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SOVIET NAVAL ARMS CONTROL AMBITIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: WILL RUSSIA ACCEPT THIS HERITAGE?

by Georgi M. Sturua

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The Soviet fascination with security threats originating on the Mediterranean-Black Sea flank is deep rooted in history. Transformation of closed and insecure Russia into the Great Russian Empire took place when Peter the Great successfully fought battles on the Southern borders, secured sea ports on the Black Sea and eventually created the first Russian fleet. With the situation more or less stabilized in the Black Sea area, Russia quite naturally turned to expand its outreach to the Mediterranean. However strange it may sound, the design was inherently defensive in nature. Neither in the late 17th century nor in the late 20th century Russian rulers ranging from Peter the Great and Nicholas II to Lenin, Stalin and Brezhnev had any substantial capabilities enabling them to add the Mediterranean to the Russian sphere of influence. And, not surprisingly, they displayed not many illusions as to the role Russia might play in the region. Moscow's imperial ambitions in the region never went beyond plans to establish control over the Turkish Straits—"gates" leading into rather than from the Black Sea. The stability of the geostrategic position of Russia was perpetually undermined by its striking inability to tame the threats from the Mediterranean area (not that those threats seemed to be very acute since the times Turkey had left the great powers club). Military-political tickling in the Mediterranean region produced constant anxieties and frustration. At the same time, Russia's concerns over "what is boiling in the Med pot?" appeared to be a rather thin disguise for its far reaching imperial policy.

The developments brought about by the World War II radically changed the Mediterranean strategic environment. At last Russia did not actually have to be present in the region to make its pressure felt. But that did not stop Russia from making a naval thrust into the Mediterranean only to feebly counteract a more effective US presence. In terms of the superpower and, more generally, East-West confrontation the region lost its strategic autonomy and became just a "flank" relatively low in importance in comparison with the Central and Northern flanks.

This assessment of the significance of the Southern flank was shared by the Soviets regardless of the fact that for the first time since the Crimean War Russia faced not just a direct military challenge from the Mediterranean but was gravely threatened by the deployment of US nuclear capable aircraft in the region. One of the earlier US nuclear war plan "Pincher"(1946)¹ required to make preparations for land and air offensive operations against the Soviet Union from the Mediterranean and Middle East beach-heads. The threat to the Soviet Union grew larger when the United States armed its aircraft carriers in the Eastern Mediterranean with nuclear weapons and later sent the Polaris submarines there.

Since 1966 the Soviets began to deploy fighting ships in the Mediterranean on a regular basis to prevent the use of the US sea-based nuclear forces. One can come across numerous Western commentaries amplifying the Mediterranean Squadron strengths to the point of ascribing to the latter an ability to wipe out the 6th Fleet

¹ See Sturua, Georgy M.: *Mirovomu Okeanu - Mirnie Vody* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), p.76.

(recall, for instance, Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt's alarmist evaluations of the 1973 Arab-Israeli crisis).² The reality very well understood by the Joint Chiefs and Soviet General Staff was quite different. The Mediterranean Squadron lacking sea-based air power and forward bases has always been a poor match for the 6th Fleet.

Anyway, by the late 1960's the Soviet Navy forward deployment in the Mediterranean was a too late response to the danger presented by the US nuclear forces. Sophistication of means of delivery of nuclear weapons reduced the Mediterranean War Theater to being simply an option in diversification of possible strategic strikes against the Soviet Union. Consequently, despite a continued build-up of the Black Sea Fleet it started to lose a competition for more attention and resources to the Northern Fleet.

Another factor that shaped Soviet approach to the Mediterranean security challenges was a perception of anti-Israeli and anti-US drive of the Arab countries as a major strategic contribution to containing US expansionist impulses. The goal was to ensure as hostile environment as possible for the US regional forces and thus limit their flexibility. The Mediterranean Squadron was assigned a new task of engaging in naval diplomacy. In public eyes naval diplomacy became a salient feature of its operations, but the Soviets were too cautious to play high-stake poker games at sea.

To make up for the lack of combat efficiency and boldness in naval diplomacy the Soviets turned to propaganda instruments of their foreign policy. The resort to these instruments was to be expected not only because of pragmatic reasoning. Paradoxically enough, the Soviets' attitude toward achieving the status of the first-rate military power was not that clear-cut. An attentive observer of the Soviet affairs could always sense certain uneasiness and apologetic overtones in the way Moscow treated its tremendous military efforts. The Soviets' sometimes bizarre overindulgence in putting together various peace proposals packages to the point when nobody could even keep track of them may be explained by a sincere and hopelessly naive desire to constantly remind the world that they were a peaceful nation. General Soviet tendency to avoid details and put emphasis on abstract ideas inevitably led to the announcement of "half-baked", poorly thought through and unbalanced peace initiatives one can never know how to apply to practice. Very rare they were to serve any other purpose than to show who was really in a vanguard of a struggle for universal peace. Usually peace initiatives were proclaimed by Soviet party and state leaders at major propaganda shows or during their visits abroad. Imitation of intensive peace-fighting activities eventually assumed ritualistic importance.

