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Students of the evolution of the Soviet Navy have long and correctly viewed that navy in the context of its Russian tradition and the Soviet economic system. If fact has not always followed projection, what may have been missing was closer consideration of that navy qua navy. Institutional perspectives, it is argued, suggest a Soviet Navy patterned more and more on the U.S. model.

PROFESSIONAL SELF-IMAGE AND THE SOVIET NAVY

by

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To understand the Soviet Navy it is not enough to consider it only in its unique Russian setting. In addition to being a product of its Russian heritage and of the Soviet Union's economic and political system, the Soviet Navy is, simply, a navy. As such, it has distinctive goals, norms, values, and perspectives which distinguish it from other Soviet organizations—even other military organizations. But these objectives also make the Soviet Navy remarkably similar in many ways to other navies, a phenomenon which may be useful for predicting its future course.

The argument that the institutional perspectives of the Soviet Navy have influenced its development does not negate the fact that the Soviet Navy exists within a very Russian political and geographic framework. Fundamental to understanding the Soviet Navy are a background of Russian history and geography, an understanding of how the centralized nature of the Soviet system affects military planning, an appreciation of the inherently insecure approach the Russian takes to national defense issues, and a feel for what constitutes the Soviet notion of "threat." The nature of the Soviet economic system must also be considered. The 5-year planning base, the influence of the Communist Party, and the crushing bureaucratic administrative system[1] all produce a high degree of inertia in Soviet planning, ensuring that any changes that occur in such a system will almost certainly be incremental rather than dramatic. If we ignore these features that engender continuity and thus predictability in the Soviet system, we do so to our own disadvantage.

Nevertheless, although the features just mentioned provide us with a broad framework for understanding the evolution of the Soviet Navy, they have to date been inadequate to explain or predict developments such as the shift to forward deployment, which took place in the mid-1960's, or the advent of the *Kiev,* in the mid-1970's. In the former case Russian history, geography, and insecurity would all suggest that Soviet naval units would be kept in home waters in order to perform such defensive missions as protection of the homeland rather than being stationed in far-flung locations in the Indian Ocean and on the western coast of Africa as has been the case. The argument that the move to forward deployment was designed to counter the presence of American SSBN's[2] seems dubious when one realizes that the units deployed out of area have generally consisted of minesweepers, small landing craft, and surface ships armed with long-range, surface-to-surface missiles intended for the anti-CVA mission. Similarly, the continuity and the inertia inherent in the Soviet economic system would have led us to expect a slightly larger and more modern version of *Moskva* and its succeeding generation rather than *Kiev,* a ship more than twice the size of *Moskva,* equipped with VTOL (Vertical Take-Off and Landing) aircraft instead of helicopters, and capable of a wide variety of missions rather than just the ASW mission.[3] Clearly something has been missing from the model we have been using to understand Soviet naval developments. Russian perspectives and the nature of the Soviet economy are useful in providing the context and the rate of evolution of the Soviet Navy, but they have not—especially since the mid-1960's—provided the key to the specific directions which that evolution has followed.

The Naval Perspective. The missing factor consists of the perspectives, preferences, and objectives of the Soviet Navy *as a distinctive institution.* To date, no comprehensive explanation of the dynamics behind the development of the Soviet Navy has incorporated these perspectives. In fact, most analysts have assumed the contrary, arguing that there is no room in as highly centralized a government as that of the Soviet Union for subordinate organizations to implement their own preferences. But bureaucracy by its very definition is a hierarchical administrative system in which heads of agencies having power over subordinates report only to the next senior agency head. Most commentators now agree that the Soviet political system is highly bureaucratized and becoming ever more so.[4] Hence, assumptions that institutional perspectives cannot and do not thrive in the Soviet Union are made in the face of strong evidence to the contrary.

