

The Cold War End-Game at Sea

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What War?

- A big war in Europe?
- Limited war on the Eurasian periphery?
- The likeliest, or the worst case?
- The Washington war vs the navy's war(s)
- President Carter's view: North-South vs East-West
- Seaplan 2000 vs Carter

‘The Enemy Has a Vote’

- So do you – and the more mobile you are, the more your vote can affect the enemy’s actions
- How can a powerful fleet affect the battle on the Central Front?
- Is the security of reinforcement the only important naval function?
- How important is the war in Europe in planning future forces?

What Matters to the Soviets?

- Who decides whether to go to war?
- The Soviet army staff? The Politburo?
- How central are nuclear weapons?
- How global is the war likely to be?
- What happens in the initial stage of a war?

What Impact?

- Initially tactical – weaken a Soviet advance through Western Europe
- Ultimately strategic – threaten (and destroy) the only nominally survivable element of the Soviet strategic force, the SSBNs
- Impact on the Politburo, not just the military staff

The Soviet Navy

- The role of interservice rivalry
- Failure to get an assigned oceanic TVD
- Secondary role in major war planning
- Resources are not necessarily an indication of status – remember Tirpitz and the German Navy
- Impact (?) of Soviet-style 'scientific' analysis of combat situations

How the Soviet Navy Would Fight

- Heavy reliance on the SOSS
- Submarines and SNA missile bombers
- Coordinated attacks from maximum range
- Increasing role(?) of surface warships
- Surface fleet to guarantee the 'combat stability' of submarines – which ones?

Naval Mobility

- Naval forces are far more agile than ground forces – but far less numerous
- Agility favors flanking operations
- Agility favors working on the enemy's mind
- Operations analysis rejects this kind of strategy – its effects are too difficult to quantify – but they are likely to be real

Freeing the Fleet

- Extensive work on cover and deception to blind the SOSS
- Microelectronic progress, e.g. Aegis, Mk 48, F-14/Phoenix
- C&D demonstrated tactically by carriers, and in UPTIDE series against submarines

Crisis Time for the USN

- Carter Administration rejects previous naval concentration on peripheral wars
- Carter hopes to balance the budget
- Europe becomes the **only** war of interest
- PRM-10 shows that NATO can stave off defeat on the Central Front (maybe)
- Micro-electronics can make a big European war non-nuclear (maybe)

Looking at the Other Side of the Hill

- What is the point of that big Soviet fleet?
- Is it pushing for regional sea control?
- Is it still concentrating on breaking the North Atlantic lifeline?
- Or is it connected to the emergence of the Soviet SSBN force?
- Interservice rivalry? The push for an independent naval role?

A Soviet View?

- Are SSBNs the most survivable part of the Soviet deterrent?
- But Western SSNs can and do trail them when they venture into the open ocean
- They seem survivable in the bastions
- The bastions are considered secure if the Soviet surface fleet protects them (assuring their 'combat stability')

The Initial Phase of a War

- Soviet priority: tipping the strategic balance
- Attempts (failed) to hunt Western SSBNs
- Increasingly precise Western missiles threaten fixed Soviet strategic forces
- Are SSBNs the only really survivable force?
- Does the bastion concept explain Soviet deployments?

The U.S. Maritime Strategy

- How naval forces will fight in the (improbable) event of a big European war
- Seize sea control, exploiting Soviet naval concentration around the bastions
- Flanking attacks impose 'virtual attrition' on advancing Soviet ground forces (and in the Far East)

Non-Nuclear Escalation

- What happens if the NATO army loses?
- Is the only option to go nuclear?
- Should we be looking back at 1940?
- Seapower can keep us alive even if the Soviet reach the Channel
- That this alternative exists can stiffen European resolve

Maritime Strategy 1981

- Classic application of seapower against a land power
- Use of naval mobility to force the enemy to dilute his attack on the central front
- Soviet need to deal with the naval offensive dilutes their ability to attack the Atlantic sea lanes
- Use power projection to win sea control

Maritime Strategy Late 1980s

- ‘Kicking in the door’ threatens the single most important Soviet naval asset – SSBNs
- SSBNs are the only strategic asset the Politburo is confident is survivable during the initial phase of a war
- Protecting the SSBNs is a **Politburo** priority
- **Perceived SSBN vulnerability is a threat the Politburo understands**

Did We Get It Right?

- **Intentions vs capabilities**
- Role (?) of special intelligence in showing how the Soviets think
- The context included a deliberate attempt to accelerate Soviet bankruptcy, which was already inevitable due to their unbalanced military spending – how much did we know about their economics?