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Taking issue with both camps is Schlesinger, a former defense secretary now teaching at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies. Today, he argues, America must "live with the risks" that have long plagued other less favored nations.

Formerly the United States had little difficulty exerting its will. "Even in circumstances as inherently unfavorable as . . . the Berlin airlift (1948-49)," writes Schlesinger, "the Soviet Union felt obliged to give way." Yet by 1968, Moscow could overlook U.S. protests and assert itself in Czechoslovakia—or, later, in Afghanistan (1979) and Poland (1981). The decline of American power vis-à-vis the Soviets also meant that the United States would be "tested" more often by smaller nations such as Iran and Nicaragua.

American responses to such "tests" have been hamstrung by a lack of domestic consensus on what U.S. interests are and how they can best be defended. Furthermore, the trauma of the 1965-1973 Vietnam involvement has, among other things, increased tension between the executive and legislative branches of government, with a suspicious Congress often doing its best to stymie the White House. Schlesinger predicts that this tension will persist: "Whatever the longings of . . . the executive branch to 'roll back the legislative intrusion,' the good old days . . . will not return."

Those who call on the United States to reduce its overseas obligations are guilty of wishful thinking. Citing the uproar that ensued when Jimmy Carter proposed, in 1978, to reduce the number of U.S. troops in South Korea, Schlesinger observes that "for any great power to back away from its commitments is more easily said than done."

That leaves the United States facing a paradox: It *must* reduce its military commitments—except that it *cannot*. Moreover, despite the need for a national consensus, America must preserve its prestige by retaliating—with or without popular support—against terrorists and those who threaten U.S. economic and strategic interests. America may "win some and lose some," Schlesinger concludes, but "try as we will, there is no acceptable way that we can escape from . . . responsibilities or risks."

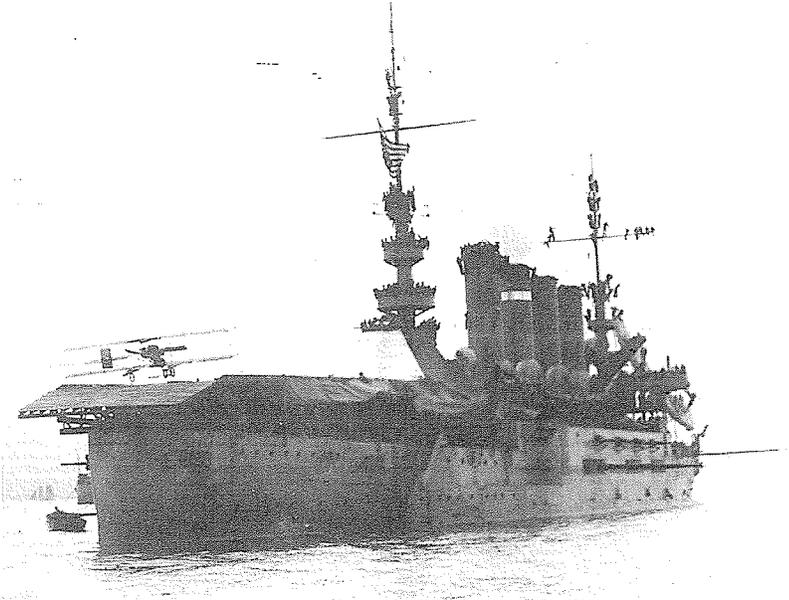
Are 600 Ships Enough?

"The Growing Navy" by Michael R. Gordon, in *National Journal* (Sept. 21, 1985) 1730 M St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036; "Is That All There Is?" by R. Robinson Harris and Joseph Benkert, in *Proceedings* (Oct. 1985), U.S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, Md. 21402.

The U.S. Navy is riding high. Buoyed by a wave of congressional support, and led by Navy Secretary John F. Lehman, it is on its way to achieving its goal of a modernized 600-ship fleet by 1989. Gordon, a *National Journal* reporter, wonders whether expansion is coming "at the expense of a balanced naval force."