Modern bureaucratic theory focuses on the fact that organizations strive to acquire and maintain some degree of autonomy in the conduct of their affairs.[5] This pursuit will lead military organizations to develop such features as a distinctive doctrine, a separately maintained internal structure, and a say in how they go about their business both as to the platforms built and in the way forces are maintained, deployed, and operated. Some reputable analysts have already hypothesized that institutional perspectives have long since permeated at least to the level of the Soviet Defense Ministry.[6] It seems reasonable to infer that this process has also extended to the next lower level of the bureaucracy, that is, to the individual military services themselves. It is highly likely, for example, that the influence of the Soviet Navy in areas of ship design, operating doctrine, and force posture—areas which require specific professional competence—has been quite strong for some time.[7] Although such hypotheses are difficult to "prove" and must generally be reached by interpolation, to discount them because they are not verifiable by documentary evidence is to constrain ourselves unduly in attempting to understand—and predict—developments in any of the subelements of the Soviet Government.

If such institutional perspectives do exist within the Soviet system and if, as argued, they are applicable down to the level of the Soviet Navy, there still remains the problem of coming to grips with these perspectives and of applying them in a predictive way to future hardware developments and force employment. To do so it will be helpful to consider the Soviet Navy's institutional perspectives in terms of three categories which I will call "professional self-image," "drop-dead analysis," and a "revolution of rising expectations."

"Professional self-image" is the initial collection of notions which leads a naval organization to set its requirements in terms of certain types and levels of forces.[7] This term refers to those intuitive—but quite real—ideas which naval leaders carry around in their heads of what their navy would be like if only they could have their way. Although professional self-image is hardly unique to navies, the peculiar nature of any navy's professional self-image will often stress those self-image aspects more than other national requirements. Hence, leading naval proponents such as Mahan have proceeded from conclusions about why navies are valuable in general terms to an argument that a larger navy was of specific value for their own country.

Professional self-image consists of general ideas about how a first-class navy should be structured and should operate, an innate pursuit of organizational self-respect, and a very human desire to be "number one," all of which culminate in a vaguely perceived "dream navy." The foundation of any navy's self-image is its capability to sail unhindered upon the oceans of the world, supporting what it perceives to be its nation's objectives, and promoting national interests in any manner and location where it is necessary or possible to do so. Thus, in the total absence of financial constraints, any navy worth its blue-water salt will strive to pattern itself after the very best navy around, but will nevertheless justify its own development in terms of specific missions which it is uniquely capable of performing for its own country. Although "absence of financial constraints" is not a realizable situation (and for that reason the fulfillment of professional self-image will almost surely be incremental) it is likely that over the long run—and to the extent that sufficient resources, commitment, and political opportunity allow—any navy will strive to develop steadily towards an all-purpose, "blue-water" navy oriented towards a strict Mahanian "command-of-the-seas" concept of naval strategy.

In addition to the intuitive essence of the organization, "professional self-image" includes such concepts as organizational integrity, autonomy, and institutional stands.[8] In practice, these more general objectives will be manifested in a series of specific aspirations including political favor, growth and modernization, flexibility and balanced forces, and ultimately, of course, in an increased share of the budget. Moreover, if the navy in question is successful in obtaining either a higher level of funding or more autonomy, it is predictable that it will endeavor to advance itself towards the fulfillment of its own ever-evolving concept of, on the one hand, its proper place in the world and, on the other, of how as a "dream navy," it should be structured and should comport itself. Viewed in these terms, the development of *Kiev* by the Soviet Navy would not have been an unexpected development, and more and better air-capable ships can be anticipated, whether or not strategic considerations seem to call for them.

"Professional self-image," in sum, consists of the collection of intuitive ideas which shape an institution's objectives. A recent interview with a retired senior Soviet naval officer illustrates the point. Asked whether the Soviet Navy in fact wanted to develop aircraft carriers, despite the fact that it seemed to have no strategic need for them, his answer was direct and simple. "Of course. Every navy wants an aircraft carrier." *That* is what I mean by "professional self-image."

