

# TRENDS in the use of the Sea . . .and their implications on Foreign Policy

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## TRENDS in the use of the Sea . . .



*Paul Henry Nitze, 58, became the 59th Secretary of Navy on 29 Nov 1963. A veteran of more than 15 years of public service, he was Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs when nominated by President Kennedy. From 1942-43 he was Chief, Metals & Minerals Br. Board of Economic Warfare, until named as Director of Foreign Procurement and Development for the Foreign Economic Administration. He later served seven years with the Department of State. Mr. Nitze graduated cum laude from Harvard in 1928, and by 1942 was vice-president of the New York investment banking firm of Dillon Read and Company, when he entered government service.*



# and their implications on Foreign Policy

**The Honorable Paul H. Nitze  
Secretary of the Navy**

SOREN Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, once observed that man may examine life only in the known past, but must live it into the unknown future. I have, nevertheless, always felt that one of the most important contributions to a man's balance and perspective is his sense of history. We must draw upon such assurances as are provided by the known past to find guidelines for working our way into the speculative future.

It is sometimes difficult to realize that the decade which immediately followed the close of

active hostilities in the Second World War, and during which so many basic and enduring decisions were made by the United States, is already history. From the vantage point of 1965 we are afforded a perspective to look back upon the problems of those years. I believe that it is important to examine them, and a long range of antecedent time, to seek guidance for the times and tests still ahead.

Policy makers in those years were—and still are—concerned with an array of conditions novel to our national existence. Change was rampant. It

sometimes seemed to be a force of itself. It was common to hear men speak of the abstraction *change* as if it were a unified reality—and indeed as if change were the only reality. “Change is the law of life,” I recall the late Secretary Dulles having said on one occasion.

That idea expressed a truth but not the whole truth. Change may indeed be one of the laws of life. It is not *the* law of life. A world without change would indeed be stagnant and hopeless. A world with nothing but change—with no elements of continuity—would be not a world but chaos. The factors produced by antecedent changes often become the constant factors in a subsequent stage; moreover, some aspects of a situation may be in flux while other aspects are enduring.

So, notwithstanding the romancing we hear about the processes of change, policy is not merely a reflection of change but is necessarily concerned with mediating between change and continuity. It must strive to preserve as well as to overturn. It often must take a stand rather than adjusting. It must know how to insist as well as how to accommodate. The essence of any reliable order consists of the elements on which men can count to continue—not those certain to give way.

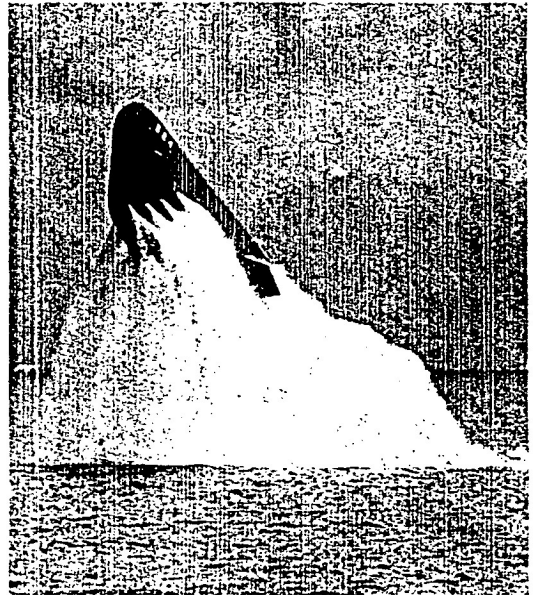
Policy, besides having to cope with change, has also to search out elements of continuity as a basis for operating. It must call upon certainties as a compass for keeping its bearing amid certainties. The factors of change are what make policy necessary, but the factors of continuity are what make it possible.

Such is the spirit behind the retrospections here expounded—not so much out of love for what has been as in preparation for what lies ahead of us. My perspective is that of a man presently and officially concerned with our relations to, and our role upon, the sea—with the bearing that control of the sea has upon our national existence and our place in the world, and, in turn, with the bearing which our national purposes have upon maritime conditions over the world. I am not single-minded about all this. I am a Navy man but not a navalist. The ocean is part, and a vital part, of our national life, and will continue to be—but I should never urge that it encompasses all of our past and future.

To account for all the drastic changes on the world scene challenging the United States might require a recapitulation of the entire known past. For emphasis I should select two great transforming ideas first projected as forces over the world during the time of Europe’s ascendancy as the integrating center in world political and military affairs, when most of the rest of mankind was subordinated to Europe under the inequalitarian

arrangements of empire. I should also stress two great events of nearly apocalyptic proportions.

