development of atomic weapons has been no less remarkable. The development has been such that *atomic weapons have virtually achieved conventional status within our armed services*. In the United States, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Marine Corps are all capable of putting this weapon to military use.³²

While he later went on to a softer line, expressing a wish to avoid the “hopeless finality of a belief that two atomic colossi are doomed malevolently to eye each other indefinitely across a trembling world,”³³ and asking if anyone could “wish his name to be coupled by history with such human degradation and destruction,”³⁴ the initial indication of the nuclear weaponry having “virtually achieved conventional status” was a sign of the New Look and a slip from the ‘Statesman Weapon’ ideas of Dulles. But by no means an isolated slip. In fact,

³⁰ October 18 1951, Eisenhower Diaries, pp. 201-203.

³¹ see Gaddis, p. 148, and Smoke, National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma, p. 66.

³² Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Atoms for Peace”, Department of State Bulletin, Vol. XXIX (December 21, 1953), p. 348. [italics added]

³³ Op. Cit.

³⁴ Op. Cit., p. 349.

even in 1955 Eisenhower was continuing to compare nuclear weaponry to conventional ammunition:

Where these things can be used on strictly military targets and for strictly military purposes, I see no reason why they shouldn't be used just exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else.³⁵

This appears to have been more than just a public bluff, though. The top-secret national security document NSC-162/2 stipulated that “In the event of hostilities, the United States will consider nuclear weapons to be as available for use as other munitions.”³⁶ But what exactly were “hostilities” ? At what level of war would they occur, and with what enemies ? The previous paragraph of the document mentions the USSR and Communist China, so they may be taken to be the targets. “[A]ny aggression by Soviet bloc armed forces” appears to have been the trigger for “our political commitment to strike hard back directly against any aggressor who attacks [the United States or its allies].”³⁷ This was the major difference in policy between NSC-68 and the Eisenhower administration. The means would no longer be measured to the mischief, but the mischief would be attacked at its source. The idea was that, for example, if Communist China decided to attack South Korea, then American retaliation would not be limited to the Korean battlefield alone. The plan was “to hit them with everything we[‘ve] got” should the armistice be broken, Eisenhower told Congress in 1954.³⁸ So the primary use of nuclear weapons was to back up threats of what might happen to the Soviets if they tried to expand their sphere of influence. As a national security document of 1955 put it, “So long as the Soviets are uncertain of their ability to neutralize the US nuclear-air retaliatory power, there is little reason to expect them to initiate general war or actions which they believe would ... endanger the regime and the security of the USSR.”³⁹ As far as general war went, US nuclear retaliation was assured, then. Eisenhower states clearly in his memoirs that. “my intention was firm : to launch the Strategic Air Command immediately upon trustworthy evidence of an attack on the West.”⁴⁰ But when it came to less than that - local aggression, for example - then the United States sought to combine the certainty of a response without corresponding certainty as to the nature of that

³⁵ Eisenhower papers, 1955 (March 16, 1955), p. 332, in Gaddis, p. 149.

³⁶ “NSC-162/2”, p. 22, in Basic Documents, p. 60.

³⁷ Op. Cit.

³⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years (2 Vols.), (Heinemann, 1966), Vol. 1, p. 181.

³⁹ “NSC-5501” (January 7, 1955), p. 11, in Basic Documents, p. 60. This phrase is repeated in “NSC-5602” and “NSC-5707/8” (June 3, 1957), in Basic Documents, p. 107.

⁴⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years (2 Vols.), (Heinemann, 1966), vol.1, p. 453.

response. Therefore public utterances from such as Dulles had to be unclear necessarily. There were times when Eisenhower was seen to be 'reining him in', for example, at a press conference in March 1954 when the subject of Dulles' "Policy for Security and Peace" article came up. Eisenhower regretted the "massive retaliation" implications that many picked up from the speech : "When it comes to saying that where on the fringe or the periphery of our interests ... any kind of an act on the part of an enemy would justify that kind of thing, that I wouldn't hold for a moment ... Foster Dulles, by no stretch of the imagination, ever meant to be so specific and exact in stating what we would do."⁴¹ These kinds of press conferences from Eisenhower were deliberately vague. "Any kind of act" wouldn't demand a nuclear retaliation on the periphery. But perhaps some might. NSC 5501 contained the authorisation to use nuclear weapons "even in a local situation, if such use will bring the aggression to a swift and positive cessation, and if, on a balance of political and military consideration, such use will best advance US security interests."⁴² "Political consideration" meant the president's final authorisation, of course.

In essence, one of the first NSC documents of the Eisenhower period, NSC-149/2, entitled "BASIC NATIONAL SECURITY POLICIES IN RELATION TO THEIR COSTS" summed up the efforts to create the New Look and keep costs down at the same time. There were cuts to be made, and the document states that in Fiscal Years 1954, 1955, and 1956, expenditures (inflation notwithstanding) would amount to \$45 billion, levelling off at \$40 billion thereafter to maintain the readiness required for the 'long haul.'⁴³ According to statistics provided by the US Bureau of the census, national security expenditures were, in billions of dollars per financial year, relatively stable under the Eisenhower administration, from FY 1954 to FY 1961; the lowest expenditure being \$40.2 billion in FY 1955, and the highest being \$47.4 in 1961. One must of course allow for inflation with the later expenditures. Revealingly, the same source reveals that the percentage of the budgetary total allocated to defence actually consistently fell year to year, from 65.7% in FY 1954, to 48.5% in FY 1961. There are no drastic falls in the percentage; it falls by from 1% to 2% year by year.⁴⁴ This is consistent with Eisenhower's ideas regarding the stability of defence expenditure.

The stamp of Eisenhower's pre-presidential thinking is clear in the

⁴¹ Eisenhower Papers, 1954, p. 325, in Gaddis, p. 150.

⁴² "NSC-5501", p. 12, in Basic Documents, p. 108.

⁴³ "NSC-149/2", p. 8, in Basic Documents, p. 12.

⁴⁴ US Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970 (Washington: GPO, 1975), pp. 224, 1116; US Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1979 (Washington: GPO, 1979), pp. 364, 435, cited in Gaddis, p. 359.

document's continual reference to the combating of inefficiency within the armed services. The idea of 'more bang for the buck' is expressed in this kind of language within the document, in a section emphasising firepower as opposed to manpower :

The guide lines with respect to force levels for the Army and Navy will be to retain for FY 1954 substantially the combat forces presently in being, with every effort being made to reduce overhead resulting from the inefficient utilization of manpower and at the same time to provide substantially increased modernization of equipment. In the case of the Air Force, substantially increased combat effectiveness will be achieved through modernization of equipment and by an important increase in the number of combat wings...⁴⁵

In a diary entry the day after NSC 149/2 was released, Eisenhower reveals that "this whole program was explained in the light of the desire of the administration to avoid any weakening of our defensive posture in the world; in fact, in the light of the need for increasing the presently available strength, particularly in the air forces."⁴⁶ In fact, according to Radford, US Navy and Air Forces would have to be ready to strike immediately in the case of, for example, renewed fighting in Korea, because "all concerned realised that [the armistice] would not be the end of a war but merely the cessation of fighting. During an armistice our forces would have to remain ready to resume fighting if the enemy elected to break it."⁴⁷ This appears to have been a departure from the more marked preference to rely more on mobilisation, but in fact the army would be cut by 125,000 men by June 30, 1954, and the Navy and Marine Corps by 75,000 by the same date. The document also refers to the cancelling of any specific 'D-date' and the establishment of "a substantial base for full mobilisation in the event of all-out war."⁴⁸ It appears then that most of Eisenhower's original policy thinking, born intellectually before his presidency, was more or less consistent with the national policies of containment and defence under that presidency. It would be unfair, though, to characterise these policies as Maxwell Taylor has, as "little more than the old air power dogma set forth in Madison Avenue trappings."⁴⁹ Taylor goes on to say that, "it placed emphasis on the new weapons of mass destruction as the basis for providing the retaliatory striking power needed as a deterrent to any aggression, large or small."⁵⁰ This is also not the

⁴⁵ "NSC 149/2", p. 12.

⁴⁶ May 1, 1953, Eisenhower Diaries, pp. 235-236.

⁴⁷ Radford Memoirs, p. 317.

⁴⁸ "NSC-149/2", pp. 8-9.

⁴⁹ Taylor, Uncertain Trumpet, (Harper and Row, 1959), p. 17.

⁵⁰ Op. Cit., p. 18.

whole story, as can be seen by the utterances of Eisenhower. In a conversation with Radford, he announced that the US would not preclude itself from deploying “a few marine and army units” for one or two “brushfire” wars, but set the disclaimer that “if it grew to anything like Korea proportions, the action would become one for the use of atomic weapons. Participation in small wars is primarily a matter for Navy and Air.”⁵¹

Although the deterrent forces were pushed more to the forefront, there was still room in the policy for the express establishment of a mobilisation base to compensate for army reductions during peacetime. Indeed, in 1954 he comments in his diary that the cabinet “agreed to get on to the matter most urgently in order to widen the mobilisation base.”⁵² The shortfall in the meantime would of course rely more heavily on deterrent weapons, which Taylor himself admitted must necessarily be the nation’s priority where defence expenditure was concerned when he submitted his own ‘National Military Program’ in 1956, the elements of which comprised, in order of priority, “deterrence of general war, deterrence of local aggression, defeat of local aggression, and victory in general war conducive to a viable peace.”⁵³ His point, of course, was that without a conventional backup, Eisenhower’s ‘Munichs’ might come to pass. Eisenhower’s main worry about the conventional backup was that it would exhaust the nation’s economy, bankrupt the US, and therefore, that way lay defeat. NSC-5501 concluded that to threaten war might be the way to stop Soviet aggression. It was recognised that the ‘Communist bloc’ was “expected to seek constantly ... to extend Communist power, and to weaken those forces, especially US power and influence, which they regard as inexorable enemies of their system. However, *they will almost certainly avoid pursuing their long-term goals in ways which will jeopardise the security of the regime or their control of the Communist bloc.*”

The NSC document also went on to list the most probable Soviet objectives in order of priority, with the isolation of the US from Eurasia coming after the priorities of holding onto the security of the USSR, China, and the Eastern European satellites.⁵⁴

Proponents of more conventional arms, Taylor included, have often overlooked the fact that the New Look had something of a substitute in mind for the lack of a large army to deal with local aggression : the assistance of allies. NSC 162/2 argued that the US could not “meet its defense needs, even at

⁵¹ “Eisenhower-Radford conversation”, February 1, 1955, Eisenhower Papers, (Whitman File : DDE Diary, Box 5, “Phone calls, Jan-July, 55”, cited in Gaddis, pp. 166-167.

⁵² November 9, 1954, Eisenhower Diaries, p. 285.

⁵³ Taylor, p. 31.

⁵⁴ “NSC-5501”, p. 5, in Basic Documents, p. 101. [italics added]

exorbitant cost, without the support of allies.”⁵⁵ This line of thought was backed up in the public utterances of Foster Dulles, who in his Foreign Affairs article of 1954 listed alliances ahead of the nuclear arsenal as “the cornerstone of security for the free nations.”⁵⁶ He emphasised the deterrent value of a community-basis for defence under a US ‘umbrella’, which would serve to keep the Soviets and Chinese in check.⁵⁷ The aspiration was to contain communism by hemming it inside a ring of states aligned with the United States.⁵⁸ The strategy of forming alliances, though, was not out of step with the Truman administration, which had signed formal alliances with 41 countries through the NATO, ANZUS and Rio Treaties. As Gaddis notes, “the Eisenhower administration extended defense commitments by treaty to only four nations not already covered by alliances arranged during the Truman administration,” these being Thailand, Pakistan, Korea and Taiwan.⁵⁹ The policy was to provide technical assistance and to intervene only with air and naval forces as far as possible. Asked in 1955 whether the idea was to have other nationalities bear the brunt of the fighting in local situations, Eisenhower replied that “that was the kernel of the whole thing.”⁶⁰

The implications of relying on allies to combat local aggression tied up with the universalist foreign policy. The community defence was a two-way bargain, and the administration therefore had to be seen to be doing all it could for its allies - but doing so without over-committing and risking any escalation. Hence, for example, the ‘domino theory’ and Dulles’ fears on Eurasia, backed up by statements such as in NSC-5501, wherein, “the Communist Chinese regime ... will attempt to expand its power on the mainland of Asia and to expel US power and influence therefrom,” and in reference to the offshore islands belonging to the Nationalists, “the Chinese Communists will... probably try to seize them, if they believe this can be done without bringing on major hostilities with the US.”⁶¹

US support of allies therefore had to be credible if they were to be a large part of a containment strategy. Hence, Gaddis has commented that, “like the authors of NSC-68, Eisenhower and his advisors attached great importance to appearances; perceptions of power, they believed, could be as important as power itself. Victories even for independent communism could create the impression of

⁵⁵ “NSC-162/2”, p. 8, in Basic Documents, p. 46.

⁵⁶ Dulles, “Policy for Security and Peace”, p. 355.

⁵⁷ Op. Cit.

⁵⁸ Dulles press conference, DSB, Vol. XXXI (December 1954), p. 897.

⁵⁹ Gaddis, p. 152.

⁶⁰ Eisenhower press conference, January 12, 1955, Eisenhower Papers, 1955, p. 57, cited in Gaddis, p. 153.

