



**JOINT SERVICES  
COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE**

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**COMPONENT STUDIES ESSAY  
TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE RN ABLE TO MEET THE  
JOINT OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES OF THE  
FUTURE.  
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**ADVANCED COMMAND AND  
STAFF COURSE  
NUMBER 10  
OCT 06 – JUL**

Since all armed forces are instruments of state policy and reflect its aspirations and vulnerabilities, all three services contribute jointly towards accomplishment of any campaign. General Eisenhower had echoed the same sentiments in 1946, stating, 'If we ever again should be involved in war, we will fight with all elements, with all services, as one single concentrated effort'.<sup>1</sup> Each service, however, operates in a unique environment and brings with it its distinctive strengths which can shield and strengthen the others weakness. Together, they contribute to the overall national strategic goal from the operational level, the level of war at which campaigns are planned; the level which is faced with the challenges of establishing operational objectives, initiating actions and applying resources to ensure the success of a campaign.<sup>2</sup> Jointery is thus a compulsion of modern warfare and the efforts aimed at integrating all state institutions, in the comprehensive approach stand as its evidence. The wide canvas of future challenges facing the military would continue to entail effective joint utilisation of the services whilst recognising the relative importance of single service roles.<sup>3</sup>

In highlighting, the extent of Royal Navy's(RN) ability to meet the joint operational challenges of the future, this essay will sequentially focus on three interrelated themes; the first being the future of international environment leading to establish the future joint operational challenges, the second being the uniqueness of maritime component and its contributions to those challenges and finally an assessment of the extent to which RN would be able to meet its foreseeable contribution to a future campaign. These three themes may be viewed as an equilateral triangle, with each of its arms providing linkage to the others. It must be highlighted here that it is notoriously difficult to predict the future;<sup>4</sup> therefore this essay will confine its arguments to the next two to three decades only. It will be argued that that the present world order has many factors working against its survival<sup>5</sup> and there exists an increased likelihood of wide scale conflicts in the future with nation states as primary actors. A further case would suggest that whilst the RN will continue to contribute significantly to joint operations, there are inherent singularities of the maritime environment which will dictate it to operate independently in order to dominate the seas. The third theme would offer that the intellectual base and technological impetus to its future programme are a cause of cheer but would have to be augmented by increasing the resources pledged to the Navy to enable the service to meet its challenges and perform its core task of sea control for Britain to protect its interests and maintain the influence it presently enjoys both within any alliance and singularly on the globe.

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<sup>1</sup> Griffin, S, *Joint Operations: A short History*, (Training Specialist Services, HQ, 2005), p.7.

<sup>2</sup> JWP 01, *British Defence Doctrine*, p. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Griffin, S, *op. cit.*, p.9.

<sup>4</sup> JDP 01, *Joint Operations*, p.1-1.

<sup>5</sup> Mahubani, K, 'The Impeding Demise of the Postwar System', *Survival*, Vol. 47, No.4, Winter 2005-06, p.7.

## **Future International Environment**

Increasing number of debates today, offering differential opinions, focus on climate change, emerging technologies, resource depletion, evolving demographics and globalisation in an effort to predict the future of international environment and its impact on warfare. Though there is merit in each, some factors are more important than the others. It is unlikely that a rise of few degrees of global temperature or increase in few centimetres of sea level will have a significant effect on the future of warfare. Also there is little of importance that the military or even the entire global community working together as one can do about it.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, technological innovation in the future led by the commercial sector would continue its exponential growth and owing to the industry increasingly transcending national boundaries, witness global proliferation. Though the military would have to pledge additional budgets to adapt to these changes to maintain its edge, it is unlikely that nano-technology, cyber warfare, space mounted systems or such other emerging technologies would affect the future of the world order or that of warfare except at the tactical levels. It must be reiterated, however, that this argument is not a dismissal of innovative technology but an acknowledgement that the military would have to integrate it in its realms as it emerges and its viability is ascertained. This would be necessary to retain tactical superiority whilst allowing for leaner manning. The other factors of resources, demographics and globalisation however possess significant potential for debate on their impact on the future of warfare and merit more detailed attention.

Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, much has been said and written about the new 'globalised' world order, implying an end to the competitive military security paradigm and emergence of geo-economics at the global centre stage. The pictures of merchantmen carrying multinational cargoes, employing multinational crews and flying flags of convenience representing a face of this new world in the present century have become commonplace. In this context, liberalists argue that this new found interdependence of states has made the world a safer place. They profess that inter state wars are a phenomenon of the past. Realists on the other hand argue that nation states continue to remain the primary actors on global stage and that national interest stands tall in any international exchange. They argue that nation states seek to maximize the balance of power. The armed forces being symbolic of a nation states power, the continuing growth in global military expenditure, powered by the

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<sup>6</sup> Gray, C, 'Future Warfare: Or, the Triumph of History', *RUSI*, October 2005, Vol.150, Iss. 5, p.16.

leading states<sup>7</sup> of the present world order, tilts the balance of arguments heavily on to the realist perspective of the world.

According to the database compiled by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, there have been 368 major armed conflicts<sup>8</sup> in various regions of the world from 1990 to 2003<sup>9</sup>. Indeed the world has not embodied the liberalist notions of 'perpetual peace'. It can also be argued that globalisation, the integration of the world market spaces allowing for free movement of trade, capital and labour is not a new phenomenon. Evidence in history indicates that all ancient empires such as the Greco Roman, the Abbasid, Empires of the Arabs, the Mongols, the many Indian Empires and the Chinese, all linked and created common economic spaces within their spheres of dominion and that the rise of the British Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, riding on the 'steam engine' created the first truly global economy.<sup>10</sup> This linkage of markets did not in history, prevent wide scale conflicts to occur. The present day globalisation, which has perhaps only evolved in time and space, has therefore not diminished the effects of national sovereignty or national power. In its present form, however, in a unipolar world order, it has significantly raised the costs for belligerents aiming to use force and thus reduced the chances of inter state conflict in the immediate future; say a decade. Globalisation, however, is in no way a guarantee against conflict of interests of the Westphalian 'nation states', implying an impending balance of power struggle in the future for which military has to prepare.

Evidence of the argument rests in the fact that the present world order is fast changing. There is an increased likelihood of emergence of new power centres which pose a challenge to transform the present unipolar geo political landscape. Riding the wheels of globalisation, the emerging powers of Asia led by China and India are witnessing sustained economic and military growth.<sup>11</sup> Barring an abrupt reversal of this process, they hold the potential to match or even surpass USA economically in the foreseeable future. With their imminent rise, are linked their growing needs and therefore their global interests. China's emergence for instance has caused the world economy to become more oil intensive and its energy needs have become the drivers of its foreign policy.<sup>12</sup> An increasing share of

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<sup>7</sup> World military expenditure in 2005 represented a real terms increase of 34 per cent over the 10-year period 1996-2005, <http://www.sipri.org>.

<sup>8</sup> The Uppsala Conflict Data Programme defines a 'major armed conflict' as use of armed force between the military forces of two or more governments, or of one government and at least one organized armed group, resulting in the battle-related deaths of at least 1000 people in a year.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.sipri.org>.

<sup>10</sup> Lal, D, *In Praise of Empires, Globalisation and order*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.xx.

<sup>11</sup> By 2025, a forecast tripling the Chinese GDP will make China the second global economy and India, the third: Quoted in 'An Initial long term vision for European Defence Capability and Capacity Needs', <http://www.publications.parliament.uk>.

