

1969

## Challenge

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### Recommended Citation

Colbert, Richard G. (1969) "Challenge," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 22 : No. 6 , Article 1.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol22/iss6/1>

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# CHALLENGE!

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A new reality is symbolized by the photograph on the front of this issue. Having rested secure and unchallenged for a generation, the U.S. Navy is now faced with a worthy rival, competent on the sea and effective in its mission, growing in capability and ambition. It is the purpose of this special issue of the *Naval War College Review* to analyze the nature of this rivalry in as many of its aspects as possible: to trace the history of Soviet maritime power to its present magnitude; to comprehend the motivation which may be propelling its development; and to project, if possible, the latent and overt implications which it holds for the United States and the free world in general.

The task outlined is one of daunting proportions, but it is believed to be a necessary one. The enormous effort put forth by one of the two greatest world powers, an effort so immediately affecting the interests of all nations, deserves the closest attention, especially on the part of those who make the sea their career. The Soviet maritime expansion has been truly phenomenal. From the battered disarray of 1945 has arisen a large, versatile, modern navy and a dramatically expanded and versatile merchant marine. Both can and do traverse the world's oceans with freedom and confidence.

No nation which has championed freedom of the seas as has the United States could deny the right of the U.S.S.R. to exercise this new flexibility.

Nor are the concepts put forward between these covers directed simply toward the implications of military confrontation in hot war. It is intended here rather to deal more with the ramifications of this new rivalry in the context of nonbelligerent, cold war competition. Each increment of Soviet maritime power provides the Kremlin with an expanded range of options, all of which affect those open to the United States--usually adversely. One has only to consider the difference between our position in the Mediterranean today and that of a few years ago to feel the force of this relationship.

The Soviet seapower potential, recent though it may be, is far from superficial: it represents a concerted thrust of an entire economy. Drawing on all available sources, from U.S. lend-lease to native initiative, the U.S.S.R. has constructed over the last two decades a technological foundation which is at once broad and profound. Training and educational facilities in marine engineering, naval architecture and other sciences have drawn level with or exceed our own, as has the caliber of personnel whom they graduate. Physical installations such as shipyards are as sophisticated as they are numerous. It is with these tools that Soviet maritime strength is being fashioned--not only in

their navy, but in their merchant marine, in their ubiquitous high seas fishing fleet, in their oceanographic research and investigation of the resources of the deep sea. The new challenger confronts the United States with an aggregate of all these factors, fused together by a unified central authority and deployed individually or in concert as a corporate vehicle of national policy.

Projections of future Soviet maritime production can be based upon what the U.S.S.R. itself has publicly established as its objectives, but these goals and their means of implementation can change rapidly. Any hazarded estimates as to intentions, particularly regarding broad Russian policy, must perforce assume the tenuous nature of conjecture. But if the future is murky, the indications of the present and immediate past are manifestly clear. We are witnessing today the burgeoning of a Russian ambition which has been germinating for generations. It has been the frustrating legacy of that body of land and that people to be denied the physical characteristics, the geography conducive to maritime growth. Confined on the west by Europe, on the north by ice, and on the south by the subcontinent--and open on the east to competition with that epitome of maritime nations, Japan--historically the prospects for Russian maritime strength have been geographically discouraging. Most discouraging has been the lack of warm water ports.

By initiative and application these obstacles have been overcome, but not removed. The U.S.S.R. has been acutely aware of both the potential advantages of its newly acquired seapower, and the necessity to use it to exploit and consolidate its position on a global scale. Domestically, considerable economic

benefits are to be reaped from expanded commercial horizons. Vis-a-vis the Western allies, the Soviet Union need no longer draw its lines of national defense along its territorial borders; nor are offensive opportunities limited to those based on land. And with regard to the third world, whole new vistas spread out for the efficient, familiar combination of economic aid, political manipulation, and military leverage orchestrated from Moscow. Having established herself as a Mediterranean power, Russia is now engaged in broadening her horizons. Soviet squadrons have launched visits of goodwill throughout the Indian Ocean basin, where the traditional British presence is about to disappear.

Whether the ever present aggressiveness which has lately distinguished Soviet shiphandling will emerge in Soviet foreign policy toward the Indian Ocean and elsewhere, remains to be seen. It is obvious, however, that the Soviets have recognized the utility of seapower in international politics, and that they have been eager to exercise it. The significance of this situation is the more urgent in the light of U.S. efforts in the same sphere. The modern, innovative Soviet Navy and blossoming merchant marine have entered the arena with a huge but partly obsolescent U.S. line of battle and a commercial fleet which, in the main, must be characterized as decrepit. Where the Soviet maritime policy has been unified and assertive, the comparable U.S. approach has been divided and uncertain.

In view of these considerations, and their importance, at the very least a study of the situation in depth seems appropriate. The endeavor here has not been to pass judgment on U.S. or Soviet commitments or foreign policy, nor to give normative proposals of what future

action should be. Ultimately, that is the province of our civilian leadership. Rather, an attempt has been made to weigh the concrete evidence of past and present: to define the capabilities of the U.S.S.R. in the light of its new maritime power and to analyze the alternatives available, if they wish to pursue them. It is hoped that such an assessment, thor-

oughly and intelligently compiled, will be of service to the makers of U.S. policy.



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**Cover: A view of the Soviet carrier *Moskva* as seen by the crew of a U.S. Navy patrol plane in the eastern Mediterranean.**

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