⁶¹ “NSC-5501”, pp. 5-6, in Basic Documents, pp. 101-102.

a United States in retreat; the resulting loss in morale and will to resist could be devastating.”⁶² Therefore, any straying from the official path was not to be tolerated. For example, Eisenhower wrote in 1955 that ,

On March 10, 1955, after the security council meeting, I had the secretary of defense into my office to caution him as to the casual statements he was making in press conferences and elsewhere - which sometimes cause very definite embarrassment to the administration. These normally involve subjects touching on foreign relations.

The latest ... [was] his casual statement that the loss or retention of Quemoy and the Matsus would make little difference in the long run.

While I think that he considers himself a master of public relations, he seems to have no comprehension at all of what embarrassment such remarks can cause the secretary of state and me in our efforts to keep the tangled international situation from becoming completely impossible.⁶³

Therefore, in order to keep allies on side, the US would have to become involved in peripheral conflicts, at least to a certain extent. It was therefore in the interest of the administration to state the importance of allies wherever they might be located.

As to whether the New Look was a step back, the answer is, at least, not a step all the way back to the austerity of the pre- NSC-68 Truman and Johnston years. There was much in the new administration’s policies which connected to NSC-68, but the main priority was clearly to avoid over-extension and excessive military spending. A budget which aspired to be more efficient and eliminate duplication was nothing new, but the substitute of firepower for manpower was a departure from the previous administration, which led to a more obvious reliance on the willingness of allies to participate in the strategy of containment. The overuse of the phrase “Massive Retaliation” has been a major problem in the understanding of the New Look. The administration often produced evidence that total reliance on nuclear weaponry was out of the question. For example, Eisenhower stated quite clearly in 1955 that, “undue reliance on one weapon or preparation for only one kind of warfare simply invites an enemy to resort to another. We must, therefore, keep in our armed forces balance and flexibility adequate for our purposes and objectives.”⁶⁴

The main problem for the likes of Taylor was one of a lack of clarity as to

⁶² Gaddis, p. 144.

⁶³ March 12, 1955, Eisenhower Diaries , p. 296.

⁶⁴ State of the Union Address, January 6, 1955, Eisenhower Papers, 1955, p. 12, cited in Gaddis, p. 166.

when nuclear weapons might be employed, as he criticises the seeming vagueness of NSC documents and use of such phrases as “in accordance with the national interest.”⁶⁵ In this he is backed up by historians such as George Baer, who states that “The problem for military planners was that it is hard to make up a strategy to fit a bluff.”⁶⁶

The New Look was therefore placing a priority on deterrence. In fact on ‘maximum deterrence at minimum cost’. There was a loosening of grip on the nuclear arsenal, though ; Dulles’ original ideas about them being the weapons of the statesman bore fruit as they became weapons of deterrence in peacetime rather than just for vague use in a US - Soviet war, as had been assumed during the Unification and Strategy hearings of 1949. In fact, according to Radford, US Navy and Air Forces would have to be ready to strike immediately in the case of, for example, renewed fighting in Korea.

But how did the strike carrier benefit from the new policies ? The answer appeared to lie in the limited foreign intervention proposed in the service of allies, and the “balance and flexibility” encouraged by Eisenhower so that the deterrent weapon need not be used.

The Development of the *Forrestal* and the Navy’s Mission

Carrier, weapon and aviation technology were to change rapidly throughout the New Look era, especially in the 1950s. For example, the Chief of Naval Operations, Arleigh Burke, commented in 1957 that,

There has been a spectacular advance in aircraft design technology. The transition from propeller-driven aircraft to jet power has been fast. We are now undergoing another evolution from subsonic to supersonic speeds at higher altitudes.

. . . By modernization we have utilized our assets of World War II *Essex* class carriers to the maximum. This has been a military necessity in order to maintain an acceptable degree of combat readiness economically in about half the time required for new construction. Carrier modernization has been pushed vigorously.⁶⁷

This all began well before the first *Forrestal* was launched, in keeping with Eisenhower’s desires for a more modern military establishment, but it will be seen that the Navy deemed the new supercarrier as absolutely necessary for its

⁶⁵ Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ George Baer, *100 Years of Sea Power*, p. 341.

⁶⁷ Cited in Scot MacDonald, *The Evolution of Aircraft Carriers*, (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Department of the Navy, 1963), p. 64.

mission during the New Look era, despite the modernisation that preceded it at half the cost of new construction, as Arleigh Burke reveals above.

Modernisation had been necessary as early as the late 1940s, when technological developments were making the *Essex* class obsolescent. On June 4, 1947, the Chief of Naval Operations, approved new aircraft carrier characteristics to be incorporated in an improvement program titled Project 27A. This was the first of a series of modernization efforts to modify the *Essex* carriers to meet changing operating requirements. USS *Oriskany* (CV-34) was the first of the *Essex* class carriers modernized under Project 27A. She entered New York Naval Shipyard in October 1947. At spaced intervals, she was followed by *Essex* (CV-9), *Wasp* (CV-18), *Kearsage* (CV-33), *Lake Champlain* (CV-39), *Bennington*(CV-20), *Yorktown* (CV-10), *Randolph* (CV-15), and *Hornet* (CV-12). These programs were conducted at Puget Sound and Newport News, in addition to the New York Navy Yard. The *Hornet*, last to be modernised under 27A, left the New York yard in October 1953. The principal changes involved in the 27A project were directed toward a capability of operating aircraft of up to 40,000 pounds gross weight. The H4-1 catapults were removed and H-8's installed, permitting the launching of considerably heavier aircraft than the carrier had been capable of during the war years. The flight decks were strengthened and the five-inch guns on the flight deck were removed to decrease topside weight, to provide more deck space for parking planes, and to increase safety aspects of the landing area.⁶⁸

It was inevitable, then, that the Navy would introduce all-jet squadrons to carrier operations. On May 5, 1948, Fighter Squadron 17-A, equipped with 16 FH-1 *Phantoms*, became the first carrier-qualified jet squadron in the U.S. Navy.

Project 27A was originally intended for more than nine carriers, but development of the steam catapult and the prospective employment of more advanced types of aircraft made it apparent that this project had to be modified to meet future needs. Accordingly, Project 27C was initiated. *Hancock*, *Intrepid* and *Ticonderoga* were slated for this program. Most important of the changes were the introduction of the steam catapult developed by the British, and the introduction of the angled (sometimes referred to as axial or canted) deck.⁶⁹

The trend extended, inevitably, to the *Midway* class. In September 1953, the Navy announced new modernization plans for these carriers under a new program called Project 110. In May 1954, the *Franklin D. Roosevelt* entered Puget Sound Naval Shipyard for the conversion. *Midway* followed in September

⁶⁸ Op. Cit.

⁶⁹ Op. Cit., p. 65.

1955. These carriers received the best features of the 27C (angled deck) conversion which were incorporated in Project 110. Additionally, they had a modified steam catapult installed in the angled deck area. With the changes in carrier configuration ran changes reflected in the re-designation of certain carriers as they appeared in the Navy Vessels Register. On October 1, 1952, the familiar CV and CVB designations went by the board, replaced by the designation CVA, reflecting their reclassification as attack carriers. Prior to this, only the CVs were known as attack carriers, in the Fleet, distinguishing them from the CVBs.⁷⁰

Each class of attack carrier could now carry the A3D, a 70,000-pound bomber capable of carrying nuclear ordnance, and 30,000 pounds lighter than the aircraft proposed for the *United States*.⁷¹ Nuclear weaponry had been reduced in size, in line with the Navy's wishes, from the enormous "package" anticipated by the designers of the *United States* to 3600 pounds in weight. So even lighter attack planes such as the new A4D Skyhawk were nuclear-capable.⁷² The Skyhawk weighed only 22,500 pounds, fully loaded, and was ideal for carrying 'tactical' nuclear weaponry for a sea control mission.⁷³

The combination of steam catapult improvements and the angled deck made the carriers far more versatile than before, especially considering the new mixture of lighter aircraft and bombs they could carry. A larger island could be constructed, for locating multiple radar and communications antennae, and the bridge and flight control centre. It was also a suitable place for boiler exhausts. And landing aircraft no longer ran the risk of crashing into other planes in the forward part of the flight deck. And thanks to the new catapults, which were easier to adapt for heavier aircraft, planes could take off and land simultaneously with far less problems.⁷⁴

The problem was that even with modernisation, the older carriers' life span would not last forever :

⁷⁰ Op. Cit., p. 66.

⁷¹ Friedman, US Aircraft Carriers , p. 255.

⁷² Friedman, US Aircraft Carriers, pp. 255-257, and Friedman, The Postwar Naval Revolution (Naval Institute Press, 1986), p. 19.

⁷³ John S. Rowe & Samuel L. Morison, Ships and Aircraft of the US Fleet, 9th Edition, (US Naval Institute, 1972), p. 172

⁷⁴ Friedman, US Aircraft Carriers, pp. 263-266.

“We are limited by how far we can go in modernization programs by the age of the ship,” said Adm. Arleigh Burke in 1957. “They are getting old. Their machinery is wearing out and they are becoming progressively more expensive to maintain. Like an old car, they must be replaced...

“The modernization programs have been the proving ground for the advances which have been made in carrier operating techniques. But the full combat effectiveness of these developments can be realized only in new construction.”⁷⁵

Two years earlier, in 1955, USS *Forrestal* (CVA-59) was commissioned, the first of a new class aircraft carrier. *Forrestal* was launched on December 11, 1954. The ship was commissioned at Norfolk Shipyard on October 1, 1955. The carrier had an overall length of 1036 feet, a width of 252 feet, and nearly four acres of flight deck. She displaced 59,650 tons and had a horsepower rated over 200,000, and a speed over 30 knots. Four steam catapults were installed. She had a complement of 3500 officers and men, including the air group.⁷⁶

Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Air) James H. Smith, Jr., spoke at the commissioning ceremonies:

If our way of life is to survive, we must maintain these two alternate military postures: the first is to maintain a powerful and relatively invulnerable reprisal force which will signal a potential enemy to stop, look and listen before he risks an all-out atomic war. The second is to insure that we ourselves will not be forced to change the character of a limited war because of fear of ultimate defeat in a series of them. Fortunately, we need not maintain a completely separate set of forces for each posture. In this ship and the variety of aircraft she can service we combine the two, and we add the multiplier of the ability to appear quickly at any one of the many far-flung trouble spots. This is economy of force, achieved without sacrifice of our objectives.⁷⁷

So the new mission of the carrier was actually to be many missions. Heavy bombers such as the A3D could conduct long-range nuclear and conventional strikes, tactical strikes - again, with either nuclear or conventional weapons - and air cover operations too. Whereas the *United States* had been designed to carry only 500,000 gallons of aviation fuel, the *Forrestal* carried over 1.5 million gallons, three times the load of a carrier designed to be larger than the *Forrestal*. The new supercarrier was clearly meant to stay on station for far longer periods

⁷⁵ Scot MacDonald, The Evolution of Aircraft Carriers, (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Department of the Navy, 1963), p. 68.

⁷⁶ Op. Cit., and see Appendix 1.

⁷⁷ Op. Cit.

than its counterpart, hence the extra fuel capacity, and also larger magazines.⁷⁸

Finally, the *Forrestal* would be carrying more protective fighter cover and new missile escorts were being developed for the navy too. Thus interception of bombers at a distance was a more likely prospect. The *Forrestal* had only 8 defensive guns rather than the bristling 44 guns of the *United States*.⁷⁹

Smith, unknowingly, presaged the Eisenhower administration's exact thoughts, later to be documented in National Security paper NSC 5501, which will be examined below. Dan Able Kimball, the Navy Secretary from mid-1951 to 1953, planned on a campaign to assure the Navy a *Forrestal* type carrier at the rate of one per year over the next 10 years, that figure being arrived at by anticipating the need for replacement of the *Essexes* with newer types of carrier.⁸⁰ In January of 1952, he suggested that some might be atomic powered, following on from hearings before the Joint Atomic Energy Committee in September 1951, and an interview in an armed forces journal in which he advocated nuclear-powered surface craft.⁸¹ The Navy secured its second supercarrier before the first was launched, the *Saratoga* being included in the budget for FY 1953, but at the cost of an ASW carrier, a destroyer, 2 submarines, 3 landing ships and an escort (DE). Kimball was nonplussed about these losses, though :

The importance attached to this carrier [*Saratoga*] by the Navy Department is emphasized by the Navy's sacrifice of other combatant ships in the 1953 program in order that a second large carrier can be added to the Fleet. Although the ships sacrificed are urgently needed to augment the battle readiness of the Fleet, the Navy decided that the need for the large aircraft carrier is even more urgent in terms of national security.⁸²

In emphasising "national security" at the expense of the battle-fleet, Kimball appears to have been emphasising the nuclear potential of the carrier, as a weapon of deterrence. And the ex-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Bradley, was quoted as saying in 1954 that,

While the main responsibility for strategic bombing must remain with the air force, in my opinion the primary mission of the big carrier is shifting towards strategic air attack. Because the enemy doesn't know where the flat tops are cruising - as he does the location of airfields - their

⁷⁸ Friedman, *US Aircraft Carriers*, pp. 396-397.

⁷⁹ See appendix I.

⁸⁰ K. Jack Bauer, "Dan Able Kimball", in Paolo E. Coletta (ed.), *American Secretaries of the Navy*, Vol. II (U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1980), pp. 833-834.