<sup>12</sup> Cornelius, P and Story, J, 'China and Global Energy Markets', *Orbis*, Vol.51, No.1, Winter 2007, p.6.

its energy imports now come from African States, some of which hold dubious human rights records. The insatiable thirst for imported resources, conflicts with the theory of peaceful rise of China. It also provides for a potential clash of interests with the UK, which has wide scale commercial and humanitarian interests in Africa. Similarly the Taiwan issue presents another example of a potential hot spot. The Chinese defence white paper of 2004 threatens to crush 'resolutely and thoroughly' any move towards independence by Taiwan.<sup>13</sup> Even though this issue is not in UK's sphere of influence, it is a major cause for concern for the United States, a close ally, and may warrant support from UK militarily. There are but other drivers of potential wide scale conflicts, such as the more apparent issues of possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) by Iran and North Korea or the non apparent ones such as the potential emergence of a Sino Russian Bloc to contest the American World Order,<sup>14</sup> which could transform the future security paradigm by bringing to fore national interests of actors, overshadowing globalisation in a multipolar world.

Linked to Globalisation is the core issue of resource depletion which will dominate the future security environment. The desire of states to improve national economic vitality against stress of evolving demographics is bound to overbear on any peaceful world order. Although forecasts of fossil fuel availability vary from 25 to 100 years, the fact remains that paucity of oil in the future with no viable alternatives in sight, has in it the potential to flare a contest between states. Progressive diminution of water, arable land, minerals and fish could also provide a basis for insecurity, instability and a wide conflict between states in the future. As professed by Gray, the pressure on resources is being challenged beyond tolerance and would drive the political context of future wars.<sup>15</sup>

Before attempting to sum up the shape of the future, there is one final aspect which merits attention, that of demographics. By 2025, the average European will be 45 years old as contrast to Africa's 22, China's 40<sup>16</sup> and India's 30 years. Also because of the continuing population increase across Asia and Africa, the Europeans would comprise a mere 6% of the world's population. In view of these statistics, two important implications need to be highlighted. The first being that the armed forces recruiting pool (16-30 age group) will fall by 15% by 2025<sup>17</sup> across Europe, the consequences of which are discussed subsequently. The second is that the rising numbers in the third world countries pose an increasing likelihood of the human disaster across Africa or Asia leading to wide scale conflicts.

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<sup>13</sup> China, 'Coming over the horizon', *The Economist*, January 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> 2007, p.46.

<sup>14</sup> Gray, C, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Eberstadt, N, 'Demographic Clouds on China's Horizon', *The American Enterprise*, July-August 1998, Vol. 9. No.4, p54.

<sup>17</sup> 'An Initial Long Term Vision for European Defence Capability and Capacity Needs', <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/.p.6>.

Thucydides claimed that 'fear, honour and interest'<sup>18</sup> are enduring motives that drive collective belligerent behaviour. This sets the context that though the recent past has primarily witnessed only conflicts on a limited scale, with the growth of balancing powers to the United States and increasing aspiration for access to depleting resources, interests of states are bound to clash, giving rise to mistrust and fear. This would lead to wider conflicts in the future and that the nature of warfare for which British military would have to prepare would not be limited to its recent experiences in Sierra Leone, Iraq or Afghanistan. Basing his arguments on evidence in history, Gray has termed the present as a 'golden age' due to absence of large scale attrition conflicts and forecast the coming of 'Another Bloody Century'.<sup>19</sup> The military must therefore brace itself for wide scale of challenges in the future stemming from benign, progressing through limited campaigns which might endure for a few years and peaking at war in the future. Thus though the Strategic effects quoted in the Joint military Doctrine such as 'Prevent', 'Isolate' and 'Stabilize' might dominate in the immediate future, it is the 'Disrupt', 'Defeat' and 'Destroy'<sup>20</sup> that would need to be continually catered for. These then represent the future joint operational objectives; the challenges to be resourced for at the operational level.

Thinking of locations at which operational actions might be initiated, it is pertinent by the argument above that the exact location of future theatres of operation is difficult to determine. It is however safe to predict that such areas are likely to present themselves far from the British homeland in regions of economic vulnerability and demographic stress. The RN must therefore be able to operate in global frontiers. Also, given the close military alliances of Britain with USA and Europe, it is most likely that RN forces would continue to fight alongside its allies if their interests were threatened and be supported by them if it were to be challenged and therefore must continue to possess sufficient capability to influence coalition decisions in support of their interests. It is in this light of the future environment that maritime contribution to joint challenges be furthered.

