

1980

Securing the Seas: The Soviet Naval Challenge and Western Alliance Options

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Recommended Citation

Caldwell, Hamlin A. Jr. (1980) "Securing the Seas: The Soviet Naval Challenge and Western Alliance Options," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 33 : No. 2 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol33/iss2/18>

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not too polemical. It is a good restatement of some things that need restating. Now that the aircrew members of all the services have learned something about hanging together, isn't it about time that our generals and admirals and politicians got together enough to prevent us from hanging separately?

DAVID R. METS

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Nitze, Paul H., Sullivan, Leonard Jr. and the Atlantic Council Working Group on Securing the Seas. *Securing the Seas: The Soviet Naval Challenge and Western Alliance Options*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979. 464pp.

In 1976 at the behest of the Atlantic Council of the United States, Paul H. Nitze assembled a distinguished group of Americans knowledgeable in naval affairs to consider the Soviet Navy's projected threat to the free use of the sea by the West. Over 2 years later and after 14 meetings this Working Group on Securing the Seas has published its findings. The result is this balanced and exhaustive analysis of the Soviet naval challenge and the Western Alliance's options for meeting it.

One of its sobering conclusions is that, "There is a stark contrast between the momentum of Soviet naval development and the relative indecisiveness on the Alliance side." There is a clear message that maritime supremacy, as important to the West as ever, is slipping away from us at an accelerating pace. The situation is grim but can be corrected if Western security leaders move now with vigor and better considered direction. We must do some fast hard thinking about what we have to do to secure the seas, then do it with a will. Consideration of the options outlined in this book would be an excellent start in this urgently needed rationalization and revitalization of maritime and naval policy.

Former Secretary of the Navy Nitze's group assigns a top priority to

improving Western Alliance naval counterforce capability. A strong Mahanist case is made that being able to destroy the Soviet and Pact Navies is the best and most direct way to ensure the security of the seas. This concept is advanced as the logical foundation for the formulation of a definitive Alliance naval policy.

The ambitious scope of *Securing the Seas* includes discussion of the evolution and probable wartime force allocation of both the Soviet and U.S. Navies, Western maritime interests, technology and force requirements, budget constraints, the sealane defense problems, and the overall naval/maritime balance. The study purposely does not address the effect of SALT or conventional arms limitation, the full consequences of an all-out nuclear exchange, the new Law of the Sea, and a few other topics. Still, it is a big book and the most complete coverage of maritime problems and opportunities to date.

The most useful chapters cover the Soviet Navy. The treatment by Michael MccGwire and Donald F.B. Jameson assisted by Norman Polmar is balanced, complete and up-to-date. Most significant and interesting is MccGwire's exposition of the Soviet Navy's pro-SSBN strategy in which a primary mission of many general-purpose forces may be to protect SSBNs withheld in home waters as a strategic reserve for war termination and for theater nuclear strikes. Although this theory is now generally accepted, its implications have not yet been reflected in Alliance naval policy. The set of tables on the Soviet Navy are an excellent, compact reference. A sound understanding of the Soviet naval challenge is prerequisite to building a definitive Alliance maritime policy. This is the best appraisal of the Soviet Navy and its role in peace and war currently available. *Securing the Seas* is an idea book by a group for which one selection criteria was creativity. Many logical, innovative concepts are advanced. The

reader's enthusiasm for some of the proposed technological fixes is realistically tempered by a fine passage by Ruthven Leopold of the Naval Ship Engineering Center on the problems in adopting new naval technology. However, it should not induce too much tolerance for the status quo, technological or otherwise. One of the depressing aspects of this study is that many of its most promising and easily implemented recommendations have been circulating for a decade or more. They have been warmly acknowledged as excellent ideas—and nothing has been done about them, usually in deference to much vested and institutionally comfortable practices that may have outlived their usefulness.

Another caveat is that good naval concepts are awfully hard to sell but once accepted, the pendulum swings back with a vengeance and perception of their worth is inflated. Passive towed sonar arrays may fall into this category. We have all been around too many "technological breakthroughs" that weren't. There are no easy technical or tactical solutions in naval warfare. Fortunately, all of the Working Group's recommendations require only more complete and rational use of available technology.

After a measured overall assessment of the naval/maritime balance pulled together by Leonard Sullivan, the Working Group wraps up its task with 21 recommendations for the securing of the Western Alliance's future use of the sea. The recommendations focus on the sea control mission. All of them are substantial and are operationally, technically and economically feasible. Collectively, they are probably a more rational plan for securing the seas than the loosely lashed raft of Western policy that has drifted in gentle circles down the past decade or more.

Many of the study's conclusions and recommendations are controversial. It would be a dull group and a duller study

if they weren't. The most strongly held alternative opinions are included in a final chapter. They also deserve attention.

This is a comprehensive and stimulating study that should be read by all who make and execute naval policy and others interested in our use of the sea. Secretary Nitze and his Working Group have done an important service well. This dedicated team is too good to disband. Their counsel is good and their work should continue.

HAMLIN A. CALDWELL, JR.

Pilpel, Robert H. *To the Honor of the Fleet*. New York: Atheneum, 1979. 463pp.

American novels about naval officers and warfare at sea have been fairly common in the last 30 years, and some of them have been high quality works—notably the novels of Herman Wouk and Edward L. Beach. Almost all have dealt with the subject of American naval involvement in World War II, which is pretty natural for the "two-ocean war" was unquestionably the epic adventure of U.S. seapower. What is, however, much less well known is the subject of American naval involvement in World War I. And it is this subject that Robert H. Pilpel attempts to portray in his novel *To the Honor of the Fleet*.

Pilpel succeeds in reminding us, first, of the politics of this now distant period. In the very first pages of this book we meet both Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, and are reminded that they had apprenticeships in administering the naval affairs of their respective nations prior to their greater political destinies in World War II. A few pages later we encounter Woodrow Wilson and his right-hand man, Colonel House. And the novel is filled with diplomacy and intrigue that was largely a result of Wilson's unsuccessful attempt to bring about peace, and to keep America out of the war. But the way