⁸¹ Coletta (ed.), *American Secretaries of the Navy*, Vol. II, p. 835, citing "Kimball interview", *Army-Navy-Air Force Journal* (15 September 1951).

⁸² Scot MacDonald, *The Evolution of Aircraft Carriers*, (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Department of the Navy, 1963), p. 71.

existence is a powerful deterrent to totalitarian aggression.⁸³

Backing this up, Joel Sokolsky's assertion is that, "By 1954, American aircraft carriers earmarked for SACEUR had begun to shift their primary focus from battlefield support to nuclear strike against targets deep in Warsaw Pact [sic] territory...,"⁸⁴ the battlefield support role being one advocated by General Eisenhower, then Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) for NATO, who, fearing for his weak position numerically speaking in Central Europe, "placed great emphasis on the sea and air strike assets available to him from the flanks... Direct naval support to SACEUR thus became an important role for American carriers and, from 1952, nuclear weapons were allocated to this role."⁸⁵

Certainly, an offensive role was foreseen, but would it be primarily a deep strike role comparable with the Air Force's? Naval and JCS documents must be examined to reveal this.

By September 1951, the JCS - with General Bradley still chairman at this time - were in agreement that the carrier had a place in offensive operations against Russia in the event of a general war, and the attack-at-source strategy was being expanded to both flanks of the Soviet Union. A JCS document stated clearly the carrier's offensive role :

These [carrier] forces represent the major striking power of the Navy and are primarily responsible for neutralising at the source the enemy's offensive capabilities to threaten control of the seas. These forces will destroy enemy naval forces and shipping, attack naval bases, attack airfields threatening control of the seas, support amphibious forces and support the mining offensive. *As additional tasks*, the carrier striking forces will defend bases and vital areas against attack through the seas as required... In addition to the above, these forces will provide naval support essential to the conduct of operations by [SACEUR], the Commander in Chief, Far East (CINCFE) and other area commanders. For example, the 6th Fleet, now in the Mediterranean, will provide naval support to SACEUR in the accomplishment of his missions.⁸⁶

The defensive role was therefore to be given second priority to that of sea

⁸³ "The Role of Aircraft Carriers", Paper by the British First Lord of the Admiralty, ADM 1/24695, (9 November 1958), cited in Eric Grove & Geoffrey Till, "Anglo-American Maritime Strategy in the Era of Massive Retaliation", in John B. Hattendorff and Robert S. Jordan (eds.) Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power (St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 271-303.

⁸⁴ Joel J. Sokolsky, Seapower in the Nuclear Age : NATO as a Maritime Alliance, (Harvard University, 1984), p. 126, cited in Hattendorff & Jordan (eds.), Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power , p. 290.

⁸⁵ Hattendorff & Jordan (eds.), Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power , p. 286, citing Sokolsky, pp. 65, 68-69.

⁸⁶ "JCS 1800/166" (September 7, 1951), cited in David Alan Rosenberg, "American Post-war Air Doctrine and Organisation: The Navy Experience", in A. P. Hurley and R. C. Ehrhart (eds.), Air Power and Warfare, (Washington DC: Department of Air Force History, 1979), p. 265. [italics added]

control by offensive means. Eisenhower himself, had told Truman that he wanted a “great combination of air and sea strength” on both of his flanks, “to hit [the Russians] awfully hard.”⁸⁷

Thus the focus for carrier-air strikes seemed destined to remain rooted to over-the-shore missions. Bearing in mind that the flexibility of the carriers was very much on the minds of Naval planners at the time, the carriers were in fact being configured for missions supporting sea control, and general war battlefield support, but also lower-intensity, diplomatic roles. The Vice Chief of Naval Operations stated in 1950 two important roles for the Navy on either end of the spectrum, both of which could be fulfilled by the carrier. The first, and most important, was sea control:

Exercising control of *all* the seas, as we must, is going to be a mammoth task. Note that I say *exercise* control. To do this we must *have* the control from the beginning, not fight for it for four long years as we did in the Pacific in World War II...

but there has always been, and now exists to an important degree, a peacetime task which only the navy can perform, namely that which is broadly termed “showing the flag.” A naval force is the only one which can move at will throughout the world without violating the neutrality or sovereignty of another nation. The navy is thus an important tool of diplomacy.⁸⁸

By October 1951, the same officer, now CINCLANT (Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet), was pushing the battlefield support role endorsed by the JCS the month before, as the “augmentation and support of forces in Europe...”

Within the confines of this task, the Atlantic Command exhibits its definite offensive potentiality. By this arrow, we indicate our readiness to deploy striking forces to the forward area. They would most probably be fast carrier task forces aimed at operations along the Western European coast or against some of the northern islands such as Spitzbergen...

...[T]he United States has maintained a naval force in the Mediterranean since the end of the last war. We call it the Sixth Fleet, and it necessarily looms large in our European strategy.

This force, in conjunction with those of our allies, by maintaining control of the Mediterranean, would furnish security to General Eisenhower's right flank.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ David Alan Rosenberg, “American Post-war Air Doctrine and Organisation: The Navy Experience”, p. 265.

⁸⁸ “Address by Vice Admiral L.D. McCormack, USN, Vice Chief of Naval Operations at the 13th Naval Civilian Orientation Conference at Headquarters, Fifth Naval District, US Naval Base, Norfolk, Virginia, on Friday, 28 April 1950 at 7.30pm (EST)”, speeches folder, Box 3, Papers of Lynde D. McCormack (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress), cited in, Gray & Barnett (eds.), Seapower and Strategy, p. 330.

⁸⁹ Confidential [declassified], “*The Atlantic Commands* Delivered at US Naval War College By Admiral Lynde D. McCormack, US Navy, 4 October 1951”; Speeches folder, Box 3, Papers of Lynde

There were two main problems with carrier forward operations in the early 1950s, though. The first was the weather in rough arctic seas. In 1952, the first NATO Atlantic exercise - 'Mainbrace' - was held, with four US Fleet carriers participating (including two *Midway* CVBs).⁹⁰ They simulated tasks of interdiction and destruction of enemy forces in Norway, air support for ground forces in Norway, and support for NATO ground forces in Denmark, too. There was also the task of covering a convoy to Bergen. But operating in Arctic waters caused all kinds of difficulties, as was indicated by the *Wasp* incident detailed in Chapter 1. According to Grove and Till, the weather was responsible for reducing the level of carrier-based air activity by 80%.⁹¹ In 1953, the weather proved even more of a setback during 'Mariner'. The carriers were unable to mount their attacks, so unstable were they as platforms in the rough seas. This was a sharp jolt to any confidence about the World War II vintage carriers' ability to take on Soviet land-based aircraft on NATO's northern flank.⁹² The near fiascos of these two exercises would, though, supposedly be less of a problem for the supercarrier, which would be more stable, thanks to its greater size, and less emphasis on the armoured flight deck of the CVBs, which resulted in more top-heaviness and roll.⁹³

The other main problem, of course, was the very ample sea denial force that the Soviets could put to sea and air. Soviet land-based air was becoming more and more long-ranged, and the submarine force, "mainly for home-water control" at this time, according to Baer, was beginning to be equipped with guided missiles by mid-1950, with 70 boats out of a total of 261 being so equipped.⁹⁴

Before 1955 then, the Navy was sounding the alarm on a renewed anti-submarine threat, against which it set a three-track strategy. One track was the defensive use of antisubmarine carriers. Half the carrier force was converted to ASW configuration, mostly old *Essex* class carriers. The second approach was one that would survive for decades: an undersea barrier composed of passive hydrophones and an attack submarine force to back up detection with destruction.⁹⁵

D. McCormack, cited in Gray & Barnett (eds.), *Seapower and Strategy*, pp. 330-331.

⁹⁰ "Carrier Deployments By Year", *Dictionary of American Naval Aviation Squadrons* Vol.1 (Naval Aviation History Office, Washington Navy Yard, 1995), p. 253.

⁹¹ John B. Hattendorff and Robert S. Jordan (eds.) *Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power* (St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 287.

⁹² For 'Mainbrace' see *Brassey's Naval Annual, 1953*, pp. 159-166; for 'Mariner' see *Naval Review*, Vol. 41, pp. 365-373, and *Brassey's Naval Annual, 1954*, pp. 285-288.

⁹³ Baer, p. 336.

⁹⁴ Op. Cit., pp. 336-337.

⁹⁵ Baer, p. 338.

The third approach is the one this dissertation is concerned with : the air strikes at the nests themselves; the sea-control rationale for an air-atomic general war carrier force. A Navy planning document of 1951 stated that, "The most effective and economical means of destroying threats to our control of the seas is to destroy these threats at the source," this being achieved by use of the carrier task forces to "destroy enemy naval forces and shipping, attack naval bases, attack airfields threatening control of the seas..." and so on, word for word with the JCS proposal of September that year.⁹⁶ Amid the talk of attack-at-source, navy documents gave little attention to limited war until the mid-1950s. Even Arleigh Burke's Strategic Plans Division in 1952, although still concentrating on sea control, thought in terms of war with the Soviets. They did however, anticipate the New Look strategy of support of forces, notably US allies overseas, in their strategic priorities:

1. Supply and support [of] US forces deployed overseas
2. Supply and support [of] US allies, in support of treaty commitments
3. Deny use of the Seas by the Soviet Union to further its objectives or interfere with ours
4. Import the raw materials and commodities necessary to sustain US armed forces and the US war effort.⁹⁷

This was a list of Navy tasks, which, although thinking in terms of global, general war, anticipated it in terms of a nuclear exchange being inconclusive and indecisive. Burke himself, in his *Reminiscences*, argues why :

The Soviet Union is a vast country. It is also a closed society, and therefore can do things secretly, including building large manufacturing plants and military installations, while we cannot... The probability of the United States being able to... destroy the will and capability of the Soviets to continue the war, we [the Navy planners] thought was very slight and that it would be foolhardy to depend on that alone.⁹⁸

The "supply and support" of US allies referred to NATO as well as other regions, reflecting British Admiralty concerns about the safe and timely arrival of convoys as part of the NATO's maritime alliance dimension.⁹⁹ Op-30 seems to have made little headway here, though, against a tide which had been rising for

⁹⁶ Department of the Navy, Naval Research Advisory Committee, Report on Historical Perspectives in Long-range Planning in the Navy (Washington DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy - Research, Engineering and Systems, 1980), pp. A29-A31, cited in Baer, p. 338.

⁹⁷ Naval Research Advisory Committee, Historical Perspectives, pp. 23-24, cited in Baer, p. 339.

⁹⁸ Burke, Reminiscences, Vol.4, p. 238.

⁹⁹ see Hattendorff & Jordan (eds.), Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power , p. 286, for an example of British concern.

some time. The Air Warfare Division of the Deputy CNO (Air) was specific about retaining a primarily offensive force :

Carrier Aviation must retain the bulk of its strength in *offensive* power if it is to support a truly offensive Navy rather than a defensive one. Our Navy must carry out numerous functions other than defensive antisubmarine warfare and must possess the self-contained ability to move at will and wage offensive war against the enemy in the air, on the surface and below the surface.¹⁰⁰

This then, was the kind of theory the Navy had at the start of the New Look era. The Navy had its atomic role and the supercarriers were on their way to support it more fully. Thus the Navy was already in possession of the modern, nuclear-capable weaponry demanded by the New Look at the outset. But Dulles had, as mentioned previously, hinted that nuclear weaponry would be the "statesman's" weapon, as opposed to the use of it as a normal tactical weapon as proposed by Eisenhower. The administration might be ambiguous as to nuclear use, and just as under Truman, the new president would have the final say on its use.

The Navy, under new CNO Robert Carney (August 1953 - August 1955) came up with a solution, though; one which had been arrived at already by Dan Kimball in 1952. The strike carrier force was basically versatile enough, thanks to the development of lightweight nuclear weapons and both long-range and tactical attack aircraft, to 'hedge its strategic bets', so to speak. In December 1953 and January 1954, Carney forwarded studies by Strategic Plans (Op-30) to the JCS which argued that the carriers were a highly mobile, combat-ready strategic reserve which could "continue over the long term to be ready to cope with limited aggression and at the same time be prepared for general war." With reference to general war, the Navy carriers were capable of inflicting "massive damage", as well as providing tactical support and sea control.¹⁰¹ This was an argument for inland strikes against strategic targets, then. One made possible by the new *Forrestals*, and the new squadrons of heavy attack aircraft introduced during the New Look era, the 2000-mile ranged AJ Savages, and later the 3000-mile A3D Skywarriors and supersonic A5 Vigilantes. That meant, for example, that a US carrier in the eastern Mediterranean was within striking distance of such strategic targets as the oil refineries at Baku, military-industrial targets in

¹⁰⁰ David Alan Rosenberg, "American Post-war Air Doctrine and Organisation: The Navy Experience", in A. P. Hurley and R. C. Ehrhart (eds.), Air Power and Warfare, (Washington DC: Department of Air Force History, 1979), p. 262.

¹⁰¹ Rosenberg, "American Postwar Air Doctrine", pp. 267-268. Also Edward J. Marolda, "The Influence of Burke's Boys Upon Limited War", U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings (August 1981), p. 37.