### **Contribution of the Maritime Component**

Having highlighted the joint challenges that might present, it is important to focus on the role and contribution of the RN to the same. In doing so, it is perhaps best to start at the uniqueness of the maritime environment which can barely be overemphasised. The seas cover 70% of the earth's surface, over two thirds of the world's population lives within 100 miles of it and it accounts for

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<sup>18</sup> Gray, C, op. cit., p.9.

<sup>19</sup> Gray, C, *Another Bloody Century*, (London: Phoenix, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> JDP 01, p.1-8.

substantial proportion of world's economic and political activity.<sup>21</sup> As a medium it is inherently international, unregulated at large and a vast majority of it is un-owned. It provides for lifelines of the world, with ships accounting for 99.5% of trans oceanic trade. Technology, globalisation and dire need for depleting resources would continue to drive further the world's dependence on the sea and in fact would make these international lifelines more fragile as fewer cargo ships carry ever more goods.<sup>22</sup> Britain being an island nation, little needs to be stressed on the paramount importance of security for this most vital organ. Given the contests between interest of states that are likely to ensue in the future, in theatres of human deprivation or proximity of resource reservoirs, all maritime choke points will remain highly unstable and would require continued dependence on the deployment of maritime power.<sup>23</sup> The adaptation of a correct maritime strategy for the RN to protect British interests of the future therefore needs little emphasis.

RN's contribution to warfare as also of all navies worldwide has been influenced by two slightly different schools of maritime strategists through history, those of Corbett and Mahan. To quote Sir Julian Corbett;

Since men live upon land and not at sea, great issues between nations at war have been decided – except in the rarest cases – either by what your army can do against your enemy's territory and national life or else by fear of what the fleet makes it possible for your army to do.<sup>24</sup>

In the context of recent limited scale expeditionary operations, Sir Corbett's views on maritime strategy, focussing largely on the littorals have become increasingly easy to justify. Navies are being seen largely as supporting land expeditions, bringing to the menu starters and deserts such as insertion, de-induction, precision targeting using land attack missiles, providing supporting fire with long range guns, coastal protection and logistics support. In Tony Blair's terminology '(These Days) It (Navy) does different things'.<sup>25</sup> This concept is not limited to the UK alone. Even the American Navy has in an effort to justify its relevance post cold war adopted doctrines such as 'from the sea' and Forward from the sea'<sup>26</sup> emphasizing the littoral context of the Navies in support of joint operations. The Mahanian Principles of dominance of ocean commons, decisive naval battles and the ensuing

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<sup>21</sup> BR 1806, *British Maritime Doctrine*, (2004), p. 18

<sup>22</sup> Falk, K, L, *Why Nations Put to Sea*, (London: Garland Publishing Inc, 2000), p.5.

<sup>23</sup> The DCDC Global Strategic Trends Programme 2007-2036, p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> Till, G, *Seapower, A Guide for the Twenty First Century*, (London: Frank Cass, 2006), p.48.

<sup>25</sup> Tony Blair, <http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page10735.asp>.

<sup>26</sup> Rhodes, E, '...From the Sea and Back again', *Naval War College, Newport Papers*, No. 24, (Newport: Naval War College Press, 2005), p.139

command of the sea (called 'sea control' in its present avatar), have been dismissed at large within sixteen years since they enjoyed pride of place and formed the very basis of all NATO Navies. The reasons are obvious; the strategy of naval supremacy by offensive action on the open ocean<sup>27</sup> has been increasingly difficult to justify to the body politic which has been sold to the fables of liberalists. Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and the two wars on Iraq have only reinforced the philosophy.

