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**Naval Intelligence in the Post-Cold War Era  
Edward D. Sheaffer**

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# Naval Intelligence in the Post-Cold War Era

Edward D. Sheaffer

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To paraphrase Winston Churchill,\* "It's not meant to malign the operators but every once in awhile you do have to look at the enemy." The question is, who is the enemy today? The only thing harder to do in Washington today than sell the Russian threat is to sell used underwear, and I don't know anybody who has ever done the latter very successfully. Probably none of you know who Roger Wells was; he was a rear admiral in charge of Naval Intelligence in 1918 who had the same problem that I have today and that is try and define the threat.

I've never met an operator who cared much about history except that history which identified patterns or trends to help forecast the future. Today I would like to first look at a bit of history as a means to attempt to predict the future, the future threat, and by that means to use it as a prerequisite for defining future requirements. In 1991, we celebrated the end of the Cold War and we watched the Russian Union dissolve. But in 1918, the war to end all wars had

just finished and peace and prosperity were supposed to reign eternal, yet 15 years later the world was in a depression and the only threat Germany presented to anybody was to itself, in the midst of the deepest economic depression in its history. Ten years after that Germany was militarily dominant in the world. That's a span of only 25 years. I have people today that ask me to try to predict what the world is going to look like in 25 years. I can't do it, and I defy anybody in this town or anyplace else to be able to do it. But, nonetheless, in that span of 25 years, we went from euphoria to famine to fear. What we can do today in order to produce some meaningful forecasts is to draw some parallels between the past, present, and future.

The latest mass expeditionary force to go overseas, as we all know, was the 542,000 men and women of Desert Storm. But our first, which a lot of people forget, went abroad in 1917 and early 1918, when Black Jack Pershing took our first expeditionary force to France. Pershing was certainly no General Schwarzkopf, but he was a unique character. He had been our military attaché in Japan during the Russo-Japanese War, and Teddy Roosevelt

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\*"No matter how enmeshed a commander becomes in the elaboration of his own thoughts, it is sometimes necessary to take the enemy into account." — Winston Churchill.

thought so much of him that he promoted him from Captain, U.S. Army, to Brigadier General, which I think probably alienated a lot of people in the Army. And he wasn't that much more of a popular character when he was sent to head the expeditionary force. On September 26, 1918, the first U.S. military offensive in World War I kicked off in the Meuse Valley and Pershing had 250,000 men stretched across a 22-mile front. But if you really look at it closely, there were 200,000 men across 12 miles. If you want to work out the math to that, that's three ranks of people, three deep, standing shoulder-to-shoulder for 12 miles. There were great hopes for the offensive because everything had been stagnated in Europe for two years. Essentially, the lines had been the same, but, less than three weeks after the offensive had kicked off, the line stagnated again, and the pessimists in the press were saying "the spring world war is over, the winter has come" — and if that sounds a lot like "Iraq has the fourth largest army in the world," it wasn't far from that. Yet, less than three weeks after that, at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the war was over. But in that six weeks, we suffered more military casualties than in any time in our history: 75,000 casualties. And that pales by comparison to the some 7 million casualties that the allies suffered during the war. In the year and a half we were in the war, we suffered a total of some 255,000 casualties. Why? For a number of reasons. But historians tell us that during the last half of the 19th century, the lethality of weapons increased by an order of magnitude tenfold. Yet tactics didn't change. The frontal assault of the Civil War was the same thing Black Jack Pershing did in 1918.

But things weren't much different at sea either. If you look back two years to 1916 to the Battle of Jutland when some 150 or so British ships met about 100 ships of the German High Seas Fleet, in 12 hours the two sides suffered around 12,000 casualties. I would offer you that one of the reasons for this is that both sides had the same technology. At the Battle of Jutland, the British guns were larger but more ponderous. The Germans had higher velocity guns and tighter patterns. The optics they had in their range finders were the finest in the world. But basically the technology was the same.

I would also offer that there were five determinants of success in war: morale, training, technology, logistics, and leadership. And if you look at World War I, it was simple technology. The prevailing technology was readily transferable across the lines; both sides had essentially the same things, and

above all, the military technology of the time was highly manufacturable.

