

Sea Power as Strategy

By Dr Norman Friedman¹

What I want to talk to you about is a view of national strategy, which has to be something more than simply saying that sea power is very useful. If you're on an island, very obviously you start talking about what effect the sea has on whatever you do. A sea power view starts with the fact that it's very easy to move things by sea, easier than any other way. Let me give you an example. I was at a discussion of fishery protection and there was apparently a recently celebrated case in which a poacher operating off your Southern coast was intercepted, not near your Southern coast, but eventually all the way across the Southern Indian Ocean off South Africa. *'Well you say, that's a pretty remarkable thing'*, but that's an illustration of the fact that in effect at sea distances shrink very dramatically. They don't shrink in the sense that you just snap your fingers and you're five thousand miles away instantaneously, but there's a sense in which things get a whole lot closer. It's an odd sort of sense. I'm not sure how to express it properly, but another way of saying that is that what floats can be remarkably mobile.

From the point of view of defending yourself, that means that anyone else using the sea as a highway can show up anywhere around your island. Talking about protecting a limited area of your coast becomes self-defeating. People find other places that are easier to approach or attack. That seems to mean that the defence has a terrible peripheral problem. By the way, that is not unique to Australia. The United States faced much the same problem. Is coastal defence the right way to protect the country? A few years ago we did a study. The argument was that movement by sea was really quite easy. The conclusion was that it might be a lot less expensive for us to discourage attack by threatening to move our own concentrated force into an enemy's waters, to threaten his coast and present him with the intractable coastal defence problem we faced. That seemed much better than waiting for enemies to come to us. That is

certainly part of a sea power approach to national defence, an approach which takes into account the full defensive (and offensive) effect of seaborne mobility.

Another part of a sea power approach (and I'll give you some historical examples) is always to ask what the point of any particular war actually is. Sea power offers alternatives which land powers generally lack; the sea power decides when and where to attack. Matters are very different from a land power's point of view, because if it borders a country bent on invasion, the war is fought simply to stop the invader from overrunning his victim. France in 1914 is a case in point. If it is not so easy to be overrun, then a government can ask how to get to the desired outcome. It can take a wider view. The wider view may very well be that attacking some particular place will offer valuable leverage. Your troops participated in exactly that kind of war. Look at Gallipoli, and forget for a moment that it was badly carried out and horribly tragic. In a strategic sense, it was an attempt to face the central issue in WWI. From the point of view of the British Empire, including Australia, it was not simply to defend France. Rather, it was to defeat Germany. Once Germany lost it would have to disgorge whatever it seized in Europe, including whatever part of France it got. But simply ejecting the Germans from France would not have defeated them, and they would always have been able to strike again (by the way that is one way to see the outcome of WWI and the ultimate second round of WWII). The British Empire was seaborne. It could not be defeated as long as the Germans could not gain control of the sea. It could, at least in theory, decide when and where to strike at the Germans. Had Gallipoli succeeded, then in theory the British might have knocked the Turks and then the Austrians out of the war. Probably more importantly, they would have strengthened a Russian army, which would have subjected the Germans to a far more desperate two-front war. It was that maritime component that gave the British Empire the

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freedom to entertain such possibilities. That they did not work out in practice was tragic, but it does not change the fact that sea power offered alternatives that land power could never have offered. So part of the sea power view is that force should be applied when and where the payoff is greatest. Sea power in effect magnifies the effect of relatively small but extremely mobile land forces.

This point is illustrated by the way the war was actually fought. The Australian Army proved extremely effective in France. But that was only part of a larger story. The reason the Army could go to France as opposed to standing in the Northern Territories trying to defend this island was it could be projected by sea - and the Germans had no way what so ever of projecting their own army the same way. We often forget that because it's so easy, transport by sea seems almost automatic. It isn't. It was terribly important that the Royal Navy and the other Empire navies, including the RAN, dominated the seas, at least in a positive sense (they could not always keep the Germans from sinking some ships, but they and not the Germans could move masses of men relatively freely).

