

Context of Designing the Future Fleet

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Looking forward, it is clear that the challenges the Navy faces are shifting in character, are increasingly difficult to address in isolation, and are changing more quickly. This will require us to re-examine our approaches in every aspect of our operations.
- *A Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority*

The world and its maritime domain are changing in profound ways. Automation, digitization, the global commoditization of tech, a rising Asia, resource nationalism, expanding maritime infrastructure -- each is playing a role in redefining contemporary identities, values and associations of individuals and their nations. Each in its own right would be of historic consequence. Combined, they may well lead to revolutionary change and a new era in geopolitical maritime affairs.

What will this mean for the U.S. Navy and the Fleets it puts to sea? It is impossible to predict with any precision, but that should not dissuade us asking, and where possible preparing, for the uncertainty ahead. For naval history teaches us one enduring certainty: the United States is, by geography and character, a maritime nation with global interests. And as long as there remains competition for those interests with other maritime nations, its naval officers must continuously look ahead for indicators of change in the character of that maritime competition and ask what that change could mean for how, who and where their reliefs will need to operate and fight in the future.

The Navy, as a Fleet and as a bureaucratic organization, has been here before. Those that have read Secretary Danzig's 2011 report *Driving in the Dark* know that trying to predict the future for precise bets to make in national security will be a recipe for failure. So what does *The Design* do differently? It starts with the organization and a change from within. A change that empowers new thought that is outside the current budget process. Last fall, a new organization has been created to do just that: think outside the "linear" budget driven process. The Navy staff has changed, and it has moved toward a strategy led vice budget led Program Objective Memorandum (POM) process. The change has led to an interdependent role for all of the staffs in OPNAV to support each other in a way that is driven from inside vice niche (one time) organizations that work outside of the day to day process. The process if done correctly, creates a "fast" learning cycle that is agile enough to get it wrong, but not fail.

The Future Fleet Design and Architecture (FFDA) 2045 Team has been asked to look ahead 28 years into the future, past the lifecycle of most present US Fleet assets. It is an attempt to purposefully look far beyond the horizon and project the contours of a future operating environment that is presumed to be on the far side of the norm-shaping revolutions outlined above. It asks, what do these changes suggest for how, who and where the future US Fleet will need to operate to sustain US maritime superiority in our next era? How will they reshape the means by which the next generation of US Sailors is tasked to deter threats to US interests at sea, project US power abroad, establish sea control when and where needed, advance maritime security in the global commons? And finally, how do we design the future Fleet and adapt our Fleet architecture to assure

they have the operational advantage from start to finish of any operation against any foreseeable adversary they may face.

Trends of the Future Operating Environment – Factors and Actors

Those factors re-shaping the security environment include:

- Global proliferation of high-end commercial and military technology, to include nuclear capabilities.
- Demographic and environmental changes shifting global competition for resources.
- Expansion of mobile and fixed international infrastructure.
- Growing information interdependence among disparate global hubs of population and production.
- New socioeconomic, demographic and environmental stresses on geographic borders and global maritime commons.

Trends among actors in the geo-political sphere include:

- Regional competitors pursuing and proliferating military capabilities to contest U.S. military and commercial freedom of access and maneuver; posturing to advance resource nationalism and geographic leverage; and innovating to augment state-sponsored coercive campaigns through cyber, information warfare, and grey/hybrid warfare.
- Sustained geo-economic interconnectivity enabling developing state actors to rapidly mass commercial and military industrial economic capacity.
- The resurgence of great-power geo-politics and imperial age posturing for relative geographic leverage.

These trends delineate the array of factors and actors postured to usher in a new era of maritime competition and contest. The competition will be shaped by factors of change in technology and resources, infrastructure and information, and borders and commons that impact the maritime domain. The contest will be shaped by actors with sufficient military capabilities, economic capacity, and geographic leverage to shape the maritime domain.