"Drop-dead analysis" is the process by which these vague notions become surrounded with a collection of justifications. This term connotes the process by which an organization's leadership takes its "essential" requirements and then looks around for a rationale to support them. Regardless of their derivation, if its requirements are challenged the organization will tend to rally around them pronouncing that its organizational "essence" or its very existence is at stake. In short, the organization takes the position that if its "essential" requirements are cut it will be tantamount to asking it to "drop dead."*

In practice, "drop-dead analysis" relates closely to program-oriented planning. Rather than beginning with contingencies and working through threats and missions towards necessary programs, program-oriented planning begins with existing programs as defined by production pipelines, existing force structure, and employment patterns and then develops missions that it can afford,[9] against threats and under circumstances in which it can reasonably expect to succeed. To the extent that such a planning basis underlies the development of a given country's naval policy, the missions of that navy might be thought of more as rationalizations than realistic reasons; that is, as outputs of the development process rather than as inputs. In short, in a program-oriented planning system (such as the one used in the Soviet Union) it is possible for an organization to build the forces which it is technologically and politically capable of building, and only then to seek missions for those forces to perform.[10]

"Drop-dead analysis" results in (1) fixed output levels, (2) a high degree of continuity in ship types from generation to generation, and (3) relative simplicity in the planning process. It also results in a high degree of organizational autonomy as programs are developed in isolation and outside agents have difficulty monitoring those programs because they lack the necessary competence. It also results in considerable pressure to maintain the status quo. That is, once a given program is well established, the tendency of reviewing authorities is to ask "why not?" rather than "why?" But "drop-dead analysis" implies something else: that the impetus underlying the establishment of "essential" requirements is not, after all, an objective evaluation of force requirements but the "essence" of the organization concerned. It is because of this pervasive quality called organizational "essence" that intuitive notions of what the organization needs often wind up masquerading as analytically derived requirements.

The connecting link between professional self-image and drop-dead analysis can be called the "revolution of rising expectations." In the past this term has been used to describe the increasing social demands evidenced in emerging nations, but the parallel seems highly relevant to organizational growth. The significant feature of this revolution as it pertains to military organizations is that objectives can be expressed not only in terms of quantifiable goals, but as roles and missions. Expanded missions will normally require more in terms of capabilities than exist or are programmed. But as capabilities are expanded to match the commitments, it is predictable that the organization concerned will strive to reinterpret its missions or to add new ones, thus beginning the cycle anew. For this reason, professional self-image and drop-dead analysis are never fixed once and for all: in each successive iteration the organization will certainly not begin by asking for less, and will most likely ask for more if it is politically feasible to do so.

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*In the current vernacular, the organization would be willing to "fall on its sword" (in obvious reference to the Japanese hara-kiri rite) if it is obliged to take further cuts in its essential requirements.

It is clear that a revolution of rising expectations has been going on in the Soviet Navy at least since the mid-1960's. Its most recognizable aspect is the effort of Fleet Admiral Gorshkov to redefine the Soviet Navy's missions to give it a broader base for additional growth and for new avenues of development. It is significant that at first Gorshkov was careful to keep his arguments closely tied to the newest goal of Soviet foreign policy "to support the national liberation movement and to effect all-round cooperation with the young, developing countries,"[11] but that his references to this foreign policy goal have gradually decreased as the Soviet Navy's concept of professional self-image has continued to evolve. What seems to have happened is that specific naval goals such as growth, modernization, and "balance" have increasingly become ends in their own right. Gorshkov's most recent arguments tend to stress general reasons why a navy is a good thing for a world power to have rather than how the Soviet Navy would support specific existing goals of the Soviet Union.

Explaining Soviet Naval Developments. Considering these distinctive naval perspectives sheds light on the reasons for the 1964 Soviet decision to move to forward deployment. Having just had its self-respect and expectations heightened by the impressive ships which began to enter the fleet, the Soviet Navy received two embarrassments in the early 1960's by virtue of its inability to do anything effectively about the American naval efforts, first in Cuba and then in Vietnam.

At about the same time, political events were making it possible for the Soviet Navy to develop along the lines which its professional self-image would suggest. With the ouster of Khrushchev, three significant changes took place in the Soviet Union's national strategy. The first change was in the basic Soviet military doctrine. The "all-or-nothing" strategy of Khrushchev was replaced by the notion of "flexible response," as Sokolovsky's 1964 revision of *Military Strategy* pointed out.[12] The second change was the shift in the Soviet approach to a foreign policy which Brezhnev called "active and thrusting while at the same time showing flexibility and circumspection."[13] Brezhnev's more pragmatic approach to foreign policy was formally endorsed at the 23rd Party Congress in 1966. To support this foreign policy, a need clearly existed for a general purpose navy capable of operating at greater distances from the homeland than had previously been required. If the political leadership of the Soviet Union had not yet seen that, it is nonetheless certain that this thought had occurred to the leaders of the Soviet Navy, as Gorshkov's first mention of "supporting state interests" as a mission for the Soviet Navy appeared in 1967. The third major change was the replacement of Khrushchev's one-man style of rule with an increasingly bureaucratic set of procedures. This provided greater autonomy to subordinate organizations, including the Soviet Navy, to pursue institutional goals along with national ones.

