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Foreign Policies at Risk: Some Problems of Managing Naval Power

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All too frequently considerations of the use of naval power as an instrument of foreign policy dwell on its positive results without adequate consideration of its costs. A fundamental step in sound military planning is determination of acceptability—what is the objective worth to me and what is its projected cost in political, materiel, and personnel terms? Ken Booth discusses some of the political costs involved in the peacetime use of naval power. These costs and problems can be ignored only at our peril. His conclusions in regard to the Soviet Navy are rather startling.

FOREIGN POLICIES AT RISK:

SOME PROBLEMS OF MANAGING NAVAL POWER

by

Professor Ken Booth

To know the pain of power, we must go to those who have it; to know its pleasures, we must go to those who are seeking it; the pains of power are real, its pleasures imaginary.

Charles C. Colton
Lacon (1823)

The aim of this essay is to show that naval power can be an unfortunate influence on foreign policy as well as a useful instrument; that naval power can contribute to the distortion of foreign policy, as well as to its support; that it can be the vehicle for irrational as well as rational behavior; and that it can bite the hand that feeds it, as well as snarling at adversaries. The essay is an attempt to present the other side of the coin to the neo-Clausewitzian emphasis on clinical instrumentality, in which armed forces are conceived in terms of the clear-cut missions which they perform in the pursuit of political goals.

The picture to be presented is entirely and deliberately one-sided, but it is an approach which has several values: (1) By aggregating certain types of naval behavior, it might help to clarify some of the inherent problems of using navies as instruments of policy in distant regions. (2) In so doing it may contribute to the debate about the utility of navies. This debate often polarizes the relatively straightforward concepts of *naval missions* as against the *opportunity costs* of maintaining expensive warships. In this polarization, political costs, which are often indirect, uncertain, and fuzzy, tend to be ignored. (3) By articulating some of the major problems of managing naval power, it

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should help those involved to think in advance of how to avoid the possible pitfalls. Forewarned is forearmed.

This essay, therefore, is the ugly sister of that numerous and optimistic breed entitled "The missions of superpower navies." However, the conclusion which the reader should draw is not that warships are not and cannot be useful instruments of policy.[1] Rather, it is to remember that since "the pains of power are real," it is well that we are conscious of them.

The Developing International Context. Concern with the problems of managing naval power reflect the feelings of an age in which there is not as much optimism as even 20 years ago, but in which there is much more worldly wise experience. There has been an important change in some Western attitudes toward the use and maintenance of armed forces in the modern world. We are not just concerned with the benefits which power brings: we are equally concerned with the problems which the possession of that power entails. We are not just concerned with the advantages accruing from the attribution of prestige: we are equally concerned with the pitfalls of being thought prestigious. We are concerned not just with the impulse to win friends and influence people: we are equally concerned with the obligations and problems which follow from such entanglements. We are not just concerned with the problems of weakness and failure: we are also concerned with the problems of power and success.

Such concerns are appropriate in the changing international context. However one chooses to describe the late 1970's and 1980's, the late 1930's is not an appropriate analogy. The Western World is not facing a massive military threat on the Hitlerian model, ready to strike out and conquer territory through deliberate military aggression. As long as Soviet leaders remain prudent, nuclear deterrence takes care of such a possibility. What causes most worry today is not another 1939, but another 1956 or 1965 or 1973. Suez, Vietnam, and the October war are our most relevant memories. The most immediate problem is not an imminent *blitzkrieg* across Europe, but concern about intervening against our interests, becoming sucked into local international and civil wars, or of being drawn into dangerous confrontations with the Soviet Union as a result of "competitive meddling."[2] These are all genuine concerns, for if one thing is certain as we contemplate the world for the foreseeable future, it is that there will be an abundance of economic, political, social, and military problems in the countries bordering the west Pacific, the Indian Ocean, the South Atlantic, and the Mediterranean. There will be a surfeit of opportunities for being drawn into disputes and for competitive meddling, especially now that both superpowers have significant amounts of naval power deployed in distant waters.

In a world of fierce nationalism, power diffusion, and frequent ungovernability, those interested in navies must ask themselves not only how might warships contribute to the success of foreign policy, but also how might they contribute to its failure. How might warships divert, spoil, undermine, or channel a government's policy in a particular region? What foreign policy risks are entailed by the very possession or use of warships in distant waters?