The enduring Soviet campaign for naval arms control in the Mediterranean was a typical exercise in futility so characteristic for Moscow's foreign policy maneuvers in areas where it played the role of an underdog. It started in 1963 as an obvious reaction to the Polaris submarine deployments. The Soviet proposal was to declare the Mediterranean a nuclear missile-free zone. The campaign continued in 1971 with a more general idea to declare the Mediterranean a zone of peace and cooperation, a fuzzy notion never fully elaborated in any Soviet pronouncement. The proposal was a part of a collection of foreign policy platitudes ambitiously called the Peace Program which was adopted with a lot of fanfare at the 24th Party Congress. The wrangling with the United States within the SALT context over medium-ranged nuclear weapons rebounded in a 1974 Soviet offer to Washington to jointly withdraw all nuclear armed ships from the Mediterranean. The Final Document of the 1976 European Communist Parties meeting written largely in Moscow repeated the idea of

² Zumwalt, Adm. Elmo R.: *On Watch* (New York: Quadrangle, 1976), p.432-439.

the Mediterranean zone of peace. But this time it was more realistically indicated that elimination of foreign military bases and withdrawal of foreign armed forces and warships from the area could be achieved "in the process of overcoming division of Europe into military blocks". At the 1977 Belgrade meeting of the CSCE countries the Soviet Union put forward the idea of expanding the agreed area covered by CBMs to include the Mediterranean. The 1980 Soviet Disarmament Memorandum unveiled at the UN session added two new elements. It contained an appeal to reduce armed forces in the region and not to deploy nuclear weapons in the Mediterranean non-nuclear states. Finally, the 1981 Party Congress formulated a goal of establishing a nuclear weapon-free zone in the Mediterranean.

Now all elements of the Soviet arms control program for the Mediterranean were in place. The program which forwent even a pretence of being balanced immediately revealed not too hidden intentions of its authors to gain advantages over the USA and other Western states in a fierce war of the two propaganda machines. The Soviet side did produce some of the intended effect to the annoyance of the West. But these awkward movements in the arms control area as such resulted only in spring blooming of US idiosyncrasy toward any form of reduction of tensions at sea (for the singular exclusion of the incidents at sea type of regulation).

Initially, the program was perceived by Moscow not within a framework of naval arms control but as a contribution to regional security and nuclear disarmament. The focus changed by the early 1980's, when it became evident that the United States together with its allies would like to stay away from naval arms control. The subsequent reshuffling of the priorities underscored the program's value for advancing the goals of arms control at sea. At that time more pragmatic concerns started to dominate in the Soviet approach toward the Mediterranean security problems. It was recognized that measures more acceptable to the West had to be pressed for. Naval CBMs appeared to be a perfect alternative to the all-or-nothing package of proposals.

The Gorbachev revolution in foreign policy did not bring a demise of Soviet naval arms control hopes. On the contrary, Moscow's attempts to introduce naval arms control issues into an agenda of East-West negotiations intensified. They were driven by the fact that powerful Western navies were artificially excluded from a balance contemplated under future arms reduction agreements. The offensively oriented US Maritime Strategy was an additional proof that naval factor had to be accounted for.

However, old habits do die hard. 1986 witnessed another ill-advised exercise in a propaganda version of naval arms control. Gorbachev offered to the United States to withdraw the Squadron and 6th Fleet from the Mediterranean on a mutual basis. Glastnost was still maturing then so no public criticism of that move was evident in the Soviet press. But internal assessments of Soviet experts pointed out with all due respect at non-constructive aspects of the initiative. They also indicated that withdrawal of US warships from the Mediterranean would have provided Washington with ample opportunity to increase its naval pressure in regions more vital to the Soviet national interests.

Rapid dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 left Russia as its most natural successor to wonder what to do with the unfinished business in the national security domain and how to adapt it to Russia's still very loosely defined foreign policy needs. No conclusive decisions as to where to go from here with naval arms control have been made yet. A number of considerations may influence formulation of Russia's policy regarding methods of enhancing security at sea, including in the Mediterranean.

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On the one hand, incentives to explore what can be done to redress the naval balance through negotiations appear to be stronger. In the November (1991) issue of "Morskoi Sbornik"³ Admiral Vladimir Chernavin went on the record to support an idea of starting a naval arms control dialogue. He propounded a slightly updated list of naval arms control measures putting CBMs at the head of it. The motives of the Navy Commander-in-Chief were not hard to guess.