Sea power is not just about navies. It is about the way all of a country's military power is used. Sea power affects the way a government views a war. The government may well want to limit its participation. The war may turn out badly; going somewhere may turn out to have been something other than a really good idea. I realise that although my crystal ball doesn't work, government's do much better, but you know, occasionally they get it wrong. The fact that the force was moved there by sea and that there is a lot of capacity means it can leave by sea. If the force shows up in ships, projecting air power from moving platforms, then it can leave quietly. If troops are ashore like say, the Marines, then it's a little less quiet, but they can still move away somewhere else when it pays to do so. Otherwise they need permission, both to come and go, and that presents both far more problems and far more loss of prestige on withdrawal. Fear of that loss of prestige can lock a government into disaster.

Sea based forces don't have to have permission to go places. Most of the time your government isn't interested in burning down someone else's country. However, it may be very interested in giving them the idea that

they could get burnt down in future. After all, most of our business isn't the actual violence; it's letting them get that idea. If you have to have permission to be there, they can really throw you out and they don't suffer any unpleasant consequences. The ability to go in by yourself is extremely valuable.

Now in a lot of cases it may be that you do much better with coalition partners. However, the ability to go it alone tends to make coalition partners decide their national interest and go along with you. If they have a veto, then there are always a lot of good reasons to veto whatever you want. You hear a lot about the United States being very unilateral (and here I'm speaking for myself, I'm not a US Government spokesman): we can go burn down Iraq by ourselves, we don't care. Clearly part of that is *'You can't stop us'*. Another part of that is, however, that many governments know they may want to join in but also know that local critics will say: *'Well, bad things will happen if you hurt this poor Saddam, a nice man you know, don't hurt him'*. Our ability to go it alone gives those governments freedom of choice, because they can tell their local critics that nothing they do will stop us; they might as well follow their interests. During the Gulf War I think the Saudi's were extremely nervous about allowing Americans in to protect Saudi Arabia, and you know that the Iraqis tried very hard to make them a lot more nervous. We showed up with three aircraft carriers, which provided the air defence of Saudi Arabia for a while. Once we could do it whether they wanted us to or not, suddenly they realised they rather wanted us to. That made a big difference to us.

Is it always a good thing to be able to do it alone? Well, I must admit that every once in a while a government may try to do something by itself that isn't very clever. I know that many of our critics feel that we're about to do that. What can I tell you? We work for our governments, and while we do we have to assume they know what they're doing.

So the first thing about the sea as a venue for moving is that it's possible to move heavy masses and concentrated weight. Another example: When we were in Kosovo the question came up of whether we could deploy attack helicopters. It may be that the real story is the Army didn't want to use them, so they showed how difficult it was to deploy. But I would point out that the Marines had large

amphibious ships, which were in effect moveable bases, and they could have deployed attack helicopters or any other sort of helicopters essentially instantly. Now whether that's desirable or not is a Government issue, but the ability to go somewhere without preparation seems to me worth the effort. By the way, the other side of that is the talk that you're getting now about the danger of Al Qaeda putting things in containers and God knows how many shipping containers there are. Most of what travels around the world goes by sea and if someone subverts that traffic of course there are problems.

But the important thing is that there isn't a lot of geography at sea, and that makes a big difference. It also means that ships cannot easily be detected in the open ocean and they can't by the way, if you're not stupid. That means that anyone facing a descent from the sea has to deal with a much larger number of different alternatives and that's a virtual reduction in his forces, that's leverage. If you have a numerically small but extremely competent land force, that is terribly valuable. The US Marine Corps is a good case in point. You may have others that you would think of. In any case, seaborne mobility gives such an organisation a lot of advantages, which it doesn't have if it has to land with permission, if it has to deploy in a more conventional manner. Those advantages come with a price. That nice naval package or sea based package is quite finite. The unit can't carry as much with it as a large army. On the other hand if it is a lot more effective than whatever they're up against, that's perfectly enough.

