Naval War College Review

Volume 23
Number 8 *October*

Article 5

1970

An Evaluation of U.S. Naval Presence in the Indian Ocean

Beth F. Coye

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review

Recommended Citation

Coye, Beth F. (1970) "An Evaluation of U.S. Naval Presence in the Indian Ocean," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 23 : No. 8 , Article 5.
Available at: https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol23/iss8/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

The following is a group research project completed in the School of Naval Warfare during the recent academic year. The project examined U.S. interests, objectives, and courses of action in the Indian Ocean in the light of the withdrawal of the British from East of Suez and the presence of Soviet naval units in the Indian Ocean area. It recommended maintaining a low military profile, mainly through the employment of naval power; transiting the area by operational units of the U.S. Fleet; exercising of Middle East-Africa South of the Sahara contingency plans; developing communications facilities in the Indian Ocean; and encouraging the states of the area to form regional groupings which would effectively fill the vacuum left by the British withdrawal.

AN EVALUATION OF U.S. NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

A Group Research Project

edited by

Lieutenant Commander Beth F. Coye, U.S. Navy

Project Members:

Lieutenant Commander Beth F. Coye, U.S. Navy
Commander Edward R. Hallett, U.S. Navy
Captain Donald V. Martin, U.S. Navy
Colonel Leon K. Pfeiffer, U.S. Air Force, Chairman
Commander John N. Spartz, U.S. Navy

Introduction. The British Government announced in 1968 that it would withdraw all military forces from East of Suez by the end of 1971 except for a small garrison in Hong Kong (a policy which is under review by the recently elected Heath government). Thereafter, units would return only for exercise purposes. This decision, coupled with the appearance of a Soviet naval force off the Arabian Peninsula in 1968 and an almost continuous Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean since then, has focused attention on the strategic problem of access and communication in the area for the West.

Recent Soviet actions indicate that the U.S.S.R. intends to maintain a credible military presence in the Indian Ocean and to increase its trade and

Naval War College Review, Vol. 23 [1970], No. 8, Art. 5

influence in the area. Expansion of its navy as a whole enables the Soviet Union to have an important tactical presence in the Indian Ocean basin. This presence becomes even more significant in view of the fact that soon no Western navy will be operating there in strength. These changes in the Indian Ocean environment, placed in the context of instability and violence in various regions of the area, suggest a reappraisal of the potential role, composition, and basing of U.S. military power in the area.

The U.S. naval forces that are available in the Indian Ocean to serve as a counterweight to those of the Soviet Union are at present minimal. The Middle East Force (MEF) operating out of Bahrein consists of two aged destroyers and a seaplane tender which have been employed in the past mainly to show the flag with a series of port visits. While this force has been adequate until now, it is open to question whether it will continue to be so in the light of increased Soviet activity in the area. In addition, the incipient British withdrawal will also remove from the area a force which might have, in some circumstances, cooperated with the MEF.

Any reexamination of the mission and composition of the MEF must take into account the willingness of the Congress and the public to provide additional resources for the area. The Nixon Doctrine, as stated in the President's receut "State of the World Message," indicates that in the future the policy of the United States will be one of a lowered profile which relies on other nations for a considerable proportion of the resources necessary for their defense. In light of this doctrine, as well as the current reluctance on the part of Congress for new military expenditures or foreign commitment, any decision to increase U.S. effort in the Indian Ocean area would have to be thoroughly justified through U.S. national interests.

* * * * * * *

The entrances to the Indian Ocean are restricted by geography. There are only two means of egress that are of any size—the sea area hetween the Cape of Good Hope and the Antarctic ice and the sea area between the southern tip of Australia and the Antarctic ice. Both of these are too hroad to be easily blocked, but they are usefnl only if the element of time is not pressing. There are three deepwater straits througb the Indonesian Archipelago—Sunda, Lombok, and Wetar—which can be used as long as the islands are in friendly hands. The Strait of Malacca between Sumatra and Malaya is usable but subject to silting. Already some of the new supertankers plying hetween Japan and the Middle East have come very close to touching bottom when transiting this waterway. The Suez Canal, which formerly was the main shipping channel into the Indian Ocean, is now closed as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict and will require a thorough dredging before it is again usable. Other chokepoints also exist in the Gulf of Aden, closing off the Red Sea, and the Strait of Harmaz, which is the narrow entrance to the oil-rich sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf.

The Indian Ocean has four subareas which have a distinct cultural background. The area from South Africa to the Sudan is composed of a multitude of black states which have recently become independent and whose economics are largely based upon subsistence agriculture and the exportation of tropical products. From the Sudan to Pakistan there are a group of Arab States which, for the most part, depend upon the export of crude petroleum for their economic livelihood. The third subarea is the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, which is wrestling with the twin problems of overpopulation and economic stagnation. Last is the East Indian Ocean area, which stretches from Burma to Australia.

The Indian Ocean region as an entity does not play an active role in international politics, but the individual states in it often do. The most populous state in the area, India, has attempted since its independence to follow a policy of nonalignment. This policy has been challenged, however, in light of the border disputes with China and the testing of nuclear weapons by the Chinese and, more recently, this policy appears to be evolving into one with a pro-Soviet and anti-West bias. Indonesia, the fifth most populous state in the world, is now under military rule as a result of an unsuccessful Communist coup under ex-President Sukarno. Australia has in the past been willing to align itself with the West in defense pacts, and it has recently indicated a willingness to assume responsibility for the naval base at Singapore when the British depart. The Republic of South Africa, isolated from the outside world because of its apartheid policy, possesses the infrastructure for a naval establishment which could contest control of the waters surrounding the strategic Cape of Good Hope.

Despite the fact that it is not in the Indian Ocean proper, Japan must be considered in any discussion of the area. As the third industrial power in the world, the Japanese have a large impact on the foreign trade of the area, and they obtain almost nine-tenths of their oil supply by tanker from the Middle East. Their future activities will certainly have an important influence upon the course of events in the Indian Ocean. In assessing this role, it must be stressed that the Western Pacific and the Eastern Indian Oceans are contiguous from either a Japanese or American viewpoint and must be treated accordingly.