The former Soviet and now largely Russian Navy which is transferred to the CIS Armed Services is shrinking at an impressive pace. Its strength was cut by 224 surface combatants and 178 submarines from 1986 to 1991.⁴ The Navy leadership announced plans to reduce the fleet's size by 20% to 25% within the next decade. Under the current plans, the construction of approximately 60 warships which was underway will be stopped.⁵ The fabled aircraft carrier building program is practically discarded, and the decision was taken to scrap the unfinished "Ulianovsk" which was to become the first Soviet nuclear aircraft carrier. The Navy leadership laments that 1992 is the first year since Peter the Great in which not a single warship has been laid down.⁶

The number of ships requiring overhaul came up to 250 by the beginning of 1991.⁷ Overhaul programs are underfunded by 75 per cent in 1992.⁸ The Navy fails to find funds and a shipyard to overhaul even the aircraft-carrying cruiser "Minsk" which now rusts in a Pacific port.

The appropriations for the Navy are constantly scaled down, and there are not enough of them to maintain forward presence or conduct exercises. The break-up of the Soviet Union has created problems with manning the Navy. Thus, the Pacific Fleet, according to its Commander Vice Admiral Anatoli Oleinik, is undermanned by nearly 50 per cent in 1992.⁹ At his July, 1992 press conference the Commander of the CIS Navy Admiral Vladimir Chernavin summed up the situation by saying that we were witnessing "a slow dying of the Navy".¹⁰

The naval leadership would like to create an impression that the sorry state of the Navy is the direct result of the dissolution of the country or, more generally, of the perestroika process. The contribution of both, of course, can not be easily underestimated. But the Navy's assertions do not tell the full story. The Soviet Navy had heard the thunders of an upcoming crisis even before Gorbachev came to power in 1985. The slow stagnation of the society and economy brought about by nearly exhausted totalitarianism was the main source of the Navy's troubles that surfaced so evidently in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

It is widely known now that the Soviet Navy's shipbuilding efforts have been failing for quite a long time. The Navy was building too many classes of ships of all major types. The Gorshkov Navy turned out to be an unbearable burden for the Navy

³ Chernavin, Adm. Vladimir: "Voenno-Morskoi Flot: Problemy Sokrashenia i Raazvitia", in *Morskoi Sbornik*, November 1991, p.10.

⁴ Ibidem, p.9.

⁵ *Izvestia*, 10 July 1992.

⁶ Chernavin, op. cit., p. 9.

⁷ Interview with Capt. Vladimir Urivski in *Morskoi Sbornik*, November 1991, p.60.

⁸ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 10 July 1992.

⁹ *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, 6 July 1992.

¹⁰ *Izvestia*, 19 July 1992.

itself. The regular practice was to commission ships that had serious design and construction defects. The list of major accidents involving warships was constantly growing, and the Navy began to experience difficult times trying in its usual manner to cover them up. The tragic sinking of the "Komsomolets" submarine literally blew up the whole nation. It is no wonder that the Navy's officers corps morale was deteriorating while the number of those aspiring to enter naval academies was decreasing.

Doctrinally the Navy was not feeling well either. It was failing to adapt itself to the new strategic, political and technological realities. No coherent views had been developed by the Navy as to how it expected to use its forces efficiently both in war and peace. It still clung to the idea of preparing itself to blunting nuclear attacks against the country and put it on top of its priorities regardless of the fact that it was beyond its capabilities to protect the country from actual nuclear strikes.

On a conventional level, the Navy proved to be unable to strike a proper balance between the goal of building large ocean-going forces and the Soviet Armed Forces strategy to fight largely a continental war. However strange it may seem but it took practically twenty years for the Navy to come up with the suggestion that in protracted conventional hostilities the significance of prevailing in a war over sea lanes of communications was growing. And it took ten years to react adequately to the adoption by the US Navy of the Maritime Strategy. Admiral Chernavin pioneered that idea only in 1990 as a response to those who could not find an honorable place for the Navy in the country's military posture. The response came too late because shortly the United States and Russia proclaimed themselves to be strategic partners and friends.

In certain sense the current strategic conditions may create more opportunities for the former Soviet Navy. Now it will not have to tax its resources to pretend to be six feet tall. Though a new military doctrine has not acquired a final shape, it has been already declared that Russia will strive to develop smaller and mobile forces somewhat akin to the US RDF to be ready for more probable contingencies such as regional conflicts. Defense Minister Peter Grachev stressed that airborne troops and naval infantry would form the core of Russian rapid deployment forces. These doctrinal innovations seem to justify maintenance of a large Navy, continued build-up of aircraft carriers and other major surface combatants.

This time again the Navy drags its feet and does not grasp the opportunity to jump on the bandwagon. However, an apparently forthcoming and belated exercise of the Navy in public diplomacy will not turn the tables on its critics. Geostrategically and historically Russia is prone to lean more on airborne troops rather than on capabilities afforded to them by naval forces in forming her own RPD. Besides, one can not neglect the fact that General Grachev is a former Commander of the Soviet Airborne Forces and an airborne veteran of the Afghanistan war.