Now, these arguments are not new. If you go back to the beginning of the 20th Century, Mahan, who was a US Navy Captain, was extremely popular because what he said was that navies eliminate distance. Most trade is maritime, so if you can cut maritime trade you starve people. He was a product of the American civil war. The Union Navy in the civil war imposed a very tough blockade on the South. Naval officers of his generation believed the blockade was decisive, therefore in navies they had the ultimate strategic weapon. Much the same as what Curtis Le May would later say about strategic bombers with H bombs. Now it turns out that no, it's not quite as decisive as all that. People faced with embargoes usually find a way to work around them, but when that is done in

conjunction with something else it is terrifying. For example, the South did manage to break through the blockade, but at a horrible cost. The cost shredded their society, which probably had effects on whether they would keep fighting. When they were fighting a hot war on land and they were denied a lot of stuff by sea, that made life a lot rougher. If you look at WWI with the Germans, it is clear that blockade alone could not stop them from operating, but if you look at the way they were say in 1917-18 the combination of the drain of fighting a war and being blockaded was a very interesting one. What does that say about sea power? It says it is very effective, but if you are going for ultimate objectives, by itself it is unlikely to be decisive. If the objectives are not ultimate, the threats you can make from the sea are likely to be very effective ones. The business about being more independent of distance than land power I think is well worth thinking about. Mahan hoped for decisive action. As I say, it did not quite work as he had hoped.

These are the arguments against him. The main argument was that one of the elements of a sea power strategy is the descent of land forces on someone else's coast. That is what I have been saying. I am not pushing your navy at the expense of everything else. I am talking about a way of using national forces. In Mahan's day land armies were growing very rapidly and there were a lot of railroads. There was a fair chance that wherever you descended from the sea an army could build up very fast to face you down. That is certainly a part of the story of Gallipoli. I would add however, that Gallipoli was a much closer run thing than people realise, that despite an unbelievable catalogue of mistakes, which I am sure you blame on the British, most would not guess at that. It very nearly worked. The payoff for working would have been that the Germans would have had a much tougher time in the East. If the French had held out at all, which they probably would have, the effect would have been absolutely devastating. That is the strategic view that I am advancing. Otherwise you say '*well why Gallipoli?*' I mean, it is a strange, remote place. Well, because you get something out of that place.

Well what happens to mass armies? In WWII we learned that we can move enough mechanised materiel by sea that whatever force comes out of the sea can be fairly powerful.

What has happened since is the cost of armies has goes up quite sharply. You find that the cost per man goes way up, therefore the number of people goes down. The number of organised units goes down. The best piece of news of all is that a lot of the people who probably would oppose you (and us also) are not very wealthy. They are unlikely to be able to pay to replace or repair what they have. It used to be that they could get it free from the Russians or the Chinese. The Chinese seem much less interested in giveaways and the Russians have gone out of that business altogether. That suggests that the future of mass armies is not good, that most armies will get smaller if they want to remain mechanised. But if they do not mechanise they will probably be easier to destroy. From the point of view of a mobile high tech organisation, that is excellent news. Also you know that international trade is increasing, that people tend to specialise for economic reasons. That may mean that if access to the sea is broken, it is actually more important now than it would have been in Mahan's time. That may be one of the messages of globalisation. Again from the point of view of imposing national will by the sea, that is interesting.

Now I must tell you that if I had been giving this talk say five years ago, I would have mentioned an American analysis that really there was very little in the world that was more than a couple of hundred miles inland. Therefore, we could live with shorter-range naval aircraft. We could get rid of the tankers that allow us to project inland, because after all when would we ever really care about anything more than 100-150 miles from the sea. Then we discovered that there's a country without a coastline that we were recently involved in and there are two ironies. One, we got it wrong. Two, a lot of what we did in Afghanistan was maritime, which was interesting.