To quote Admiral Michael Owens, who said in context of Desert Storm;

The fleet was never forced to fight the open ocean battles the Navy had been preparing for during the preceding twenty years. Instead, the deadly skirmishing of littoral warfare dominated...For the Navy, more than any other service, Desert Storm [coinciding with the end of cold war] was the midwife of change.<sup>28</sup>

The argument above should not be viewed as favouring either philosophy. Both Scholars' have in their writings a wealth far beyond the two broad themes presented here. Since strategy is the birthplace of any Navy, however, the contest here is to determine the predominant theme for the RN for the future; the choice between brown and blue waters.

A littoral maritime strategy is perceived to enable greater jointery for the RN and brings with it advantages to the limited scale campaigns envisioned for the near future. In such a case RN plays the supporting role; the means to determine ends. The independent decisive roles of dominance of the seas are pushed to the background. Acceptance of the Mahan theory on the other hand suggests that little can be achieved in terms of bringing effect on land by the RN without achieving sea control (in all three dimensions). Such a vision stresses independent operations by the Navy to achieve that control before moving to contribute to the littoral fold. There is but this slight dilemma. In presence of formidable naval challengers, control of the seas is the enduring theme from which all other effects follow. In their absence however, which has been the recent experience, this lesson is easily forgotten and sea control albeit some minor asymmetric threat is taken as a given. This represents a grave danger for the future and must be taken note of. Also a predominantly littoral maritime strategy runs the additional risk of being challenged by a continental one. It makes believe the Army and the Air Force that they can in large measure achieve on land what the navy can from sea. Consequently, the

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<sup>27</sup> Till, G, op. cit., p.43.

<sup>28</sup> Rhodes, E, op. cit., p. 142.

utility of the Navy is questioned and it is often forgotten that for an island nation, whose sustenance depends on the seas, naval power provides the first line of defence.

As highlighted earlier, the future 'globalised' trading order would be strife with national interests and the ensuing influence and competition. Therein lays more evidence for 'sea control' as the principal theme for the future of RN. The potential challengers too are pressing down the same lane. The influence of Mahan on China, which is increasingly reliant on sea borne commerce, resonates powerfully. Quoted often and interpreted in his offensive stance, a recent interpretation in the Journal of the PLA Academy of Military Science noted that, 'One can only guarantee smooth sea traffic and eventually gain sea domination by annihilating the enemy' in large scale fleet engagements.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, the Chinese Navy force structures, influenced by such thought, have broken away from the shackles of coastal defence and by 2010 would be operating nearly 50 modern to near modern submarines, including three to six second generation nuclear powered ones.<sup>30</sup> The destroyers and frigate acquisition programs supported by replenishment vessels too are on the fast track and Chinese desire to build and operate aircraft carriers is an open secret. Indian Navy is also expanding its sea control instruments and would induct its second aircraft carrier soon in addition to the large 6000 ton destroyers which are being constructed indigenously. Littoral Manoeuvre capability in these navies, measured in terms of amphibious craft is witnessing a far slower growth rate than the power projection forces. Blue water capability, supported by replenishment vessels to increase range of operations, seems to be the clear message. The aspiration for sea control does not undermine but takes precedence over littoral ops in support of joint operations, especially when there are clear choices to make in terms of resources. As the future unfolds, Mahanian notions of shaping the battlefield at sea would stem to the fore in urgency and sea as 'medium of dominion'<sup>31</sup> would return to the centre stage. Navies can thus be expected to have much the same set of operational preoccupations as their predecessors.<sup>32</sup> Sixteen years might be too soon to forget history.

It is thus the main course; the naval war fighting that the RN of the future would have to prepare for whilst catering to the broad range of deliverables to the Joint table that would continue to endure. It is this vision of war in more traditional terms, which would require the navy to exercise control to guard

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<sup>29</sup> Holmes, J,R and Yoshihara, T, 'The influence of Mahan on China's Maritime Strategy', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol 24, No. 1, 2005, p.26.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www8.janes.com>, Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – China and North East Asia.

