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RE: Summary of lecture '*Defense Unification, the U.S. Navy and the Space Race 1957-1970*' to be delivered digitally for the panel: "*Expressions of U.S. Sea Power in the Cold War*" at the 2021 USNA McMullen Naval History Conference, 23rd September 2021.

This lecture is the third instalment presented at USNA McMullen conferences. These lectures at USNA have tracked the progress of the author's PhD research. Using newly declassified sources, the PhD research focuses on 1945-1964 defence unification in Britain and America and its relationship with the development of strategic thought from the naval and maritime perspective. Defence unification saw the traditional service departments abandoned in favour of centralised civilian authority and oversight in a bureaucratic Defense Department, controlled by an all-powerful Secretary of Defense.

The lecture will initially remark on findings of PhD research related to how the U.S. Navy faced the challenge of defence unification that reached new peaks as the Space Race started in the late 1950s—commenting on how the navy avoided abolition by 1956 and after how the Navy Department reformed and transitioned the navy into a more normative continental sea power familiar to today with a revised place within U.S. defence. It will explore how the U.S. Navy answered the question of 'what is sea power?' 1945 through 1960s where the space race between the United States and the Soviet Union became a factor in securing U.S. naval identity. Contrary to recent accounts that have seen air power theorist's narrative dominate the debate on the space race and strategic space theory, the lecture will explore how the navy answered the 'NASA call' that resulted in it playing a pivotal role in early space power and securing space as a military domain. It will demonstrate the navy was fundamental to shaping and supporting the civilian led aspiration to put a human on the Moon. Although space power started as a sideshow and grew in importance, the navy played a crucial role in securing NASA's future, risking political capital and clashing with the competing armed services in a period of tense defence unification negotiations. Considering this gamble, new research underlines the space race helped secure the U.S. Navy's plans to address the Soviet Navy threat while underling space as maritime domain practically, strategically, and theoretically. From the naval perspective, there was a symbiosis between the game of 'cat and mouse' being played on and under the world's oceans as another was occurring above Earth's atmosphere. The comparison was justified. These two environments- both hostile to humans- where the sea was a classic battleground for nations and had seen civilian and military interests intertwine for generations, paralleled NASA's efforts for civilian exploration of space in a tense Cold War environment. Space was a new frontier for vying nuclear-armed continental superpowers to explore the application of military power to further their grand strategic and tactical plans even as a narrative of exploration echoed that of the early humans on the world's oceans. Although the 1960s saw a stalemate with the risk of nuclear annihilation, the United States won the space race with the Apollo missions to the Moon. However, the future of navies was again in doubt by 1970; their role inflated purely on the grounds of a particular threat, the question of maritime strategy all but forgotten. Although the space race was over, defense unification and questions over the future of the navy were not; however, all three issues – space, unification and maritime strategy ultimately started in 1945 between Britain, America, and Russia.

James W.E. Smith