

The Center for Strategic and International Studies

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I like.

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5 November 1969

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Dear Dick:

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Enclosed is a copy of the speech for 19 November. It is still a draft, and so I would appreciate any suggestions that you or your excellent staff may have, for I know that all the speeches must be correlated, and I know too that I probably have left out some important matters which should be discussed.

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It was good to see you yesterday at the German Embassy, and I am looking forward to seeing you again on the evening of the 18th of November.

With warmest regards,

Sincerely yours,

Arleigh
ARLEIGH BURKE

VADM Richard G. Colbert, USN
President
U.S. Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island 02840

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Member, Executive Committee

Speech to International Seapower
Symposium, Naval War College, Newport,
Rhode Island, on 19 November 1969,
by Arleigh Burke

Gentlemen:

It is a great honor for this old retired sailor to meet with this distinguished group of naval officers. I am certain that during the course of this symposium it has already been said many times that more naval talent is gathered in this room today than has been assembled any place in many generations.

I am grateful that you, the leaders of the navies of the world, have made the great effort to attend, and I am grateful too that I could attend. I can't resist the comment many of you have heard in the past, that you will gain much more from the seminars by the exchange of ideas in a free discussion than you will gain from what is said from this platform.

I would like to thank Vice Admiral Colbert for making this symposium possible. The success of the Naval Command Course has been due primarily to the efforts of you naval officers who have attended the course, but my good hard-working friend, Dick Colbert, has done more for this course than any other United States Naval officer, and I would like to thank him for the enthusiasm and energy he has given over so many years.

But the greatest pleasure of all is to see once again so many friends of years ago. Gentlemen, it is good to see you.

The world is changing fast. In all countries in the entire world there is unrest, anger and frustration. In each

one of our countries there are large groups of people who are dissatisfied with things the way they are and they intend to see that changes are made. Some people want to destroy our present society, destroy our present values, but they have no idea of what they want instead.

Modern communications, quick transportation, great improvements in manufacturing, and rapid growth of populations are causing strains on the economies of all countries. Balance of payments, balance of trade, lack of liquidity and particularly worldwide inflation and national resource allocation are causing much concern among the world bankers and the heads of states.

The international political strains are well known to this distinguished audience.

Certainly this is the time for cool heads--and certainly this is the time for friendships to be cherished.

Out of all the confusion of the past few years, one fact has clearly emerged--the role of naval forces is becoming more and more important. There are many reasons for this increased importance, but I would like to note some of the reasons why sea power has become even more important for my country than it has been.

First, the Soviets have taken a sharp new interest in sea power. This traditional land power has broken out into the oceans of the world and is thus creating new points of confrontation with the United States.

Second, the American mood is now one of profound disillusionment over the progress of our land commitment in

Asia, as well as the political deterioration and anti-Americanism in many foreign countries. Our ground and air bases in foreign countries add to our balance of payments problems as well as having adverse political and social consequences with the host governments.

United States global strategy will veer away from ground force commitments and fixed land bases and toward a new sea strategy to exercise our diplomacy and contribute to peace and stability in the world, as well as to protect the vital interests of the United States and to meet our treaty commitments.

Other new factors are emerging.

For one thing there are twice as many nations now than there were just one generation ago. That means international relationships are much more complex now and rapid communications and modern equipment add to the complexity.

We have now a functioning international body--the United Nations. It has served its purpose well, it is a good forum for discussion of problems affecting nations, but there is a limit on what it can do. It can not tax, it can not raise and support armed forces, it can not pass laws and enforce them. These are the elements of sovereignty and no nation so far is willing to give the United Nations or any other ^{supra-}~~super-~~national organization the right to tax, the right to decide where and when their armed forces will take action, or the right to pass laws ^{governing actions} _{at nation,} within the country. And yet without that authority the

United Nations is limited in what it can do. Therefore it can not enforce stability in the world although it can and does try to persuade the nations to remain peaceful. This situation will continue for a long time.