Australia has a relatively small population, which is extremely well educated. You are very good at high technology; those are your strengths. As an outsider I apologise for talking about what you should do, but it would seem to me that you should get very interested in technological leverage, because if you can take a consolidated force and hit someone with it effectively, that's probably the best pressure you can make. If you need numbers, then even if you get a population of 50 million (as

recently proposed, but apparently not terribly popular) that's still not a billion and a half right? Too, if you look at the new forms of commercial surveillance what you find is that photo satellites are really not very good at finding moving objects. They're very good at finding large concentrated objects. A client can certainly ask to look at his border and see if anyone is getting ready to attack. That almost means that large land armies setting up in advance where it takes them weeks or months to bulk up large concentrations are going to be detected - which by the way says that what the coalition army did in the Gulf War will not work. To do that massive flanking attack we had to build up a large force. It would seem to me that your chances of effectiveness get better compared to larger more or less fixed forces. Land forces can't move that fast, because although the vehicles are quite fast they do not carry much with them, so that they have to stop to fuel every so often. They also need lots of spares and maintenance. Even if the vehicles make 50 miles an hour on a road they cannot keep that up for long. Ships are not as fast, 30 knots is not 50 miles an hour and certainly not 500, but because we carry a lot with us at sea, we go a lot further.

A very good British naval historian once said it this way. If you look at a convoy battle in WWII and the distance say from London to Warsaw, which in land terms is an unimaginable distance, the whole thing takes a couple of weeks. To cover the same distance on land you're talking about months or years. But the force is very thin. The number of troops would maybe be a battalion, maybe a couple of squadrons of aircraft. So when you're looking at what happens at sea, you're looking at things that are spread out. Things like reconnaissance and deception tend to count more at sea than they do on land. A phrase I once saw in a novel about land warfare was '*on land, geography is destiny*'. If you are smart and you look at a map you can figure out what will happen. Helicopters make life more interesting, but if mass has to go by road, there are only so many roads. It is not like that offshore. If I am projecting land power from offshore, at least when I start, I can start from an unpredictable place. I can also reduce what has to go ashore by putting more of the firepower if you like, offshore. If it is all unified of course, I can then call on that firepower from offshore. Of course, you have

to buy the right stuff to do that. In addition I may be able to keep more of the logistics base offshore, for longer. That means I land less and I land a greater proportion of teeth. That can make it easier to move around. There are obviously limits to what I can land and obviously if most of the support is from aircraft, or missiles or guns offshore, there will be times when things go wrong so that whoever goes ashore wants some organic backing. Right now for us is a major issue as to how much organic materiel the Marines have to carry ashore.

If you buy yourself a finite Navy, or finite sea based force, it has to do a very wide variety of things. Because you can hang around unliked and you can gather intelligence. Very often your government wants that more than anything else. There is some crisis brewing, you would like to know what is happening and you would prefer people not to figure out that you are finding that out. Even with satellites, which will eliminate your national treasury very rapidly, people know when they are around. You cannot move them around very easily. You can to some extent, but that raises the price. With aircraft, most people who like aeroplanes can buy books showing all the specialised aircraft in the world and they can easily guess exactly what they do. Submarines are different. Most people in this region cannot find submarines to save their lives. So they are a way of gathering things covertly. The covert part includes not effecting an ongoing crisis until you decide to do it. That is valuable because it maximises your government's range of choices.

Once a decision has been made the same navy shows up for coercion. In that cases it is definitely worth while for people to see it. The fact that they cannot throw it out by denying it a base of some kind makes a big difference. That says that larger more survivable surface ships buy a great deal. Since I work for a Navy that really likes big ones you might have guessed that I would say that - but that does not make it any less true. Then there is this. A lot of governments like to impose embargoes as a way of imposing pressure and your Navy has been very prominent in the embargo in the Northern Arabian Sea against Iraq. Well as I said before, embargoes do not often cripple, but they are a way of applying pressure. Flexible ships offer the widest possible choice, which means that the government, which pays

for them, gets the most for its money. I apologise if what I say is obvious.