Taken together, these factors provided both the opening and the justification for Gorshkov to issue his famous order to the Soviet Navy to "sail upon the oceans of the world." If the full capabilities to operate and support an oceangoing navy were not yet available, that could be dealt with in time: the important thing was to get the policy itself approved and implemented. The ships which began to be designed and built from that point on (*Kresta II*, *Krivak*, *Kara* and *Kiev*, all of which began to appear in the early 1970's) reflected ideas that a naval professional would be expected to hold about how a fleet should look and what it should be capable of doing.

The Conceptual Phase in Naval Development. Implicit in this discussion of how professional self-image, drop-dead analysis, and the revolution of rising expectations have pertained to the Soviet Navy is that there is something more to the origin of a navy—and any particular aspect of a given navy—than the rhetoric by which it is justified, the hardware it builds, and the doctrine by which it operates. There is, in short, a preliminary stage in the evolutionary cycle which can be termed the "conceptual phase" of naval development. The conceptual phase is heavily influenced by the perspectives of the naval leadership. To a significant degree it in turn influences the rationale used to justify future developments, the specific features designed into new ships and weapons, and, most of all, the doctrine which guides the employment of the fleet. Understanding that this conceptual phase is a factor in naval development, how it works and what it consists of at a specific time will be of assistance to us in understanding and predicting the future development of any navy. The writings and utterances being used to justify certain developments, the sequence and purpose for which hardware is built (whether or not it is in consonance with the rationale being used), and fleet exercises and operational deployment patterns are all clues to what a navy's professional self-image is at any given time. But historical examples of what the professional self-image of other navies was at similar stages of development provide other valuable indicators. In any case, it is important to keep in mind that since professional self-image itself evolves, it must be understood more as a dynamic process of organizational self-fulfillment than as a single fixed concept. For that reason, while professional self-image will never be easy to analyze, any explanation of a navy's development will be incomplete if not totally incoherent without it.

Including specific naval perspectives in considerations of the Soviet Navy leads to some revealing insights regarding the future. The first of these is that as the professional self-image of the Soviet naval leadership is not shared by high-level political leaders, the Soviet naval leadership may be marching to a different drum than that which official Soviet policy is beating. This being the case, the "dream navy" of Soviet naval officers may be responsive to Russian geostrategic and defense considerations only where it is expedient or politically imperative that it be so. This in turn could lead to some gross anomalies between what Soviet political leaders say is policy and how the Soviet Navy actually develops. For example, because of the increasing autonomy with which the Soviet Navy seems to be operating, those who would argue for increased capabilities for the Soviet Navy will have a surprisingly wide degree of latitude in arguing for the programs they want so long as they couch their arguments in the proper rhetoric. For this reason, it is important for observers to be wary of accepting at face value anything which Soviet naval leaders say or write about future developments.

Moreover, because of the influence of professional self-image, it is predictable that whatever the reasons originally given for building certain ships, once they are delivered those ships for the most part will be operated in accordance with the Soviet naval establishment's intuitive feelings about how a first-class navy should operate rather than strictly in accordance with stated wartime missions. In this respect, James Cable's observation that "the motives for which warships are built seldom foreshadow the actual nature of their employment"[14] seems applicable.

