CHAPTER III

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE INDIAN OCEAN

One of the ironies of the contemporary world was that one heard so much about "Soviet Naval Presence" and "Soviet Threat" in the Indian Ocean. Looking back at Russian history, Russia's urge to gain access to warm waters was matched by the dismal power of its navy. The naval engagements with the Ottoman Turks and the Japanese during 19th and early 20th century proved a total disaster for any Russian ambition to the sea; while naval power never counted much in the military might of Soviet Russia, even during the second world war. On the other hand, the concept of 'Soviet Threat' as traditionally interpreted by those who felt threatened by Soviet Russia was more in the realm of ideas, intrigues and subversion, while its military-strategic aspect was confined to Russia's geographical approximinity with Europe; later, from the fifties onward, military-strategic aspect of this threat began to shift its focus from land to air and then to the seas. Indeed in some ways, this shifting perception of 'Soviet threat' is simply an
assertion of generally accepted claim in the West and elsewhere that the USSR had transformed itself into a de-ideologised state and indeed a Super Power with characteristic hall-marks of any Super-Power and certainly similar to the other Super-Power namely the U.S.A.

If we accept such a perception of Soviet threat and thus subscribe to the view that there was no qualitative distinctive bases of Power between the two Super-Powers, we must logically counterpose policy goals and objectives of the one against those of the other; that is to say a Super-Power like the Soviet Union should act whether we like it or not, as a Super-Power with global interests in various parts of the world including the Indian Ocean. On the other hand if we reject the mechanical view of a Super-Power and thus find some qualitative difference between the two Super-Powers, we invariably have to look into such crucial questions as 'who threatens whom' and 'who benefits from what'.
Here when we focus our attention on the Indian Ocean in recent past, we have a distinct advantage without involving ourselves in arguing for and against either of the positions, mentioned above, we might even arrive at a conclusion common to both of them.

Let us examine the past Soviet role in the Indian Ocean from the viewpoint of a Super-Power, in this case, the Soviet Union. Firstly it is a common knowledge that during the first thirty-eight years of its existence, the Indian Ocean was simply a matter of geography for the Soviet Union. It was from 1955 onwards, as the Soviet Union began to work at Asia and embarked on a long range programme of aid and assistance both military and non-military, to Afro-Asian countries, notably Egypt and India, the Indian Ocean assumed importance for Soviet merchant shipping. As the Soviet Union became more involved in Asian affairs in consonance with her claim of an Asian Power as well, trade and commerce grew with Asian countries, and thus consequently also the frequency of Soviet-shipping vessels in the Indian Ocean. Hence it was no over-exaggeration to suggest that the increasing Asian content in Soviet policy, in general, resulted in the significant high
level of activity for Soviet navy, both military and non-military, in the Indian Ocean. However, in term of overall importance for Soviet trade, the Indian Ocean ranked low as the exit from two major Soviet import-export areas (the Baltic and the Black Sea) accounted for about 80% of Soviet Seaborne trade. Yet the Indian Ocean became vital for Soviet trade with Asian countries.

Secondly, as the trade is followed by the flag and being a Super-Power, the Soviet Union had allied, clients, satellites, spheres of influences, military bases, in short a finger in every pie, Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean was necessarily regarded as ominous. Moreover, from the point of view of the other Super-Power, the U.S.A., and its allies, what was a gain to the Soviet Union was a loss to them-a vulgarisation of the primary maxim of super-power politicking. Yet it

1. Although the exit from Black sea does carry a small share of Soviet import-export trade with Asian countries touching the Indian Ocean, the main exit points for Asian trade remained the Eastern Coast;
just about summed up the reality. But the point is whether the Soviet Union had set these goals before her, or more importantly, whether she had the resources at her command to undertake such a task? The contention is that the Soviet Union had neither the will, nor the need, nor even the resources to match the U.S. style of Super-power behaviour. Let us substantiate this by a bare minimum statement of some facts:

a) Although by all counts, the Soviet navy had considerably expanded since 1962, Soviet defence expenditure was still heavily committed to deterrence (why was this so, for example, that we have not yet heard of Soviet navy acquiring aircraft carriers?);

b) Except some sharing facilities we still do not know of any Soviet base in the Indian Ocean (one might even ponder as to why the Soviet navy followed to cumbersome practice of toeing its supplies to the high sea);

c) The Soviet navy was estimated to have 475,000 men (including Naval air-force 75,000 and naval
infantry 14,000): 231 major surface combat ships; 300 attack and cruise missile submarines (including 26 nuclear-powered long range cruise missile). This compared poorly with the might of the US Navy and its allies with all time highest US defence spending for the navy during those years; moreover, it certainly did not provide the Soviet navy with enough teeth to interfere with western shipping in the Indian Ocean or elsewhere and surely deterred it to take such actions as the US 6th and 7th Fleet had undertaken in the past.