Then there is strike. I would distinguish strike from a protracted campaign because very often you want to show someone that you can come back and hurt them later if they stay out of line. For example, in 1986 we thought that the Libyans had ordered the bombing of that disco in Berlin, which killed some Americans. We decided to give them a hard time. We went in with a mixture of carrier and land based very long-range air. I think the land base was to force the British to agree that they were in with us (the aircraft flew from British bases). We were very big on making our allies be shown to be part of what we were doing. Again my guess, this is not official. The main point of this to me was not that we achieved enormous destructive effect in Libya, we did not, everyone knew that. Later there was some talk that a couple of Tomahawks would have done the same job. What we did in Libya was we basically waltzed through their air defence system and did not get hurt. We showed we could come back later and do what we like. Well that seems to have impressed them, they did not come back and do a lot more terrorism. We were pretty happy about that.

Then there were protracted ground campaigns and you may be about to see one soon. There I would say the pay off on projecting by sea is that we pick where we go. That means that it is much harder for someone else to mount a serious defence. Number two: if things do not do that well, we can leave. Now, if you were a maritime power that thinks like that and you have more land oriented coalition partners, they generally do not appreciate this point of view at all. Their objective is to make sure that you stay with them and preferably that a lot of you stay with them more or less permanently. Your government's objective is to gain some kind of end - which is not to be nice to whoever you're partnered with. Before WWI there was a discussion in Britain of whether they would basically go for maritime or a coalition land oriented view. It seemed to me reading the discussion at the time, that the proponents of total coordination with the French on land were saying '*well this naval stuff which is a sea power view, is sort of cold blooded, even reptilian*'. Well they lost a lot of people including a lot of your people showing how warm hearted they were towards their coalition

partner. The last I looked you signed up to be Australians rather than citizens of some wider assembly of countries like, say, ASEAN. Alliances are not the same as nationhood. Coalitions are often a very nice thing to have, but at some point your national interests may differ. The ability to choose I think is worth a lot. These are questions that come up. If you buy a sea power range of strategy, it costs. So how much leverage do you get out of sea power alone?

The answer is a lot, but not everything. This one is important. It matters what your objectives are. If you are a satisfied country (you qualify, we qualify) there is not much territory that you really want all that badly. For example, we went in and overran Afghanistan. To Afghans presumably Afghanistan is a very valuable place. I do not think that very many Americans would regard it as a terrific place to run. They may claim it is a strategic place between central Asia and Pakistan, but from my point of view we would prefer not to be in a strategic place at all, it is a miserable place, you know that. Our interest was in destroying a safe rear area for Al Qaeda. That is a transitory interest. You go in and do something very unpleasant and then you find something else to do. Because we have forces that are very easy to redeploy, that is possible. Once you land somewhere and you garrison it, it suddenly becomes terribly important. That is a very distorting thing. You have had a little experience of that and we have had a whole lot more. How much did you really care about the merits of Vietnam? Well it was part of a larger war. How important was Vietnam itself? Once we'd invested enough bodies, we couldn't figure that one out. If you look at different places that people describe as strategic, usually they are strategic as part of some bigger war. When the bigger war goes away, our national strategy is going to change, or at least the details will change. The less that you are forced to buy permanent presence in places the happier you're going to be. So you want the benefits of being there without the bad part about having to be there permanently.

If I get a lot out of the fact that my enemies cannot figure out where I am, then how long does that last? All I can tell you is that I spent a lot of time studying how we tracked the Soviet Fleet. It's hard to track moving ships at sea especially if they do not cooperate. The methods we used, passive satellites, some radar

satellites, do not really correspond to commercial satellite applications. That says to me, that probably the future of the sea sanctuary is better than the future of a lot of others. When you buy ships, and now I will get to specific naval things, there is a tendency to specify exactly what you are supposed to do. The trouble is they last a long time and your crystal ball tends not to be all that hot. So actually being a bit bigger pays off. The reason a bit bigger does not really cost that much is that what supports a ship at sea is buoyancy, you do not have to pay a lot just to sit there. If you buy yourself a much bigger aeroplane you have to spend a lot more on propulsion. If you buy yourself ten million more tanks, you have bought yourself ten million tanks. So for me as an American it has to be easier to modify, and by the way, also a lot harder to sink if you design it right. All of these things do not automatically work, if you are a dummy you do it wrong and bad things happen to you, you have been in this business long enough to know that.