Stalingrad and Kharkov, and the Black Sea naval facilities were possible targets for the attack-at-source role.¹⁰² The *Forrestal* and her ilk embarked a full squadron of twelve of these heavy bombers, *Midways* an abbreviated squadron of nine, while modernised *Essex* CVAs carried only three.¹⁰³ It is an important point to note, however, that the effort was made to put them on all classes of CVA, in the spirit of versatility. And each class of carrier could carry three 12-aircraft squadrons of smaller attack craft, all of which could deliver the new smaller "tactical" weapons.¹⁰⁴

Essentially, though, the carrier had to fulfil its sea control function first, before there was any chance of a strategic strike into inland targets. A 1954 Op-30 document from Burke spelt out the *status* of the Navy's wartime priorities, which were remarkably similar to pre-New Look tasks :

First, the navy must dominate the seas to maintain the flow of men and materials to theaters of war, and the return flow of our supply of strategic raw materials. It must be prepared to counter the probable capabilities of the enemy to challenge our control of the seas and especially the sea areas ... used by our shipping. We must deny our most probable enemy the use of his submarines, and his growing fleet of surface ships, and must counter his mining effort and his air threat to shipping and naval forces.

Second, the navy must land combat forces where and when they are required, and assist in providing combat support to US and Allied forces, including air and gunfire support, as the situation may require. Protection of the sea flanks of our overseas forces against enemy forces which attempt to interfere with naval operations, shipping or naval support of our ground forces is an important navy responsibility.

Third, the navy must, by offensive operations, control the sea areas that the enemy wishes to use, denying him the use of these seas and permitting their use by our own naval forces, as avenues into enemy territory.¹⁰⁵

As applied to the offensive carrier force, the priority tasks are quite clear. *First*, the sea control function of attack at the source should be used to make sure control of the seas is assured, ahead of any other mission. *Second*, air support for the flanks, and the quashing of any other threats to US and allied forces operating on those flanks. Then, *and only then*, should the US carrier force be used as an

¹⁰² Baer, p. 347.

¹⁰³ Hagan (ed.), *In Peace and War* , pp. 309-310.

¹⁰⁴ Op. Cit., p. 310.

¹⁰⁵ Top Secret [declassified], OP-301C1, Ser: 00051P30, "Status of US Programs for National Security as of 31 December 1953," 21 Jan 1954; "1954 Top Secret Spindles 0001 to 000300" folder, 1955 Strategic Plans Division Subject and Serial Files, Operational Archives (Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard), cited in Gray & Barnett (eds.), Seapower and Strategy , p. 331.

“avenue into enemy territory” for inland strategic strikes. The emphasis on sea control, then, is constantly present in navy strategic documentation from the early to mid-50s, both before and after the New Look era. The navy's strategic planners, although thankful to be part of the US strategic posture thanks to fleet modernisation and the possession of a nuclear-capable force, which could be stationed around the world in accordance with Eisenhower's wish for a ready reserve, stressed the forward operation of carriers in constant connection to its sea control function where a sea-denial force was present. An American naval strategic force was present, but could only strike non-naval targets after it was first assured of its own defence.

This handicap was to change with a new approach to Naval strategic power : the Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), which would 'cut out the middle man' of sea control by virtue of its undersea relative invisibility.

The Attack Carrier 'versus' Polaris

It is important to note that there can be no in-depth discussion of Polaris development here. This section will instead concentrate on the priority given to Polaris and the effect on the attack carrier, leading to future strategic implications under the leadership of Arleigh Burke (CNO from August 1955-1961), in the next chapter.

The first real guidelines for future naval strategy and appropriations in the light of Soviet possession of a hydrogen weapon came out just months before his entry into office, with a pivotal NSC document in January 1955 entitled NSC 5501, closely followed by the 'Killian Report' of 1955, entitled "Meeting the threat of Surprise Attack."¹⁰⁶

NSC 5501 stressed that the US military should be divided into different elements; the first of which should be an effective 'second-strike' nuclear retaliatory power, "*secure from neutralization or from a Soviet knockout blow, even by surprise...*"

So long as the Soviets are uncertain of their ability to neutralize [this]... there is little reason to expect them to initiate general war.¹⁰⁷

Again, the US nuclear force was stressed as a peacetime deterrent. The

¹⁰⁶ Technological Capabilities Panel [Killian Commission] in Trachtenberg, Basic Documents, pp. 321-510.

¹⁰⁷ "NSC 5501", p. 11, in Basic Documents, p. 107.

second element was consistent with New Look planning, and with Eisenhower's state of the union address of that year : forces sufficient to "help deter any resort to local aggression, or,

... to punish swiftly and severely any such local aggression, in a manner and scale best calculated to avoid the hostilities broadening into nuclear war. Such ready forces will be in addition to those assigned to NATO; they must be properly balanced, sufficiently versatile, suitably deployed, highly mobile and equipped as appropriate with atomic capability. ¹⁰⁸

It seems clear enough that the Navy's attack carriers fit the bill of versatility, mobility and atomic capability by 1955, but, importantly, doubts had been raised about the carrier's vulnerability in the North Atlantic. Under Burke, the navy would look elsewhere for a secure strategic striking force. The Killian Report, following up NSC 5501, argued that the US should develop, quickly, a medium-ranged ballistic missile (IRBM), and concluded that "ship basing probably would allow better coverage of Soviet Bloc targets [than land-basing] and be free of political restraints [i.e. a lack of need for a foreign power's permission for basing]." ¹⁰⁹ Burke was aware of opposition to the IRBM development, but established in December 1955 a "Special Projects Office" under Admiral William Raborn to garner the best people in the Navy for the job. His biographer described the decision to push for Polaris as "probably the single most significant action of his six years as Chief of Naval Operations." ¹¹⁰ On the other side of the coin, Polaris development ate up more and more of the Navy's budget : over 4% by FY 1958, 8.96% by FY 1960, and 14.06% in FY 1961. ¹¹¹ The corresponding shift in resources would cut deeply into the fleet to the extent of cancellation of new ships, submarines and weapons systems such as the Regulus and Triton cruise missiles, causing sea control proponents such as Elmo Zumwalt Jr. to bemoan the decision as "the single worst decision about weapons made during my years of service ... without cruise missiles practically all our long-range offensive capability was crowded onto the decks of a few carriers." ¹¹²

In the words of Harvey Sapolsky, "the choice among weapons systems is the choice among defense strategies." ¹¹³ This was certainly true. NSC documents

¹⁰⁸ Op. Cit.

¹⁰⁹ "Meeting the Threat Of Surprise Attack", Basic Documents, p. 405.

¹¹⁰ David A. Rosenberg, "Arleigh Albert Burke", in Robert W. Love Jr. (ed.), The Chiefs of Naval Operations (U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1980), p. 279.

¹¹¹ Op. Cit.

¹¹² Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., On Watch : A Memoir (Quadrangle, 1976), p. 71.

¹¹³ Harvey Sapolsky, "Technological Innovators : Admirals Raborn and Rickover", in Arnold R. Shapack (ed.), Naval History Symposium - The Navy in an Era of Change and Crisis, (U.S. Naval Academy, 1973), p. 237.

outlined the national strategy, and Polaris certainly supported nuclear retaliation on a strategic scale, whereas the cruise missiles were intended for sea control targets such as naval airfields, bases and shipyards.¹¹⁴ As CNO then, Burke in effect began a 'split' of naval functions into the two distinct elements of retaliation by Polaris, and the more flexible carrier force. According to Rosenberg's account though, Polaris was for use by both submarine *and* surface forces. The carrier forces were of course, already nuclear-capable, but missile stationing for task forces was one way to ensure continued appropriations for new carriers and cruisers, within the strategic forces.¹¹⁵

Instead of continentally-based ballistic missiles, then, Burke proposed that Polaris be based on surface ships, which were more mobile than SAC bases or land-based silos.¹¹⁶ In June 1959, he asked the JCS to approve Polaris for basing on the navy's six guided missile cruisers - eight missiles per ship. As well as the carriers, the escorting cruisers could help bridge the shortfall in Polaris deployment until the undersea missile fleet was complete, whilst simultaneously carrying out other missions. The decision was made, though, to save them for the submarines. Neither Defense Secretary McElroy nor the other chiefs were convinced about the cruiser's ability to perform the task, especially considering the requirement for carrier escort.¹¹⁷

Intriguingly though, Harvey Sapolsky puts forward an interesting counterpoint, lauding Polaris as "the beneficiary of a rather rare convergence between a policy consensus and technological opportunity."¹¹⁸

He sees the Polaris project under the SPO as a ram-rodging of a priority project through Naval opposition, which was sizable in the face of its enormous cost : "The entire increment in the navy budget from 1955-1961, a total of 4.5 billion dollars."¹¹⁹

His opinion is that internal threats to the program came from officers keen to avoid another direct competition with the Air Force so soon after the navy debacle in the B-36 hearings of 1949.¹²⁰ He describes a strategy of "co-optation" as a means of unifying the Navy on Polaris development : getting people behind the project by promising them a slice of it; people such as surface ship and carrier

¹¹⁴ Rosenberg, "Burke", in Robert W. Love Jr. (ed.), The Chiefs of Naval Operations (U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1980), p. 277.

¹¹⁵ Op. Cit., p. 281.

¹¹⁶ Op. Cit., p. 294.

¹¹⁷ Op. Cit., pp. 301-302.

¹¹⁸ Harvey Sapolsky, "Technological Innovators : Admirals Raborn and Rickover", in Arnold R. Shapack (ed.), Naval History Symposium - The Navy in an Era of Change and Crisis, (U.S. Naval Academy, 1973), p. 26.

¹¹⁹ Op. Cit., p. 27.

¹²⁰ Op. Cit., p. 28.

proponents :

...[T]here were a lot of proposals circulating in the Navy for putting Polaris on aircraft carriers and strapping them on ... cruisers. The Polaris proponents would, in turn, endorse every one of these proposals, even though they knew them to be technologically absurd or perhaps ... didn't seem to be strategically possible. They did so because they were interested in getting the support of the carrier admirals ... who were interested in building more carriers. ... And it was a wise policy to go around endorsing such proposals, because the Polaris proponents knew they would never see the light of day when it came time for funding; the proposals could be secretly sunk at the Office of the Secretary of Defense level ... and it was cost free.¹²¹

Rather interestingly, this argument was part of a paper delivered at a naval history symposium which a retired Burke himself attended and where he also gave a paper; yet there is no record of any comments to the contrary from the ex-CNO. Not only that, but the viewpoint is backed up by Raborn's early insistence that the Polaris missile was part of a sea control function that would support a carrier-based strategy :

Its tactical mission would be to beat down fixed base air and missile defenses to pave the way for carrier strikes aimed at destroying mobile or concealed primary targets."

But there was no hiding its real purpose by 1957, when the Naval Warfare Analysis Group had the Polaris mission down as national deterrence, programmed to hit "population or industrial targets," due to the relative inaccuracy of the missile versus hardened military emplacements.¹²² In short, with the advent of Polaris, carrier-air operations under Burke - using the NSC as his strategic guide - would have less of a strategic mission. This was part of his eventual intention to relocate them to a mission of intervention, a limited-war role. This would cause controversy within the administration and mean a troubled future for the strike carrier, with its original "national security" mission usurped by the Polaris SLBM.

¹²¹ Op. Cit., p. 31.

¹²² Baer, p. 355, citing the Naval Research Advisory Committee, Historical Perspectives, pp. 48-49; also Graham Spinardi, "Why the US Navy Went for Hard-Target Counter-force in Trident II (And Why it Didn't Get There Sooner)", in International Security, Vol. 15, part 2 (Fall 1990), pp. 151-152, 157.

Chapter Three : The Strike Carrier and Limited War

All throughout the New Look period, strike carriers were ‘deployed forward’ to trouble-spots around the world, for reasons which James Cable refers to as ‘Gunboat Diplomacy’.¹ Showing the flag, forcing an opponent to back down, sometimes getting involved in a conflict. This chapter details more exactly the carrier’s role in situations outside the scope of a full-scale war.

The first section will deal with two contemporary approaches to the problem of limited war after Korea. The first was the government stance of ‘graduated deterrence’, whereby the ‘New Look’ reliance on nuclear weapons was hindered by the approaching nuclear balance with the Soviet Union, and new attention was brought to ‘tactical’ nuclear warheads for the purposes of fighting peripheral wars.

Critics of the government’s continued reliance on non-conventional forces include Bernard Brodie, Admiral Arleigh Burke, and General Maxwell Taylor. Their differing approaches, especially in the case of the two servicemen (Brodie being more of a theorist) might be put under the umbrella of an alternative approach to fighting limited wars or ‘countering local aggression’ : Flexible Response - a build-up of arms and men in a similar style of proposal to that propounded in NSC-68. In the case of the Navy, this was ‘The Navy of the 1970-Era’, the central question being how much disagreement there was between the administration and the Navy leadership?

The next section will deal with the actual situations the Navy’s carriers found themselves in around the globe. Indochina, the Quemoy-Matsu and Tachen Islands crises, and Lebanon all serve as case studies for the role of the carrier. Whereas previous sections have asked the question of what the carriers’ role *should* be, this section examines what it actually was at the time.

The final section is an examination of the debate between the administration and the Navy’s leaders as to the future role of the carrier and what force levels were required to allow it to perform that role. A central issue is that of the cost of the new nuclear carriers, of which the *Enterprise* was the first. Was nuclear propulsion necessary, or should the priority have been more oil-fired carriers, especially in a period when the Navy was beginning to age as a whole? And if the main role of the carrier was to be that of limited war, did it follow that

¹ see James Cable, Gunboat Diplomacy, 1919-1979, (Macmillan Press, 1981)

they could be smaller or cheaper ? This is an examination of the balance between defence economy and the composition of fleet required for a limited war role.