Soviet Policy in the Third World. A new look in Soviet foreign policy began to emerge in the mid-1950's when Nikita Khrushchev, as head of both the Communist Party and the Russian state, undertook several measures to restructure Soviet national strategy. Khrushchev's term for the new strategy, peaceful coexistence, was not a new one for the Soviets, but the methods he proposed were, in fact, a unique blend.

The necessity of a new Soviet strategy was obvious in the face of the unquestioned superiority which the West then enjoyed in nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles and the success of NATO and other alliances designed to curb Soviet expansion. Checkmated in any attempt to expand by outright force of arms, the U.S.S.R. broke out of its landlocked isolation and began to compete for influence and prestige outside of the continental sphere of influence which it had obtained as a result of the Second World War.

In the context of this new policy, the Third World has taken on new meaning and greater importance to the Soviet policymaker. Viewing Soviet Third World policy *in toto*, there are several general trends which have emerged within the past 15 years. The Soviets appear at the moment not to be interested in encouraging chaos in this area—they prefer instead to gain influence at the expense of the United States and the West. They have not been adamant about promoting their own models of economic development but have, instead, exhibited a more pragmatic and openminded approach to the problems of modernization. The Soviets have also concentrated their resources and attention on specific nations and geographic areas. (About 70 percent of their economic aid has been given to India, Afghanistan, and the United Arab Republic.) Moscow's efforts in the Third World have also been undertaken with an eye to undercutting and countering Chinese influence and maintaining Soviet leadership of the Communist movement.

The Soviet Union at first attempted

to increase its influence without the supporting effort of deployed military forces. This policy was at least partially the result of Khrushchev's thinking that nuclear weapons technology had severely limited the usefulness of conventional weapons. At the same time, the Soviets were concentrating on defending themselves from the carrier strike forces and the Polaris types of submarines. Failure in Cuba and Khrushchev's ouster brought changes in military construction programs and operations, particularly for the Navy. The Soviets expanded their naval forces, with an emphasis upon nuclear attack submarines, surface ships armed with missiles, and long-range aircraft. Two new capabilities were added in the form of two helicopter carriers and reactivation of the naval infantry (Marines).

But, most significantly, these new ships went to sea. The expanded Soviet Navy, in its new role of "protecting state interests abroad," has contributed much toward increasing Soviet influence among the underdeveloped countries of the world. Since the midsixties the navy has remained very active operationally and over a period of time has acquired significant "blue-water" experience and capability. Through an extensive ship visit program, these new and sophisticated ships have visited many ports in the underdeveloped world, in general impressing the natives with both their presence and capability. In addition, Moscow has stationed large naval forces in the Mediterranean, where they would be in a position to contest the control of that sea with the 6th Fleet or interpose themselves to counter any U.S. intervention. As a result, the nations of the Third World are well aware of the maritime capabilities of the U.S.S.R.

One of the most meaningful developments in the Soviet Union in relation to its status in the eyes of other countries is Moscow's rapidly growing merchant marine. As a result of the 1959 Seven Year Plan for merchant fleet development, by the end of 1965 the fleet had experienced a growth of approximately 250 percent. By the end of 1966 the estimated total was 11.5 million d.w.t.'s. The Soviets today possess well over 1,600 vessels comprising about 13.9 million d.w.t.'s. (In perspective, it must be pointed out that merchant marine fleets of Norway and Japan increased as dramatically as that of the Soviet Union during the years considered above.) With a foreign trade turnover of about $7 billion in 1958, Soviet trade surged to approximately $20 billion in 1968. With this expanded carrying capacity, many new avenues of trade have been opened with underdeveloped countries.

The cultural contacts which have ensued have, in many cases, lessened hostility and suspicion toward Moscow. Many states, notably the United Arab Republic, are becoming more and more dependent economically upon trade with the Soviet Union. In addition, the Soviet Union has earned a significant amount of foreign exchange by underselling its maritime competitors for hauling services. Such activities are likely to expand as soon as the Soviet merchant marine is relieved of the necessity of transporting military assistance to North Vietnam. The opening of the Suez Canal or the end of the war in Vietnam would release many Soviet ships to compete in other areas.

To appreciate the implications of this new look in Soviet foreign policy, the Soviet techniques and instruments of policy should be considered as part of a continuum, all under government control. Soviet political initiatives, trade, aid, military exercises, merchant marine, and presence all can be utilized in conjunction by the Soviet Politburo without gaining the cooperation of any intervening authorities. Real concern must arise if the Soviets continue to expand their conventional intervention capabilities and adopt an interventionist

policy. The vital question is: As the Soviet Union attains more and more power and influence through its forceful military and foreign policies, will it recognize the restraints necessarily inherent in the international system of the 1970's upon any power, but particularly on a superpower?

The Soviet "Threat" in the Indian Ocean. Probably the initial Soviet interest in the Indian Ocean was fishing. The need for protein foods not satisfied by internal production has advanced the Soviet oceangoing fishing fleet to the point where it is the world's largest. A sizable Soviet fishing fleet was operating in the Indian Ocean in the 1950's, and by 1968 its annual catch was about 2 million tons—almost one-third of the total Soviet catch. Eventually this area may yield between 10 and 20 million tons each year. (The current world catch is about 50 million tons.)

Another Soviet activity and interest since the beginning of the space era has been in seaborne support of the various space events. Since 1967 Soviet Space Event Support Ships (SSESS) have been deployed continuously in the Indian Ocean, which provides the Soviets with an emergency sea recovery area for recoveries on the polar axis along the 60° east/120° west meridians, a route which gives maximum overflight of the Soviet Union. Several other types of scientific programs add to the interest, such as hydrographics, hydroacoustics, geomagnetics, and communications. These scientific research interests are related generally to improving techniques in antisubmarine warfare and in the command control of missiles and space shots.