If we look at technology, if we look at WWI, we didn't get started until late 1916. We didn't get serious about the possibility that we might go to war, so we got a late, slow start. We had a fairly cold industrial base. It took us about 28 months in those days to produce a submarine from concept to actually floating the boat in the water. A total of 99 were approved by Congress, but we only completed about 26 by the time the war was over. Destroyers weren't much different, except that we got a little bit more efficient. Aircraft, on the other hand, if you look at some of Anthony Fokker's work in Europe, from the time he conceived an airplane design, until he flew it, took 6 to 18 weeks. At the same time, Fokker didn't have structural engineers, so the way he tested air wing strength was literally to stand factory workers on the wings until something broke. We did a little bit better in World War II when we had a warmer industrial base and we could ramp up more quickly. Submarine design-to-delivery got down to about 18 months, destroyers on the order of 20. But something began to creep in which I think was ominous for the future. In June of 1944, at the end of WWII, the A-1 Spad (skyraider) single-engined bomber was conceived on the back of an envelope in a restaurant in Washington, D.C., and the first aircraft actually flew in March of 1945, eleven months later. But 25 years later, that same airplane was flying in Vietnam. I think the lessons in the first half of the century, where time was on your side, technology transfer went from being fairly transparent across enemy lines, if you will, to becoming somewhat translucent — but quantity was still not a problem.

If we look at today and tomorrow, destroyer design-to-completion now takes 10 to 15 years. The Aegis cruiser design started in December 1964. The first hull was commissioned in December 1983. That's 19 years by my count. As for submarines, by the time the new Seawolf gets here (if we're lucky), it will have been 15 years from the time design concept started till the first hull is completed. It takes six years or more to build one. It's taking us six years today to build the current SSN 688I class. As to aircraft, there's no difference: it takes 10–12 years. The lessons to be learned, of corporate risks plus complex electronics, is that time and quantity of time give us costs. I think transfer of technology is becoming much more opaque, and, out there in the Third World, as you will hear later when I talk about the Third World threat, they are going to be in

the business of buying, not building. What they are going to buy is going to have to be lethal because they probably won't be able to buy that much of it.

So what's the threat? The Russian threat is going to be higher tech but it's going to be smaller, yet eventually they are going to become more professional. Maybe Russia is a gentler bear, but it's still the only nuclear threat that is a risk to our nation's future existence. But what is coming is a regional and subregional threat, now that the world is no longer bipolar. And it's going to be a higher tech threat. The world is going to become less stable, and therefore it's going to become more threatened. I think the driving threat of the next decade is going to be economic warfare. That won't manifest itself in combat initially, but economic warfare is becoming ever more likely. It's going to have more impact, and when intractable differences arise between countries, they can easily spill over into combat. If I had to characterize the 1990s, I would characterize them as the period of the politics of instability. About a year ago, I met an epistemologist. If you don't know what that is, it's a person who studies knowledge. He was trying to point out to me how fast knowledge is developing in the world, and he made the following comment: he said that when a child who is born today reaches 50 years old, 75 percent of his or her knowledge will be things you don't know today. Now, I walked away from that and thought about it for awhile and didn't realize that maybe I had really gotten slammed — because there are two ways to look at that: either I'm pretty dumb or there is going to be a lot of new knowledge out there. Assuming the latter, not the former, knowledge is not a linear function. The point is that a Navy lieutenant 25 years from now will have to work with knowledge constituting probably on the order of 40 percent things that we don't even understand today. Yet the scary thing to me is that lieutenant, like the A-1 Spad example from the Vietnam era, is going to be flying or driving things that we design and build today. So there's an axiom that I would like to offer you that I feel very comfortable with: today's military technology will make tomorrow's difference.

As far as the Russians are concerned, if you look at history, one of the things that is apparent is that major nations which fade after their initial rise tend to come back. You can look at Germany, you can look at the Netherlands, you can look at Spain. There are all kinds of historical examples. So I don't think the Russians have gone away. What is most bothersome to me, at least, is that, ever since the

Vikings came down the Volga River in the 9th century, there have been 11 centuries of autocratic rule of one form or another in the former Soviet Union, and I'm just not convinced that's gone forever — and it may not be gone forever in my lifetime.

