

*Admiral
Sprounce*

ROUGH

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From: President, Naval War College
To : Secretary of the Navy

Subj: Reassessment of the Fields and Values of the
three elements of Land, Sea, and Air Power;
Comments and Recommendations Concerning.

1. There is no task today of more lasting value than the proper reassessment of the fields and values of the three elements of land, sea, and air power in their balanced relationship. Prior to the development of air power, land and sea power were relatively precisely outlined and delimited in their scope which left no real basis for misunderstanding and friction between them. The shore line marked the limits beyond which land power could not go without the aid of sea power and beyond which sea power (according to the then existing concepts) could never go at all.
2. Air power, in transcending this historic barrier, inevitably introduced a clashing of interests with resultant misunderstandings and friction. Partisanship begot partisanship and uncompromising and opposing schools of thought developed.
3. Accompanying the development of air power has been another complicating and confusing factor. This is the flood of revolutionary developments which began to demonstrate itself in the First World War and which shows no sign of culmination in the development of atomic fission and other new scientific weapons of today.

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Of all of these, the greatest factor perhaps was the final "break-through" of industrial warfare with its mass armies, fleets, and air forces and its mass techniques of supply and organization. In its sheer extent of fighting in space and time this has tended to swamp the minds of observers. But added to this great industrialization of war further complications such as the far reaching implications/^{of} submarine warfare and the new significance of economic and psychological warfare. The total effect of all these factors seems to have overwhelmed military thought and to have caused it to lose pace. So much of the old has broken down and so much of the new has been added that there no longer exists an accepted closely-knit analysis of the whole of war and of strategy. Instead theories have tended to center around new technical developments which have given rise to more or less unconnected and very often contradictory doctrines like sprawling limbs without backbone or head. Strategic bombing, fleet gun-fire support of troops, infantry-artillery cooperation, tank and anti-tank warfare, submarine and anti-submarine warfare, etc., are viewed as separate subjects. Military theory has increasingly lost its breadth of vision and some seem to hold that the limited subjects with which it deals no longer require a profound theoretical understanding of the overall strategy of war.

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4. Even the problems of coordination and cooperation between sea, land and air power can be viewed in this limited manner without any understanding beyond that of the technical issues arising out of the specific properties of ^{the} three arms. So huge and complex a set-piece as the Normandy landing was solved and fought on such tactical concepts rather than on strategic comprehension. Indeed, in so far as air power was concerned, the strategic plane was ignored. The plan, which represented our supreme effort of the moment did not provide for the distribution of the air power available in Great Britain. The division of effort between strategic bombing, close and distant tactical support, protection of Atlantic sea lanes, and other manifold tasks was not specified. These were technical problems to be resolved by the specialists in air power and not to be trespassed upon by the equally narrowed exponents of the other specialized fields.

5. This separation has led to a complete estrangement which, by a vicious circle, leads to still further compartmentation. The worst feature of this fatal development, however, has not been merely the loss of the sovereign intellectual mastery of war, but rather the fact that this loss seems not to have been perceived. The student of warfare has become increasingly satisfied and complacent within this ever more bewildering

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chaos of partial perspective - completely oblivious of the fact that in war, as in any organic phenomenon, the whole is always infinitely more than the mechanical sum of its parts, and that even the most perfect series of special doctrines, special concepts and special studies must, by their very nature, fall short of elucidating those fundamental issues which should be the main preoccupation of the military thinker. Military thought has tended to divide itself between two fatal extremes-the desperate clinging to an inadequately clarified past, and the equally desperate attempt to break with every tradition and "start again from scratch".

6. Any effort to struggle out of the impasse and deal with the problem within its full historical-political-strategic context has become subject to attack. Partisan lines are drawn with each "specialist" tending to deprecate the value of the weapons advocated by other specialists and restrict the field of their useful employment. The value of strategic bombing is extolled or questioned according to "party lines". Even the brilliant performance of sea power in World War II is ignored by other "specialists" and its present position spoken of as that of an instrument long past its zenith which must hereafter be confined to a more secondary role. The principle of "divide and rule" is followed and the council of our joint military leadership is

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confused. The ground force itself, which should be the firmest exponent of the balanced approach, is often found subscribing to the partial perspective. Ironically the ground force, in the confusion of conflicting claims, seems to have forgotten that, in a war of unlimited objective, the only ultimately decisive form of warfare comes from the defeat of enemy ground forces and the occupation of his territory. In losing sight of this fundamental truth they also fail to properly evaluate the fact that this requires the coordinated effort of every weapon in our arsenal and that global strategy must continue to rest ultimately upon sea power, which alone is capable of assuring the transportation over the broad oceans of the masses of men and goods which are needed, if such decisive victory must be assured. But even more disturbing is the modern tendency to ignore sea, air power's equally vital role in permitting a nation to undertake and support limited warfare which may in the future, as it has in the past, exert such inexorable pressure as to force our will upon the enemy. For, however a future war is planned, the safety of America depends upon the ability of her sea power to project our armed might across intervening seas and bring it to bear on the enemy.