The Provoking of Third Parties. An immediate problem concerns the question of threat assessment from the perspective of third parties. It is an old and familiar problem. What country *A* does out of prudence or self-defense might provoke countries *B*, *C* et cetera, into hostility and suspicion. In this respect it must be remembered that many countries have a very much more traditional view of the usability of

military force than is supposed by some Western commentators. If so-called "gunboat diplomacy" is not as likely as in the age of imperialism, some states still have to worry about the threat of force from the sea, perhaps used in support of hostile neighbors or internal opponents. In this respect one might cite the provocation felt by India at U.S. naval activity in the Indian Ocean in recent years. This activity caused a negative input into Indian (and other) thinking about the United States. This created problems for U.S. diplomats (at the end of 1974, for example) when they were attempting to build up their country's diplomatic capital with the Indian Government. It must be remembered that one naval power's so-called "blue water" is another country's maritime backyard. Superpowers must not be surprised if local countries are overly sensitive about what happens there. The yearnings (if not the capabilities) for local Monroe Doctrines are not the prerogatives of the militarily mighty.

A naval power might argue that third parties should not feel provoked if they are not actually targeted. This is not how it will look, however, from the perspective of worst-case forecasting by the planners of the country concerned. This is true not only of their attitude to naval presences, but also of their attitude to so-called goodwill visits by naval units of powerful states.[3] Newly independent countries often have ambivalent attitudes toward such manifestations of naval reach. One man's goodwill visit may well be another man's gunboat diplomacy.

The Provoking of Adversaries. Unless a rising naval power manages its growing strength and/or expanding activities with great subtlety and tact, it may well provoke its adversaries into counter-availing efforts. This may produce unacceptable tensions or, in the long run, no net strategic advantage but greater costs. The loudly publicized entry of very limited Soviet naval forces into the Indian Ocean has had the effect of spurring U.S. naval efforts in that region.

The Costs of Meeting Challenges. Naval considerations can have foreign policy implications in various ways. If, for example, a country is faced with a naval challenge which it cannot counter with the forces presently at its disposal, it has a range of alternatives: it has either to engage in a naval arms race, seek allies, appease the putative enemy, or otherwise try to manipulate relations with it. Each of these alternatives entail political or other costs and risks. The problems faced by British foreign policy because of the overstretch of the country's naval commitments in the first 70 years of the 20th century are the most prolonged illustration of the painful adjustments necessary when a country's power and responsibilities are not in accord.

In addition to diverting foreign policy to meet naval challenges, naval considerations might direct foreign policy in certain directions because of what might be called the *strategic scarcity*[4] of certain geographical locations. The importance of Gibraltar, Iceland, Malta, the Turkish Straits, the passages through the Indonesian archipelago, the eastern horn of Africa, in addition to many others, are evident for certain maritime countries. Superpower naval requirements with respect to these areas will affect their foreign policies in various ways. At the minimum they will generate the need for interest and attention and the desire for a degree of influence. There will inevitably be an attempt to keep these areas out of hostile control. Just as economic scarcity constrains and determines economic policy, so the strategic scarcity of some locations can constrain and determine foreign policy.

Some Political Costs of Naval Bases. The operational advantages which result

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from the use of overseas bases for navies which operate at a great distance from their homelands are self-evident. For present purposes, our concern is with possible political disadvantages. There are five main problems:

1. *Uncertainty.* If a country's naval operations in a particular area depend to an important extent upon the use of forward bases,[5] this means that the government concerned will have to rest at least its medium-term naval strategy in that region upon the goodwill or sufferance of the government of the country with the facilities. Sometimes, this will present few difficulties, because of mutual confidence. This is the case with the United States and Britain. But such a relationship is the exception rather than the rule. More typical are the problems faced by the United States over its military bases in Iceland and Turkey, countries with whom the United States has been an ally for a generation. The instabilities are considerable: in an era of sensitive nationalism and frequent domestic instability, the enjoyment of military advantages in foreign countries cannot be taken for granted. Bilateral relationships can change with great rapidity. In this respect it is interesting that despite its much smaller involvement in global politics, the Soviet Union has suffered relatively more repudiation than the United States. Over the last 15 years it has been repudiated by Guinea, Ghana, Indonesia, the Sudan, and Egypt—relatively small Third World countries on which it had lavished some hopes and attention. This uncertainty undermines confidence about the long-term enjoyment of facilities, and it goes without saying that governments prefer to avoid instabilities in their programs.