Finally, it is quite clear that the Soviet Navy has not had to look very hard to find a model for how a modern first-class blue-water navy should look and operate. Since 1945 the U.S. Navy has been capable of going almost anywhere and doing most anything once it got there. In recognizing the American Navy as the main threat to be countered, the Soviet Navy has also, consciously or unconsciously, become envious of the specific hardware in the American naval arsenal, and has been using the U.S. Navy as the model of its aspirations. In this regard, it is noteworthy that Admiral Gorshkov spent a substantial portion of *Sea Power of the State* discussing the many effective ways in which the American Navy has been used since World War II.[15] He concluded that it had done so for imperialistic reasons and thus had been wrongly motivated. Significantly enough, he never claimed that the actions themselves were improper ones for a navy to have taken, the clear implication being that the Soviet Navy could be used in the same ways and the actions would be quite proper. If the Soviet Navy is patterning itself after the American Navy, then it is predictable that it will eventually include among its forces flush-deck aircraft carriers, mobile amphibious forces, and a considerable blue-water endurance capability consisting of shore facilities or large fleet oilers, even though none of these would seem to be justified by geostrategic or threat-related considerations. It is not certain that the Soviet Navy will ever develop to this point, as such factors in the Soviet system as the increasing economic demands of the civilian sector and the still-preeminent position of the Soviet Army are increasingly serving to constrain further naval development. Hence if CVAs, mobile amphibious forces, and blue-water oilers do *not* enter the Soviet fleet, analysts will have to look not only at the Soviet Navy but at other features of the Soviet system. For it will not be because the leaders of the Soviet Navy did not want them, were not asking for them, and were not striving to get them.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Lieutenant Commander McGruther was graduated from Dartmouth in 1965 and holds an M.A. in Strategic Studies from Brown University. He has served in minesweepers, destroyers, frigates, and most recently as Operations Officer of U.S.S. *Leahy* (CG-16). He is a graduate of the Naval War College (where he was the first winner of the Colbert Prize Essay competition) and has served in OPNAV. For the past year he has been conducting independent research and writing at the Naval War College under the Navy's Professional Development Program and is now en route to U.S.S. *Joseph Strauss* (DDG-16) in which he will serve as Executive Officer.

NOTES

1. Michael MccGwire and John McDonnell, eds., *Soviet Naval Influence: Domestic and Foreign Considerations* (New York: Praeger, 1977), p. xxiv. See also Ken Booth, *Soviet Naval Developments III* (Halifax: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, 1974).

2. Michael MccGwire, "The Evolution of Soviet Naval Policy 1960-1974," chap. 28 in Michael MccGwire, et al., eds. *Soviet Naval Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1975).

3. J.W. Kehoe, et al., "Observations of the KIEV," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, July 1977, pp. 105-111.

4. The proceedings of the "Maritime Workshop" of the Centre for Foreign Policy Affairs (see notes 1 and 2 above) have elaborated this point at length with respect to the Soviet Navy.

5. See for example Grahem T. Allison, *Essence of Decision* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), and Martin Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1974).

6. John Erickson, *Soviet Military Power* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 1971).

7. The term has been adapted from Warner Schilling, "Admirals and Foreign Policy 1913-1919." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.: 1953.

8. Halperin, pp. 28-62.

9. John Garnett in "Defense Against What," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, December 1970, p. 20, argued that governments are always tempted to design defense policies against threats they can afford to counter rather than against those which actually exist. See also Ken Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1977), p. 198.

10. Peter H. Vigor, "Soviet Understanding of 'Command of the Sea'" in MccGwire, et al., eds., p. 607.

11. *Istoriya Vueshnei Politiki* SSR, Moscow, 1971, ed. by Ponomarov, et al., vol. 2, p. 496. (Official History of Soviet Foreign Policy).

12. The differences in the discussion of the significance of local wars are reflected in the 1962 and 1963 editions of V.D. Sokolovsky, *Soviet Military Strategy*. The first edition was translated by Rand (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963); the second edition appearing as *Voennaia strategiia* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963). See also V.D. Sokolovsky and M.I. Cherednickenko, "Military Art at the New Stage," *Krasnaya zveszda*, 28 August 1964, and Michael MccGwire, "The Turning Points in Soviet Naval Policy," Chapter 16 in *Soviet Naval Developments: Capability and Context* (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 203 for further discussion of this era.

13. *Pravda*, 5 June 1973, as quoted in Robin Edmonds, *Soviet Foreign Policy 1962-1973* (London: Oxford University, 1975), p. 3.

14. James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy* (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 131.

15. See for example Gorshkov's discussion in *Seapower of the State* (U.S. Naval Intelligence Support Center translation), pp. 314-321.

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