Shipping, both commercial and military, is far more important to the Soviets today than 10 years ago, and it is their principal interest in the Indian Ocean. With the Trans-Siberian rail route at the saturation point and the everincreasing availability of government-owned merchant ships, the movement of material between the east and west coasts of Russia, using a sea route through the Indian Ocean as opposed to the frozen Arctic Ocean, becomes more important. Considerable quantities of supplies for North Vietnam, originating in western Russia, have been sealifted via the Indian Ocean.

The first Soviet combatants appeared in the Indian Ocean in the spring of 1968. This force—a cruiser, two destroyers, and an oiler from the Pacific Fleet—arrived in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. They called at Madras, Bombay, Karachi, Colombo, Basra, Umm Qasr, Bandar Abbas, and Mogadiscio. Since the introduction of this initial force, the Soviet Navy has made it known through continuous deployment and port visits that the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf are areas of Soviet interest. Within a 2-year period the Soviet Navy has made approximately 50 visits to 16 countries.

The first shift of major fleet units between coasts via the southern route began in 1968. The southern route is far less hazardous, provides for good will visits, crew training and relaxation, and the testing of military equipment in a tropical climate.

Perhaps the least definitive but potentially most significant Soviet interest in the Indian Ocean is political in nature. It is strengthened by the British decision to withdraw from East of Suez by 1971. This vast area, surrounded by 32 littoral nation-states, many of which are underdeveloped, provides an atmosphere where flag flying can reap political and economic benefits. The value of having a military presence was demonstrated in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war when Soviet ships in ports of the United Arab Republic apparently shielded those ports from Israeli attack.

Although the Soviet Union is not known to hold any formal base rights agreements in the Indian Ocean littoral, it continues to take advantage of any

situation that might afford a military or logistic foothold. Rather than rely on extensive bases, the Soviets have endeavored to develop afloat replenishment and support capabilities. Submarines on sustained cruises have been accompanied by submarine repair depot ships. However, it is still highly probable that one or more base support agreements could be established within the next few years.

There are many other areas where a military or logistic support precedence may have already been established. Naval assistance has been provided to India and Indonesia; funds and assistance have been provided to Somalia, Yemen, and Aden for construction of port facilities; Soviet shipbuilding has been performed in Indonesia; and Russian naval auxiliaries have been replenished at Singapore, Male, Reunion, Mahe (Seychelles), and Tamatave (Malagasy).

With special emphasis given to the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean, Moscow is projecting a new type of military and political power to enhance the Soviet image in the Third World countries. While the Soviet naval forces known to have plied the Indian Ocean are far from formidable, it would appear that they have served their purpose. First, the numerous port calls made have demonstrated to the Third World nations that there is a Soviet military unit virtually on call when needed. Second, notice has been served to other world powers that the Soviets have an interest in the Indian Ocean. Third, they have attained the capability for sustained naval operations in a tropical environment, although not without some difficulty.

Both the new look in Soviet foreign policy and the growth of Soviet seapower pose some distinct problems for the United States and the West. Although it can be said that the Soviet Navy is an unbalanced fleet, that the Soviet naval construction program is not commensurate with the expansion of their merchant marine, that the Soviets have no large-scale amphibious capability, and that there is no real threat to the security of the United States, there are decidedly serious implications to this emerging phenomenon in the political, psychological, economic, and military spheres.

The Soviets are now able to compete with the West for influence and prestige in the uncommitted nations of the world. For the first time they are projecting themselves into areas in which Western power has been unchallenged. *The inevitable result is an impression of Russian growth and Western decline.* One of the most important considerations in the capability of a state to accomplish its goals and policies is the relationship of this capability with the capability of other states. However small the new capability of the Soviets, it introduces a new factor into the equation of the general balance of power. Since the nuclear age the two superpowers have been in the delicate position of attempting to achieve points for their own value systems without upsetting the overall balance. The key to this effort is that one must be in a position of strength if one is to compete. Until recently the Soviets did not have this bargaining position other than in their own sphere on the European Continent. This shift in Soviet policy now puts the Soviets in a real bargaining position with the West in the strategy of conflict. This new relationship is developing just at the time that domestic pressures directed at the Government are calling for less U.S. presence and commitments in far-off countries. In certain political-military situations, as this relates to Third World areas, the Soviets can now be looked upon with a considerable degree of credibility in which previously the West was unchallenged.

The fast-growing Soviet merchant fleet could presage many new situations

for the West. The most significant would be its use in any effort to establish an alternate transportation system to the Trans-Siberian railroad by means of an oceanic route through the Indian Ocean. The potential which this might provide the Soviet power base is considerable. The economic and military aid programs have already had a very definite impact upon East/West relationships and no doubt will continue to play a role in the Soviets' strategy. Other economic implications include competition with the Soviets for raw materials from Africa and Asia and the introduction of Soviet methodology and technology into these regions.

The growth of the Soviet Navy and merchant marine has several important military implications. In any future crisis situation the options of the U.S. Navy will be limited by the very presence of a significant Soviet naval capability. The Soviets have introduced to Western navies what has been called the tactic of interposition, which costs relatively little and exploits the threat of force rather than force itself. Where the U.S. Navy once went freely, it will now be confronted with the possibility of opposition.

While present Soviet naval strategy does not provide a capability to contest control of the sea on a global basis, it does allow for a formidable force in confined waters within range of Soviet land-based air. The Soviets are now in a position to contest control of strategic waterways which were hitherto not traversed by combatants potentially hostile to the West. In the Indian Ocean the Cape of Good Hope, which is utilized by large and slow supertankers transporting oil from the Middle East to Europe; the Bab el Mandab Straits which guard the southern end of the Red Sea; the Harmaz Straits, which form a narrow entrance to the oil-rich Persian Gulf; and the Strait of Malacca, which is presently used by tankers carrying crude oil from the Middle East to Japan are all vulnerable to Soviet naval action. Even a relatively modest surface or submarine force in the Indian Ocean could contest one or more of the above waterways. In fact, it probably would require a substantial force to counteract such a threat, especially in view of the very limited U.S. surveillance resources in the area.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union, by moving to sea and at the same time professing belief in the freedom of the seas, has demonstrated that it views the struggle for power to be largely economic and political, with low-level military conflict playing a limited role. The Soviets now have an important stake in securing order on the world's oceans. Should they in the future become more and more dependent upon maritime transportation vice the Trans-Siberian railroad or should they become dependent upon any of their trading partners for any strategic materials, their vulnerability to naval action will be greater. In these circumstances they may, as in the matter of strategic arms limitation, find they have a commonality of interest with the West.