<sup>31</sup> Till, G, op. cit., p.355.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*, p.356.

friendly merchantmen marshalling resources while sinking or capturing those of the enemy<sup>33</sup> that casts a shadow over a predominantly littoral strategy for the RN and exposes the inherent limitations of jointery for naval warfare.

There are but other singularities of the naval domain, the chief amongst those being flexibility and self sustainability of naval forces. Owing to the strategic nature of sea power<sup>34</sup>, naval forces have and will continue to be the handmaidens of Britain's foreign policy. Reconfiguring at will, RN ships demonstrate political will by friendly port calls or displays of power. Given the politically controlled nature of land boundaries, limitations of moving heavy Army and the need for forward operating bases for the Air Force, the Navy, provides the first choice for the government to display the initial posture and to deliver the first effect. It is the un-owned nature of seas which permits and dictates the RN to operate independently of the other two services, displaying Britain's desired strategic posture. Also, not to be forgotten, the RN brings to the nation the only strategic nuclear deterrent making it a one of and thus unique in its employment.

Evaluating the enduring role of strategic influence that the RN would continue to perform, it is unlikely that desired effects could be achieved with amphibious craft rather than an aircraft carrier or a destroyer. Force structures built upon the enduring theme of sea control would thus yield favourable results on account of most RN tasks for the future. RN would then be able to contribute to the joint operational challenges, its core role of securing the seas, which would enable it to support land forces. Also, as suggested by Rhodes, 'control of the oceans implies control not simply of the world economy, but, through, the capability to support coalitions and alliances of global balance of power'.<sup>35</sup> It shall therefore be the force projection high technology capabilities that would drive RN to fore in coalitions.

### **RN Preparedness**

Having established that the future challenges of the RN cover a wide canvas, let us examine the extent to which RN, which is and should remain 'A World Class Navy, Ready to Fight and Win'<sup>36</sup> gearing up its resources, both material and non material to meet these challenges.

... our Navy and Royal Marines must be agile, versatile and highly competent, built around a balanced fleet of sufficient size, numbers and capability to meet all our tasks, while exerting reach,

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<sup>33</sup> Falk, K, L, *op. cit.*, p.13.

<sup>34</sup> Gray, C, S, *The Navy In The Post Cold War World*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p.9.

<sup>35</sup> Rhodes, E, *op. cit.*, p. 147

<sup>36</sup> Naval Strategic Plan 2006, p.2.

presence and influence where ever needed. We must be able to deliver effective Maritime force projection, Maritime Security and Maritime Manoeuvre, drawing on the most modern technology but also on well led, high quality, adaptable people<sup>37</sup>.

[Rear Admiral Alan Massey]

Surely, that future vision encapsulates the entirety to which RN must be prepared to meet the challenges identified. The Future Maritime Operational Concept stresses the need for a Versatile Maritime Force (VMF) and the Naval Strategic Plan has carried that forward into eight lines of development, which are, Training, Equipment, Personnel, Information, Concepts and Doctrine, Organisation, Infrastructure and Logistics.

The abundance of the very first, therefore, which equips RN to prepare for the future challenges; intellectual thought to question the future in terms of doctrine and concepts, is a sure reflection that RN is most likely to meet its future challenges. The acknowledgement of versatility and a balanced fleet catering to 'future characterised by a bewildering number of variables' and the possibility of inter state warfare as a result of decline in confidence in globalised markets by DCDC is an indication that military thinkers are on the right path. The wide understanding of the long term nature of defence planning is also in itself a source of strength for the future of RN.

Translating conceptual correctness into the physical component, the recent boost to Britain's amphibious capabilities has fostered the littoral manoeuvre capabilities for the future. The commitment to state of the art Type 45 destroyer and the next generation CVF programmes exhibits the promise to stay in tune with technology and bridge the naval air defence capability gap which exists post withdrawal from service of Sea Harrier FA2. The vote in favour of retention and upgradation of the strategic deterrent and new attack submarines too merits accolades for Britain's strategic thinkers. These capabilities are sure to enable global reach, expeditionary posture and power projection required to dominate the seas and act in support of land expeditions. They would also provide high end capability in coalitions and yield the vital influence for Britain's national interests whilst serving the allies. The fact that all these major projects are rooted largely in indigenous designs and supported by British ship building industry adds further optimism to the extent that RN is prepared to meet the challenges for the future.