Limited War Theory : Graduated Deterrence and Flexible Response

On January 23, 1956, Eisenhower commented on a staff report headed by General Harold L. George, on the "net evaluation of the damage that would be anticipated" in a thermonuclear war with the Soviet Union, if that war were to start on July 1 of that year. It was a two part report ; the first part anticipating no warning as to the attack until detection of its launch, the second anticipating "a month of strategic warning." The report concluded in the first case that the US would sustain some 65% casualties among the population. The limiting factor on the damage inflicted being "not so much our own defensive arrangements as the limitations on the Soviet stockpile of atomic weapons." More optimistically, it was estimated that Russia would be obliterated by the American response, but in the second case of a month's warning before launch, there was "no significant difference in the losses we would take." ²

With the advent of both blocs being capable of sufficient thermonuclear and atomic capability, concluded Bernard Brodie in 1959, there came an end to the days where "a real - and difficult - analytical problem [existed] in choosing targets that would make a campaign decisive rather than merely hurtful... [and] the functions of ground and naval forces, though clearly and markedly affected [by fission weapons], still appeared vital."³ With the coming of a deployable hydrogen bomb force in Russian as well as American hands, and the US working on a second-strike capability, there appeared to be a nuclear stalemate developing in the late 1950s. The idea of nuclear weapon use in a wide range of circumstances began to elicit wide criticism. As John Lewis Gaddis asked, "what assurance was there that the US would actually reach into its nuclear arsenal for the means to counter every outward probe the other side launched, however insignificant?"⁴ On a more contemporary basis, Henry Kissinger argued that it was unwise to combine "maximum horror and maximum uncertainty,"

² "January 23, 1956", Eisenhower Diary (DDE Diaries series, Box 9, Diary-Copies of Personal [1955-1956], in Eisenhower Diaries , pp. 311-312.

³ Bernard Brodie, Strategy in the Missile Age, (Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 153.

⁴ Gaddis, p. 165.

The greater the power, the greater the inhibitions against using it except in the most dire emergencies, and the more likely that no objective will seem important enough...⁵

NSC 5602, written at the start of February 1956, watered down the language of nuclear weapon use from previous documents such as NSC 5501's confident proposal that US forces should "punish swiftly and severely any such local aggression."⁶ Instead, the language used in 1956 was that the US "ready" forces should,

Defeat *or hold* in conjunction with indigenous allies, any such local aggression, ... Such ready forces must be sufficiently versatile to use both conventional and nuclear weapons ... Such forces must not become so dependent on tactical nuclear capabilities that any decision to intervene against local aggression would probably be tantamount to a decision to use nuclear weapons.⁷

The document recognised that "with the coming of nuclear parity, the ability to apply force selectively and flexibly will become increasingly important," and with regard to the allies so important to the US containment policy, "the apprehensions of US allies as to using nuclear weapons to counter local aggression can be lessened if the US deterrent force is not solely dependent on such weapons." It concluded though, that when confronted with a choice between "acquiescing in Communist aggression or... taking measures risking either general war or loss of allied support, the United States must be prepared to take these risks if necessary."⁸

Therefore the administration was still, if not wholly, reliant to a certain extent upon nuclear weapons and the concomitant risks of escalation without what had been termed 'escalation dominance'. Eisenhower himself was still trying to convince critics within the military that tactical nuclear weapons would not lead to all-out war: "The tactical use of atomic weapons against *military targets* would be no more likely to trigger off a big war than the use of twenty-ton 'blockbusters'," he said to Maxwell Taylor in 1956.⁹

With regard to any conflict in the European area, even with regard to Maxwell Taylor's criticism of a probable "limited" engagement between East and

⁵ Henry Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, (Harper, 1957), p. 152.

⁶ "NSC 5501", p. 11, in Basic Documents, p. 107.

⁷ "NSC 5602", (February 6, 1956) p. 5, in Basic Documents, p. 129. [italics added]

⁸ "NSC 5602", pp. 5-6, in Basic Documents, pp. 129-130.

⁹ "Eisenhower conversation with Maxwell Taylor", May 24, 1956, Eisenhower Papers (Whitman File : DDE Diary, Box 8, "May 56 Goodpaster", cited in Gaddis, p. 167. [italics added]

West over Berlin¹⁰, Eisenhower was most specific: "If resort to arms should become necessary, our troops in Berlin would be quickly overrun, and the conflict would almost inevitably be global war. For this type of war our nuclear forces were more than adequate."¹¹In other words, NSC 5602 still held true. The choice was nuclear deployment over Soviet expansion. As late as 1960, when Taylor's criticisms came out in print, NSC documentation made it absolutely clear that "conflicts occurring in the NATO area, *or elsewhere involving sizable forces ... should not* be construed as local aggression."¹² Thus nuclear forces would be used, should deterrence fail in the face of large-scale enemy forces. 'Local aggression', of course, had been defined by Eisenhower in 1956 as conflicts below "Korea proportions", as was detailed in chapter 2.

The sticky point was how and where nuclear weaponry could be used in limited wars, in order that those wars might be kept limited. NSC documents stated time and again that local aggression should be dealt with "in a manner and on a scale best suited to avoid the hostilities broadening into total nuclear war."¹³ The NSC recognised that "general war might occur as the climax of a series of actions and counteractions which neither side originally intended to lead to general war", and that, "an increasing dependence on nuclear weapons may impair US ability to intervene against local aggression without the use of such weapons."¹⁴ This concern was mirrored by Kissinger the next year. He argued that "the limitation of war is established not only by our intentions but also by the manner in which the other side interprets them. Unless some concept of limitation of warfare is established in advance, miscalculation and misinterpretation ... may cause it to become all-out even though both sides intend to limit it." His solution was an agreement by both sides to set boundaries for the limitation of wars.¹⁵

This view was echoed by Bernard Brodie in 1959, who stated that "we shall have to work very hard to keep [war] limited. We should be willing to limit objectives *because* we want to keep the war limited, and not the other way around," because total war in a thermonuclear environment was "simply too unthinkable."¹⁶

His criticism of the 'graduated deterrence' scheme employing "tactical" nuclear weapons was that "it is much easier to distinguish between use and non-

¹⁰ Taylor, *Uncertain Trumpet*, p. 8.

¹¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years* (2 Vols.), (Heinemann, 1966), Vol. 2, p. 336.

¹² "NSC 5906/1" (November 10, 1960), p. 8, in *Basic Documents*, p. 234. [italics added]

¹³ e.g. "NSC 5501", p. 11; also "NSC 5810/1", (July 30, 1958), p. 3, in *Basic Documents*, p. 195.

¹⁴ NSC 5602, pp. 23-24, in *Basic Documents*, pp. 147-148.

¹⁵ Kissinger, p. 185

¹⁶ Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, p. 313.

use of nuclear weapons than between the use of a nuclear weapon below some arbitrary limit and one well above that limit." ¹⁷ Or, put another way, the Soviets would not be too likely to pause to get out a 'nuclear measuring tape' at the sight of a mushroom cloud. Soviet attitude to "limited" nuclear war was extremely hostile and derisive; unsurprising, given their preponderance of conventional forces. Thus, an explicit negotiation on their use was unlikely, even if the administration had sought it.¹⁸ The worry was not just about Soviet retaliation using larger nuclear weapons, but about the willingness of US indigenous allies to support atomic use, even in a limited sense, which might cause those allies to become more afraid of the US intervention on their behalf than of communist aggression. 'Better Red than dead', so to speak. Brodie put it succinctly when he remarked that, "A people "saved" by us through our free use of nuclear weapons over their territories would probably be the last that would ever ask us to help them. We might have to insist on rescuing future victims of aggression even against their will, but it will not be a good diplomatic position to be in." ¹⁹

And yet, the "last analysis" of the NSC, at least on paper, was nuclear release ahead of communist expansion.; despite Eisenhower's universalism and Dulles' preaching on collective security, national security policy was still, "in the event of actual Communist *local* aggression," for, "the United States... if necessary [to] *make its own decision* as to the use of nuclear weapons."²⁰ There were doubts, in private, even in the President's mind by the end of the New Look era as to the viability of his own strategy. In August 1960, he admitted that "the more the services depend on nuclear weapons the dimmer ... the hope of gets to contain any limited war or keep it spreading to general war."²¹ This was a far cry from the public optimism of Dulles in 1957, writing in Foreign Affairs that nuclear weapons "need not involve vast destruction and widespread harm to humanity," whereas Soviet "propaganda" was all that made the nuclear weapon cause for "horror." ²²

So if nuclear war could not be kept limited, what then ? A return to the expenses of NSC and 'flexible response', or a real 'step back' in policy to the Truman years of parsimony ? Defense Secretary McElroy in 1959 pessimistically

¹⁷ Brodie, p. 323.

¹⁸ For example, Colonel V. Mochalov & Major V. Dashichev, "The Smoke-screen of the American Imperialists," Red Star, (December 17, 1957), cited in Brodie, p. 322.

¹⁹ Brodie, p. 325.

²⁰ "NSC 5602", p. 6, in Basic Documents, p. 130. [italics added]

²¹ "Eisenhower conversation with Kristiakowsky and others", August 24, 1960, Eisenhower Papers, (Whitman File : DDE Diary, Box 33, "Aug 60"), cited in Gaddis, p. 174.

²² John Foster Dulles, "Challenge and Response in U.S. Foreign Policy", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 36 (October 1957), p. 31.

suggested that US policy "really had to be that of massive retaliation."²³

Radford, however, an original proponent of the New Look and still a supporter of tactical nuclear weapon use, decided to remind Eisenhower that "the reason we can intervene in many areas quickly with force is that we can do this with small forces which, armed with atomic weapons, are not in danger of being wiped out."²⁴ According to historians such as Kissinger, Gaddis,²⁵ Brodie and Baer, graduated deterrence was too much of a risk. It relied too much on Eisenhower's own self-assurance to be a 'long-term policy.' But it also reflected the superiority the US still enjoyed over the Soviet Union. "They're not ready for war and they know it," said Eisenhower in 1955. "... if they go to war they're going to lose everything they have. That ... tends to make people conservative."²⁶ The implication was that both sides had as much to lose as each other, so in the end, it all came right back down to Dulles' policy of "Boldness", versus the alternative of conventional force build-up.

The Navy, of course, was still trying to be as flexible as possible, within the confines of the national strategy. Navy Secretary Charles Thomas, at the launching of the *Forrestal* in 1954, described the new supercarrier as "the country's most versatile and most desirable weapon in our modern arsenal, due to its multi-role capability."²⁷ Constant modernisation of naval forces was the watchword under Eisenhower's Defence policy, which – as indicated by the president's memoirs and the NSC – demanded modern weapons as the substitute for manpower. So the Navy did receive funds for systems such as the supercarrier, heavier jets, and guided missile escorts to protect their striking power. But shipbuilding costs were rising as a result of the new technologies being purchased,²⁸ and manpower did indeed give way as a result. In 1954 there were a total of 1080 ships in the Navy, and nearly 10,000 aircraft, sticking closely to the numbers advocated by the Joint Chiefs in their recommendations as to the formation of New Look forces for the years leading up to 1957 and thereafter.²⁹ By 1957 though, that manpower had been reduced even further and

²³ "Cabinet Meeting", March 13, 1959, Eisenhower Papers (Whitman File: DDE Diary, Box 25, "Staff Notes, March 1-15, 59", in Gaddis, p. 174.

²⁴ "Eisenhower-Radford conversation", July 14, 1959, Eisenhower Papers, Box 27, "Staff Notes, July 59", in Gaddis, p. 175.

²⁵ Gaddis, p. 175.

²⁶ Op. Cit., citing "James Hagerty Diary", February 8, 1955, Hagerty Papers, Box 1(Dwight D. Eisenhower Library)

²⁷ John R. Wadleigh, "Charles Sparks Thomas", in Paolo E. Coletta (ed.), American Secretaries of the Navy, Vol. II (U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1980), p. 863.

²⁸ Op. Cit., p. 862.

²⁹ see Radford Memoirs, pp. 324-325 for summarisation of the JCS outline. For ship numbers : US Congress, House Armed Services Committee (hereafter HASC) , Department of the Navy Appropriations for 1955, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Appropriations, House of

so had the fleet; perhaps unavoidably considering the combination of a relatively fixed budget, the continuation of the supercarrier program, the start of the Polaris program, and the ageing of most other World War II vintage ships (including the modernised attack carriers), that the Navy still relied upon.³⁰

The Navy had to keep in mind that modernisation was becoming more rapid, and technology advancing at an exponential rate on both sides of the Iron Curtain, even if America was slightly ahead. Thus the navy considered two responses to changing world affairs : a more modern Navy, and a flexible strategy that would keep it in a job, and well supported, with regard to the New Look. Indeed, as early as 1954, the Navy under Thomas was beginning to look towards having more balanced forces, as far as possible :

If we channel our military effort to only one type of possible military aggression – as we had begun to do just prior to Korea – we ignore the threats of other types of military aggression, which can be just as defeating and just as conclusive. Moreover, in doing so, we permit any enemy to concentrate his effort on circumventing our single strength. Thus in these days of supersonic planes, nuclear weapons, and guided missiles we must still have soldiers and sailors ... antisubmarine ships and landing craft as we so recently saw in Korea, as well as global bombers and massive retaliatory weapons.³¹

Considering this speech, it is less than surprising that Thomas chose Arleigh Burke as the man to lead the Navy “into the tomorrow”, passing by 92 more senior officers to promote an advocate of the navy’s traditional mission of sea control over the strategic mission. He assumed office in July 1955³², after which the navy started to push for the limited war role of intervention against local aggression postulated by the NSC. In September 1955, Burke received a memo from his Deputy for Fleet Operations and Readiness echoing Thomas’s speech of the previous year :

For the past several years we have been conditioning our armed forces to handle nothing but an all-out war accompanied by a liberal sprinkling of atomic and thermonuclear weapons by both sides. All our thoughts have been channeled toward how we can best project our atoms

Representatives, 84th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 3 (Washington GPO, 1955), pp. 268-270, cited in Coletta (ed.), American Secretaries of the Navy, Vol. II , p. 862.