U.S. Policy in the Third World. The tenor and tone for U.S. foreign policy into at least the end of 1972 were laid out rather clearly during the first year of the Nixon administration. The requirements implicit in this policy will affect the U.S. courses of action in the Indian Ocean area.

Certainly the President's Guam pronouncement—the Nixon Doctrine—is the key. President Nixon reiterated three principles as guidelines for future American policy toward Asia in his "Address to the Nation" on 3 November 1969:

> First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments.
>
> Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the

Naval War College Review, Vol. 23 [1970], No. 8, Art. 5

> freedom of a nation allied with us, or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security.
>
> Third, in cases involving other types of aggression we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.

President Nixon expanded this doctrine in the fall of 1969, and in an interview in January 1970 Secretary of State Rogers put fnrther substance into the general direction of U.S. foreign policy. The Secretary inclnded the concepts of a lowered profile, the reduced presence of the United States, and more emphasis on regional cooperation. At the same time he made it definite that the new general posture did not equate to neoisolationism.

The "State of the World Message" submitted to the Congress 18 February 1970 is a summary of the basic concepts of U.S. foreign policy operation which were developed in the administration's first year of office. In addition to the Nixon Doctrine, the message emphasizes two other principles—America's strength and negotiation—neither of which is new. It is in the application of these principles that a change of direction may eventually occur.

Thns, one is seeing the unfolding of a new U.S. military strategy which probably will be somewhere between flexible response and massive retaliation, with the Nixon administration questioning the viability of flexible response as professed by the New Frontiersmen. The first results have included: A new goal for general-purpose forces (one major and one minor contingency); a policy which encourages and assists friends in strengthening their own military capabilities; retention of substantial conventional forces as a part of the balanced deterrent; and greater emphasis on military assistance, if it can be effectively used by local forces.

What are the realities of this new posture of U.S. foreign policy? In terms of overall military strategy, the new posture has put some restraints on just how much and how far our commitments extend. Explicit in the Nixon Doctrine is the balance-of-forces concept, which says, more realistically than the two previons administrations, that we cannot afford to be a world policeman and must apportion and commit our military forces with greater care and more restraint than in the last decade.

There are still many nnanswered questions regarding how many U.S. forces will be required, what kinds of U.S. assistance will be provided, and when and where those forces and that assistance will be committed under the new requirements. Nonetheless, other practical considerations have already influenced the strategy. The costs of maintaining oversize conventional forces are unpalatable to the Congress and the taxpayers in view of the seemingly more urgent domestic needs and constitnent pressures therefor. The experience of Vietnam has created skepticism concerning the validity of flexible response. The net overall result is that the administration's $71 billion military budget (FY 71) represents the lowest share for defense of the total budget in the last 20 years. The administration is determined to shift Federal resonrces away from the military, to deemphasize nonnuclear capabilities, and at the same time to maintain sufficient strategic forces.

Any reductions in U.S. military capability reflect not only domestic and military considerations, but also the effect of the international environment upon U.S. foreign policymakers. U.S. interests, vital or otherwise, change according to how the policymaker per-

ceives the threat and the status of interstate relationships worldwide.

Many of these external factors which relate to the Indian Ocean area have been mentioned. One of the most striking is the realization that the Indian Ocean region is not a political entity but a geographical region consisting of areas which the United States perceives as south Asia, Southeast Asia, east Asia, Australia, east and southern Africa, and the Middle East. There is no basis to assume that a future pattern of power in this entire ocean area will develop based upon naval or maritime forces.

The most significant political new arrival in the Indian Ocean today is not the U.S.S.R. but Japan—the key to much of the Eastern Indian Ocean region. Japan is important because it is the only nation in East Asia potentially powerful enough to play a major security role in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. The third industrial power of the world, Japan's economic growth is probably the most significant happening in Asia today. Its interests in the Indian Ocean area are expanding rapidly. There is no question that Japan will play a significant economic role in Asia, the Pacific, and the overlapping areas in the coming decade. Japan's economic power base and her economic thrust throughout the area are extremely important by any measure.

From the vantage point of the U.S. policymaker, it is most logical that Japan gradually assume some of the responsibilities in East Asia presently being carried by the United States. Recognizing the potential of a new United States/Japanese relationship, President Nixon has stated that Japan's partnership with us will be a key to the success of the Nixon Doctrine in Asia. On the other hand, Japan's future political and military/security roles in the Asian area in the 1970's represent delicate relationships. There are psychological and political factors inside and outside Japan which inhibit it from increasing its military presence.

The current military policy of Japan envisions that the defense of the home islands would require U.S. support in accordance with the United States-Japan Mutual Security Treaty. The Japan Self-Defense Force (some 250,000 men) which is still small in relation to Japan's immense economic strength, is to serve in a supporting role.

It is an indisputable fact that Japan, if she so chooses, can assume a greater military role in the Indian Ocean. Her gross national product is the third largest in the world and is rapidly closing on the now sluggish performance of the Soviet Union. Her technological capabilities, given adequate time and resources, are great. This was recently illustrated by the launching in February of 1970 of an artificial earth satellite.

Japan also possesses the ability to quickly and easily produce nuclear weapons, and her refusal to be bound by the nonproliferation treaty is a matter of great significance.