If today's military technology is going to make a difference in tomorrow's struggles, we must outpace other nations, and we need quality over quantity — and we certainly need enough to defeat the quantity that any adversary has. And I make the comment here that we must remember the fundamentals: a bullet is a bullet is a bullet. Why did our aircraft in Desert Storm have to stay above 21,000 feet? Very simple. It was the shoulder-fired SAM (surface-to-air missile) threat, and, we couldn't defeat bullets. You've got to take into account that relatively simple military technology still has a role to play in modern warfare.

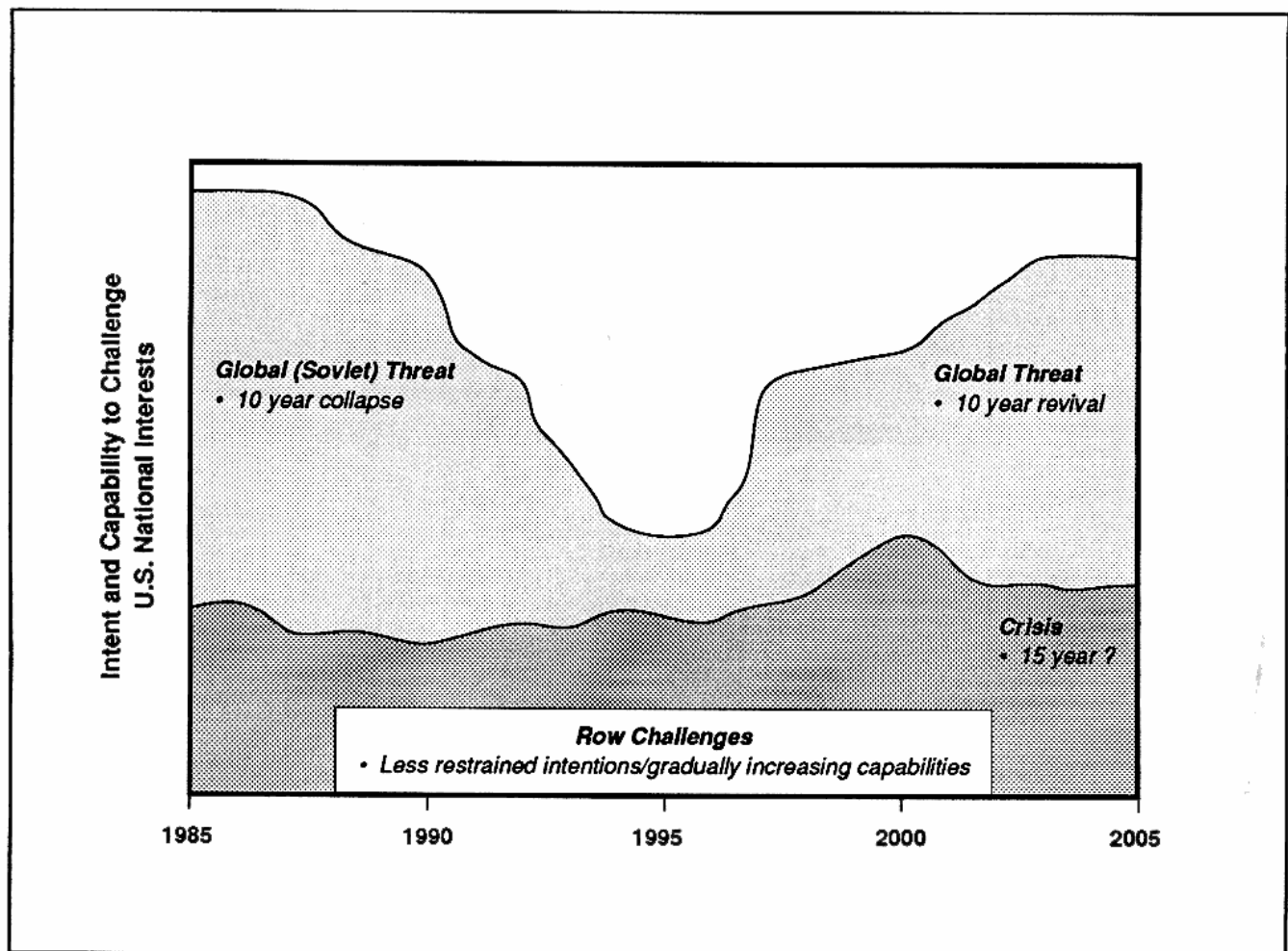
I mentioned what I thought would make a difference in winning on the future battlefield. I also think that morale, training, and leadership are a wash. If a country is willing to take the time, and has a cause of sufficient import, over time, 10–15 years, whatever it takes, it can develop the morale, the training, and the leadership. But what it can't do is develop the technology and the logistics — and I think the determinants of success on the battlefield of tomorrow are going to be two things: logistics and technology. As some heavy equipment and transporter driver, an Army sergeant, said during Desert Storm, "you ain't got what you ain't got." We planned to fight in Central Europe. To do that, we didn't need HATs (heavy armor transporters) to carry tanks. So, when General Schwarzkopf and General Powell came up with the idea to end-run Iraq and had to move a thousand tanks a couple hundred miles, the entire U.S. Army had 500 HATs. We ended up buying a bunch from Czechoslovakia. But during Desert Storm, we learned that we could move an armored force, that we could deploy it, that we could fight with it. An example that is not often used about the success of technology in Desert Storm has to do with the thermal gun sights on our M1A1 tanks. You may recall that the weather during the four days of the war was heavily overcast and that it rained most of the time — lots of smoke from the oil fires in Kuwait — lousy weather. We were able to regularly take the Iraqi tanks under fire from 2,700 meters, day or night. The Iraqis could not even see us with their night vision devices until we were within 1,100 meters, and that caused not only a great deal of consternation among the Iraqis,