7. The lip service being paid to the principles of coordination

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and the partnership of effort should not blind us to the actual anarchy of thought existing. This anarchy has formed the basis for a struggle which is sometimes unhappily analagous to the "cold war" of the international front. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the one field where it should be least evident. Sea-air power and land-air power, which demand the closest partnership and coordination, are too often viewed as implacable rivals. Instead of partners they are considered as "especially specialized" in their particular and mutually exclusive fields. Land-air power can and does operate over the seas and not only should this be recognized but it should be welcomed and utilized to the fullest. By the same token it should be equally apparent and gratifying that sea-air power can operate over the land with equal facility and effectiveness. With its floating fields it possesses unique flexibility and enormous range and endurance. When the capabilities of atomic and other new weapons of science are added to these qualities there is created not only a strategic weapon of untold capabilities within its own right, but a brilliant and coequal partner of land-air power which can ably assist and abet the latter. The defenses of the enemy are spread thin by the more varied direction of sea-air power's attack making easier the more inflexible approach of land-air power and, once again

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multiplying not adding to the overall effectiveness of our effort. But the very mention of this capability of sea-air power is immediately viewed by some as an intolerable intrusion into another's field of responsibility and subjected to the strongest attack. The more dogmatic opponents adopt extreme and unreal counter-claims with which, by constant repetition, they seek to acquire the sanction of accepted fact and the approval of the unthinking. "Victory through pure air power" is again advanced and pursued with all of the zeal of a crusader, and a successful crusader to boot. The popular appeal of fighting the disreputable and reprobated reactionary elements is employed as a powerful weapon to stop any real intellectual approach to the problem. Instead the whole approach is completely broken down into a consideration of two such opposite views that they cancel each other out and make any attempt to reconcile them out of the question.

8. Of the two opposite pitfalls we face namely: the desperate clinging to an inadequately clarified past and the equally desperate effort to "scrap our intellectual inventories" and "Start again from scratch", the second is even more dangerous than the first. By its own admission, it is "rootless" in the most literal sense and hence at the mercy of every passing kind of military fancy. It has given rise to a new "air Mythology"

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which is epitomized by the remark of the young Air Force enthusiast who said: "We don't read history. We write it".

9. It was to answer the problems of just another such revolutionary period that Clausewitz and Mahan spoke so eloquently. The rise of sea power and the Napoleonic revolution in land strategy posed questions for the military thinker to solve. Together, these two writers managed to restate the questions in such clear cut terms as to bring them within the grasp of any intellectual reader and leave the answers readily apparent. The greatness and success of their writings lay, in the last analysis, in their intense feeling for the interrelation and interdependence of theory and history - - history checking and illustrating theory, theory directing and integrating history. The result was an all comprehensive, radical, closely knit analysis of the whole of war and strategy. Despite their unrivaled mastery of their intricate subject, they did not speak as specialists for specialists, but crystallized the great events they dealt with in their full historical-political-strategic context.

10. Unfortunately, the classical doctrines of these two writers, which were never fully developed from the fragmentary form left by their authors, are no longer adequate to cope with the

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problems posed by the new revolution in warfare. It is therefore essential for new military historians to rethink and reformulate our doctrines. Military history must be made to recapture its vision of the great central issues and reassert the mutual interrelation and interdependence of theory and history. Only then can dangerous delusions be viewed in their true perspective.

11. We must face the future of war, not in the abstract, but as Clausewitz and Mahan dealt with it. It must be "unravelled historically" layer by layer, step by step, to determine by the most meticulous intellectual analysis exactly where we stand today. The question of whether military history is to be restored to a position to discharge the vital functions it formerly provided, is anything but an academic issue. It is an eminently practical decision, the decision upon which our future hangs. Only from a historical point of view can we apprehend the mass of historical facts in their inner unity, and only this inner unity can preserve us from contradictions. If we are to engage in war again we must view it as it will be, stripped of all partisan coloring. We must neither attempt to take it for something nor make it into something which by the nature of the circumstances it cannot be.

12. It is therefore recommended that a Chair of the ~~H~~ History of War be established at the Naval War College to be filled by the

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most competent historian obtainable. Here, freed from the responsibilities he might otherwise be heir to, he can devote his time and talents to the pursuit of his subject.

Through the ^{ia}medium of occasional seminars and lectures, he can use the practical knowledge of the Staff and Student Body as a foil for the development of his thinking.

13. The establishment of such an activity within the Naval War College would represent a modest outlay when compared with the considerable staff of civilian educators at other schools of the armed forces. It is not without precedent since it is in line with the opportunities once provided Admiral Mahan at the Naval War College. The establishment of similar chairs at the National War College, Air University and other joint and service schools would represent a welcome broadening of the field and it is hoped that the Naval War College again leading the way as it did when founded, may interest these other activities in a similar pursuit of the problem.

14. Only in this way is it believed that we can build our conclusions upon firm foundations. In this instance the traditional approach is the sound and proper approach. Any other carries within itself the seeds of its own eventual decay. We must bring to an end the partisan fighting and climb back to an intellectual plane where the whole of war and strategy can be

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intelligently viewed, analysed, and evaluated.

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