



# **The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy, 1977-1986: Naval War College Newport Papers 19**

*D.Phil., John B. Hattendorf, Naval War College Press*

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To understand a series of events in the past, one needs to do more than just know a set of detailed and isolated facts. Historical understanding is a process to work out the best way to generalize accurately about something that has happened. It is an ongoing and never-ending discussion about what events mean, why they took place the way they did, and how and to what extent that past experience affects our present or provides a useful example for our general appreciation of our development over time. Historical understanding is an examination that involves attaching specifics to wide trends and broad ideas. In this, individual actors in history can be surprised to find that their actions involve trends and issues that they were not thinking about at the time they were involved in a past action as well as those that they do recognize and were thinking about at the time. It is the historian's job to look beyond specifics to see context and to make connections with trends that are not otherwise obvious. The process of moving from recorded facts to a general understanding can be a long one. For events that take place within a government agency, such as the U.S. Navy, the process cannot even begin until the information and key documents become public knowledge and can be disseminated widely enough to bring different viewpoints and wider perspectives to bear upon them. This volume is published to help begin that process of wider historical understanding and generalization for the subject of strategic thinking in the U.S. Navy during the last phases of the Cold War. To facilitate this beginning, we offer here the now-declassified, full and original version of the official study that I undertook in 1986–1989, supplemented by three appendices. The study attempted to record the trends and ideas that we could see at the time, written on the basis of interviews with a range of the key individuals involved and on the working documents that were then still located in their original office locations, some of which have not survived or were not permanently retained in archival files. We publish it here as a document, as it was written, without attempting to bring it up to date. To supplement this original study, we have appended the declassified version of the Central Intelligence Agency's National Intelligence Estimate of March 1982, which was a key analysis in understanding the Soviet Navy, provided a generally accepted consensus of American understanding at the time, and provided a basis around which to develop the U.S. Navy's maritime strategy in this period. A second appendix is by Captain Peter Swartz, U.S. Navy (Ret.), and consists of his annotated bibliography of the public debate surrounding the formulation of the strategy in the 1980s, updated to include materials published through the end of 2003. And finally, Yuri M. Zhukov has created especially for this volume a timeline that lays out a chronology of events to better understand the sequence of events involved. The study and the three appendices are materials that contribute toward a future historical understanding and do not, in themselves, constitute a definitive history, although they are published as valuable tools toward reaching that goal. To reach closer to a definitive understanding, there are a variety of new perceptions that need to be added over time. With the opening of archives on both sides of the world, and as scholarly discourse between Russians and Americans develop, one will be able to begin to compare and contrast perceptions with factual realities. As more time passes and we gain further distance and perspective in seeing the emerging broad trends, new approaches to the subject may become apparent. Simultaneously, new materials may be released from government archives that will enhance our understanding.

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