³⁰ Coletta (ed.), American Secretaries of the Navy, Vol. II , p. 863, citing HASC, Navy Appropriations for 1957, Vol. I, (GPO, 1956), pp. 305-306.

³¹ Coletta (ed.), American Secretaries of the Navy, Vol. II , p. 865, citing “Speech by Secretary Thomas to Institute of World Affairs, Riverside California,” (14 December 1954), copy in Papers of the Secretary of the Navy (Washington : Department of the Navy, 1954).

³² Coletta (ed.), American Secretaries of the Navy, Vol. II, p. 861.

against the enemy while at the same time preventing him from projecting his atoms against us...

Thermonuclear warheads in the Soviets' possession were a scary thing to have 'projected' at a surface ship. There was an alternative, though. Referring to the Korean War and Indochina, the memo concluded that,

In the ten years since World War II our principal problem has not been all out atomic war. On the contrary, what we have been faced with is daily is the peripheral type war, the brush fire wherein atomic weapons have not been used and probably could not be used without risking expansion into an all out atomic war. And this may be the type of war with which we will be faced for many years to come. In fact, there is growing doubt in the minds of many officers that we will ever become involved in an atomic exchange unless we allow ourselves to get in a position where we are not equipped to fight any other war.³³

In keeping with this line of thinking, and with the worries of the NSC in NSC 5602, Burke asserted in a letter to Charles Wilson that the Soviet potential to negate US strategic superiority meant that the US should keep future conflicts within certain bounds, recommending greater resources to the conduct of war which might remain non-nuclear. He echoed the statement above that limited wars were the most likely to occur in the future, but included the caveat that a strong nuclear deterrent was necessary to prevent all out war as well.³⁴

The great asset of the attack carrier - especially the new *Forrestals* accompanied by guided missile cruisers for longer-range protection than guns could provide, to facilitate the destruction of enemy atomic bombers – was that they were able to fit in with both types of warfare – both the brushfire and general wars. But now the Planning Division was beginning to take more notice of the peripheral conflict as a role for the carrier. Indeed, one naval officer suggested that the Navy be the “champion of limited war and preparedness for it.”³⁵

Perhaps significantly, in the same month this memo was received, Thomas was giving Raborn his Special Projects office to develop Polaris.³⁶ Polaris, as has been stated, was a massive undertaking in terms of cost and effort, but despite

³³ Secret [declassified], Op343, serial 00368P34 “New Concept of Amphibious Operations Warfare; Requirements for Support of,” 21 Sept 1955, A3 Folder, 1955, Strategic Plans Division, (Subject and Serial Files, Operational Archives (OA) NHC), cited in Gray & Barnett (eds.), Seapower and Strategy, pp. 331-332.

³⁴ “Letter, CNO to SecDef”, serial 012P00, (November 6, 1956), Burke MSS, NHC, cited in Edward J. Marolda, “The Influence of Burke’s Boys Upon Limited War”, U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings (August 1981), p. 37.

³⁵ Op. Cit., citing Commander Malcolm W. Cagle.

³⁶ Coletta (ed.), American Secretaries of the Navy, Vol. II, p. 869.

exemplary progress, it would also take time. The navy would still rely on carriers for a nuclear strike role, and all the CVAs were capable of launching the new heavy attack bombers such as the A3D Skywarrior before the first Polaris was test-fired.³⁷

Burke had remarked that he was serving, “in an era marked by the most rapid technological changes in the history of the Navy,”³⁸ and he was trying to steer the navy’s carrier force away from a strategic role at precisely the same period that the administration required highly mobile, flexible task forces, which in fact, the carrier task force was. As Burke said in 1961, “Naval Forces are essentially self-contained offensively, defensively, and logistically. This staying power is an important feature of our modern navy, which ensures that United States strength and influence can always be exerted where and when needed .”³⁹

Consider the following complaint though, from Maxwell Taylor, commenting on a National Security Council meeting of July 1957, when he was serving as the Army Chief of Staff: he asserts that, “Secretary Wilson decided to produce virtually single-handed a long-range program for presentation to the National Security Council.”

He reportedly depended upon Admiral Radford [and others]... [but] the Joint Chiefs had no hand in it.

Whatever the precise authorship... it hit the services like a bombshell. The service secretaries and the Chiefs of Staff learned of its existence only three days before its presentation for approval by the national Security Council. It covered the period 1959-1961 and undertook to hold the annual defense budget at approximately \$38 billion by reducing manpower to compensate for the rising cost of military equipment.

Specifically, the overall military manpower was to decrease from 2,500,000 men to 2,200,000 men in 1961.⁴⁰

Taylor went on to describe the presentation as unjustified in the way that it emphasised atomic use “when it was generally agreed that the order of probability of future nuclear challenge was : first, cold war, second; conflict short of general war; finally general war.”⁴¹

³⁷ Op. Cit., p. 881.

³⁸ “ADM Burke to Secretary Gates,” (1 June 1959), Personal Papers of Arleigh A. Burke, cited in Coletta (ed.), p. 888.

³⁹ “Address by Admiral Arleigh Burke, USN, Chief of Naval Operations, Armed Forces Day – Salt Lake City, Utah – 17 May 1961”; “SPEE-8” File, Papers of Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, Operational Archives, NHC, cited in Gray & Barnett (eds.), Seapower and Strategy, pp. 332-333.

⁴⁰ Taylor, Uncertain Trumpet, p. 49.

⁴¹ Op. Cit., pp. 48-49.

Taylor had realised that the navy was moving toward the Army position by the time his memoirs were written, but saw them as a service “having a stake in the role of Massive Retaliation...”

[The Navy] had been hesitant to support the limited war theory, although inclined to agree in principle. For one thing, the navy saw the possibilities of the nuclear-powered submarine with underwater-launched-missiles and foresaw a new role as a preponderant part of the atomic retaliatory force. But on the other hand, it had a claim on a part of the limited war mission, which it hoped to expand.⁴²

The army was the big loser in the budgets under the New Look, whereas the Navy budget remained constant at around 29% throughout the Eisenhower period.⁴³ Taylor stated why he thought the navy was faring better ; its flexibility:

The navy fights hard for the preservation of its present large carrier force, attempting to justify its numbers by the requirements of both general and limited war. ... The navy prefers to advance upon three parallel lines, seeking to expand its role in strategic bombardment and limited ground warfare while retaining its responsibility for antisubmarine warfare. ⁴⁴

Taylor and Burke were part of a JCS team which criticised the Air Force for taking too much of the defence budget and spending all of it on an all-out war strategy in which their bases were obvious targets for a first strike, especially after the scare the US received when the Russians launched their first Sputnik. Nuclear war was soon to become a no-win situation.⁴⁵ The Navy was assured of its strategic role by virtue of Polaris, though; an ‘invulnerable’ system which was well hidden underwater. Thus it was unnecessary to purchase large amounts of missile submarines, because Soviet thermonuclear attack would not be able to pinpoint Polaris submarines. In 1959, when the SAC had 3000 bombers and 1000 tanker planes, and some 3261 points on its target list, the navy could propose 232 targets to be covered by 29 submarines loaded with 16 missiles each to be a force “sufficient to destroy all of Russia.”⁴⁶ Therefore, the navy thought it could afford to concentrate on the limited war problem .

The navy’s Long Range Objectives Group (Op-93), produced a report at the end of 1957 which condemned the graduated deterrence concept as making

⁴² Op. Cit., p. 59.

⁴³ Baer, pp. 350-351.

⁴⁴ Taylor, pp. 100-102.

⁴⁵ David Alan Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill : Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-1960,” *International Security*, Vol. 7, part 4, (Spring 1983), pp. 37, 50-51.

⁴⁶ David Alan Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill”, pp. 50, 56-57.

“general war more likely to occur, and endangers US security by alienating allies and diverting resources from conventional preparedness,” and should therefore be , “subject to challenge.”⁴⁷

In January the next year, Op-93, produced a long-range planning study which it thought would provide the answer; “The Navy of the 1970-Era”.⁴⁸ Burke agreed, arguing that “one reason why we resist inflating our retaliatory forces is the urgency and magnitude of the limited war problem.”⁴⁹ He saw that the US was getting involved in armed struggles further and further away from the global power centres Kennan had originally intended to defend, but that Eisenhower’s policy was universal. Thus Burke could feel justified in saying that it was more likely that “the fulcrum of the struggle will be in the undeveloped areas of the free world – from the Asian periphery through the Middle East and Africa to Latin America.”⁵⁰ In any of these places the US might be required to intervene in a limited conflict.

For the combined tasks of providing for the deterrent Polaris fleet, providing sea control, and for providing for limited intervention abroad, the US Navy would need a fleet of 933 ships and 7000 aircraft.⁵¹ Although the carriers would still have a nuclear role in a general war, it was becoming obvious that Polaris could take over from the strike carrier, which then might be less exposed to Soviet stand-off defences. But as long as Polaris was incomplete, the carrier still had a role to play. Supercarriers could still serve as auxiliary platforms with regard to the strategic role, or “a continuing, flexible, alternate capability,” as Burke would put it. He continued, though that he wanted to make it clear that,

[F]or 1970 we are optimizing the carrier force for limited war, to be the nation’s primary cutting tool for this purpose. The deterrence of all-out war will not then be the carriers’ number one job. The carrier force need not measure up to the defensive requirements of that role in 1970, however useful it may be in that context in the next few years.⁵²

Vice Admiral Wallace Beakley, the Deputy CNO for Operations, told

⁴⁷ Op-93 memo [declassified], “Adaptation of the National Military posture to the Era of Nuclear parity : A Suggested Navy Position ,” serial 0008P93, 3 December 1957, A16-10 folder, 1957, Op-60 File, NHC, cited in Marolda, “The Influence of Burke’s Boys Upon Limited War”, p. 37.

⁴⁸ CNO to Distribution List, 13 Jan 1958 and encl., The Navy of the 1970-Era, Naval Reactors Division, 1958, NHC, cited in Francis Duncan, Rickover and the Nuclear Navy (U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1990), p. 101.

⁴⁹ Naval Research Advisory Committee, Historical Perspectives, p. A-45, cited in Baer, p. 360.

⁵⁰ Edward J. Marolda, “The Influence of Burke’s Boys Upon Limited War”, U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings (August 1981), p. 38.

⁵¹ Naval Research Advisory Committee, Historical Perspectives, p. A-47, in Baer, p. 360.

⁵² Op. Cit., p. A-43, in Baer, p. 361.

Congress that “the carrier’s contribution to the [strategic retaliatory] mission is strictly a bonus and in no way detracts from its essentiality for naval purposes.”⁵³ This had been the view of Burke and other navy planners all throughout the 50s, but now it was given air because of the limited war role the navy wanted for its carriers, closely following the NSC documents which, thanks to Burke and Op-93, did indeed split the Navy into the two elements detailed in NSC 5501 and following documents.

But rather than the graduated deterrence strategy promulgated by the NSC, the navy was keeping war limited, and on the periphery for its carriers in the future as much as possible, This was why it required so many ships and aircraft. The navy’s carriers were to be the “point of the spear” for the US mobile reserve force.⁵⁴

Carrier on the Periphery : Deterrence or Containment

James Cable states that ground and tactical air forces often need contiguous allies to access the territory of their victim, and more importantly perhaps, that the sea "offers a neutral *place d'armes* open to all, where forces may be assembled, ready for intervention but not yet committed... a ship that has approached the victim's coast, even a fleet that has entered territorial waters, is a lesser involvement than a platoon that has crossed the frontier."⁵⁵

This was a special advantage to be added to the fact that carrier forces were self-contained offensive and defensive fighting units. But considering that Eisenhower placed so much emphasis on deterrence and nuclear weapons was there a case for the large carrier in an increased conventional role; were carriers for use for deterrence or intervention under his administration ?

According to John Lewis Gaddis, "it is clear in retrospect that the administration was prepared to 'go nuclear'," in several peripheral circumstances, including the Quemoy Matsu crises of 1954-5 and 1958, an outbreak of renewed hostilities in Korea, and if a decision was made to intervene in Indochina.⁵⁶

Gaddis makes the criticism that the US range of choice with regard to intervention was determined largely by its allies; and this was certainly true in

⁵³ Cited in Edward J. Marolda, “The Influence of Burke’s Boys Upon Limited War”, U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings (August 1981), p. 40.

⁵⁴ Baer, citing Naval Research Advisory Committee, Historical Perspectives, p. A-43; Rosenberg, “Burke” in Love, Jr., (ed.), p. 293; Rosenberg, “American Postwar Air Doctrine”, p. 296.

⁵⁵ James Cable, Gunboat Diplomacy, 1919-1979 (Macmillan Press), p. 109.