but they also had no idea what they were being hit with. They didn't know if it was artillery, MRLs (multiple rocket launchers), aircraft, or tanks.

I'll close this portion of the brief by saying that I think it's very important that what we build today, or what you build today, or more importantly, perhaps, what we don't build has four important consequences: it constrains the future of the president's military options, it limits battlefield opportunities (and, where there's coequal technology, we are going to have too many casualties, and I don't think the American people will ever stand for that again, and we, the people in uniform, are going to be held accountable if we go into a war and we have large amounts of casualties). Finally, I would offer

that technology offers us tremendous dividends and opportunities in the field of improved tactics.

While keeping all that in mind, let's look at a little bit of the future. Look at figure 1, which goes from 1985 to 2005. If you go back over history for about 500 years, you will find a cycle appearing at varying intervals eight times. What it represents is the European power system, which the United States joined some time in the 18th century. Japan joined it in the 20th century. The cycle implies that there is something, some coalition, some nation, that is always challenging the system. For some reason — it can be a long war, it can be pestilence, it can be whatever — that threat begins to diminish. It bottoms out after about 10 years, and then some-



**Figure 1**  
**The Future as Viewed from the Past**

thing else in the system begins to grow to challenge the system, and it takes about another 10 years for that to rise. That happened eight times in the last 500 years. It didn't matter what the state of technology was or when it was. It didn't happen in exactly 20-year intervals — it actually took between 18 and 23 years — but the mean in there is around 20 years. The only time when this did not happen was between the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the beginning of World War I. You may recall that 100-year period was called "Pax Britannica." It wasn't that Britain was the strongest power in the world, but it floated back and forth between coalitions to balance them.

According to the pattern, at about 1995, the former Soviet Union is going to start to go completely one way or the other. They are going to regroup and, God willing, democratize, or we're going to see some other form of dictatorial government return, and then, in about another 10 years, it will build back up again.