2. *Dependence.* Although confidence about bases has decreased, they still exist. Once they exist, the naval power becomes dependent to some extent upon the good favors of the host government. This dependence will make the naval power vulnerable to some extent to the host government. The latter will be able to hedge the use of the base with restrictions, as with the Egyptian restrictions on the Soviet use of its ports. It will have the power to threaten its free use in crises, just when the base may be most needed. A degree of dependence opens up the naval power to the possibility of political manipulation by the host country.

3. *Provocation.* In a postimperialist, postcolonialist world, bases (or rumors of bases) are almost certain to be a provocation to local nationalists and local political opposition. They are always a boon to adversary propaganda.

4. *Inertia.* Naval bases have always tended to have a multiplier effect. Once immediate operational requirements have been met, there has been a tendency for needs to expand. Mohamed Heikal has described how Soviet naval requirements in Egypt grew after the June war, such that President Nasser lost his temper with President Podgorny, declaring: "This is just imperialism." Admiral Gorshkov fared no better when he visited Egypt in 1970.[6] The expansion of Soviet naval "needs" in Egypt resulted in important damage being done to Soviet-Egyptian political relations.

Once the use of a base becomes well-established, inertia tends to result in inflated attitudes concerning its importance, especially if there are no ready alternatives. The multiplier effect spawns ideas about "vital interests." This happened with the High Tory School of British naval thinking with regard to Simonstown, South Africa. Rightly or wrongly, their desire for good relations with a country which offered a secure naval base and other facilities was thought more important than the possible policy repercussions of closely associating with a country whose domestic policies were regarded as outrageous by most of the Commonwealth. With naval bases, as with many useful

things in life, it is often difficult to imagine how one will manage without them: that is, until one has to, and does.

5. *Domestic political costs.* As the attitude of some people in Britain showed over the Simonstown issue, there are sometimes domestic political costs attached to the use of bases. This has also been the case in the United States over Diego Garcia. The Diego Garcia affair shows that even if those responsible try to remove possible opposition by quietly removing the resident population, one does not necessarily free oneself of political costs in a democracy, because of the political capital to be made by journalists and political opponents at home.

Despite the various costs which might accure from foreign bases, naval powers will find them useful. This is still true for the U.S. Navy, despite its impressive afloat support capabilities. The need for shore support is even greater for the Soviet Navy, despite its long-established propaganda stance against such manifestations of "imperialism" and foreign domination. The Soviet Union has taken the political risks rather than provide alternatives: greater numbers of ships, more skilled manpower for self-maintenance, or sufficient quantities of afloat support. The need to make the Soviet domestic economy work to a minimally satisfactory level gives them little choice but to base naval planning on the risky expedient of the use of foreign ports.

The Costs for Third World Countries. Almost more than anything, Third World countries want independence. Freed from colonialism within living memory, they want to avoid falling under the domination of other external powers. For this reason the provision of naval bases involves costs for small countries as well as the naval power. There is the risk of falling into client status. There are various opportunity costs: perhaps "tilting" to one side will mean that economic or other advantages from different sources are foregone. There is the risk to prestige. If a Third World country offers base rights to a superpower navy (or even if they are only rumored) some neighbors will scream. In the middle of 1975 the Egyptians were provoked by rumors that Libya had offered base rights to the Soviet Union, and Saudi Arabia has objected strongly to Soviet naval activity in the Somali Republic and the Republic of Yemen. Third World sensitivity on this matter sets limits to the possible penetration of the naval power.

Who Manipulates Whom? Influence is almost always a two-way process. We often have a fixed mental image of one-way influence being exercised by the physically strong over the physically weak. This bears little relationship with the facts. Parents understand that with children there is no direct relationship between physical strength and real influence. Between a superpower and a smaller country it is hardly ever clear *who* is manipulating *whom*. This is all the more so in a world where the militarily strong do not feel free to deal with the militarily weak by carrying and wielding a big stick.

Naval bases may be the opportunity for the small to manipulate the mighty. Because a country with the use of a foreign base desires stable evaluations for planning purposes, it automatically has a stake in the preservation of a government which seems favorably disposed toward it. In a world where friends are in short supply, one must nourish those one has. It would be a particularly naive host government which did not recognize the potential leverage which this partial superpower dependence gave it. The maneuverings of Nasser's Egypt, Mintoff's Malta, and Hallgrimsson's Iceland are instructive in this respect. Often, the dependency will not be upon a particular government as much as upon a particular individual.