⁵⁶ Gaddis, p. 171.

the case of Indochina.⁵⁷

The ease with which carriers could be deployed to the periphery without major diplomatic problems was demonstrated in February 1954, when CNO Carney deployed 2 carriers and escorting destroyers to conduct training exercises “as a cover for possible operations to assist the French in Indochina if such operations should become necessary,” adding that the “task force should be ready to render prompt assistance during the time they are in the South China Sea.”⁵⁸

With regard to intervention there, Carney assured the force commander that “there is an approved expression of national policy recognizing the grave consequences that could result from loss of Indochina to the Communists.”⁵⁹

There were, however, conditions for US intervention in Indochina, which had to be met before the president would go before Congress and ask to intervene. They included US military participation being requested by France, the Associated States, the Philippines; that the ANZUS treaty would be invoked; that the UK would be at least acquiescent; that France would guarantee independence to the Associated States; and that French troops would remain in-country. The US intervention would be supplementary, by sea and air primarily; native troops would have to be trained, and a command structure agreed upon.⁶⁰ Quite a list indeed, but one that spawned from the US reliance on allies, and from the position that, when combating communism, the US had to be seen as a liberator, not an imperialistic power enforcing its will on others. The unilateral bailing out of a colonising nation was therefore out of the question.

According to Radford - at this point the Chairman of the JCS - there were major problems with the French government. “Principally air and sea” meant to the French upwards of 6 marine divisions, and there were not even that many marine divisions in existence; only three under the New Look!⁶¹

Still, it was the US opinion that Southeast Asia was not militarily defensible after the loss of all Indochina to the communists. The problem was that the US did not want another Korea on its hands, hence the JCS disassociating itself from any cease-fire in advance of a political settlement. One potential powder-keg in the region - Korea - was enough.⁶² The JCS therefore recommended that US contributions be limited to the fast carrier task force and

⁵⁷ Gaddis, pp. 171-172.

⁵⁸ Paul B. Schratz, “Robert Bostwick Carney”, in Robert W. Love Jr. (ed.), The Chiefs of Naval Operations (U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1980), p. 251.

⁵⁹ Op. Cit., p. 252.

⁶⁰ Radford Memoirs, p. 418.

⁶¹ Radford Memoirs, pp. 420-421, p. 325 for Marine Division figure.

⁶² Radford Memoirs, p. 413.

USAF land-based bombers based outside the country, in Okinawa.⁶³

As Radford reveals, the JCS knew that the real problem lay in the neutralisation of communist China, the Vietminh's main supporter.⁶⁴ The JCS also noted that "*involvement in Indochina, even on a limited scale, increased the risk of a general war.*" They recommended that any involvement be accompanied by increased mobilisation at home.⁶⁵ Intervention therefore, was by sea and air or not at all. On May 21, the JCS rejected plans for a static defence of Indochina as a "gift to the USSR", similar to that which Korea had been. Radford, it has already been noted, was not a fan of that conflict.⁶⁶ Ridgway warned that intervention in that sense would involve a million troops and expensive construction projects if it were to be feasible.⁶⁷

The upshot was that many, the British and French included, were confused about US policy. Would they intervene against aggression or not? As Clement Attlee commented, "Sometimes it is awfully hard to understand what the American line is, as between what members of the government say and ... what generals and admirals say."⁶⁸ This was not the whole story though: with regard to the adverse French position at Dien Bien Phu, Carney concluded that conventional ordnance would be of limited effectiveness against the Vietminh, and atomic weaponry might harm the French as much as aid them.⁶⁹ Still, nearly 300 planes on 3 CVAs stood by, just in case China decided to send troops into the region, in which case the situation might have differed.⁷⁰

At the end of it all there was no US intervention at all and the country was split in two. The US position at this time was that resistance to communism needed popular support, and that peoples supported should be defending their own institutions. In this case, it wasn't the Indochinese the US were "liberating" but the French, and despite Eisenhower's universalistic speeches, Kennan's "we have some communists... now come across" position still held true. An ally doing too little for its own defense was outside the New Look's lookout.

At the opposite end of the spectrum lay the Formosa Strait crises, where as far as the US was concerned, their ally was behaving too aggressively. Taiwan and the US had signed a mutual defense treaty on 2 December 1954, so attacks on Quemoy, Matsu and the Tachens required Eisenhower to go before Congress

⁶³ Op. Cit., p. 425.

⁶⁴ Op. Cit., p. 426.

⁶⁵ Op. Cit., p. 427.

⁶⁶ Op. Cit., p. 436; Department of Defense, United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, Department of Defense, Washington : Government Printing Office, 1971), Vol. 9, pp. 478, 487.

⁶⁷ "Carney", in Love Jr. (ed.), p. 253-254.

⁶⁸ Radford Memoirs, p. 442.

⁶⁹ "Carney", in Love Jr. (ed.), p. 253.

⁷⁰ Hagan (ed.), In Peace and War, p. 315.

to secure the Formosa Resolution on January 29 the next year, whereby Congress gave the President authorisation to use force against the Chinese, using his own judgement as to when it became appropriate to do so.⁷¹

Given official support from Congress, the Taiwan Crises were a more fundamental test of the US resolve, and the ability of the Navy to respond. Unlike Indochina, Taiwan was one of the island bastions proposed for the original containment barrier, and its loss would be a real blow. Carney and Radford supported strikes against the mainland in the event of an all-out Chinese attack, and the US 7th Fleet, in 1955, was the only barrier between China and Taiwan, except a SAC launch.⁷²

Red Chinese aircraft started bombing the islands in 1954, and although the Quemoy and Matsu groups were held due to perceived (by Chiang Kai-Chek) military importance - they acted as barriers to two important mainland ports. The Tachens were evacuated from under the guns of the Chinese mainland over an 85-hour period. The deterrent presence of a 5 carrier US Fleet caused the attacks to halt completely, so there was no US-China air battle, although there were isolated incidents from time to time.⁷³ There was no need for an air-strike - atomic or otherwise - upon the mainland, as the 7th Fleet proceeded to take on board 27,000 people, 8600 tons of equipment, 166 heavy guns and some 100 vehicles. It was an impressive display of American naval power, which attracted favourable attention the world over.⁷⁴ Thus the Navy backed up the threat of massive retaliation in the early 50s with a kind of mobility and readiness the other services could not provide. Even if the Air Force was the main provider of the strategic strike, the Navy had atomic striking power too, and also the ability to help allies directly in this case; naval presence with an atomic dimension meant that the NSC's stark choice between retreat and nuclear release did not come to pass. And the executive at the time did believe that nuclear weapons would have to be used in the event of an attack.⁷⁵ This was inadvertently revealed to the public when a reporter leaked an off-the-record statement by Carney that, if an all-out attack occurred, he had been authorised to destroy communist China's industrial base.⁷⁶

Yet the "Carney leak" may have been useful to the ends of American foreign policy . For

⁷¹ "Carney", in Love, Jr. (ed.), p. 260; "The Formosa Resolution", US Statutes at Large Vol. LIX, part 7 (resolution signed January 29, 1955) (Washington: GPO).

⁷² "Carney to Radford", April 22 1955, FRUS 1955-1957, Vol. 2 (GPO, 1986), p. 504.

⁷³ see Paul B. Ryan, First Line of Defense , pp. 19-20 for examples.

⁷⁴ Ryan, p. 21, citing Time, February 7 1955, p. 11; Baer, p. 345.

⁷⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years (2 Vols.), (Heinemann, 1966), Vol. 1, p. 476-477.

⁷⁶ "Carney", in Love Jr. (ed.), p. 260.

some reason, Peking suddenly ended the bombardment ... and sought a relaxation of tensions in the Taiwan Strait.⁷⁷

The US Navy in the first half of the New Look era, then, got along quite well without having to launch any air-strikes against communists on the periphery. Intervention was accomplished in the Formosa Strait without recourse to testing the capabilities of US Navy atomic strike planes. It could be said that the navy deterred China both from intervening openly against the French, and from invading the Chinese Nationalists and causing a lapse in containment. The navy was unable to prevent partition of Indochina though, but the imposition of so many conditions on US allies by the executive precluded US intervention in the first place. That was hardly the navy's fault.

The second half of the New Look era saw Chiang Kai-Chek behaving too aggressively for the administration's liking in 1958, especially considering the Soviet scientific advances which had taken place in the intervening years. He was basing a third of his ground forces on the remaining offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu, just miles away from major concentrations of the Chinese military.⁷⁸

An Eisenhower aide had noted the probable process of escalation with regard to US involvement in the Formosa Strait by the end of the previous crisis:

We all believe the Chi-coms are building up to an attack on Matsu and Quemoy and ... it will be inevitable that our military units will become involved for this reason : if the communists attack the islands in force, Chiang's Air Force will immediately go into action, ...[then] the communists ... [,] will attack Formosan airports. Once this happens, under our treaty obligations, the United States Air Force units go into action since an attack on Formosa would oblige us to do so.⁷⁹

The August 1958 bombardment was therefore an attack on American resolve. If a conflict arose, the government would, according to CINCPAC Felix Stump, have to "stop pussy footing around about the use of nuclear weapons," because Chiang had already "insisted that we must use our atomic capability , but... [expressed] disturbing doubts about our willingness to do so."⁸⁰

Again the 7th Fleet was the barrier to an invasion. For both the administration and the Navy, the containment policy was once more at stake. Burke stated that,

⁷⁷ Op. Cit.

⁷⁸ Hagan (ed.), *In Peace and War* , p. 316; Gaddis, pp. 171-172.

⁷⁹ "Hagerty Diary", March 11, 1955, *Hagerty Papers*, Box 1, cited in Gaddis, p. 172

⁸⁰ Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Brookings Institution, 1988), p. 70.

President Chiang can't give up those islands and we can't ask him to... If we retreat under pressure, where does that leave us in the eyes of the world - and our own eyes ?⁸¹

The national policy was clear. Atomic release over communist expansion, even if the islands weren't too important to the US. They were important to a US ally, and there was no question of a colonial nature here. And the leader of the state was actually *requesting* nuclear assistance. But this was an era of nuclear plenty, and Nikita Khrushchev warned that "to touch off a war against People's China means to doom to certain death sons of the American people and spark off the conflagration of a world war."⁸²

Notable by their absence during probably the greatest crisis of the New Look Era were the supercarriers. Three smaller CVAs were in place within 4 days though, and they covered Taiwan's airports so the Nationalist fighters could conduct an air-to-air only campaign . More reinforcements included heavy cruiser escorts, the *Midway* and *Essex* and their escorts, and a CVS carrier for antisubmarine operations.

The *Essex* had sailed from the Mediterranean to reach the Straits, even though the *Forrestal* was deployed there simultaneously.⁸³ There was a US limited intervention of sorts again, this time including a resupply of the islands under fire; covered by the CVAs and their nuclear-armed bombers, US ships escorted the Nationalists up to 3 miles off the island of Quemoy and met with no artillery fire, although within that limit, Nationalist ships were targeted and one destroyed. By the end of September the convoys were getting through regularly enough, and on October 25, the Communists undertook a policy of bombardment on alternate days, allowing easy resupply. Any active intervention was unnecessary after this relaxation of tensions, which marked the end of the second crisis. The fleet retired.⁸⁴

In fact, no supercarrier entered the Far East until 1959,⁸⁵ when there was cover in the Mediterranean. There, in the summer of 1958, supporting the Eisenhower Doctrine - or Middle East Resolution⁸⁶ - the hard-working *Essex* had given close-air cover to marines going ashore near Beirut as part of a force to stabilise the pro-Western government of Lebanon. The presence of the 6th Fleet

⁸¹ Rosenberg, "Burke", in Love Jr. (ed.), p. 290.

⁸² Cited in Baer, p. 364.

⁸³ Hagan (ed.), *In Peace and War* , p. 316 ; Appendix 2, 1958 deployments, CVA 59.

⁸⁴ Hagan (ed.), *In Peace and War* , pp. 316-317.

⁸⁵ Appendix 2, 1959 deployments, CVA 61.

⁸⁶ "Joint Resolution to Promote Peace and Stability in the Middle East," House Joint Resolution 117, 85th Congress, *DSB*, Vol. 36 (25 March 1957), pp. 481-482.

provided an ‘umbrella’ for the operation at a greater distance, too. Again, no serious communist resistance was encountered, but the significance of the operation was the speed at which it was carried out: 13 hours from the order from Eisenhower, marines had been deployed ashore, and in significant numbers - nearly 6000 marines were ashore at the height of the Lebanese instability. With the marines and later the army present, any kind of coup was impossible, and the US kept a uniquely pro-Western ally in the Middle East.⁸⁷

Limited War, Limited Carriers

The limited war Navy proposed by Burke was part of a navy strategy which stressed mobile and flexible striking forces, but also the navy’s constant priority of sea control. Burke was keen to point out the Navy’s mobility in 1961, but he grounded it in terms of the ability to *support* a conflict overseas first :

... in time of war ... no matter what kind of military power we project overseas – naval, ground or air – we are going to have to use the seas to sustain that power.

And that means we must be able to control the seas, that we must keep them free for *our* use and to deny that use to any enemy. Control of the seas is the navy’s primary mission...

All of our naval forces have the tremendous advantage of mobility. Moving at sea our ships have no fixed address. They cannot be targeted in advance, for attack by long-range ballistic missiles.