There is a lot of interest in netting and remote sensing. Navies probably do more of that right now than other services, because ambiguity and reconnaissance play a larger role in naval warfare, because they are more spread out. One thing you will see I think, is that if the Army is going more towards what we call the digitised battlefield, where netting allows a small army unit to attack beyond its own horizon, you will see them split into smaller units and their thinking will be more like what we associate with naval thinking. The great problem is they will have to solve logistics problems, which do not occur at sea. By the way, also if you get a lot more lethality out of a numerically small but very sophisticated army unit, that becomes a very natural thing to project by sea and if it's very lethal, it is really a nasty thing to project. You know there is a lot of interest in stealth. This is not the right talk for it, but I think stealth probably will not last that long, that is because computers get better all the time. That says '*do not worry so much about stealth, be survivable*'. The weapons do not get much better. It is not that easy to sink something if you make it a bit bigger, right.

Let us look at some historical cases. The point I want to make is that there are really different ways of looking at wars. Look at the two World Wars. I was a defence analyst for

years during the Cold War. You know that we always talked about the central front. Now the central front was called central because it was the middle of the West German border. But obviously many people thought the central front was central to what would happen. So the question always was 'What if the Russian Army was any good?' I question now whether it was. If they were good, they would overrun all of Germany and France and they get to the Channel. Well would that win WWII? Our answer in the Maritime Strategy was no. WWII would really be about whether Russians would dominate the world. We would not like it if they reached the Channel. I mean, we would prefer the Europeans still to be intact. On the other hand we also had this sneaky feeling that some of them might decide to avoid having their countries completely trashed by surrendering. Our answer was 'Guess what? The war does not end when you give up, so you may as well fight'. This was not always popular for some reason. I cannot imagine why, but that is really a difference in outlook.

The other thing was this. If you look at the central front in the Cold War and you imagine a war actually occurring, it becomes a horrible meat grinder like the Western front in WWI. So if you are an analyst and you think that you are earning your pay, the question that comes up is 'was there some way to fight WWI in which a whole generation of Westerners did not get killed?' Well, I was involved in developing the US Maritime Strategy and in effect we were saying 'yes there is', because if you look at the seaward flanks of any advance into Europe, those flanks become terribly interesting. If you present a real threat to those flanks, then whoever is advancing has to take account of it and probably has to pull back until he secures it. That means that if you are willing to take real risks at sea, because flanking attacks are going to be expensive and tricky, then there is a way of slowing down a Soviet advance. Now why would you care about that? Because a lot of NATO strength was through mobilisation - there were a lot of reservists. They could not maintain standing forces the size of the Russians, but if you could make sure that any war in central Europe was in slow motion, there was a fair chance that the odds would even up. Another example of the Maritime Strategy was in the Far East. We got very friendly with the Chinese. The Russians

had a feeling that one day the Chinese would like to have Siberia back. The Chinese have maps that show that the Tsarists stole Siberia and that it was very unfair - and it was only a mere three or four hundred years ago (as you know that is moments) and the Russians would never quite forget that possibility. So that would tie down fairly large Russian forces. They really could not redeploy them because of poor communications, but we were interested also in tying down mobile forces. For example, anti-ship bombers, submarines, things like that. What we got out of having a strong Pacific Fleet was they could not bet that we did not have a secret deal with the Chinese to overrun Siberia when the good times came. I would imagine the Chinese did not want any part of it. But you can do attacks that look as though you are preparing for them to go in and then let them explain in Moscow later. That is the kind of thing you get out of mobility. Would it have been decisive? We think it would have been kind of useful. We thought that having minor amphibious forces would make them worry a lot about places like St Petersburg. That is a very sobering business. Just the idea that we could match them in places that were asymmetric for them probably sobered them up a lot, and we think we got a lot of mileage out of it.