The state of affairs in the former Soviet Navy obviously puts Moscow in a situation when its appeals to proceed to naval arms control would be dismissed as a futile attempt to bargain from a position of weakness. The pressure for naval arms control on the part of Moscow nowadays loses whatever small credibility it had before.

Moscow bargaining position in the naval arms control area seems to be exceptionally unconvincing in the Mediterranean since it embroiled in a rivalry with Kiev over the Red Flag Black Sea Fleet which was essentially a competition over who was going to preside at its funeral.

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The former Soviet republican leaders met in late December, 1991 to create the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS). Among other decisions adopted at that meeting they defined the Strategic Forces of the CIS to include naval forces. This decision was hoped to put rest a dispute that arose earlier that December after the Ukraine had announced that it was taking command over troops of the three military districts of the Soviet Armed Forces and the Black Sea Fleet. In reality, the accord on the Strategic Forces of the CIS proved to be illusory and only pushed the Ukraine to accelerate the process of gaining control over the Fleet. On January 3, 1992 Kiev declared that the Black Sea Fleet personnel would have to take a pledge of allegiance to the Ukraine. The next day Chief Commander of the CIS Armed Forces Marshal Evgeni Shaposhnikov reacted with his own order to swear in the Black Sea Fleet personnel. On January 9 President Eltsin reaffirmed in a mounting battle of words that "the Black Sea Fleet was, is and will be Russian".

The conflict just flared until April, when Ukrainian President Kravchuk issued a decree proclaiming establishment of the Ukrainian Navy on the basis of the Black Sea Fleet ships based in the Ukrainian ports. Since few combatants are based in non-Ukrainian ports, the decree essentially meant that the Black Sea Fleet would belong to the Ukraine. One of the decree's provision also stipulated that some warships would be transferred under temporary operational control of the CIS Armed Forces Command. President Eltsin immediately fired back with a decree that declared the Black Sea Fleet to be under Russian jurisdiction and placed under control of the CIS Armed Forces Command. Several days later both states agreed to suspend their decrees on the Fleet and start negotiations.

The first round of negotiations took place in the end of April and was inconclusive. The delegations exchanged lists of warships that in their opinion should be transferred to the Ukraine. (Practically no figures were publicly revealed that characterize initial bargaining positions of the two sides. According to one source, the Ukraine seemed to claim that 8.8 per cent of the former Soviet Navy total tonnage could be found in the Black Sea Fleet, and at least the warships based in the Ukrainian ports constituting 6 per cent of the total tonnage should belong to it. Admiral Katasonov asserted at one of his press conferences that while Russia wanted to give up 22 per cent of the Black Sea Fleet warships to the Ukraine the latter laid claim on 90 per cent of them).¹¹ In spite of existing serious disparities in their positions both sides sighed with relief that the negotiations had finally started.¹²

Definitely, one can not trace any naval roots in this conflict. The Russian-Ukrainian debate over the future of the Black Sea Fleet is notable for its complete disregard for a fundamental question: after all, is the prize worth fighting for?

There is a diverse group of politicians and military men on the Russian side of the dispute who do not take "no" for the answer. Some strongly oppose the idea of giving up even a portion of the Fleet as a confirmation of the second-rate status of Russia. Others, like former editor-in-chief of "Morskoi Sbornik" Vice Admiral Grigori Shedrin, continue to insist: "To lose the Black Sea Fleet means to expose our southern sea flank. And keeping in mind that not all our neighbors have given up territorial claims to Armenia and Azerbaijan... one can not dismiss an ill-fated

¹¹ *Nesavizimaya Gazeta*, 3 July 1992.

¹² *Nesavizimaya Gazeta*, 7 May 1992.

decision on the Fleet as an ephemeral danger to the existing CIS. Besides, by weakening the Black Sea Fleet we are provoking the Americans to pursue a tougher policy in Northern Africa, Middle East and Southern Europe."¹³

The opposite views are expressed as well. The Fleet was created two hundred years ago to be a strategic spearhead for the Empire. But the spearhead was blunted in 1841 when the Fleet was essentially locked in the Black Sea. Modern times have only brought further aggravation of the strategic position of the Fleet. Neither in the World War I nor in the World War II the Fleet played any active role while huge resources were continuously poured into maintaining a visible naval presence in the very much closed Black Sea. For some time it appeared that the missions for the Fleet had been finally defined to the point of putting it at the forefront of a possible World War III. But the Fleet failed to prove that it could be effectively used to "repulse an enemy aerospace attack", as the saying then went, even when some of its units were forwardly deployed in the Mediterranean. Besides, Soviet top naval experts admit that exercises conducted over the years have confirmed that the Fleet would not be able to break out of the Black Sea in case of a crisis.