Recognizing that economic assistance is a major instrument in Third World policy, the reality is that the FY 71 budget items for overseas operations constitute the lowest U.S. foreign aid program since its inception, as prescribed by Congress. Total outlays proposed are $1.72 billion and $625 million for the Agency for International Development and military aid, respectively. Assuming that Third World areas are crucial in maintaining world stability and a balance of power, it is suggested that any past guidelines for U.S. policy in these areas are outdated and that a new approach is required. This new approach very likely would include less intensive U.S. client relationships, more multilateral and regional groupings, and exploration of possible areas of Soviet/United States cooperation. In the Asian environment our future policy must involve considerably greater United States/Japanese coordination.

Naval War College Review, Vol. 23 [1970], No. 8, Art. 5

Whatever the outcome, reevaluation must encompass a definition of the security interests at stake. It may well be that the American public will not accept the Executive's appraisal. The challenge will be to formulate a national strategy which considers the projection and promotion of U.S. power in terms of *all* the instruments of foreign policy. Even more difficult will be the task of gaining public acceptance and congressional support.

U.S. Interests and Objectives. The British decision to pull back East of Suez has telescoped the time factor in this entire area for decisionmakers who formulate U.S. strategic interests. In the past there has been sufficient European interest and commitment in the area so that the United States had only to give moral support to its European allies and to the key indigenous countries with but a token of force. The historical European interest in the basin was the protection of trade and colonies. The British, for example, maintained rapid and secure lines of communication and control of the Indian Ocean waters to deny intervening powers easy invasion into India. Parenthetically, it can be stated that British influence or power in the area was possibly overrated. It was a negative rather than a positive control and, for the most part, was limited to securing the navigation of the Persian Gulf against threats. The British were a power depending more on the absence of any rival than on actual power assertion by which it might be confronted or attacked. A logical question in view of present major power policies is whether the Soviet Union can replace the British using the same strategy.

The immediate problem for those formulating the objectives which promote and protect U.S. interests in the area is the determination of an adequate counterbalancing substitute for the departing European forces. Is anything additional required? No doubt the United States will continue to have important interests in the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent throughout this decade, and after the planned British withdrawal the interests and commitments of the United States will continue to require forward deployment of forces for protection through deterrence. Actually the United States has important interests in all of the subareas of the basin.

A basic interest is projection of a positive U.S. strategy of peace, promoting the United States and countering Communist influence and presence. If this part of the world is to succeed in achieving the kind of peace espoused by U.S. leadership for centuries, and most recently by President Nixon in his "State of the World Message," the West must present a positive approach. At the same time, the lessons of the cold war emphasize that to the nationalistic frame of mind there is a very fine line between Communist and democratic "imperialism." Positively projecting Western influence while simultaneously riding with the forces of change is a feat of balance which is extremely difficult to maintain over the long term.

An important continuing interest is maintaining and promoting stability in the Persian Gulf, the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Africa—stability which allows greater political and economic development. Significantly, the Indian Ocean borders on the second, fifth, and sixth most populous countries in the world (India, Indonesia, and Pakistan, respectively). Because the majority of these littoral countries are underdeveloped, a certain amount of instability is inevitable. Concurrently, the strong element of nationalism imbedded in the governmental process of most underdeveloped, emerging states is part of their potential and strength. This same nationalism very likely precludes a cordial reception to any significant form of U.S. military presence.

The political dynamics of the area—complex and involved—are not conducive to uninterrupted success for this interest. China is constantly attempting to disrupt or to weaken Indian unity. India and Pakistan will continue to have border difficulties exacerbated by Soviet arms, which are being shipped to both countries. These and other factors complicate the achievement of long-term regional stability.

Promoting, protecting, and securing U.S. and allied economic rights to important oil resources, current and future investments, expansion of trade, and scientific and technical data is another basic U.S. interest. The Persian Gulf region supplies nearly 60 percent of Western Europe's oil, 90 percent of Japan's, 65 percent of Australia's, and 83 percent of Africa's. For consumption within the United States, this oil is of little significance; however, it is used in great quantities by the United States in Southeast Asia and fuels U.S. and NATO allied forces in Western Europe for their operations. Also, U.S. private investment in this oil is enormous.

The degree of U.S. interest in Middle East oil is a controversial matter. However, in view of the above considerations, it is obvious that there is a major U.S. interest in Middle Eastern oil, particularly in relation to its continued availability to U.S. allies. At the same time it is realized that this interest is not one which calls for special commitments or for the use of military power. A corollary to heavy U.S. investment in the oil and allied vital interest in it is the favorable influence which Middle Eastern oil gives to the international balance of payments.

The Pacific-Indian Ocean area has achieved parity with Latin America and Europe as an outlet for U.S. trade and investment, and, although direct American trade and investment in the area have not increased as rapidly as in the Pacific, the region is a principal market for Japan and Australia, whose economies are becoming increasingly linked to that of the United States.

In view of these economic considerations, the strategic interests of the non-Communist world, whether they are involved directly or indirectly in the economic growth of the area, would be affected adversely if freedom of movement in and out of strategic waterways were curtailed or denied. Therefore, a basic U.S. interest is assisting in maintaining secure lines of communication and freedom of the seas, including the right of innocent passage.

President Nixon recently reemphasized that the United States has interests in defending certain land areas abroad as well as essential air and sea lines of communication. These derive from the political and economic importance of our allies, our desire to prevent or contain hostilities which could lead to major conflicts and thereby endanger world peace, and the strategic value of the threatened area as well as its line of communication.

Another fundamental U.S. interest has materialized in the light of the Nixon Doctrine: The interest in a partnership approach to the Indian Ocean area which includes more sharing of the military and economic burdens. There are many factors which preclude and deny unilateral U.S. action in the area. Not only must other allies contribute to the security and development of the area, but the indigenous countries must undertake self-help.

To support these diverse interests, the following U.S. objectives appear to be realistic and within the bounds of the Nixon strategy for the 1970's.

- To help create an environment in which important countries such as Iran, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia can maintain autonomy through their own efforts and achieve economic and political stability. Speaking to the critics of this objective, this does not entail acquiring client states which are to eventually be U.S. satellites.