Another big change that has occurred since World War II is the development of nuclear weapons. For years the United States had great superiority in nuclear weapons, but this condition no longer exists. Since 1966 particularly the Soviet Union has made terrific efforts to expand its nuclear warfare capability as rapidly as it could. They have done this in spite of the need for consumer goods in their country, in spite of the differences of opinion in the Politburo. Now the Soviet Union and the United States probably have about the same nuclear delivery capability.

Britain, France and the Chinese Communists also have a nuclear capability, and it would not surprise me if within a few years other nations would develop a nuclear capability--even with the non-proliferation treaty in existence. The tensions in the world have increased and all nations in the world must be very careful that regardless of the tensions a nuclear war does not result from those tensions.

And then there is another change--the effect of the Vietnam war. This war was started by the North Vietnamese and carried out largely by the Viet Cong as a war they call a war of national liberation to take over the government of South Vietnam. It has been a peculiar war fought with a tremendous number of

self-imposed restraints by the United States. It is the most unpopular war in which the United States has ever been involved because the restraints have kept it from being fought to a successful conclusion. There has been no clear-cut decision. This war is not only unpopular in the United States, but many of our friends are violently opposed to it and demand the withdrawal of the United States regardless of the sacrifice of the Vietnamese if that were to happen, and also regardless of the future of the other free nations in Asia.

The Vietnam war has created another change--and that is that every nation will be more reluctant to come to the support of any other nation unless it has the assurance beforehand of the support of its friends. The Russian led, Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia proves this principle in reverse. It also demonstrates the continuing strength and direction of Soviet led, East European communist policy. It is well that we remember Czechoslovakia as well as Vietnam as we look at today's changing environment.

As a consequence of the Vietnam war it will be a long, long time before the United States ^{again} commits large number of land forces to combat overseas. As you all know, we have had substantial opposition to the Vietnam war, and so I doubt that the United States will again become involved in operations ashore unless it is absolutely necessary and unless we have a significant number of allies. Yet the United States has interests all over the world and we have in addition

responsibilities all over the world. This is realized, and I believe that the United States is shifting gradually to a maritime strategy that will allow the United States to meet its responsibilities while avoiding land combat of undetermined size or duration. The details of that maritime strategy, though, will be greatly influenced by the priorities that our people put on the relative importance of our internal affairs as compared to our international obligations and interests.

These are some of the elements of the strategic environment in the world today, and they will affect the decisions of all nations.

It will also be affected by the priorities of Soviet policy. A forthcoming panel report from our Center for Strategic and International Studies has tried to pinpoint the key trends within Kremlin policies. The European and American panelists have concluded that the Soviets are likely to confront us with increased Soviet chauvinism, ideological hardening throughout the bloc, greater military strength and instabilities within Kremlin leadership. These factors, they conclude, could lead to a Soviet policy of more competitive intervention in international political and military affairs.

These conclusions would seem less ominous if the Soviets had satisfied themselves with the development of strong land and air forces. But they have not. They have become formidable sailors and blue water sailors at that.

I would now like to talk more specifically about the rise of Soviet sea power. You all know its fishing fleet is about twelve times the tonnage of our fleets and that it serves the double purpose of obtaining protein and intelligence. They have stressed oceanographic research. They are developing a tremendous modern merchant marine. The Soviet merchant marine now has about 1500 ships of approximately 12 million DWT. It ranks fifth in the world, adding about 80 new ships a year.

Since 1966 they have increased and modernized their naval forces greatly. At one time the Soviet navy was tied to the flanks of its army, but no more. The Soviet navy has been operating sizable forces in the Mediterranean, in the Atlantic and the Pacific. They have sent several task forces into the Indian Ocean. They are become experienced with the requirements of a blue water navy.

The Soviets have always stressed submarines, and recently they have concentrated on ballistic missile submarines. They have about 45 and over 15 are nuclear powered. They are building submarines at a greater rate than all other navies combined. They may produce as many as 20 a year. In a very few years they can be expected to have more ballistic missiles at sea than do we. They also have 60 submarines equipped with cruise missiles at sea and more attack submarines--about 250. Their new submarines are capable of operating long distances from the Soviet homeland over extended periods of time, and they can operate either independently or in wolfpacks.