Magnified by an ignorance of local politics and uncertainty about future changes, a naval power might come to feel that its privileges in a particular country depended almost entirely on a single local leader. At its simplest it is the old idea of "better the devil you know . . ." In the second half of the 1960's the Soviet leaders found themselves in this position with respect to President Nasser. Like almost everybody else, Soviet observers could not easily imagine Egypt without Nasser. By cultivating him, they then opened themselves up to his influence. While the Soviet position in Egypt seemed to depend upon Nasser, his position did not depend upon the Soviet Union. Indeed, too overt an identification between a local leader and an external power can provoke internal opposition. It is now well known that the Egyptian Armed Forces had no affinity with the "Ugly Russian." In Third World countries, leaders do not win laurels for being thought the puppet of any foreign power.

If the local country is successful in its manipulation, it may result in the naval power having to pay more in economic and political costs than it originally expected. History is full of examples of how small commitments can insidiously expand into large entanglements. Americans do not need reminding of this. Soviet leaders have been luckier, and perhaps more prudent, in limiting their commitments.

On the whole, the Soviet Union has done badly in her relationships with small countries far from its borderlands. The picture of one-way Soviet influence into the Third World is misleading. The Soviets have given help and encouragement (and the importance of this is not to be underestimated), but they have not been able to make Third World countries into puppets. There are many constraints on Soviet influence-building efforts, from nationalism in general to Arab distrust of a godless civilization. Outside the Warsaw Pact (itself not the monolith our cold war mind-sets still project) there are no Soviet "clients," whose foreign and domestic policies are pulled by strings from the Kremlin. The forward deployment of the Soviet Navy has certainly not helped to produce Soviet clients. However, by making Soviet foreign policy vulnerable to the manipulation of some small countries on which it depends for bases, it has opened up Soviet foreign policy to more influences and more complications than ever before.

Local Conflicts. When a naval power identifies its policy with a particular country, this can result in its becoming involved in local problems. If the country with which the naval power is identified is involved in squabbles with its neighbors, then the naval power's relations with these neighbors will be adversely affected, and so its regional influence-building efforts will be limited. The Soviet experience is instructive in this respect. The Soviet involvement in the Somali Republic, largely because of naval factors, increased the distrust of Saudi Arabia, Kenya, and the Sudan. By supporting Iraq, the Soviet Union increased the suspicion of Iran. By its moves toward Libya, it increased Egyptian wariness. The more a naval power becomes involved in a local area, its problems and responsibilities grow. In the summer of 1973 Soviet warships transported Moroccan troops to Syria. This has rightly been put forward as one of the ways in which the Soviet Navy has been used to support foreign policy: in this case it was a means of giving concrete encouragement to Arab unity in its fight against "Zionism." Whatever diplomatic capital was gained by the Soviet Union with the Moroccans was surely shattered at the beginning of 1976 because of Soviet support of Algeria, a country with whom Morocco is in contention over the Spanish Sahara. When the

Moroccan Navy apprehended a Soviet Merchant ship with an arms shipment for Algeria, the goodwill created by the Soviet naval instrument must have been erased.

Identification with a particular country can cause problems in other ways, as has been illustrated by British-South African relations. Not only did the maintenance of a military and naval relationship tend to exacerbate British relations with the black Commonwealth, but even the residual relationship of the mid-1970's gave the South African Government the opportunity to manipulate British naval visits as gestures of solidarity. A good example of this occurred in October 1974, much to the embarrassment of the British Labor Government.

Forward deployment might result in naval powers being dragged into local conflicts in a serious way. Before moving to forward deployment, it would be relatively easy for a naval power to avoid direct involvement in a local conflict. With no capability for intervention, no intervention is expected. Propaganda capital could be made at little cost: words are usually (though not always) cheap. The situation changes with impressive naval units over the horizon. The pressures for intervention will be greater: because of the temptations of gain, because the possession of an instrument tends to shape the will to use it, because of the possible entreaties of local associates, because of the desire to protect established positions, and because of a conviction that prestige demands some concrete action. Once a degree of military access is possible, expectations change. In some circumstances the pressures might prove irresistible. Forward deployment increases the likelihood of involvement and the risks of escalation in local disputes.