Even before a formal dissolution of the Soviet Union in late 1991, a group of respected naval officers put together a proposal to reform the Soviet Navy. Under the proposal, warships would have to be reallocated between the four existing Fleets in the following way: the Northern Fleet would contain 45 per cent of all naval vessels, the Pacific Fleet - 40 per cent, the Baltic Fleet - 8 to 9 per cent while the Black Sea Fleet - just 6 to 7 per cent. Above all, qualitatively a new Black Sea Fleet was planned to be a far cry from the old one consisting primarily of small diesel submarines, frigates and corvettes.¹⁴

One cannot say that the harsh strategic realities are unnoticed in Kiev. The Ukraine officially does not aspire to step into the Soviet shoes in terms of maintaining a super-Navy. Most observers doubt that the Ukraine has enough resources to support the Black Sea Fleet in its present strength and would either scrap a large number of warships or sell them abroad. (However, in the fight over the Black Sea Fleet Kiev is prone to make rather strange acquisition decisions: a command ship "Slavutich" hailed as the first Ukrainian Navy warship was commissioned in early August. What was never mentioned was the fact that this highly expensive ship was equipped to operate in the Arctic areas and had been specifically designed for the Northern Fleet). The first Commander of the Ukrainian Navy Rear Admiral Boris Kojinov defined his Navy's missions as maintaining favorable operational regime in the Black Sea and defending sea lines of communications. Rear Admiral Kojinov also stated that the aim was not to develop a "strategic Navy", apparently meaning a Navy with global responsibilities. Was this declaration an article of faith or simply an attempt to reassure the West that it has nothing to fear in having the Ukraine as a new member to the Big Navy League and rather support Kiev than Moscow, its old naval opponent, in a dispute over the Black Sea Fleet?¹⁵

One is inclined to believe that Kiev is now more concerned with winning over friends than expressing its soul. It does not betray any hypocrisy on the part of the Ukrainian leaders. A common feature of politics found in all former Soviet republics is there fluidity. Independence came to them like a bolt from the blue. As a result there

¹³ Interview in *Morskoi Sbornik*, May-June 1992, p.8.

¹⁴ Dudnik, Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Valsimir: "Ne Stoit Milliardov Flot, Stoiashchii i Stenki", *Mosvovskie Novosti*, 17 May 1992.

¹⁵ *Kraznaya Zvezda*, 10 April 1992.

is no clear understanding where to go from here or how to get there. No distinct and clear national interests have yet surfaced to guide actions of political elites in their zealous quest for authentic rather simply legally correct independence. Intensive and sometimes childish political posturing more often than not takes the place of a well balanced political process. What today is regarded as a word to be passed around tomorrow may be easily rejected as a profound mistake. Current attitudes toward the Ukrainian Navy's missions may quite easily undergo a complete turnabout.

Kiev does not yet have a full-fledged foreign policy. It is still oriented too much inward and, unlike Russia, is free from foreign policy obligations of the past. The vacant place of foreign policy is occupied by rivalry with Moscow. Even a juicy "carrot", that is, Western credits, does not distract Kiev's attention from a tug-of-war with Moscow. Persistently dropping hints that the Ukraine has not closed the door to the nuclear alternative, Kiev has proved to be recklessly insensitive to by no means determined Western opposition to appearance of new nuclear-weapon states on the ruins of the Soviet Union. The name of the game was to make Russia shiver at the thought of the nuclear armed Ukraine and yield to its demands.

In the final analysis, nothing could destabilize situation in Europe more than deepening of a conflict between Russia and the Ukraine. If that were to happen, the obvious choice for Kiev is to keep in good shape its land forces which it plans to maintain comparable in size with the Bundeswehr of the Cold War years. The Navy could contribute negligibly little to deter the formidable opponent on the eastern borders though temptations to show a blue-and-yellow flag to unnerve Moscow would be hard to resist. In modernization of the land and air forces Kiev, locked in conflict with Moscow, would try to turn for outside assistance. Since the West would go out its way not to support ambitions of either side, Kiev may be forced to look for rather strange political bedfellows further alienating itself from the West.

It can be predicted with a fair degree of accuracy that under this scenario Kiev, strategically vulnerable from sea approaches, would become a fervent proponent of naval arms control and especially CBMs as a measure to keep a check on the Russian Navy. Lacking experience and sophistication, Ukrainian foreign policy-makers would inevitably slide into a trap of declaratory naval arms control by producing an endless stream of unrealistic proposals. The day when Kiev becomes an ardent supporter of naval limitations, prospects for arms control at sea would be buried once and for all. This notion would fail to prove its validity and viability if Moscow joined forces with Washington to denounce the very idea of arms control at sea.

