

Editorial Note on Naval Strategy

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EDITORIAL

The Navy lacks a method for generating vigorous debate and thought about the future geostrategic environment on which to base choices about the shape, makeup, and size of its force Structure. As a result, the Navy has been unable to ensure that strategy is at the heart of programme development. The Navy is currently suffering from a serious strategy deficit. In the Navy, strategy is not an institutional value. The current "Navy Strategic Enterprise" programme was based on the premise that institutional leadership is neither educated nor equipped to think about and operationalize strategy. Rather, the Navy places a premium on operational experience and capable programme management. Peter Haynes' recent assessment of the Navy's senior leadership in the Post-Cold War era backs up this general finding. According to Haynes, the Navy's senior officials have been uniformly chosen for their experience in their operating communities for the last 50 years.

Beyond operational considerations, the Navy lays minimal emphasis on the educational and intellectual growth of its officer corps. While there are numerous opportunities for promising junior officers to further their education, shore tours to complete degrees in strategic studies or the social sciences at institutions such as the Naval Postgraduate School, the Naval War College, and outside civilian universities are not considered career-enhancing. Because officers will not obtain a fitness report (FITREP) and may be forced to detour from ideal career routes, detailers and senior leaders have frequently characterised these educational possibilities as undesirable.

The Navy's institutional reliance on technocratic and bureaucratic abilities in top management is most visibly manifested in the OPNAV staff's intra-bureaucratic power allocation. The N8 is widely acknowledged as the Navy's most bureaucratically powerful element (as evidenced by the data collected for this study). Most top officials in the Navy have served in these organisations on their way up the corporate ladder. While some senior leaders have

spent time in the N3/N5, these visits are usually brief and aimed at familiarising admirals with the N3/operations side of things. Few admirals stay in their positions long enough to make meaningful changes.

In some ways, the Navy's development of an analytically focused leadership group with no strategy background is a reasonable institutional response to the demands placed on it by its civilian masters in the Office of the Secretary of Defence and Patrons in Congress. The Navy, like the other services, is primarily responsible for manning, training, and equipping the force before delivering it to the combatant commands, who will deploy it as instructed by the President/Secretary of Defence. This enormous responsibility necessitates a high level of programmatic, managerial, and operational expertise in a complex company.

Another element contributing to the Navy's strategy deficit is a lack of continuous and unambiguous strategic guidance from civilian masters in the Office of the Secretary of Defence and the Executive Branch, backed up with authoritative budgetary power. To put it another way, the Navy's strategy deficit is a result of the country's strategy deficit. The Navy's struggle to build its organisational strategy is exacerbated by the increasingly dysfunctional structure of strategy formation and development in the national command authority during the last quarter-century.

The Cold War gave civilian leadership across the political spectrum with a set of broadly held assumptions on which to base policy for much of the twentieth century. The military services were given and adopted this unified structure, which they utilised to construct supporting plans, policies, and programmes. Because both parties largely agreed on the necessity to confront Soviet military strength throughout the Cold War, Republican and Democratic administrations adopted a very identical security agenda. The single conceptual centre of gravity for strategy rapidly unravelled with the end of the Cold War, as civilian leadership shifted to significant regional contingencies as scenarios on which to base strategy and policy during the 1990s.

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