One of the transforming ideas referred to is the concept of the nation state—a concept embracing in combination, first, a people united by historic recollections and common expectations for the future; second, a homeland serving such a people as their historic base and the focus of their identity; third, a regime identified with such a people and homeland, whether in the role of agent or master, in the making of history. The other transforming phenomenon is technology itself—the adaptation of knowledge gained through experimental science to the harnessing of new sources of energy and to continuous improvement in processes for getting work done.



### The Two Wars

The events referred to are two wars—the one coming just a half century and the second a quarter century ago. Men at first called the one of 1914 the European War. As it got out of hand, they came to call it the World War. We know it now as World War I—the opening phase of what we now see in proportion as a great protracted conflict.

Anyone trying to appraise the world scene even as late as 1910 would in high probability have missed the portents of war. Preponderantly, at that time, men counted on the factors of interdependence produced by rising technology to stay the hand of violence and to perpetuate the high level of tranquility enjoyed by Europe, and, as a corollary, the whole world in the century since Waterloo. The states of Europe, sharing a generally common view of history, seemed to have adapted permanently to a hands-off precept con-

cerning each other's internal affairs, desisting from trying to dictate their neighbors' futures and their choices of modes of government. No one state had been strong enough to dominate the others, and Great Britain, close by in its insular position, had been intent to maintain that peaceable balance. The work of drawing the world together, quickened by technology, was all but complete. The ties between Europe and the world at large were still preponderantly in the inequalitarian frame of empire. Men did not assume they would so remain forever, but few expected them to be riven wholesale soon.

A few exceptional and pessimistic observers—the English historian, J. N. Figgis, for example, and the Americans, Henry and Brooks Adams—had forebodings concerning the fragility of the arrangements on which other men were counting too hopefully to endure. They sensed the emerging factors of disequilibrium as Germany, favored by growing technology, especially in steel, moved toward a preponderant position and posed a threat to British ascendancy at sea. They foresaw, some of the pessimists, how technology and interdependency, far from staying the hand of violence, might only multiply the havoc enormously when and if war should come.

I cannot undertake here to labor the chronology of those two wars, but I must fill in a few details. In both of them the levels of technology greatly affected the course of battle, and in both, in turn the demands of battle greatly spurred technology. Both, besides being fought over huge ranges on land and sea and in the skies, became, far beyond military contests, struggles pitting the wills and values and moral fibres of peoples on one side against the other. They were world wars not only in scope but in the sense that the world would never be the same again.

In the first, Germany, and two nationally diversified states, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, plus some lesser collaborators, were arrayed against Russia, France, Britain, and some lesser allies in a two-front war. In the East, the multinational states buckled under the stress of combat, and Russia also was ground down in defeat. Russia's ponderous ruling order gave way to rule by a conspiratorial group devoted to a notion of re-making that state—and then the world—to fit its own theory of history. In the West, Germany's land forces, after surging into France and Belgium, went on the defensive tactically—a position greatly favored by the state of weapon technology at the time. Meanwhile Germany strove to overturn its opponent's advantages in sea power by undersea warfare. Only after the weight of the United States was brought to bear, was Germany's hold in the west finally loosed. The strength to turn the tide came by sea, and the circumstance making possible its advent was the triumph scored against the undersea threat.

In the second of the two wars, Germany, with Japan's, Italy's, and a few others' aid in what was called the Axis, was at first given a free hand by Russia, overran its nearby eastern neighbors and then Western Europe and had the British at bay. Thereupon the Germans turned eastward against vast Russia. Japan, already warring against China, attempted a knockout blow against United States sea power in the Pacific to free its flank for a move into Southeast Asia and then on to India. Now it was a world war again—on a scale even greater than the previous phase. Technologically, this time the advantages lay with the offensive. It was a long ordeal—and sometimes the issue was in deep doubt—before the initiative could be wrested from the Axis. I do not wish to present a dogmatic navalist's interpretation of how it finally was done, for there was credit enough for all services—but without a preponderance of naval power, in the last analysis, naught else could have availed.

At the end, much of Asia was disorganized and demoralized. Europe was in a parlous state—its wealth was dissipated, its productivity impaired, and its public life was scarred by the indignities of enemy occupation. Its season as the integrating center of an imperial-colonial order, seemingly so solid in earlier decades of the century, was now over in all but form. The colonial outlands would now rise to demand status as nation-states, irrespective of having or lacking a grasp of history and canons of public life for making their way as going concerns. Even so, Europe's potential made it a vital factor still in whatever order might be put together to take the place of the one which had come apart, and Germany, though defeated, remained a key to Europe's future.