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<sup>37</sup> Naval Strategic Plan 2006, p.2.

All however is not well with the extent to which RN is prepared. The conceptual foresight of military planners seems to be contradicted in the top echelons of political leadership. Blair's recent observation stating that, the era dominated by anti submarine patrols requiring large numbers of frigates is over and that today's versatile Navy needs to support expeditionary forces and help in disaster relief, counter terrorism and evacuation of UK citizens,<sup>38</sup> might be too premature especially in view of the submarine acquisition programme of potential challengers mentioned earlier. Such narrow vision for the future also risks sending the RN down the path of a predominant littoral strategy warned against.

More dismal evidence is provided by the trend of defence expenditure which has declined steeply since the Cold War. Even though it is claimed by the current government that the defence budget has witnessed a 1.7% growth in real terms, the highest sustained growth in 22 years since 2004<sup>39</sup>, the increment pales in comparison with the increase of 6.1% on NHS, 5.1% on transport, 4.7% on education and 2.3% on social security per year during the labour term.<sup>40</sup> Also apprehensions abound on the perceived rise of 1.7% real terms rise view comparative defence inflation which is pegged at 7-9% implying an actual reduction of 3-6% in the defence budget each year. Even if government claims were accepted, the shifting priorities towards land forces, drawn on the basis of ongoing endeavours at the expense of the Navy are a sure cause of concern for RN of the future. Whilst the percentage spending of defence expenditure on the Navy has increased across nations from 1997 to 2001, that in the United Kingdom has reduced as is evident from the table below.<sup>41</sup>

Country	% of Def Expenditure(1997)	% of Def Expenditure(2001)
USA	28.8	29.0
Canada	29.9	30.8
UK	<b>22.1</b>	<b>20.9</b>
France	15.7	17.3
Russia	15.0	17.5
China	9.0	10.8
India	8.8	13.3

This trend has then clearly continued beyond 2001 and translated on to the cuts in the RN frontline. The mothballing of four type 42 destroyers in July 2004 left the RN with a fleet smaller than the

<sup>38</sup> Tony Blair, op. cit.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> 'Immorality of forcing the military', *The Business*, 24 Jan 2007.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www2.janes.com>

French<sup>42</sup> and it was estimated that as a result of those cuts, the Navy will lose 3000 personnel.<sup>43</sup> On 08 Jan 2007, Telegraph speculated that the Navy would 'retire a further six frigates and destroyers to bring budgets into line' and as a consequence, 'the fleet will lose almost half its warships with 19 out of 44 laid up in port'.<sup>44</sup> The reduction in ordered numbers of Type 45 sums up the trend being witnessed by the RN.

This brunt being borne by RN is indicative of the poor prioritisation of the political fabric as a lack of understanding of the importance of sea power's contribution to the future operational challenges. The steady decline in naval inventory, especially the frontline ships and attack submarines will cause the resources to be overstretched, especially when faced with performing the core naval task of exerting control over ocean spaces against well equipped navies. Simply put, no matter how flexible a ship might be in terms of the roles that it can perform due to embedded technology, greater numbers permit the naval forces to be at more number of places and hence permit expeditionary posture by reducing average transit times. More ships also account for more nodes and therefore greater networked power.<sup>45</sup> The declining numbers of ships will impact the dominion of global commons, a role which cannot be substituted for by any other service. Also, when conflicts become imminent, it might be too late to construct a fleet of desired numbers.