A powerful incentive for the Ukraine to maintain more than merely coastal naval forces is a bleak energy situation it is creeping into. Dramatic decline in oil production in Russia which was a traditional supplier of oil to the Ukraine has finally brought home to Kiev that no matter how good relations with Russia can be the latter is faced with a danger of not satisfying its domestic requirements. On top of all, Russia is determined to make its oil available only at the world market prices. Other energy suppliers from the CIS countries such as Turkmenistan are following the suit of Russia and driving their prices up.

The Kiev leadership search for a partner who could assure a stable access to energy sources resulted in adoption of a plan to build a gas pipeline from Iran. The wisdom of this decision is very much in doubt for those who quite rightly point out that large investment into the project will be put at risk since the stability of Iran is far from being guaranteed. The risks are magnified because the pipeline will run through Azerbaijan who pioneered the use of an energy blockade in the former Soviet Union. Criticism is levelled against the Ukrainian Government also because of its failure to

take account of the probable reaction of the West towards Kiev's flirting with volatile Iran, a source of Islamic fundamentalism. It is wondered aloud (in the Ukrainian General Headquarters, among all places)¹⁶ why not to spend money allocated for the pipeline construction more wisely, that is for building a tanker fleet and acquisition of escorts to defend the sea lines of communications which will connect the Ukraine and the oil and gas rich countries of the Persian Gulf area.

This alternative to the overreliance on Russia as the main source of energy supply to the Ukraine if adopted may significantly alter the current trends in the development of Kiev's military doctrine and Armed Forces. The redirection of the military efforts toward naval build-up would become a salient feature of the Ukrainian military politics. Since the Ukraine lacks strong naval constituency and naval traditions, the Government would feel obliged to present a vision of the Ukraine as a great seafaring nation. It would drum up a whole panoply of excuses and open up propaganda campaigns to break off with existing land oriented mentality of the people to support a new strategy.

However, feeling too insecure in the new role of a self-proclaimed naval power and not having a technological capacity to create and maintain a strong Navy, Kiev would most probably resort to other means as well to protect its oil lifelines. Under this scenario, Kiev, being concerned about something more practical than simply annoying Moscow, would seek the cover of the NATO security umbrella at least on the high-seas. It seems that a naval arms control option would be turned down by Kiev because of offering too little and too late, not to say of the absence of enthusiasm on the part of the NATO regarding the idea. The latter's approach to naval arms control would seem to shape the Ukrainian attitude toward it. Though a group of vocal Navy lobbyists have assumed a prominent standing in the battles over the Black Sea Fleet, they ride the wave of nationalism and still have to prove their case to the Parliament and public. Scepticism is abound whether they can face the challenge and come closer to the realization of the described scenario.

It is tempting to describe the paradox of the Russian-Ukrainian relations in their present form in Freudian terms. They are both natural and unnatural at the same time. Natural because inertia of centrifugal forces that led to the break up of the Soviet empire by definition has to be very strong. Unnatural because on a human level the two nations are very much intertwined, not to say that they bound to lose politically and economically if allowed to firmly set on a collision course. Of course, awkward actions of politicians and war of words can spoil the Russian-Ukrainian relations for many years to come regardless of what constitutes their real national interests. The short history of interaction between the former Soviet republics is full of examples that fit the pattern of neighbors turning into mortal enemies.

To the great surprise of many observers, the Moscow-Kiev dialogue displays a lot of resiliency. Overall settlement of the disputes disrupting that dialogue is a more probable outcome of the post-imperial development of their relationship. Should the events take this turn, Kiev would adopt a relaxed military posture with a lesser emphasis on highly numbered land forces. However, the Navy being an expensive distraction from the goals of economic modernization may lose the battle for limited budget appropriations anyway.

A major breakthrough appeared on the horizon when President Eltsin and President Kravchuk met in Dagomys in late June, 1992 to settle disputes existing

¹⁶ See, for instance, a collective article by the Ukrainian General Headquarters experts in *Megalopolis Express*, 29 April 1992, p.20.

between Russia and the Ukraine. An overall agreement signed at this summit among other things contained an affirmation of three principles: both parties stressed importance of continuation of the negotiations regarding creation of Russian and Ukrainian fleets from the Black Sea Fleet; the basing infrastructure would be used on a contractual basis; the parties would refrain from taking unilateral measures before the negotiations were concluded. The agreement directed to freeze situation as it was at the moment - the Black Sea Fleet being neither Russian nor Ukrainian and a part of the CIS Armed Forces. When the Andreev flag - a flag the Russian Imperial Navy - was raised at most Soviet warships at the end of July, the Black Sea Fleet turned out to be the only part of the former Soviet Navy carrying a flag of a non-existing state in violation of international law.

The Dagomys agreement on the status of the Black Sea Fleet proved to be too weak to restrain nationalistic pressure coming from both sides. A month after the summit a real crisis was provoked when an anti-submarine corvette whose crew had been among the first to take a pledge of allegiance to the Ukraine left the Sevastopol base controlled by Admiral Katasonov and flew to Odessa. Opposing forces that escorted the rebellious frigate to Odessa were very close to starting a shoot-out.