#### New Circumstances

Such are the elements in the background of the manifold changed circumstances confronting the United States in the years immediately following World War II. These are still with us. There are others—enormous ones—in the field of weapon technology. Perhaps one can best convey the essences by a quick enumeration:

I should cite, first, the establishment of positions of great scope and importance—namely Soviet Russia and the Chinese People's Republic and appurtenant areas—for revolutionary purposes with universal claims on the future derived from their asserted monopoly of legitimacy growing out of a purported law of history of which they claim to be the exponents and guardians. Each of the major elements of the Communist sector presents a position of enormous sweep and significance: China, one of the most ancient of realms, bearing on Central Asia, the Asian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia; Soviet Russia, heir to centuries of imperial expansion, which provided a land position of unequalled dimension bearing on or ap-

proaching areas as diverse as Scandinavia, Europe, the Balkans, Iran and Afghanistan and the sub-continent, China itself, then Japan, and Alaska—a position lacking, from the standpoint of strategic formidability, only the characteristic of great accesses to the sea.

I shall cite secondly the fact of weapon systems characterized by prodigious destructive capabilities and immediate readiness for delivery over spans of thousands of miles—weapon systems which are of limited use in interdicting attack and which impel their possessors toward promising their security on the threat of incalculably destructive retaliation.

Third, I should cite the sharing of high capability in such weapons by two societies—one of them our own, and the other, Soviet Russia—both based beyond the confines of what used to be, in earlier phases of modernity, the central theater of strategic significance and political importance in world affairs.

Fourth, I take note of the progressive disappearance—a major phenomenon of our times—of the inequalitarian imperial order which was centered on Europe and which did serve, in its fashion, for a framework relating the less developed and the tradition-bound lands and peoples to the metropolitan centers.

Along with that phenomenon, I would stress the compounding number of states, new to independence, entering the world's public life in some instances without having had the opportunity to develop adequate bases of public life of their own—often stirred by expectations and aspirations beyond those practically realizable.

Finally, there is the dynamism of contemporary communications with their tendency to make the world resound to every issue and every problem; a world with so much more of communication than community. It is a world now truly, for the first time, brought into the situation of being one world of cognition, just as in our times, as one of the novelties, it is a world become at last truly a single theater of strategy.

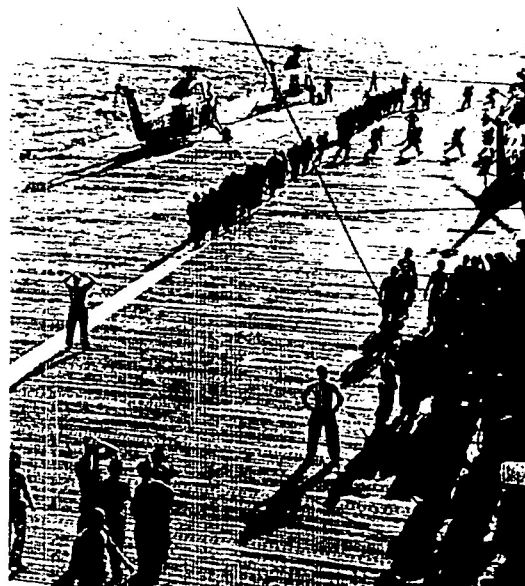
Such are the conditions underlying that phenomenon—at once so changable in some respects and constant in others—which we call the Cold War. It involves a basic contest over the character of whatever world order is to be instituted. It involves a reluctance to invoke weapons—combined with an unremitting interplay of war-making potentials as they affect calculations on both sides of the confrontation. The issues focus in a central respect on Europe, and specifically on Germany. Yet they reverberate over the whole of the now interactive globe.

In face of manifold changes, policy, pressing to keep pace with changes of its own, has found points of reliance in realities of a fixed and per-

sistent kind. Because not all has changed, the nation has been able to meet the challenge.

### Mastery of the Sea

The United States was able to meet the test of events in the immediate sequel to World War II because its own public life had not been undermined by the struggle and because its own resourceful economy was intact, the structure of its credit system unimpaired, and its political institutions firm. Moreover, the United States had preserved mastery of the seas. With a magnificent maritime position, it was able without fear of a challenge to move the vast tonnages required for recovery and rehabilitation even, as in the period



of hostilities, it succeeded in transporting across the seas, in face of most formidable counter forces, the all but infinite requirements for victory and deliverance. It was easy to overlook the essentiality of the factor of maritime strength in the post-war period—to take it as a *given*.