How might a superpower be drawn into a local conflict, perhaps against its interests or wishes? This question can be answered in several ways. One approach is to draw up scenarios. A pro-Soviet regime facing internal threat might call upon immediate Soviet assistance; this could lead to increasing involvement in a civil war. Another possibility is suggested by the situation in southern Africa. One might envisage South Africa fighting for its life in the last laager against both a guerrilla and conventional attack from the north, heavily supported by Soviet equipment and delivered in Soviet ships. In hard-pressed circumstances, the South Africans might ignore the sanctuary accorded to shipping in several limited wars since 1945; they might try to destroy the Soviet military aid at sea rather than wait until it is in the hands of enemy troops a month or so later. Such sinkings might not only be more "efficient" militarily, but might also be calculated to be a catalytic action, to draw in Western Powers in direct support. A second way of speculating about future risks is to consider recent "might-have-beens." How would the U.S. Government have reacted if the June war had broken out just a few days earlier and had trapped the U.S. carrier sailing through the Suez Canal? How would Britain, the United States, or Israel have reacted had the *Queen Elizabeth II* been sunk with heavy loss of life as a result of President Ghadaffi's orders in April 1973? How would the Soviet Union have reacted had anti-MPLA forces sunk Soviet ships transporting supplies to Angola? A third approach is the least precise but most telling. This approach tells us not to be complacent and to remind ourselves that almost all crises in history have been surprises to those most centrally involved. That we do not know how something might come about does not mean that it will not happen. Anything can happen in international politics, and usually does. History is full of "unthinkables." It is worth recalling in this context that Lord Carrington, then British Minister of Defense,

admitted in 1971 that an analysis of 45 engagements of British forces between 1945-1959 revealed that on no single occasion had the engagement been foreseen. There is little reason to suppose that the British are worse at prediction than anyone else. Military history was surely the inspiration for Murphy's Law: "If anything can go wrong, it will: and when you least want it to."

One particular catalyst to involvement in local troubles might be the initiative of local commanders, either one's own or those of a local power. There have been some suggestions that the *Pueblo* and *Mayaguez* captures were the result of the initiatives of relatively junior officers. A naval power cannot control how the locals behave. It should be able to control its own commanders, but this is not always the case, and this is a danger to consider. What if there had been a precipitate response by 6th Fleet commanders to the sinking of the *Liberty*? On this occasion Navy commanders had a better appreciation of the situation than the Pentagon, but the U.S. Navy has not always been an obedient instrument of a political will. In the Cuban missile crisis, which is passed down as a legendary example of crisis control, there were at least two examples of the U.S. Navy failing to act in concert with Presidential wishes.

The Problem of Local Expectations. Many of the problems for a naval power arise because of the changing expectations of local powers. If a naval power does not have the capability or will to live up to these expectations, then disappointment will be the least of the consequences. By visiting ports in west and east Africa at various times, including some sensitive times, Soviet warships have been used to try to increase Soviet influence with particular governments. It would not be surprising if the leaders of these countries had a rather higher expectation of Soviet sympathy and willingness to help than any Soviet leadership would allow. This could cause strain if the local leader called for serious help.

Even if help is given it might not be appreciated, and it goes without saying that the local power will not necessarily offer any concrete rewards for help given. This was the case in Soviet-Egyptian relations in the late 1960's. Some Egyptian opinion did not appreciate the significance of Soviet gestures of support such as the deployment of warships in Egyptian ports vulnerable to attack.[7] From its point of view, the Soviet Union received little thanks for acting as Egypt's supporter and arsenal.

Changing Naval Balances and Changing Intentions. If a naval balance changes, either favorably or unfavorably, then this will result in changed naval evaluations and expectations. These might ultimately result in changed foreign policy intentions. If the changed balance is to one's advantage, the outcome might be an encouragement to a more ambitious or opportunistic foreign policy, the result of more confidence or the arrogance of power. On the other hand, a relative decline in naval power might result in decreased estimations of what might be achieved. There might be less self-confidence in using what one has. Over the last few years this has been the cause of a worry on the part of many of the allies of the United States: they fear that some in the United States have thought themselves and talked themselves into passivity as far as using their naval instrument is concerned, just because the Soviet Navy has broken the former U.S. position of comfortable monopoly. While it is clear that in most circumstances the Soviet Navy cannot stop the U.S. Navy from carrying out its missions without shooting at it, an attitude of self-denial has been generated. And if Americans say that they are inhibited by Soviet naval presences, third parties will listen and presumably

adjust their behavior in respect to both parties. If Americans do not have confidence in their power, what right have third parties to disagree?

While friends of the United States worry about its post-Vietnam uncertainties, a longer term question concerns the Soviet Union. Will its changing naval capabilities affect its foreign policy intentions? How will forward naval deployment affect Soviet foreign policy in the long term? Will they use their navy to take advantage of opportunities that arise around the world? The answer so far is affirmative, but so far the naval support of foreign policy has been very restricted in scope, limited in impact, and cautious in implementation.[8] Whether or not they use them, forward deployed warships give Soviet decisionmakers new options. And even if the forward deployment was originally a response to U.S. naval activity, it cannot be taken for granted that Soviet decisionmakers will abjure their use for other purposes. Although there is little or nothing to suggest that the Soviet Union planned to create an overseas intervention force on traditional Anglo-American lines, they could cobble something together for a small intervention. When governments look back, they are almost always surprised at the way things turn out.