Congress has approved funding for all but two of the 28 new ships requested by the Navy in the 1986 fiscal year. When completed, those 26 vessels will raise the fleet's total to 560—down from 1,055 in 1968 during the Vietnam War but above the 1980 low of 479. Behind this build-up,

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January 18, 1911, in San Francisco Bay: An airplane lands for the first time on the deck of a Navy ship, the battleship Pennsylvania.

reports Gordon, is a Navy budget that has increased at a real annual rate of 7.5 percent over the last five years. This year, the Navy will account for 35 percent of total defense outlays (\$244 billion).

Some critics of the planned expansion contend that the Navy is trying to do too much too soon. Cuts in maintenance funds may sideline up to 20 percent of the Navy's carrier planes by 1991. And Gordon says that Lehman has "front-loaded" the Navy budget by securing firm congressional commitments that often mask real ship-building costs. In 1983, for example, Congress earmarked \$6.8 billion to construct two more *Nimitz*-class aircraft carriers. When the necessary support ships and aircraft are taken into account, the total bill will rise to \$34 billion.

The Navy says it wants new ships, especially big aircraft carriers, to implement its "forward strategy"—a plan to bottle up the Soviet fleet in its home waters and to strike at military bases in the USSR if war comes. Yet this ambitious concept stirs strong criticism. Stansfield Turner, retired admiral and former CIA director, has noted that by the time the thin-skinned carriers came close enough to launch attacks on the USSR, "they would be within range of over 90 percent of USSR land-based bombers." Other critics regard the "forward strategy" simply as a marketing device designed to make the case for a larger Navy.

To Harris and Benkert, Navy commander and lieutenant commander,

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respectively, war with the Soviet Union remains the Navy's "most demanding and important contingency"—though it is also the "least likely." They argue that in today's world of limited conflicts ("violent peace") more emphasis should be given to the use of (less expensive, less vulnerable) non-carrier surface ships to gather intelligence, demonstrate support for allies, and provide a U.S. military presence in trouble spots such as the eastern Mediterranean.

Indeed, the authors recount that of the roughly 200 "crises" to which U.S. naval forces have responded since World War II, only 55 percent resulted in deployment of aircraft carriers. Thus, proponents of the 600-ship fleet should remember that "ships which may be supporting players in global war may well be the lead players in peacetime."

A Forgotten Region

"Southeast Asia and U.S. Global Strategy: Continuing Interests and Shifting Priorities" by Richard K. Betts, in *Orbis* (Summer 1985), 3508 Market St., Ste. 350, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Barely 10 years have passed since Saigon fell to the Communists, but hardly anybody in political Washington talks about Southeast Asia anymore. In the White House, observes Betts, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, only sub-Saharan Africa gets less attention.

Ironically, the neglect coincides with the mushrooming of U.S. economic interests in the region. American trade with the members of the Western-oriented Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand—doubled between 1977 and 1982 (to \$21 billion). And the Soviet Union has vastly expanded its military presence in the region since Hanoi granted its ally access to the former U.S. air and naval bases at Danang and Cam Ranh Bay.

Why the U.S. inattention? America's "painful hangover" from the Vietnam War and the authoritarian character of several of the ASEAN governments are contributing factors, Betts explains. Yet the chief reason that U.S. policy-makers ignore Southeast Asia is that ASEAN faces no significant external threats from Communist powers.

The Soviets may deploy more warships and reconnaissance planes in the region these days, but Southeast Asia is "no greater a priority for Moscow than for Washington." (Indeed, Vietnam may provide the USSR with convenient bases, but at high rent: A 1983 State Department report estimated that the Soviets spend \$3-\$4 million per day to shore up Hanoi.) More important is China's swing into the anti-Soviet (and anti-Vietnamese) camp during the early 1970s. Fearing a reprise of the 1979 frontier war with China, Vietnam now keeps most of its one million-man army near its northern border. Some 100,000 troops occupy Kampuchea (Cambodia), where they are busy dealing with Chinese-backed local guerrillas. Any Vietnamese invasion of Thailand, which borders on Kampuchea, might well invite what Beijing calls a "second lesson" for Hanoi.

Internal insurgencies do pose varying threats to Thailand, Malaysia, and