In point of fact, the characteristic which had given the American position its great immunity in its earlier decades were now basic ones impelling the nation into unprecedented responsibilities and enabling it to fulfill them. The position remains singular as the one affording the scope necessary for providing an adequate counter to the positions now within the sway of communism. It reaches from the Arctic to the tropics. It stands in both the great land hemispheres. Finally, it is an unparalleled position in maritime implications—with lengthy facings on both the Atlantic and the Pacific. The establishment of such a national position is surely one of the greatest consequences

of the great movement outward from Europe in that epoch, when, in Sir Halford Mackinder's phrase, all the oceans suddenly became European.

Yet merely to face upon the oceans is not, *ipso facto*, to have maritime power, but only presents an opportunity. The test is what is done with the opportunity. In the great exacting period of marginal conflicts and central tensions since World War II, the United States has been diligent to preserve ascendancy on the seas so as to keep logistical access to the myriad positions over the world in whose security we are involved and which contribute to our own. Thus is realized a basic factor underlying the credibility of our alliance structures.

Developments in that period have been such as not only to preserve access to the seas as channels but also to bring sea power directly into the equations of deterrence. The combination of the first true submersible realized in the nuclear-propelled submarine, the solid-fuel missile, and the fusion bomb have brought the heartlands of the continents within strategic range of sea power. The deterrent power represented in the POLARIS submarine fleet is a growing reality. We had eleven such submarines operational ten months ago. Now we have eighteen—with the total due to rise to thirty-four, carrying 544 missiles aboard in the next year and a half. An advantageous side effect of the POLARIS growth rate is an increase of our capability for other sorts of missions as carriers deployed in the Mediterranean and the Western Pacific and heretofore rigidly committed to deterrent missions now become available for other uses as needed.

The technological developments I have referred to are also within reach of our potential adversaries—a circumstance placing critical importance on techniques of anti-submarine warfare. In this respect, control of the ocean surface and of the air above—in part because of factors of geography, our allies and we in combination enjoy an inherent advantage here—is of the essence. Anti-submarine warfare techniques encounter an inherent problem rising from the opacity of the seas. This problem is being worked on—in a spirit of optimism combined with urgency—and may soon be surmounted.

### The Maritime Future

Here I shift the tenses of my discourse to look ahead, seeking the certainties for charting a course into the unknown. It may be asked whether the maritime factors will count in the ranges of time ahead as they have in the past, and as they do even now. The answer—emphatic and unequivocal—is: yes. This must be so as far ahead as circumstances are calculable—and I should not venture to calculate beyond. The role of the seas will not diminish, nor will the importance of our

role upon the seas.

The seas will persist not only as the main channel by which substance is transferred in great volume from continent to continent. They will grow in import as sources of wealth.

The floor of the ocean, far and wide, is becoming the scene of exploration for oil. Fifteen countries, including the United States and Canada, now boast off-shore oil production. Another ten countries are engaging in, or planning, relevant explorations. The most active areas being the Persian Gulf, the North Sea, the African shores off Nigeria and Liberia, the Gulf of Suez, Trinidad, and Brunei—with the North Sea area the most dramatic of all. Petroleum represents only a beginning. The floor of the seas—and the waters themselves—afford inestimably rich mineral potentials in great variety.

Besides mineral resources, the oceans offer a huge potential in foodstuffs—not only in respect to fishery but also as a place for cultivation and harvesting of plant life. Such oceanographers as France's Jacques Cousteau and our own Columbus Iselin look ahead to use of the seas—with replenishment phased to reaping—as rationally superior to present methods as farming is over the hunting stage in making avail of the resources of land.

As to military uses, the seas will continue as vital as in the past both with respect to marginal conflicts which may arise and with respect to the strategy of deterrence—and our plans envisage developments to preserve and to exploit the advantages accruing to the United States and its friends from maritime ascendancy.

Only a few years ahead the nation will have acquired a capability to mount out and deliver, wherever required, up to two divisions of Marines on 20-knot amphibious assault ships. It will have new and improved methods of horizontal and vertical envelopment designed to project amphibious power further inland than ever before. Assault troops will be preceded by greatly improved carrier striking forces capable of maintaining anti-warfare defense of sea areas—thanks to improved ship-to-air missiles and to F-111B fighter aircraft with Phoenix missiles. These latter will also serve as escorts to our large numbers of A7A attack aircraft with a doubled payload radius. The effect will be a quantum increase in our capability to exploit the seas in limited war.