Perpetuating Old Habits. Warships can create new intentions, but they can also perpetuate old habits. It is sometimes said that the maintenance of Britain's role east of Suez in the 1960's was more useful for the future of the Royal Navy than was the role of the Royal Navy for the future of British policy east of Suez. British decisionmakers were inclined to think that Britain had a military role to perform east of Suez because British ships were there. British ships were there because they had always been there. The existence of warships can adversely affect foreign policy by encouraging policymakers to put the cart before the horse.

Have Gunship Will Travel. In all aspects of life, instruments can shape the will to use them. It is one of the reasons why British policemen are not armed. The idea that weapons shape the will to use them has long been one of the themes of the proponents of disarmament. It is the belief that policies will become unduly militarized if military capabilities are readily available.

Some Americans have always feared that the possession of particular instruments might shape their own will. This was the case with Woodrow Wilson before the First World War and was the case with the cancellation of the proposed Fast Deployment Logistic Ships over half a century later. The idea was classically expressed by Senator Richard Russell: "If Americans have the capability to go anywhere and do anything, we will always be going somewhere and doing something." A recent example of the possession of local naval power shaping the will to use it was the U.S. response to the seizure of the *Pueblo*. The task force which assembled in the Sea of Japan seemed an appropriate response to the seizure of a ship. But the show of force was not a credible threat. Furthermore, it distracted attention from subtler and possibly more efficacious approaches. Whether or not alternative approaches would have secured a more favorable result, at least it would have avoided the unfortunate image of the U.S. Navy as a "paper tiger," snorting around the Sea of Japan with an abundance of politically unusable naval power.

One bizarre example of the instrument shaping the will occurred in April 1973, when President Ghadaffi ordered an Egyptian submarine to sink the *QE II*, in the aftermath of the shooting down by Israel of a Libyan airliner, with heavy loss of life.[9] The episode is an important reminder of the role of

personalities in politics; that the scope for "unreasonable behavior" is greater than political science "analysts" often give credit; and that mature naval officers and effective command-and-control arrangements (the Egyptian submarine commander reported to his own authorities before taking any action) are vital. The possession of even a small amount of naval power can shape some wills.[10] We wait to see whether and how far Soviet decisionmakers may have their wills shaped by their modern and rakish-looking warships.

Warships as Catalysts. In sensitive situations warships can be vehicles of risk as well as instruments of opportunity. They can provoke or attract trouble, and major incidents involving ships (and especially warships) are always dramatic. Attacks on ships (real or imaginary) have played a part in the outbreak of all but one of the major wars in which the United States has been involved in the last 80 years. These incidents were occasions rather than basic causes of war, but they are not to be overlooked because of that.

In the present Soviet-United States naval confrontation, especially in relatively restricted areas such as the Mediterranean, some have feared the possibility that close interaction in a crisis might be the spark which will kindle serious conflict. In a tense crisis, might not one side misperceive the tactical behavior of the other? Might there be a temptation to take preemptive action rather than be sunk first? Close interaction puts a premium on speedy (perhaps hasty) decisions: sink or be sunk.

The Pitfalls of Prestige. Naval prestige, like sex appeal, is a great advantage for those wanting to operate in the world of affairs. But both can lead toward serious pitfalls. Both can be "corrupted."

Navies can be used to support a policy of bluff. The situation does not have to be as dramatic as the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* in 1941. One might expect Soviet naval prestige to fall in "anti-imperialist" circles if it never actually stops the United States or its allies from carrying out their "imperialist" business. The possession of naval prestige might be costly if it produces complacency. One manifestation of this might be a "negative policy of prestige," resulting in a lack of concern about what others think. The United States discovered the possible consequences of this at Pearl Harbor. The greatest naval power in the world was not sufficiently credible to deter attack by a smaller one. Credibility is not synonymous with strength. It is not enough to be strong: it is also necessary to let allies, third parties, and adversaries be aware of that strength. Oversensitivity about prestige, on the other hand, can result in a naval power being dragged into disputes against its interests. One might be tempted to escalate trouble because of a feeling that one's prestige is always on test, and that one must prove oneself. Feeling "chesty" might produce an arrogance which leads a power to have expectations beyond its capabilities. Demands might arise because of the stimulated expectations of local associates. Problems will occur if the latter have expectations which the naval power has neither the capability nor will of fulfilling.