POLARIS is not our only seagoing asset for nuclear war. In addition, our powerful, versatile attack carriers contribute to our country’s retaliatory capability. These carriers and their attack aircraft form the backbone of our naval striking power: power that can be projected overseas, power that can carry the fight to the enemy, power that can be used in wars of every kind...

... aggressors are apt to strike in areas where we are not so well covered, in areas far away from concentration of land-based American fighting power. And that is why our *mobile* naval forces are so very important. Our Navy/Marine Corps amphibious capability, one unique to the United States, can supply armed strength from the sea ready to fight ...

Naval Forces are essentially self-contained offensively, defensively, and logistically. This staying power is an important feature of our modern navy, which ensures that United States strength and influence can always be exerted where and when needed .⁸⁸

⁸⁷ For details, see Arleigh Burke, “The Lebanon Crisis”, in Arnold R. Shapack (ed.), Naval History Symposium - The Navy in an Era of Change and Crisis, (U.S. Naval Academy, 1973), pp. 70-80.

⁸⁸ “Address by Admiral Arleigh Burke, USN, Chief of Naval Operations, Armed Forces Day – Salt Lake City, Utah – 17 May 1961”; “SPEE-8” File, Papers of Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, Operational

The 'Navy of the 1970-Era' had proposed that 6 out of 12 supercarriers be nuclear-powered for maximum mobility, along with 12 of 18 guided missile cruisers and 18 of 54 frigates.⁸⁹ By 1961 the only nuclear carrier in the fleet was the *Enterprise* (CVAN-65), but Burke was enthusiastic about her capabilities :

Her eight powerful nuclear reactors would enable the *Enterprise* to cruise 20 times around the world without refueling. Her great endurance and her advanced hull design would allow the ship to make this extraordinary journey at sustained high speed, exploiting to its utmost the seagoing advantage of mobility.⁹⁰

Indeed, mobility was stressed by her first captain after commissioning:

"Propulsion and control characteristics of the ship offer great tactical flexibility," said Capt. de Poix in mid-1962. "There are four rudders, one almost directly astern of each propeller. This provides excellent maneuverability at all speeds as well as tactical diameters in turns which compare with much smaller ships. . . .

"Her ability to launch a strike on the enemy from one position, recover, and launch another 24 hours later from an unpredictable position more than 800 miles away from her previous strike position will constantly be a factor in causing the enemy to utilize protective forces that could be deployed elsewhere.

"If a show of force is required, *Enterprise* can be on distant station in a shorter period of time than any other ship in the Fleet."⁹¹

But there was a problem in the Navy : aging ships were causing the fleet to shrink year by year instead of grow to the 1970 targets proposed by Burke. The Navy had 376 major warships in 1960 as opposed to the target of 537 for 1970.⁹² In a private conversation, the president said he had "lost faith" in the large nuclear carriers due to the evolution of Soviet air defences. Attack-at-source, high-altitude heavy bombers would be phased out in favour of the all-weather A-6 Intruder, a medium attack plane which could penetrate defences by 'hugging the ground' to avoid Soviet radar. Accurate Soviet SAMs had made the high-altitude bombers too vulnerable in the meantime, which made attack at source

Archives, NHC, cited in Gray & Barnett (eds.), Seapower and Strategy, pp. 332-333.

⁸⁹ Francis Duncan, Rickover and the Nuclear Navy (U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1990), p. 101.

⁹⁰ Scot MacDonald, The Evolution of Aircraft Carriers, (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Department of the Navy, 1963), p. 72.

⁹¹ The Evolution of Aircraft Carriers, p. 73.

⁹² Baer, p. 365; Duncan, Rickover and the Nuclear Navy, p. 101.

too risky.⁹³ Without a sea control function in general war, and with no Soviet carriers to oppose, the carriers' main job appeared to be intervention, which in the main had been fulfilled by the smaller CVAs.⁹⁴ Another issue was cost. The nuclear ships might have been modern, but also represented the substitution of quantity with modernity. They cost approximately 1.5 times as much as their conventional supercarrier counterparts. The *Independence*, for example, cost \$189 million, and the first *Forrestal* \$218 million, compared with an estimated \$472 million for the *Enterprise* in February 1960.⁹⁵ The Navy could substitute two *Forrestals* for one *Enterprise* at those prices, putting the advantages of the ship into the shade somewhat. For the Navy the flight decks were more important than the propulsion plants.⁹⁶ The Navy decided to study the possibilities though, in a treatise on nuclear power, which slightly more optimistically had the cost ratio at 1.5 times that of a conventional carrier, although its endurance, even at high speed, was almost unlimited by virtue of never having to refuel. The independence from logistics required definition, though. Carriers still had to refuel their aviation squadrons. It was found that an oil-burning carrier could operate its air groups for four days without replenishment, a nuclear carrier for five or six.⁹⁷ The decision on the next carrier's propulsion system was a foregone conclusion, with Burke and Wallace Beakley, and Gates (now Defense Secretary) and William Franke, the new Navy Secretary, all coming out in favour of the oil-fired carrier for the future.⁹⁸

And the Navy needed the ships. As early as 1954, there were complaints about the forward operations taking their toll on the 6th and 7th Fleets. Admiral Donald B. Duncan told Radford in 1954 that,

The deployment of 4 CVA to the Far Eastern command is the most difficult to maintain. It has now been extended for over two years. To continue it, ships have been switched from ocean to ocean, sometimes temporarily, at other times permanently...⁹⁹

⁹³ Hagan (ed.), *In Peace and War*, p. 310; Baer, p. 365.

⁹⁴ Baer, p. 365.

⁹⁵ Duncan, *Rickover and the Nuclear Navy*, p. 106.

⁹⁶ Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense, Appropriations for 1960*, 86th Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, pp. 172, 1017-43, 1552-59, cited in Duncan, p. 103.

⁹⁷ Duncan, *Rickover and the Nuclear Navy*, p. 108.

⁹⁸ Duncan, p. 108, citing Subcommittee of the HASC, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1961, 86th Congress, 2nd Session*, (Washington, GPO, 1960). For Gates, *Part 1*, pp. 61-62, for Franke, *Part 2*, pp. 85-86, for Burke, *Part 2*, pp. 84-86, and for Beakley, *Part 5*, pp. 267, 275, 296-297.

⁹⁹ Paul B. Ryan, *First Line of Defense*, p. 22.

James Cable explains the fact further when he says that carriers are particularly susceptible to the demands of modernisation, and tend to spend long periods in dock when being serviced. He postulates that ideally, “a total strength of 3 carriers is thus needed to be sure that [one] can, at short notice, keep one carrier on continuous surveillance of uncertain duration.”¹⁰⁰ He goes on to say, quite correctly, that the US Navy had more obligations to fulfill than any other. Only a fraction of its power could be diverted to an emergency.¹⁰¹ The navy had a grand total of 26 CVAs of all types,¹⁰² and was attempting to keep 4 Fleets in action, in the Mediterranean and the Far East, backed up by the 1st and 2nd Fleets in both oceans, Atlantic and Pacific. Little chance then, of achieving Cable’s target of a 3 to 1 ratio for deployments, especially with ships rapidly approaching the end of their days, a constant budget, and the rising costs of New Look insistence on modernity. So the Navy, by the 60s, couldn’t afford to buy more expensive ships under the New Look and keep up shipbuilding in other parts of the fleet, including the all-important Polaris program.

Conclusions

So what was the Navy’s mission? The atomic strategic striking demanded by the likes of Nimitz and Radford before the Unification and Strategy Hearings? Or Sherman’s sea control mission of attack at the source? And what about the limited war roles of intervention and deterrence, or the diplomatic mission of showing the flag? The answer is, to one extent or the other, all of the above. The versatility of the carrier was what set it apart from the all-out war only mission of the SAC. The navy was a mobile, self-contained force as Arleigh Burke quite rightly highlighted. Clark G. Reynolds separated the Navy into two distinct functions along the lines of the Polaris / Carrier split - Deterrence and Intervention, respectively, although admitting the roles overlapped.

As we have seen, the Polaris missile and submarine were designed for a purely deterrent role, at the expense of sea control systems. Arleigh Burke’s choice of weapons system - and thus choice of strategy – had for once not the sea control mission as a priority but what he described as finite deterrence. Despite some in the Navy objecting to the decision to build the Polaris, especially

¹⁰⁰ Cable, p. 125.

¹⁰¹ Op. Cit., pp. 143-144.

¹⁰² Baer, p. 335.

Zumwalt's assertion that it was the worst weapons choice possible, it was certainly a more viable choice of weapon than, say, the nuclear-powered attack carrier. If the Navy wanted a deterrence mission, then Polaris was ideal: a system that could survive a Russian nuclear strike better than the SAC bombers at their bases. But, as has been mentioned, the first Polaris didn't see service until the very end of the decade.

In essence then, the Navy's priority for the atomic weapon since Admiral Forrest Sherman proposed the strategy for the *United States*, was one of sea control, and the attack at source of naval-oriented targets. The Naval planning literature is consistent in its sea control priority, and despite the criticisms of the other services, the Navy was always more interested in controlling the seas than taking over the role of another service. An extremely interesting paradox that may have been overlooked though, was that the navy's nuclear weapon strategy for sea control was finally superseded by the finite deterrence concept of the Navy's most persistent sea control advocate, Arleigh Burke. His was the insistence that a strategic mission be "strictly a bonus," but the move to a dual role of strategic backup and limited war removed the fleet's capital ship from the service's primary mission. This was the New Look at work though. In an era where an atomic war would be a two-way affair, as Bernard Brodie indicated, there was still room for the carrier. But a thermonuclear Russian bomber and missile force would obliterate America regardless of whether the sea lanes were open. Before the advent of nuclear plenty then, sea control was the watchword. But the carrier was an interim strategic weapon at best, right from the start, which had to have a sea *and air* control mission to protect itself before any thoughts of a strategic strike were possible.

Next we come to the limited war question. The Navy under Burke certainly wanted one, thanks to the advent of the Soviet hydrogen bomb. It must be the conclusion of this essay that under the New Look, the Navy 'point of the spear' mission was strictly limited to the Lebanon excursion, though. What Cable has termed 'naval suasion' was as close as the navy usually got to a true active intervention. Even the navy's smaller carriers, such as the *Essex* class, had, in the final analysis, a graduated deterrence mission, even before the concept was developed. The prime examples are the Taiwan crises, the Indochina deployment being relatively useless due to the terrain, and the fact that the New Look was a strategy formed to avoid such wars. Had China become involved, then nuclear weapon use was possible on a Massive Retaliation basis, but the atomic weapon was a deterrent to the great powers. Had the US used the atom bomb against the Vietminh, the US would have been seen as imperialist in an area where they

needed to be seen as allies.

The first Taiwan incident was extremely important for the Navy, because it formed a precedent for graduated deterrence. The attack carrier, even a modernized *Essex*, thanks to the 'tactical' weapons supposedly comparable to conventional ordnance managed to block Chinese invasion of Taiwan and its islands. It was essentially a massive retaliation weapon and a trip-wire backed up by atomic force (the Air Force bombers in Okinawa) all in one, and went on to prove itself as such in the second Formosa Strait crisis. The navy's carriers in cold- or limited- war scenarios provided mobile sanctuary areas for allies. The fact that they *carried* nuclear weapons deterred the enemy from attacking them, without their having to use them. Maxwell Taylor's assertion that the US did not want to even suggest the possibility that the US might employ atomic weapons with regard to Lebanon is not entirely sound when one considers the fact that the US interventionist ground force was covered by a nuclear-armed carrier force. The US Pacific fleets especially were mobile 'containment islands.' Even in a time of atomic plenty, they controlled the conflicts they became involved with. As symbols of a *Pax Americana* they performed well. But the Navy would have to wait further for a true limited war mission thanks to its need for the supercarrier force as an 'auxiliary strategic deterrent.'

One must conclude that the Navy should have been building smaller carriers from the conception of its limited war role. Tactical planes could deliver nuclear weaponry and, even the *Essex* carrier could carry heavy attack craft. But after the *United States* imbroglio, the Enterprise provided the Navy with a kind of catharsis. It just did so at the expense of Burke's 900-ship navy. And even the Navy itself realised that the kind of mobility required for dispersal was secondary to making up for deployment obligations. Russia might have carried the gravest threat to the US, but bottling up the supercarrier into the Mediterranean cost Burke his flexible non-atomic response.

In closing, then, the New Look navy was versatile enough to remain consistently funded, and versatile enough to follow both the administration's strategies: those of Massive Retaliation (at least in the Far East), and graduated deterrence. But only at the expense of the Navy's desired two missions of sea control and conventional warfare at the end of the period. The Strike Carrier of the New Look era finished up as primarily the graduated deterrence weapon the Navy sought to condemn. As George Baer concludes, the navy was not where its leaders wanted it to be, even after a decade of successful innovation and modernisation.¹⁰³ This was because it was tied to an administration whose

¹⁰³ Baer, p. 366.

military was closely controlled by an ex-military president. Eisenhower, unlike Truman, had his own concept of national security and had the knowledge, the self-confidence, and enough authority to make it stick. If, as the Navy wished, the carrier was to remain a “national security weapon”, then the Navy had to play to Eisenhower’s tune. Naval leaders such as Burke knew all too well what happened in 1949, and the service could have been much worse off had Burke attempted to push the ‘Flexible Response’ case too far under Eisenhower. In the end, the carrier was, at least primarily, a weapon of deterrence during the New Look era.