I need not remind you gentlemen what a threat this poses to all our - 7 - sea line of communications.

The Soviets have developed a new helicopter carrier of the Moskva class and large helicopters which will give them an antisubmarine warfare capability they did not have before. These ships could be used, of course, also for amphibious warfare.

The Russians have over 100 PT boats equipped with surface-to-surface missiles. These are old Styx missiles, but they are still very effective, as the Israelis found out about two years ago when the ELATH was sunk. This was the first time that a combatant ship has been sunk by a guided missile, but it probably won't be the last time. Now other navies, I am sure, are developing surface-to-surface missiles for use on very small hulls.

It's quite obvious that the Soviets realize the importance of sea power, and it is also obvious that they have recently realized how to use sea power. They are using regularly naval bases at Alexandria, Algiers, and Latakia in Syria. They will probably establish other bases.

The Soviet Navy is now a formidable force. It will probably be operated on the high seas and it will be seen not only in the Mediterranean but in all oceans. It is also probable that the Soviets have adopted a maritime strategy and will continue to support that strategy with a large and versatile shipbuilding program.

That maritime strategy will include not only the use of naval forces for combat but also will be used in conjunction

with their merchant marine and fishing fleet to achieve political and economic influence throughout the world.

I would like now to speak a little bit about the United States Navy, for our Navy too is undergoing change. Some of it is not so good, because recently the United States Navy has reduced its size for economic reasons. Fortunately the Navy was permitted to retire its oldest ships and as a result of this it will have an opportunity to concentrate on new programs and build some new ships.

The main striking force, the carriers of our Navy, fortunately have not been reduced. We also have a large amphibious capability.

Our new ships are excellent even though they are very expensive. I personally believe that they may be oversophisticated, but then I'm an old-timer who was brought up without the use of radio, let alone radar and all the other modern electronic devices. In any case, our Navy will have to develop new ships and they will have to build them at a cost that the United States can afford, and, most importantly, they will have to get enough of them to defend the interests of ourselves and our allies.

It is time that all of us reexamine our own strategy and that we take a look as best we can at what may happen in the future.

The question that confronts all of us is how best to operate in the future. All of our navies have improved in the last few years, and each of us can contribute a great deal to achieve our common aims.

There are four basic possibilities in the use of our naval forces in the future.

First, each nation could operate its naval forces solely as national naval forces.

Second, we could form alliances and establish the role that each navy would play within the alliance.

Third, we could integrate all or most of our naval forces into a United Nations naval command.

Fourth, we could have multi-national cooperative naval efforts based on regional orientation and mutual interests.

Before I discuss these possibilities I would like to emphasize that each nation must depend primarily upon itself. Nations are like men in this respect--the success of a man is dependent primarily upon his own efforts. Of course he can be helped and supported by his friends, but fundamentally he must depend upon himself. The same is true with nations.

And so it is very important that each nation have plans for the use of its naval forces to protect its own interests, even though it has alliances or other arrangements for support by friendly nations. This is even more important now that the United States Navy is being required to reduce its ships, and even though the United States Navy will continue to meet all of its commitments.

Nevertheless a small navy by itself cannot protect its nation's interests against a large nation. However, as has been demonstrated many times in history, a small well-trained combat force can inflict tremendous damage upon a superior force,

and if it is good enough it can cause the superior force to hesitate before it attacks. There is nothing so important to the defense of a nation as its own loyal, well-trained armed forces.

In view of the state of the world today, I would expect that military alliances will be much harder to conclude in the future than they have been in the past. In addition military alliances have some inherent drawbacks. First, they are oriented toward specific threats and thereby are apt to become outdated as new threats appear. Second, usually a predetermined set of circumstances must occur before operations can commence under an alliance. When the circumstances are not exactly as predicted it will take much consultation among individual nations before combined naval operations can start.