Prestige can lead to pitfalls if it is possessed: it can lead to pitfalls if it is not taken care of. While overemphasis on prestige can encourage the arrogance of power, a neglect of the prestige factor in naval policy might encourage the ambitions of adversaries and might contribute to a lack of self-confidence. One can become victim of one's own negative prestige: this might inhibit a naval power from effectively using its real capabilities. Some observers have criticized what they see as a mistaken policy of negative prestige on the part

of the United States in recent years. One consequence of this has been that third-party perceptions of the naval "balance" give a picture which objectively is too flattering to the Soviet Navy. It also gives a picture of Soviet success and influence-potential which the strained decisionmakers in the Kremlin would find impossible to recognize.

Gorshkov Plus 30. This essay has shown some of the problems involved in managing naval power in distant regions. It has suggested that the Soviet Navy in forward deployment (unless accompanied by great good luck and used with much care) is a risky new feature on the international scene not only for Western and Third World countries, but also for the Soviet Union itself. The Soviet Navy creates options, but it also risks provoking the United States into naval expansion; it risks provoking the suspicions of local powers; it opens up the Soviet Union to manipulation by small powers and to propaganda attacks by adversaries about its "gunboat diplomacy"; it risks being dragged into local squabbles and thus alienating many countries; it risks being sucked into conflicts and having policy shaped in undesired ways; it risks the raising of expectations which cannot be fulfilled without the Soviet Union facing dangers and taking on obligations beyond its norm. These outcomes are all possible. It should not be assumed that the Soviet Navy in forward deployment will always be used cautiously and in very limited ways and will always be attended with success. These risks facing Soviet policy give us ground for speculating about a future Soviet Navy which will be rather different from the one most frequently envisaged in the West.

In a generation's time the Soviet Navy might be like it is today, only slightly more so. Because of economic constraints (and nobody foresees these getting easier for the Soviet leaders), it is not likely to be greatly different in size. But there is an alternative future. This is the possibility that the Soviet Navy will have retreated (except for SSBN's and some residual patrols) to its more traditional continental orientation. This might come about as a result of a combination of developments: (1) The present Soviet Navy will have provoked the U.S. Navy into qualitative and quantitative supremacy in decisive areas. (2) Soviet naval diplomacy over a 20-year period will not have proved a cost-effective instrument of policy: it will have drawn the country into some scrapes with Third World countries, alienated others, and brought about dangerous confrontations with the West; it will have raised some local expectations which could not be fulfilled; it will have been exposed as a paper tiger in revolutionary circles, by looking impressive but not actually being used; and it will have contributed to the development of an "Ugly Russian" image in many parts, magnified by Western, Chinese, and local propaganda.

These developments might not much matter for the Soviet leaders but for one other possibility, namely that they will have decided to drop out of the anti-SSBN mission as a result of *Trident* and whatever comes after it. Despite their traditional emphasis on a damage limitation philosophy, the Soviet leaders are willing to recognize insuperable economic and technological constraints. They called it a day with the ABM, and the same is likely with the anti-SSBN mission unless a massive breakthrough occurs in the detection of nuclear submarines. Even if such a breakthrough occurs, there will still be enormous cost constraints. Thus, over the long term, the Soviet Union will disengage from the anti-SSBN role. Presumably this will not be until the ships presently being built have had their day: they have them and therefore will use them. When the damage limitation mission fades, forward deployment will have to be

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justified in terms of the support of foreign policy rather than in terms of general war missions. If the warships have been used in support of foreign policy only on a small scale, then the benefits will have been small scale; this will mean that the continuance of this role cannot be justified in relation to its enormous costs. On the other hand, if the warships have been used more aggressively and opportunistically, then all the problems and risks of failure will have occurred, and, without a doubt, the problems of exercising naval power will surely be greater than ever in a world of power diffusion and in which increasing importance is attached to maritime sovereignty. The Soviet Navy's blue water will be somebody else's maritime backyard, and other countries will be highly sensitive about its behavior.