Let me shift from that just a little bit, if I can, to my job. Change has been something we've had to live with in the intelligence community for a couple of years. It's something that is only going to increase with the rate of change in our country and the world as a whole, but, as I mentioned earlier, we're moving from a single threat to various challenges around the world. In the Navy's case, most of the challenges are regional. Most of the problems of the world are in the littoral areas; therefore, we are looking at littoral warfare — bringing expeditionary forces "from the sea" — whereas our strategy throughout the Cold War, of course, was to deploy forward and meet the Russian Navy as far away from this country as we could. Our national strategy requires responses, and I think that will only continue. But what's happening, if you look at the military, is that the troops are coming home. We're out of the Philippines. We've reduced by 50 percent the number of our troops in Panama, and we're down to almost 50 percent of the former level of troops in Europe, and there are more coming home. The Air Force is coming home as well, and we're going to end up pretty much with a garrison in America except for the Navy and Marine Corps elements, which are deployed forward as part of our forward strategy.

Change is also adaptability. The Navy has a new doctrine that's part of this littoral warfare paradigm, and it's called "... From the Sea." Four key operational capabilities are called for when we go into a littoral area. It's much more difficult, in a

sense, than fighting the Russians would have been. It's a far more complex area. We have to be able to establish command, control, and surveillance of the area. Only when we've done that can we move to the second phase, which is to dominate the battle space, project our power ashore, and then, finally, to sustain the force.

For intelligence folks in the Navy, our business is really unique for one very simple reason. We live inside our weapon systems. Nobody else does that. You can fly airplanes for a couple of hours and maybe even for 24 hours; a soldier may drive around in a tank for three or four hours; but when the Navy and Marine Corps are deployed overseas, we live in our weapon systems all the time. It doesn't matter if somebody blows up your tank when you're standing outside it and you're far enough away; you're not inside it. But when you're ship-deployed, you're in the ship, and, as Jim Schlesinger said to me one day (and I think he was absolutely correct), "You need to be able to expect the unexpected." And because you have to be able to expect the unexpected, there is no ramp for preparedness in the world overseas. You're either ready or you're not ready.

That also means, in our case, you either have intelligence or you don't. It's not something you can turn on and off. You either have it all the time or you don't have it at all. By this I mean tactical intelligence, which supports the operating forces. If you're going to deploy a composite aircraft wing rapidly, as the Air Force is well prepared to do, it takes a week to 10 days. You can gather up a lot of intelligence and get yourself prepared in 7 to 10 days. You don't have that much time when you're deployed in a ship overseas.

What about the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI)? One of the things that we've been doing is changing. Another of the things that we've been doing is consolidating. It used to be that I had five commands under me. I don't know whether any of you have ever administratively tried to take a couple of thousand people and change their organizational functions and their jobs very dramatically. It's not an easy thing to do. In any case, we went from five commands and first downsized to three on the way to going to one.

The new Office of Naval Intelligence chain of command is very flat. It's not like the normal military pyramid type of organization. Why? This outfit doesn't fight. It's a bunch of bureaucrats like me and a bunch of intelligence analysts and folks supporting them. My experience in any bureaucracy



has been that the more you delegate authority to the lowest competent level, the more work gets done and the better it gets done. So that's why the ONI chain of command is so flat. There are eight directorates, and I expect them to do the work and get it done without a lot of overhead.

What I'm happiest about, though, is that the Office of Naval Intelligence has lived for 40 years in some buildings that were built during World War II as temporary structures until the war was over. Well, the war must still be going on because we're still living in them. In 1984 we put a request in the federal budget for a new headquarters. The request was approved in 1984 and, thank God, the Cold War was still on to give us the money in 1989 and 1991

to provide about a 600,000 square foot building that will house about 2,500 people. The good thing is that the building has a name. The name is the "National" — not the Navy, not the Naval, but the "National" — "Maritime Intelligence Center." Why is it called that? Very simply, and for one reason, a couple of reasons actually: Marine Corps Intelligence is going to join us out here in the same building, and all the Coast Guard Intelligence personnel who are in Washington are also joining us out there. So, we've got the Marines, the Navy, and the Coast Guard together, and those represent the three uniformed services that work maritime intelligence. And with that, let me stop.



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