

# Game of Minds and Tools: Challenge of Winning Future Littoral Conflicts

R Joseph

Sri Lanka Navy  
albion907@gmail.com

Continued progression in naval tactics, sensors, and platforms have made the complex maritime environment a complicated one. A comparison of the first-ever recorded naval battle and the most recent one provides evidence to prove this fact. Naval battles which took place in the open seas are gradually moving towards the littorals. This makes conventional navies vulnerable against an unorthodox enemy capable of utilising restricted ocean space to challenge the navies and merchant shipping. Advanced navies have today become handicapped when confronting littoral threats despite being technologically superior. Therefore, the objective of this research is to analyse how modern navies, such as the U.S. Navy (USN), could strike a balance between technology and the human component in winning future littoral battles. Modern naval platforms populated with smart tools tend to sideline human involvement in the decision-making process. Major scientific innovations in the fields of Artificial Intelligence, Advanced Autonomous Underwater Systems, and development of Unmanned Surface Combatant Vessels are in the process of taking the centre stage in both decision-making and execution of mission-critical decisions, making human involvement less significant. The rapid incursion of technology into naval warfare and the challenges it poses on the USN was analysed by way of conducting a qualitative comparison of (i) 'Time-Space-Force' dynamics, (ii) limitations in military decision-making tools, and the (iii) aggressive warrior mentality. Important findings of the study are; (i) limitations in military decision-making tools force operators to surrender decision-making skills to advanced sensors/tools, (ii) aggressiveness is a force multiplier in decision-making, and (iii) modern navies lack the ability to win decisively in future littoral battles. However, it is worth noting here that advanced weapons, sensors, and platforms may guarantee victory in most future naval battles. But, employment of smarter and aggressive minds over tools will ensure that with human decision-making superiority, every naval battle can be turned into a definite victory.

**Keywords:** Aggressive Warrior Mentality, Littoral Warfare, 'Time-Space-Force'