For all these reasons, when the second series of *Navies in Peace and War* comes to be published, it will have been written not by a navy commander in chief advocating a larger navy, but instead it will have been written by the political leadership and signed by a pliant CinC. The series will include a strong critique of the adventurism of the Gorshkov period and the accompanying cult of personality. The critique will be supported by numerous statements and eulogies by Western admirals in the 1960's and 1970's describing Gorshkov as a "Russian Mahan." What could be worse for him? "Mahanian" is a pejorative word in the vocabulary of Soviet naval doctrine. *Morskoi sbornik* for 1972-73 will disappear from shelves, and the Soviet Navy will be told to return to its traditions. Not for the first time, Russian warships, after a few decades of out-of-area operations, will be pulled back.

Conclusions. Whether or not the arguments of this essay are correct in detail, they do lead to a number of important conclusions which might be expected to command general support:

- Warships are vehicles of political risk and cost, as well as of military and foreign policy opportunity. Furthermore, the clinical image of a functional relationship between a policy and an instrument of policy is misleading. "Missions" are only part of the story, if its most important part. It is safer to keep in mind that in some circumstances the naval tail may wag the foreign policy dog.
- We should not be unimaginative in our thinking about naval developments. Irrationality, drift, the impact of personality and chance, loss of control, surprise—these are the stuff of politics. The history of strategy is full of cases of weapons and men being used for one purpose, when their initial rationale was very different. We have heard plenty of threats that leave something to chance: we should hear more about analysis and forecasting that leaves something to chance.
- The problems of naval power indicate the complexity of the debate about the utility of superpower navies. If the debate is to be an informed one, more public education is required on naval matters. This puts a responsibility on the service concerned to explain its role carefully to its interested public. Outworn slogans will not suffice.
- In an era of naval diplomacy rather than of war at sea, a premium is put on politically mature and sensitive naval officers steeped in the law and politics of the sea, governmental policy, and international relations.
- As far as policymaking is concerned, it is dangerous to think in terms of "vital interests" in relation to bases or dependence on particular foreign rulers. The term "vital interest" can easily be debased through overuse. History shows that yesterday's vital interest is very often today's bad memory.
- As far as the carrying out of policy is concerned, the variety of political

costs underlines the importance of clear foreign policy goals and good intelligence. This essay is a reminder that the instrument can shape the will, and so a warning against decisions determined by reflex actions rather than due consideration. It is a reminder that influence is almost always two-way, and so a warning about always considering how *one might be* manipulated rather than simply concentrating on how *one will* manipulate. It is a reminder that naval diplomacy is a matter of diplomats on land as well as ships at sea and of the role the former can play to ensure that naval messages are not misperceived. It is a reminder of the importance of imagination in thinking about the ramifications of one's acts. In particular it is a reminder of the importance of imagination in trying to think how one's actions appear through the eyes of others. It is a reminder that a superpower's blue water is almost always somebody else's maritime backyard, and that whatever a superpower navy does there, the local power will always regard it more seriously and more emotionally.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Ken Booth received his B.A. in the Department of International Politics at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. He has taught there since 1967, specializing in strategic studies. His publications include *The Military Instrument in Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1972* (1974); Joint Editor of *Soviet Naval Policy: Objectives and Constraints* (1975); co-author of *Contemporary Strategy: Theories and Policies* (1975), and *Navies and Foreign Policy* (forthcoming, late 1976).

NOTES

1. Lest anyone misunderstand my position on this point, I would refer them to my *Navies and Foreign Policy* (London: Croom Helm, to be published late 1976). Much of the material in this essay is based on episodes, developments, and instrumentalities discussed in detail in this book. For this reason footnotes have been kept to a minimum.
2. The phrase is L.W. Martin's. See his "The Utility of Force," *Adelphi Papers* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1973), No. 102, p. 19.
3. This was most clearly expressed by L.W. Martin, *The Sea in Modern Strategy* (London: Chatto and Windus for the ISS, 1967), p. 140.
4. This phrase was suggested in conversation by Michael K. MccGwire.
5. For the purposes of this essay it is not necessary to become entangled in the thorny problem of the meaning of "bases," "facilities," et cetera.
6. Mohamed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan* (London: Collins, 1975), pp. 47-8, 163-4.
7. Edward Luttwak, *The Political Uses of Seapower* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 67.
8. For a list of such usages, see Robert G. Weinland, "Soviet Naval Operations: 10 Years of Change," chap. 20 in Michael MccGwire, Ken Booth, John McDonnell, *Soviet Naval Policy, Objectives and Constraints* (New York: Praeger, 1975).
9. Heikal, pp. 192-4.
10. The dynamics of weapons innovation increases this problem. Note the relevance of the comment made about hovercraft: "a solution looking for a problem."