It has become evident that the wrangling over the Black Sea Fleet was taking both sides to close to a dangerous line beyond which they would risk to lose control over the situation. President Kravchuk openly warned hot-heads that if nothing was done to remedy it, the Fleet may become "an autonomous entity"¹⁷ independent of Moscow and Kiev. The prediction might appear bizarre but only for an outsider. The officer corps of the Fleet had pressed to chose sides and tired of total disarray created the Coordinating Committee in a way reminiscent of revolutionary committees that had taken the power and replaced the leadership of the Imperial Russian Navy in 1917. The Coordinating Committee put forward a proposal to establish two separate fleets under a joint Russian-Ukrainian command. The fleets would enjoy an equal access to the shore facilities and be developed according to a common shipbuilding program.

The general framework of the Black Sea Fleet dispute resolution was finally approved at a meeting between Russian and Ukrainian Presidents in Yalta on August 3, 1992, and in one important aspect the decision fell short of what was demanded by the Coordinating Committee. To diffuse the situation, it was decided to postpone the creation of the independent Russian and Ukrainian Black Sea Fleets till 1985. The agreement withdrew the Black Sea Fleet from under control of the CIS Armed Services Command and put it under direct control of the two Presidents who would form the Joint Black Sea Fleet Command consensually. Russia and the Ukraine would have the right to man the Fleet with 50 per cent of new conscripts each. The shore infrastructure was to be used jointly with a proper regard to each other's laws and without interference in each other's affairs.

The agreement contained an interesting reference that both sides supported "a policy of turning the Black Sea into a nuclear free zone, zone of peace and cooperation".¹⁸ Significantly, this reference had not attracted an attention of any commentator apparently not so much because the idea was taken for granted but because its practical value did not fare highly in the public eyes.

¹⁷ *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 4 August 1992.

¹⁸ For the text of the "Agreement between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the Principles Governing the Formation of the Fleet of Russia and Ukraine on the Basis of the Former Black Sea Fleet of the USSR", see *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, 8 August 1992.

Regardless of the agreement, the dispute is far from over. The compromise worked out by Moscow and Kiev failed to satisfy the fierce nationalists on the Ukrainian side and many Black Sea Fleet officers. The former and the latter both reject the principle of putting off a final decision on the future of the Fleet. But no matter in whose hands the Black Sea Fleet will turn out to be or in what proportion it is divided, the bottom line is that the former Soviet Navy posture in the Mediterranean can be proclaimed dead. During his May, 1992 visit to Italy Admiral Chernavin officially admitted for the first time that the Navy had started to deploy warships in the Mediterranean not on a permanent but on a temporary basis.¹⁹

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While feeling positive about naval arms control in general, Russia will first have to sort out for herself what purposes may be served by going after it in the Mediterranean context. The main security objective of Moscow in this area was and still is to prevent attacks from that direction. However, the strategic and political context has changed and filled this objective with new meaning drastically reducing any need for naval arms control along the way.

The reasons for trying to engage the West in arms control at sea are much less evident now. No one in the Kremlin hoped to achieve with arms control what is being done unilaterally by the United States. For instance, for many years Moscow feared nuclear strikes from the 6th Fleet. In September 1991 President Bush announced a withdrawal of all tactical nuclear weapons from US warships and land-based aircraft. In its turn Russia withdrew all tactical nuclear weapons from the Black Sea Fleet by May, 1992, and though it is not stated anywhere, one is inclined to believe that Moscow will avoid deploying tactical nuclear weapons in the Mediterranean when and until Washington keeps them away from the 6th Fleet.

A more striking example of the changed circumstances is that Washington is cutting its naval forces to the level of the late 1970's after a frantic naval build-up of the 1980's. Granted that the 1990's Navy will be more effective than its 1970's version, but Washington would not have even dared to think of major reductions in the Navy strength if not for the radical changes that occurred in the former Soviet Union and East-West relations.

In his chapter, Marco Carnovale rightfully argues that though some believe complex naval arms control negotiations to be redundant in this environment it is most suitable for working out formal agreements to safeguard against possible deterioration of the international situation in the future. At the same time not all doubts regarding usefulness of negotiated accords are dispelled if to recognize that written agreements are also not immune from falling a prey to the worsening of international climate. Besides, all sides have to think twice before opening a Pandora's box by starting new negotiations and perhaps spoiling good-will spirit atmosphere that constitutes a major part of that climate. The plausibility of this scenario rests on a still negative attitude toward naval arms control exhibited by the United States.

Formal negotiations, as Gordon Wilson correctly points out, may be, in fact, counterproductive because of the bargaining chips tactics usually associated with them. Weapons that may otherwise have been given up are retained in order to apply pressure on a opposing side.

¹⁹ *Izvestia*, 30 may 1992.