I have already discussed the limitations of the United Nations, but I do not believe that United Nations naval forces can be made effective, particularly because of the organizational structure of the United Nations and because our individual nations quite understandably do not want to surrender our sovereign power to the United Nations or anybody else.

So far the United Nations forces have been made up of neutral or neutralist forces which take action after conflict has already started. Usually those actions are passive or are restricted to the observer and reporting role. In short, they have not been effective as a police force and have not been able to prevent most conflicts.

It would be possible to establish multi-national naval forces in various regions of the world. I would like to emphasize, though, as much as I know how, that any multi-national efforts must take second priority to specific national interests.

Still in many regions of the world our nations do have many mutual interests. Nations in a geographic region are more apt to think alike than nations in a broader geographic distribution. They share common concerns that a nation out of the region frequently does not understand or does not think warrants the action that the nations within the region think is desirable.

There are a lot of real advantages to such a system, but the system certainly will not work unless there is complete mutual trust and confidence. This is very difficult to achieve and can be achieved only after a long period of time and after much experience in operating with one another has been attained.

The advantages of this system are that the influence of stronger powers in local matters can be limited. A regional system would demonstrate that the nations of an area have a mutual concern for stability in the area and are willing to take action to maintain that stability. It also would provide an excellent base for similar cooperation in economic matters and perhaps even in other political matters.

Somehow or other multi-national forces seem to have a greater political and psychological impact than national forces in these days. Certainly it is true in the United States that

the use of multi-national forces in any situation would have greater support among United States citizens than the use of United States forces alone.

Navies are very fortunate in many respects, and one of these is that our ships and units are more easily integrated into multi-national task forces than other military forces. We are all trained similarly. We have similar experiences, but most importantly sailors from time immemorial have a fraternal bond based upon facing the same hazards at sea that no other group of people in the world has. The unwritten laws of the sea are obeyed by all navy people. We understand one another better.

Another factor is that a ship and her crew are a national unit and maintain their national identity and therefore are responsive to national policy.

We have had much experience in operating with one another already. Our communications are understood by each other, and exercises such as our NATO exercises and the Unitas operations have demonstrated over and over that our navies can operate together in small units or in large units.

There has recently been established a Standing Naval Force Atlantic, which is a pretty good example of a multi-national force. It has been quite successful not only in its operations but in its ability to solve the command and control problems which of course do arise. It is creating among the participating navies the mutual confidence so necessary for success.

Perhaps something like this is the answer to some of our problems. In any case it would be wise for all free world nations to develop some means of operating together in the common defense and to protect their common interests and to protect their common interests quickly whenever that becomes necessary. This means training together, working together, knowing each other, and above all, understanding each other and liking each other in spite of ^{our} ~~their~~ faults.

Finally, the most important element of naval power is the officer corps. The integrity, the skill, the ability, the tenacity in combat of officers is more important in naval forces than even in other military forces, and they are the essential of all military forces.

I would like to emphasize what I mean by this by referring to the German and Japanese navies during World War II. The German Navy nearly broke the back of the allied effort with its submarine force. The German submarine force was relatively small at the beginning of the war and it was expanded rapidly. Its submarine officers were mostly trained during the war. Their success early in the war was phenomenal. This success was possible because of the characteristics of the German naval officers. Ninety per cent of the German submarine operating forces were killed, and yet up to the very end of the war German submarines drove in for attack against overwhelming odds. If the German government had built its new submarines sooner and if they had recognized sooner the importance of naval power,

the results of the war might have been different.

The one thing that all United States Navy people who were in World War II in the Pacific remember above all else is the skill and the persistence of the Imperial Japanese Navy. They too at the end of the war fought against overwhelming odds, but they too fought up to the very last minute with a determination which all of us now should have.

Gentlemen, there will continue to be many changes in the world situation. There will continue to be much change in the equipment that we use at sea. There are many possibilities in operating naval forces to the mutual advantage of the countries concerned.

But there is one element that is of paramount importance and that is an excellent officer corps. Gentlemen, I admire what your navies have done. I know that under your direction all of our navies will improve and our citizens will continue to enjoy their freedom.

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