The role of the seas will surely not diminish with respect to the maintenance of deterrence. The POLARIS prototype, plying the waters, will be mainstay against attack and intimidation both for us and our allies for an undefinable future. In a complementary way, the effort to improve anti-submarine capabilities must be worked at perseveringly. Whether or not the technical difficulties related to the opacity of the seas can be surmounted, we should be able to preserve and

to enhance the factors favorable to our side. We have now, and shall have increasingly in the future, a capability for making an ocean-wide approach to the problem of security against submarines. The North Atlantic littoral is composed entirely of nations identified with, or friendly to, our cause. The putative aggressor must send his submarines through straits and passages susceptible to mining and patrolling—a factor with a great potential for attrition in extremity. Any political development in the decades ahead serving further to integrate the interests of the Atlantic community will strengthen the potential for making the North Atlantic a lake of the Free World.

Similar developments can be projected for the Pacific. Free world nations virtually ring this vast body of water. Alliances of various categories bind the United States to all the western hemispheric nations abutting the Pacific, and to Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of China on Taiwan, Japan, and the Republic of Korea—the matrix for coordinating forces and operating a base complex of huge sweep and enormous strategic potential.

We can look forward in the future, within the Atlantic and in most of the Pacific, to a system of total surveillance, reconnaissance, and reporting of the ocean areas. I am confident that in the 1970's we shall be able to keep accurate, up-to-date plots of every ship under way on the oceans—a tremendous boon not only in relation to nuclear deterrence but also in regard to inhibiting the use of the seas by marauders and smugglers and to restraining Communist subversive operations on the waters.

Yet, in this combination of increased economic uses of the seas and of possessiveness over the seas and underlying land with the rising potential of the sea for military uses, one can see the outlines of great issues of law and policy. In contemporary times two serious threats to the law of the uses of the sea are becoming manifest—first, in the exercise of unilateral claims of extension of territorial seas and internal waters and, second, in interference with innocent passage of vessels.

The Soviet Union, and then a score of other nations have claimed, on their own and outside the limits of international law, wider limits for their territorial waters than permitted by the traditional three-mile limit. The effort has been spurred by desires to achieve political aims at the expense of other nations, and to gain expansive and exclusive control of fisheries. In other instances, governments have been attempting unilaterally to put aside the traditional law related to base lines for measuring territorial seas. The intention is to pre-empt as internal waters vast areas hitherto established and used as high seas.

Some of the newly emerging nations are disposed also to deny the validity of the right of transit through international straits—a right which the United States is clearly constrained to assert and to uphold. Obviously the maritime nations of the world must insist that there be free right of transit through such straits for their vessels of commerce and for their security forces as well.

The United States and its allies must stand firmly against erosion of the law of the sea. It will in high likelihood not be enough merely to voice principles. Actions to protect these interests will have to be maintained in the future.

Actions by the United States to assert the principles we maintain may meet resistance. The emerging nations, in many cases, do not seem to appreciate the value of the freedom of the seas. Now, and for the next few years, we may probably expect them to assert their sovereignty by exclusive claims such as I have already mentioned. It may be, however, that, as they gain maturity, they will learn, as we and the other maritime nations of the world have learned over the past several centuries, that the equal rights of all nations to the common, non-exclusive use of the high seas is more in their interest than exclusive claims to small segments of those seas. Thus, we may hope that the trend we have seen for the past few years may be reversed, and the principles we enunciate will win a large measure of international acceptance. I would expect that the United States policy of insisting on being able to deploy the cutting edge of usable power through the high seas, including the narrow straits, in support of world order and stability, can win a large measure of international acceptance.

Now, however, I turn back in closing from speculation to certainties. In times ahead as far as it is given to us to see ahead, the strength of the United States will be linked to maritime factors—a constant to be taken into account and to be provided for. As new issues arise to require new remedies, as the means go on changing, we must keep that end steady in our minds. Our link to the sea is as Walt Whitman expressed it a century ago:

Thou holdest not the venture of thyself  
alone, not of the Western Continent  
alone,

Earth's *resumé* entire floats on thy keel  
O ship, is steadied by thy spars,

With thee Time voyages in trust, the  
antecedent nations sink or swim  
with thee,

With all their ancient struggles, martyrs,  
heroes, epics, wars, thou bear'st the  
other continents,

Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the  
destination port triumphant. . . .

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