The constant cuts might also result in a steady decline of in-nation capabilities required for building complex warships. The present order of ships and submarines is unlikely to sustain the industry for the future. In a statement to the house on 15 Dec 2005, the secretary of state for defence commented in reference to the ship building program that 'in about ten years it would not be affordable to sustain excess industrial capacity in the long term'.<sup>46</sup> Key skills thus run a risk of being lost and might compromise the operational effectiveness of RN. Another offshoot of the constant reductions has been on the personnel front.

Demographic trends indicate that RN for the future may find progressively difficult to attract suitable or sufficient recruits.<sup>47</sup> Couple to that the impact on morale of the officers and sailors whose jobs and promotions are sure to be impacted upon as a result of cuts facing the RN.<sup>48</sup> It is these factors that

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<sup>42</sup> The Daily Telegraph, 06 Jan 2004, p.23.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www8.Janes.com>, Janes Sentinel Security assessment – Western Europe, 22 Sep 06.

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.Telegraph.co.uk>, 08 Jan 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Barnett, R, W, 'Naval Power for a New American Century', *Newport Papers*, No. 24, op. cit., p.206.

<sup>46</sup> 'How the Defence Industry Needs to Change', <http://www.publications.parliament.uk>.

<sup>47</sup> DCDC op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.Telegraph.co.uk>, 08 Jan 2007.

cast apprehensions on the extent to which the RN will be able to face the future challenges. Continual recruitment in sufficient numbers, motivated by better pay and promotion potential across all RN and auxiliary branches, offset only by inducted technology is the only way ahead.

Trends must be recognised and inevitability of the future appreciated. Coalition ship building may be explored more deeply. The lower scale of peacemaking and enduring tasks such as sustenance of peacekeepers in operation zones close to the littorals can, if pushed to the wall, be offloaded to trade. The incremental use of technology in unmanned systems, aerial, surface and sub surface, which reduce body count, can achieve in large measure the maritime security tasks for the future. But the network centric war fighting capability infused with high technology must be preserved in sufficient numbers of both personnel and units for the RN to be a credible force and Britain to remain a war fighting nation of sufficient influence in any coalition of choice.

To conclude, unlikely as it may seem, for a world scarce of resources bulging under demographic stress, the fairy tales being woven by liberalists would fall apart in the future and wide scale conflicts are likely to ensue as they have throughout history. David Ochmanek, has echoed similar thoughts and believes that use of force by states, which has been endemic in the international system, will remain so well into the next century.<sup>49</sup> The operational challenges for the RN, therefore, would dominate a wide spectrum as in the past. The Navy would continue to provide for strategic influence, and support expeditionary land operations. The main focus however would be the application of total force in the maritime domain in contests far from home shores.

Whilst there is a clear recognition of this fact amongst naval thinkers and the intellectual component of the Navy is fully capable of meeting its future challenges, the material cuts facing the RN represent the failings of the political fabric's understanding of the importance of the RN for this island nation, thus undermining its future ability. Whilst the present force levels are just adequate, any further reduction would make Britain increasingly reliant on its coalition partners to provide for its war fighting resulting in having to make substantial concessions, thus jeopardising its own interests. An immediate reversal to the declining naval budgets is therefore a must for RN to maintain adequate numbers of highly capable sea control instruments.

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<sup>49</sup> Shultz Jr, R, H and Pfaltzgraff Jr, R, L, *The Role of Naval Forces in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Operations*, (Washington D C: Brassey's, 2000), p. 4.

Finally, the maritime nation of Britain must make its choice. As clarified by Till, effective jointery is a tremendous advantage only if it is based on a clear recognition of the differences and similarities between the services.<sup>50</sup> The island of Britain stands at the tipping point. If it were to adopt a predominantly continental strategy or even a littoral maritime strategy in favour of a strategy dictating dominion of seas due to short sightedness of the body politic whose aspirations and vulnerabilities it represents, it runs the risk of imposing huge costs on the Royal Naval institution's ability to meet its future challenges. It must therefore make the right choices to retain its reach and influence as a nation.

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<sup>50</sup> Till, G, op. cit., p.31.

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