• To find the proper mix of economic and military assistance, largely through multilateral and regional organizations such as the Asian Development Bank and aid from capable allies, e.g., Japan.

• To maintain sufficient military forces, capabilities, base rights, and facilities to support U.S. foreign policy, strategy, and economic interests; and to increase U.S. visibility in the area.

• To supplant the British presence with a combination of U.S., Western, and allied presence designed to limit Soviet and Chinese initiatives.

In the light of U.S. desire to protect U.S. interests in the Indian Ocean and counter Soviet and Chinese initiatives in the area, the creation of a highly visible multilateral military presence, primarily naval, should be a long-term aim. Special effort should be made to include Japan. The United States should encourage the nations of the area to operate their forces in a multinational naval capacity. The Navy of the Republic of South Africa should be invited to participate even though political difficulties are to be anticipated. This state possesses the only strong maritime force in southern Africa. This type of unified presence will tend to protect all nations' interests and promote stability in the area. It will promote regional security conceptions.

• To maintain a viable United States/Japanese partnership toward solving the economic, political, and security problems in the Indian Ocean.

• To establish a communications station, support base, and airfield and maintain present satellite tracking facilities in the Indian Ocean area. Present gaps in intelligence collection must be filled.

An annoying problem which U.S. planners currently face in the Indian Ocean area is the scarcity of intelligence data. It is possible that this too can be at least partially alleviated on a multilateral basis. While the United States could conceivably construct, on its own initiative, a communications station, support base, and airfield in the area with its own resources, regional cooperation in the surveillance of the entrances to the Indian Ocean and the exchange of intelligence information concerning naval and other activity in the area might conceivably narrow the intelligence gap at minimum cost and with a minimum of U.S. presence.

This collection requirement has become more critical with the increasing activity of the Soviet maritime forces. An alternative could be using seaborne platforms vice fixed bases. Certainly the bulk of the surveillance requirements will rest with naval forces. Collection requirements range from being knowledgeable of the trade traffic to monitoring the space capsule recoveries of the Soviet Union and missile testing by various countries. Since the Indian Ocean is so vast, it is necessary that comprehensive surveillance be maintained along its perimeters, especially the Cape of Good Hope and the eastern straits. Such capability would identify the traffic and any subsequent intelligence requirements could be assigned as necessary.

Communications, fuel supply, and maintenance facilities for naval units are marginal in the Indian Ocean area. Several ports can provide fuel or bunkering supplies from commercial vendors and do so for many of the naval forces operating in the area. Except for South Africa and Singapore on opposite sides of the ocean, only India possesses facilities for shipbuilding. Any naval force which operates permanently in the Indian Ocean will require extensive logistic support.

• To comply with treaty commitments and other obligations and agreements such as providing nuclear protection to allies while simultaneously preventing nuclear proliferation.

• To avoid a military confrontation with the Soviet Union and Communist

China. Other than the India/China scenario, the remoteness of such a direct confrontation in the Indian Ocean area engenders apathy toward consideration of the objective. Nonetheless, there are treaty agreements and interests which, in the long term, could enhance the possibility of such confrontation.

- To prevent dominance by a hostile power. (Dominance or predominance as used in this context is defined as the ability of an outside power to use the resources of a country or area for its purposes without effective opposition.) In view of the professed ultimate goal of the Communists, the United States cannot accept dominance of the Indian Ocean area by either the Chinese or the Soviets. Of course, the more immediate threat is the Soviet one.
- To protect U.S. property and be capable of evacuating U.S. citizens.
- To secure scientific and technical data from the Indian Ocean area.

Many Americans, perhaps the majority, dismiss U.S. interests in the far-off lands of the Indian Ocean basin as being nonvital and therefore not to be reckoned with, at least in this period of cutbacks and reassessments. The single equation of the Nixon strategy, the basic geopolitical considerations concerning the littoral countries, the probable British withdrawal, as well as Soviet and Chinese penetration suggest that dismissal become reappraisal—the United States does have important interests in the Indian Ocean area.

U.S. Courses of Action. Of necessity, the Nixon Doctrine and U.S. policies toward the littoral countries of the Indian Ocean, matched with economic and military commitments, play an important part in any course the United States decides to take. The approaches U.S. foreign policy could adopt in the Indian Ocean area vary from complete withdrawal to maintaining a full-fledged Indian Ocean fleet with attendant support requirements. At any level of involvement the United States could build the machinery for establishing regional alliances in which it would be a major or a minor supporter. Except for complete withdrawal, any level of operation would most likely require some basing facilities.

The U.S. Middle East Force (MEF) consists of a command ship (converted auxiliary seaplane tender) and two destroyers based at Bahrein in the Persian Gulf. The five main functions of U.S. forces in the East Indian Ocean are: Showing the flag; protection and assistance of U.S. merchant shipping and maintenance of free passage in international waterways; evacuation operations; administration of military assistance programs; and communications and intelligence collection activities.

Recognizing that the present three-ship MEF is little more than a presence, the United States is not in a position to withdraw it, considering the U.S. interests and objectives at stake. The United States is losing its communication station in Peshawar, Pakistan, by enforced abandonment, but it will retain other communication stations in the area. Most of the communications and intelligence collection activities are carried out by special groups, with the MEF making highly valued contributions.

The principal value of the MEF is political. The ships usually operate singly in a continuous round of port visits to coastal countries from East Pakistan to Mozambique, including the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea area. The Commander of the MEF, an admiral, travels by air to visit some of the other countries such as Nepal and Afghanistan and coastal countries where port visits are precluded because of ship transit times. Although it is difficult to assess, it is generally concluded that the present level of activity does, in fact, indicate to local governments that the United States has some interest in their development and stability.

