



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

**IN THE NEWS**

## **Battle Force 2045: The U.S. Navy's Bold Plan for a 500-Ship Fleet**

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By: James Holmes

Battle Force 2045 aspires to accomplish Mahanian strategic goals using a non-Mahanian fleet to prosecute non-Mahanian operations. Can it work?

Mahan is back—tanned, rested, and ready!

On Tuesday, speaking at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments ([/about/events/csba-fireside-chat-with-secretary-of-defense-mark-esper](#)), Secretary of Defense Mark Esper unveiled (<https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2020/10/06/with-its-fleet-of-2045-the-us-militarys-chief-signals-hes-all-in-on-sea-power/>) a U.S. Navy (<https://nationalinterest.org/tag/us-navy-0>) force design titled "Battle Force 2045." Administration policy and the law of the land require the navy to construct a 355-ship fleet, up from just under 300 today. If properly funded and executed, Secretary Esper's plan would produce a 355-ship fleet by 2035—but only as an interim step toward a 500-ship fleet in 2045.

And he explicitly cited Alfred Thayer Mahan's masterwork *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/13529/13529-h/13529-h.htm>) as authority for bulking up the U.S. battle fleet for an age of peer-on-peer strategic competition. Mahan wanted the United States to construct a fleet capable of winning "command of the sea" from the strongest contenders it was likely to meet. Commanding important waters—in his words, amassing "overbearing power" that sweeps the waves clean of rival fleets—would permit America to conduct maritime trade and commerce more or less unhindered, choke off an enemy's commerce, and support military strategy by landing troops or otherwise exploiting the oceans as a safe sanctuary for maritime movement.

Many blessings come from a dominant battle fleet...