Now lets look at a WWI example. If you were British and you did not feel culturally close to the French, you might ask yourself what the biggest threat was. You might say something like 'Ok, if the Germans are most sensitive about say East Prussia where the German military elite came from, pay the people who will give them the hardest time right? Go in the Baltic and threaten to land there'. The Germans tried to laugh that off, but I do not think it would have been very funny, I think it might have worked.

Another example shows how bad things can be. The Crimean War in its time was called the Russian War. It was really about getting the Russian Empire to stop threatening various places including Turkey. So the question was 'how do you deal with these Russians? They have a big land empire far away, so what do you do?' The first idea the British had was 'we will make a maritime raid. There's a place - the Crimea - in the Black Sea, and the Russians are threatening the Turks in the Black Sea. We will grab the Crimea as a demonstration of our power and our will.'

Apparently their intelligence was terrible. They did not realise the Crimea was actually well defended and that they would get bogged down there. As soon as they were bogged down there, suddenly the war was about the Crimea. The British Cabinet developed the idea that if ever they won in the Crimea the war would end in their favour. This was absolute insanity. From the Tsar's point of view, the Crimea was a useless place in the Black Sea far from where everyone cares. He did not really care about his own troops. It was perfectly acceptable to use up a few more troops and tie down the enemy. There was no way that the loss of the Crimea would shatter the Russian Empire. The British had to find something that mattered.

Well in the Baltic the British figured out there was something that mattered and that was St Petersburg. About 1855 the British took a Russian Sea fortress called Sveaborg. That's usually treated by historians as a sort of a cute but irrelevant stunt. Well the Russians felt a little differently. Those defences were not very different from what was defending St Petersburg. Also because security was not brilliant, the Russians could watch the British building a specialised force that would have taken St Petersburg. That is, you could see the force being built and you had the demonstration it would have worked. The Crimea might not matter, but St Petersburg really did matter and probably that threat had a lot to do with the Russians deciding that this was not really a whole lot of fun. There were other things also. The point I am making is that a sea power way of thinking assumes you can go anywhere along someone else's periphery and that very often there is some place other than where you happen to be that gives you a bigger pay off. It is about leverage. Now if you have an army with ten million people, all of them feel like getting killed for Allah, then presumably leverage and economy are not all that important. I doubt many - if any - such armies exist.

If I look at WWII, look at Churchill after June 1940, the thing that they were so desperate to prevent had just happened. By the way, they do not have an ally in the East giving the Germans a hard time. This is a pretty bad thing. People who do not like Churchill say well, he had this mystical vision that there was some way out, but of course he was crazy and we should have settled. Well no, he was a historian. If you look at their previous

wars like the Napoleonic War, what happens is that as long as the British stay in business, they can keep forming coalitions, and eventually they form one that busts the French. It takes a while. Things do not always work. You go in, you land troops, you try to do something, something goes wrong, you take them home and land them somewhere else. Now you can see that either as (as somebody at Newport once said) a Mrs Mcawber type of strategy '*Something will turn up*'. Or you can see it as a very reasonable way of using sea power. By the way, part of the sea power story was that they had access to world resources, including incidentally, yours. That made a tremendous difference. Now I would guess that at some point Churchill said to himself. It's 1800 again, or 1801 or whatever. The other side runs the continent, but they cannot jump the Channel, lets give them a hard time and eventually we will get friends. His guess was that he would get the US. The Russians were not as satisfactory, because they probably would have enjoyed also seizing all of Europe, which would have meant another unpleasantness later, but you work with what you have got. That is a very different view. If you look at casualties in two World Wars, you will notice that your chance of survival as a British soldier went up rather dramatically in WWII, even though army people feel that they did not do that good a job in places like Normandy. They did not know how to combine arms properly. Still, the peripheral approach really was a very good one. In wars you do not get high grades for showing how tough you are, you get high grades for winning. If someone else wants to bleed as part of your war, that is his business.