The profound nature of the changes, their magnitude pull the rug from under proponents of CBMs at sea, especially in the Mediterranean context. The whole notion of CBMs was designed to suit specific conditions similar to the ones of East-West military confrontation. It was hoped that adversaries through some degree of openness were to reduce mistrust and tensions in their relations, decrease a possibility of an accidental conflict as well as inhibit opportunities for surprise attack. CBMs were essentially to serve as a substitute to fundamental restructuring of security relationship between opponents. Now Russia and the United States call themselves friends and partners. Together with European countries they are gradually moving towards establishing a completely revamped security regime which will derive its strength from the fact that former mortal enemies share beliefs in democratic values and free market economy and despite all differences are in one boat. It is obvious that a new alliance system which will include Russia and the West is bound to emerge. And within this system the requirement will be, say, not for notification of military exercises but for coordination of military activities on strategic and operational levels.

One may raise an objection to this line of reasoning. Whatever one expects to happen in the future Russia's and NATO's nuclear forces still target objectives on each other's territory. Though it can not be denied that Russia and the West have passed the Cold War phase and entered a transitional period, only God knows when and how it will end. If so, adoption of some classical CBMs would not hurt.

US warships on intelligence mission were involved in a number of unpleasant incidents in or near contested territorial waters of Russia in the first months of 1992. The Russian public was surprised to learn that tricks from the by-gone era were still practiced. Significantly, the general mood was not to attach to those incidents more than they deserved. However, one is inclined to assume that they provided a dose of fuel to the arguments heard on the Russian side that, after all, some form of naval CBMs would not be out of place even today.

Besides, the idea to open if not actual negotiations but at least a dialogue on maritime issues on a confidence building basis is more accepted in the NATO quarters now than some time before as one can judge from the chapters by Gordon Wilson and Richard Hill. Definitely no harm can be incurred to any side if, as suggested by the latter analyst, to exchange exercise calendars or to invite observers to certain exercises.

However one may assess the urgency of negotiating naval CBMs, Russia should not try to seek them too actively. As one can clearly sense from Bradford Dismukes' chapter, naval CBMs are still treated by the United States with an air of uneasiness and suspicion. By giving up the initiative Moscow will come closer to alleviating her concerns over Western naval activity.

There are grounds to believe that pragmatism will prevail and more subtle diplomatic tactics will be used by Moscow. These tactics seem to be more appropriate and effective since current reordering of national security priorities by Western countries will tend to curb the elements of Western naval posture deemed to be alarming and provocative from the Russian point of view. Of course, such Russian-Western interaction in itself may fall under the category of confidence-building, but only if to expand definition of CBMs beyond any reasonable limits.

The problem of definition is noted here because by stating that naval CBMs have outlived their usefulness one tends to create an inaccurate impression that any activity meant under the term of "confidence-building" is unnecessary and unwelcome. The point of contention is whether the traditional understanding of the

term makes it valid to be applied to the current status of the relations between Russia and the NATO countries. One and the same measure may be adopted, for instance, invitation of observers to military exercises, but in one case the goal is to prevent a surprise attack, in another the goal is to broaden security cooperation.

Whatever one may have to say about naval CBMs, from a Russian perspective the Mediterranean is a much less attractive area for their initiation than North Atlantic or Pacific where naval threats are more salient. As to the United States, reorientation of its military strategy towards meeting regional challenges makes the Mediterranean area, the southern part of which continues to be too volatile, not a very suitable choice for measures constraining naval activity or reducing the Navy's flexibility.

Still, should Russia be interested in getting rid of the US naval presence from the Mediterranean? Logically enough, Russia's new military doctrine also stresses preparation for the most probable form of hostilities, that is, regional conflicts in the Southern hemisphere to which the Mediterranean area is closely linked. Though the 6th Fleet continues to present a potential threat to Russia, under the current conditions its contribution to the maintenance of international security, and security of Russia as well, through crisis management operations can not be denied (the recent examples are the Persian Gulf War and the Yugoslavian crisis). The danger that the Fleet poses to Russia should be dealt with in a broader context of the Russian-American relations and not by naval arms control measures similar to the Gorbachev proposal of 1986. Moscow should attempt to provide for positive features of the US naval presence in the Mediterranean to surface more clearly.

The Soviet timid participation in the Persian Gulf War opened a period of East-West strategic partnership in dealing with the Third World instabilities. Besides, the Soviets' entrance into the anti-Iraqi coalition confirmed their psychological willingness to resurrect comrade-in-arms spirit of the World War II. If to build on that experience now, the Mediterranean appears to be a perfect testing ground for developing methods and mechanisms of military effort coordination.

The defense communities on both sides of the dismantled Berlin Wall tend to cling to the past and consider the notion of coordination as impractical or far-fetched at best. To bridge the existing gap between the present day realities and war planning, they ought to try truly innovative approaches and at last do start preparing for future contingencies.