Although the primary military role

of the MEF is escort and protection of U.S. shipping under threat and assistance in evacuation operations, its actual military capability for combat contingencies is virtually nil. If the MEF is to be considered a deterrent to a shipping threat, U.S. policymakers must realize that such a deterrent may be challenged. A small symbolic force may be a deterrent to a power not wishing to engage in conflict; however, if it were to be challenged, then the United States would be faced with a choice of withdrawal or intervening with greater force. Withdrawal would forfeit the credibility of this deterrent, but reinforcement would confirm it. In other words, a small force in a dangerous area may be as much an invitation to conflict and a source of involvement as that of acting as a deterrent. It should also be kept in mind that military capabilities of any degree, once in an area, become themselves an interest and commitment where none may previously have existed.

The risk of retention of the MEF might be involvement in crises where U.S. interests are negligible or absent altogether or that the presence of the MEF might provoke or become a focal point of a crisis. However, by the very fact that it is there now, a withdrawal might be interpreted by friendly nations as an abandonment of U.S. interests and commitments and by the Soviets and radical Arab States as an open invitation to step up their initiatives. The present MEF is more or less accepted by the states in the area, inexpensive, and apparently accomplishing the modest political role assigned to it. In the long run, the Soviets might read the MEF withdrawal as an open invitation to their own unchallenged entry. A significant growth of Soviet presence in the Arabian Sea area could, at least potentially, present the United States with serious problems.

The present composition of the MEF must be considered. Operating under the shadow of the United Kingdom presence, it has been an adequate expression of U.S. interest in the area. However, the likely British withdrawal and the advent of newer and more modern Soviet ships cause a diminished image to be projected by the obsolete U.S. ships. It is probable that this image will no longer signal effective U.S. support of interest and commitments. Even relatively unsophisticated states are capable of recognizing military inferiority of an overaged seaplane tender and two obsolescent destroyers and, accordingly, could equate inferior military capabilities with a very low level of interest. If the United States intends to retain the MEF in the area, it should be sufficiently modern so as to not suffer damaging comparison to other forces.

If the MEF—any size—is required in the Indian Ocean, then the basing rights of such a force become very important. With the closure of the Suez Canal in 1967, the policy of exchanging 6th Fleet ships on a 6-month rotational basis to the MEF was no longer feasible. Instead, ships are now detailed on a more permanent 1-year tour. U.S. visibility is now more pronounced as the ships are brought alongside the dock at Bahrein for periods of up to 2 weeks of overhaul. The issue of U.S. basing rights on Bahrein is currently in an unsettled state. An important facet in delaying a U.S. withdrawal from Bahrein until after the British leave would be the undue attention an abrupt departure would create, regardless of the reason.

In April 1967 Britain and the United States signed an agreement which gives the United States the right to build and use naval, air, or communication facilities in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT—Farquhar, Aldabra, Desroches, and the Chagos Archipelago. The development of a communication site for tracking and relay purposes could prove to be a most valuable location for control of strategic forces and could also be a standby communica-

tion facility. The availability of a staging base for logistic support to a small MEF, as well as an operating base for ASW and surveillance aircraft, would be invaluable for naval operations in the area.

By operating a base in the BIOT, no problem of increasing the number of ships in the MEF would arise from the increased visibility, as there would be no host government. Political disadvantages of the level of presence being carefully related to a host country's perception of the threat would be eliminated. With basing facilities removed from a highly visible area, a force could be controlled to present a managed visibility, and if withdrawal from any port of call were required, it could be accomplished with minimum turbulence involving foreign implications, either political or economic.

As discussed previously, Soviet intentions and desires in the Indian Ocean area are not fully known; however, if the United States is to be in a position to protect its interests, the threat which the Soviets are presenting must be adequately assessed. This requires intelligence-gathering facilities and a surveillance capability so that Soviet shipping and combatant maneuvers can be monitored. The need for building an airstrip to handle an air surveillance capability provides added impetus toward establishing a base in the BIOT.

In order to present a managed, flexible visibility in the Indian Ocean, the United States must conduct combatant transits from the Atlantic and/or Pacific Commands through the Indian Ocean on other than a continuous basis, either in combination with the MEF or separately. These transits should make port calls as desired or required. This would signal to the Soviets, as well as others, that the United States has the intention of keeping its commitments and will not abandon the area. Acting in concert with the Nixon Doctrine, heavy U.S. unilateral involvement in the Indian Ocean is not feasible. The idea of going it alone should be discarded as rapidly as possible in favor of more multilateral and regional defense arrangements.

The force structures of the allied navies in the Indian Ocean area are such that none of them can protect their own interests independently. At the same time there are a considerable number of forces of other countries which will play a role in any projected U.S. profile:

- The Royal Australian Navy will acquire greater regional importance and has already extended its surveillance well into the Indian Ocean. Australia maintains close ties with the United States, the United Kingdom, and other Commonwealth navies and conducts periodic exercises with navies of SEATO countries.

- Indonesia has the largest indigenous maritime force in Southeast Asia. However, the capability of the Indonesian Navy has greatly diminished in the past several years due to a deteriorating material condition. From 1958 to 1965 Indonesia received substantial naval assistance from the Soviet Union; however, that assistance has all but ceased, and spare parts and technical assistance for maintaining the Soviet naval vessels which were provided have not been forthcoming.

- The Imperial Iranian Navy (IIN) is in the process of expansion. As a member of CENTO, Iran has to rely on the aid of CENTO members to defend the Persian Gulf area. The IIN has conducted yearly naval operations with the United Kingdom, exercised with CENTO countries, and periodically conducted naval exercises with Pakistan.

- The Royal New Zealand Navy has the smallest naval force in Asia. However, its existing force is active in its naval operations with SEATO, ANZUS, and the Australia-New Zealand-Malaysia Agreement (ANZAM).

- The Royal Thai Navy, one of the better navies in Southeast Asia, maintains close ties with the United States

and exercises with the U.S. Navy and SEATO navies as circumstances permit.

- The South African Navy (SAN) is the most effective navy in sub-Sahara Africa. Other than the Simonstown Agreement with the United Kingdom, which provides a joint responsibility for defense of sea routes around the Cape of Good Hope and joint training programs and exercises, South Africa is not a member of any treaty organization or pact except the United Nations and has no other defense agreements. The SAN has conducted naval exercises in the past with the United Kingdom and the United States, but not recently.