If you look at the Pacific War, there's a real question of what the war aim is. For the US Navy, which I regard as correct, the war aim is simply to defeat the Japanese. After they lose they disgorge whatever they have grabbed, that is the end if it. The view taken by the US Army in a lot of its historical work is that war was about how evil it was for the Japanese to seize the Philippines, which we owned. *How important was taking back the Philippines? Did it win the war? No. Were we still fighting there on VJ Day? Yes. Did it eat up a lot of people? Yes.*

The last thing I will tell you is if you look at Afghanistan, the only reason we were able to go into Afghanistan was sea based power. Now sea based does not mean it is just sailors, do

not get me wrong. If I look at Afghanistan, problem one is if you are going to make an attack in Afghanistan where does it come from? Well no one in the region is all that hot about playing with us. In many cases they will not try and stop us flying overhead, because we will bomb them, but other than that they are not interested. Well, we could strike at Afghanistan from carriers. The problem was that we had gone cheap on carrier based tanking, so we absolutely had to have that amount of cooperation. That is, we absolutely needed to have bases available with tankers. In fact, Australia contributed some tankers. However, the strike at least did not have to be land based. That made a tremendous difference in how much we had to pay people to let us in. In the ideal world we would have kept the A-6Es and we would have been able to do it off the carriers by themselves. The world is not ideal; our crystal balls are not perfect. The second thing was do you need ground forces? Well you now hear about how these special forces people in Northern Afghanistan would act as the artillery for the Northern alliance and people say 'what do you need troops there for, look at what you can do from the air?' First, it is what we can do from the air in support of a ground army. No ground army, no fun. Secondly, in Northern Afghanistan there were a lot of people who had good reason to really hate the Taliban, so we said to them 'We will help', and they said 'Great idea', once we demonstrated that we were serious. And by the way that took a little while, before they would play. So Northern Afghanistan works pretty well without a lot of American troops.

Now lets ask about the other half. If you look at Southern Afghanistan, actually more South Eastern Afghanistan, which is mostly Pushtuns (the Taliban were Pushtuns) one of the mistakes was that we thought of it as an ideological split; it was more ethnic. You know, we may not like the brand of Islam that they are pushing, but by god they are our creeps not yours, so we will back them up. That meant that there was not going to be any Southern alliance spontaneously forming to kill the Taliban. What do you do? Well I would argue that moving those US Marines that took Camp Rhino near Kandahar was not just a cute stunt, but instead was absolutely decisive. It was decisive because once we had a serious fighting force on the ground in Taliban country, then that convinced a lot of other

Afghans that we were serious and that we were not backing down. Second, the Taliban had a choice. They could try to wipe out our Marines, or they could basically admit that they were powerless. They admitted powerlessness. Well that killed their prestige a lot. Now the Marines complained that there were not enough of them to go out and do offensive action, so they felt weak. No, they were decisive. Now, why did that work? It worked because their logistic and firepower base was at sea where we could move it around easily and as little as possible had to move inland and it was very effective. That is a sea power kind of application. You get a lot more for your money when you have real national mobility, when everyone can move freely at your government's dictate, when there is enough fire power offshore so that what lands really gets backed up against opposition, and fire power has to include aircraft.

I apologise if I have imposed on national decisions here, but it's a kind of strategy I think is well worth thinking about.

About the Author

*Educated as a theoretical physicist, Dr Norman Friedman is a defence analyst concerned primarily with the interaction between technology and tactical, strategic, and policy issues. He was a staff member and then Deputy Director of National Security Studies of the Hudson Institute from 1973 through 1984. Since that time he has served as a consultant to the Secretary of the Navy (in the Office of Program Appraisal, 1984-94) and to various defence contractors. He has published 26 books, most recently *Seapower as Strategy: an account of modern naval strategy; a history of the Cold War*, *The Fifty-Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War*; and *Seapower and Space, an account of the role that space and information assets now play in naval warfare*. He is a member of the U.S. Naval Institute, the Royal United Services Institute, the American Society of Naval Engineers, the American Physical Society, the Naval Submarine League, and the British Naval Review.*