- The Indian Navy (IN) is the largest in South Central Asia. Though India's policy of nonalignment precludes its participation in regional military pacts, it has increased naval ties with several African and Indian Ocean countries. The IN is expanding through assistance and procurement of ships from the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. This expansion, juxtaposed with the British withdrawal, increases the importance of the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean in the 1970's.

- The Pakistani Navy has a small force and compares favorably with those of other developing countries. Though a member of SEATO and CENTO, Pakistan has participated in recent naval exercises only as an observer.

- The French Navy, the largest Free World continental European naval force in the Indian Ocean area, maintains a naval base as well as a few ships in Djibouti, French Somaliland. France is expected to evacuate its port in Djibouti, French Somaliland, by 1975. This specific removal of presence could touch off an Ethiopian-Somali confrontation, as the area is contested. Only the presence of the French has muted the problem.

French interest in the western Indian Ocean area dictates its continued presence. Whether or not France is interested in participating in any kind of regional security arrangement is not known. If the threat to its security in the area were to become great enough, it might show some interest. Until that time it is doubtful that France will do any more than protect its own interests. Nevertheless, the matter of regional security with French participation should be explored, particularly along the lines of the French providing the senior officer and larger ships.

- Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) has grown to become the strongest non-Communist navy in Asia. If there are no unfavorable domestic, political, or economic developments, the MSDF may be expected to increase both in size and effectiveness. Japan is one of the few powers today who can afford to assume a greater military effort. In the development of United States/Japanese relations it is absolutely essential that the United States strongly urge Japan to fulfill its responsibilities in protecting Western interests. Regarding Japanese protection of her own interests, the U.S. goal should be involvement only to such an extent as to ensure Japan's reliability in any military endeavor.

Many of these navies have already established a rapport amongst themselves and have conducted joint exercises. This kind of cooperation and machinery promotes U.S. interest as well, and thus the United States should foster such relationships and assist with military forces and economic and military aid. Recognizing that the naval resources of most littoral countries are very limited, the United States must encourage its allies to exercise periodically in the Indian Ocean. This has obvious advantages to the United States and would signal the Soviets, the radical Arab States, and any other revolutionary elements that the indigenous countries are willing to commit forces in the maintenance of stability and peace in their area. In the final analysis, U.S.

interests would be served best were the United States to hold the level of its involvement in the Indian Ocean area to a low profile, while assisting the littoral countries in protecting their own interests.

In conclusion, a low profile course of action comes closest to meeting U.S. objectives in the Indian Ocean area. The following specific elements are required for the United States to retain a low military profile with pronounced visibility and at the same time provide a blend of diplomatic, economic, and military measures in the Indian Ocean area:

(1) Encourage the Western countries to continue their economic and military aid programs and assist them as required or requested.

(2) Encourage continued bilateral and multilateral exercising of allied naval forces under existing arrangements and press for greater involvement of France, the United Kingdom, and Japan through their present interests in the Indian Ocean area.

(3) Establish a communication and satellite tracking station in the BIOT with an air facility to fulfill support requirements and provide for an air surveillance capability to be operated from the island on a required basis. This facility should be viewed as a possible alternate staging base for the MEF. It is not in the best interest of the United States to become embroiled in any problem over the use of Bahrein. Removing the MEF gradually to a base in the BIOT and eliminating permanent basing rights in Bahrein could serve to prevent undue alarm to the friendly Persian Gulf states.

(4) Maintain the present size of the MEF at three ships and modernize the force as a further display to all parties of U.S. commitment to the area.

(5) Schedule periodic transit of the U.S. 6th and/or 7th Fleet combatants (air and surface elements) through the area. The size of the transit force and the exercises being conducted should fit the level of visibility desired. The primary purpose, under existing circumstances, should be the flag showing through port calls.

(6) Exercise Commander in Chief Middle East and Africa South of the Sahara (CINCMEAFSA) area contingency plans periodically, primarily as a show-of-force operation and a command and control exercise.

If the Soviet presence or threat increases, additional elements could be employed to counter this. However, at the present time the measures stipulated should be sufficient to fulfill U.S. commitments and demonstrate resolve in carrying out our objectives in the Indian Ocean area.

* * * * * * *

The United States has important political, economic, scientific, and military interests and objectives in the Indian Ocean area. Although the Soviet naval presence does not now constitute a military threat to the United States of any real significance in itself, its maritime forces are an adjunct to Soviet strategy and foreign policy and could greatly affect the balance of power and stability of the littoral countries and regions of the Indian Ocean. This presence should be watched carefully and countered in order to promote and protect U.S. interests and objectives. The probable British withdrawal from the area at the same time that the United States is reassessing its policies complicates the task of promoting and protecting U.S. interests, but it can be accomplished under the guidelines of the Nixon Doctrine by means of a course of action depicting a low military posture and profile, predominately naval. Visibility and surveillance can be increased in conjunction with remaining Western Powers such as France and other capable allies such as Australia and Japan by means of partnerships,

multilateral arrangements, joint ventures, and mutual assistance. However, in the final analysis, the United States must have sufficient military strength to support its foreign policy for the area. As a minimum this means modernization of the ships of the Middle East Force, construction of a communications station and related support facilities and runway in the BIOT area, periodic exercising of MEAFSA area contingency plans, increased emphasis on the area by naval forces of the Atlantic and Pacific Commands, expanded surveillance, and economic and military assistance to key countries.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk, speaking at the commissioning of the aircraft carrier *America* said: "The Navy can move everywhere . . . it can pack a big punch, or a small one, or readily perform the peaceful missions of mercy or of good will. . . ." There is, of course, a panoply of Navy firepower to dazzle the eye and ear. But the emphasis is upon its amazing selectivity to meet given situations rather than upon its potentially awesome totality.

Julian Hartt, Los Angeles Times
quoted in Direction, March 1965