d) Lastly, it is clear that history does not always repeat itself yet it might serve as a guide to the future. The Soviet Union unlike in Europe, had been extremely sensitive to nationalism of newly emergent states of the Third World, particularly in Asia. She had not embarked on any project which could hurt the nationalist aspiration of Asian countries. It might well be argued, and rightly so indeed that such a posture could serve the interests of the Soviet Union. And,

Finally, this brought out the overall interests of the Soviet Union herself. It was indeed true to say that the Soviet Union was extremely worried over all time high spending of and top-most priority given to the US Navy. Soviet news media had been consistently hitting at the US decision of converting Diego Garcia as a US Naval base, mainly for US nuclear-powered submarines. Submarines equipped with Poseidon missiles operating from bases as Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean (particularly in North-West Indian Ocean) brought all areas from Soviet Western borders to Eastern Siberia and as far as Moscow within their target; furthermore, with eventual addition of multiple individually guided warheads to Poseidon missiles more Polaris submarines were to be free for deployment at targets in European USSR, Central Asia and Western Siberia. All this when seen against the background of Pentagon's preoccupation with "ocean strategy" and highest priority for the US Navy, had appeared to the Soviet leaders as a great threat against their country. More so, when they found that

3. For example, see the article by B. Teplinsky in S ShA Ekonomika, Politika u Ideologa No 10, 1972 (Moscow).
given the immediate and short-range domestic compulsions, they had nothing to counter, except showing their flag in high sea which was a threat to their national security. It is in this context that Soviet support to the proposals for "nuclear free zone" and a "zone of peace" for the Indian Ocean became meaningful. It was with this apprehension in mind that Brezhnev declared in June 1971:

"The US Propaganda machinery has launched a wide campaign concerning the Soviet Navy. Washington, you see, sees a threat that our warships appear in the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and other seas. But at the same time, U.S. politicians consider it normal and natural for their Sixth Fleet to be constantly present in the Mediterranean, hard by the side of the Soviet Union as it were, and for the Seventh Fleet to be stationed off the coasts of China and Indochina."

"We have never thought and do not think now that it is an ideal situation when the navies of great powers are sailing for a long time at the other end of the world, away from their native coasts. We are ready to
solve this problem, but to make an equal bargain, as they say."

The clear implication was that the Soviet leadership would like to opt out of a potential armed rivalry in the region.

The above discussion brings out the fact that it did not serve the Soviet Union well to pursue her goals and objectives in the Indian Ocean simply like a Super-Power. This is not to say that the Soviet Union disliked the fact that the Indian Ocean was no more "British Lake". On the contrary she continued to strive in countering the US Navy's strategic plans and objectives. Admittedly, such 'modus operandi' was bound to sharpen super-power rivalry and contradiction in the region. But the question remained whether such a development was inherent in the nature of world politics of those days and more importantly, whether this could develop into an eye-ball confrontation with the two opposing world social systems. Naturally the Asians had a role to play in those times in this respect.

The starting point of recognising some qualitative difference between the Soviet role as a super-power and that of the United States hinged on the nature and function of ideology in Soviet policies. The ideology of Communism, which according to the Soviet leaders and policy-makers was the basis of all facts of Soviet life and society, it rejected the notion of acquiring sphere of influences, neo-colonialist gains and establishment of military bases at the expense of other nations. Communism treats that social changes occurring in a society as primarily the handiwork of that particular society itself while the external forces can only, and not more, catalytically help in creating simply a balance of social forces favourable to progressive social changes. It denies the promotion of national interest and safeguarding of its strategic and territorial security beyond its borders. It also strives to counter and weaken the capitalist system by any means short of a total nuclear war. Ideologically the overall interests of the newly independent countries of Asia, Africa and Latin
America basically are common as against the capitalist system and views them as friends and allies, in spite of their differing level of development, in this clash of the two systems.

Hence the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean fundamentally showed the weakening of capitalist system (i.e. the disappearance of the British Lake), emphasizes the countering influence as against the basic community of interests between the socialist system and the Third World, and thus a guarantee for safeguarding the political and economic independence of the Third World countries. In short, the Soviet naval presence in the region promoted the interests of littoral countries of the region, while the Power rivalry in the area must not escalate into a direct or indirect military confrontation locally or at a world-scale. Indeed, as Brezhnev's statement, quoted earlier, showed the Soviets regard the talk of 'Soviet threat' in the Indian Ocean as a smoke-screen for aggressive US naval plans followed by high level of activities, while they regarded their own naval
presence as essentially geared to their need of trade and commerce with Asian countries, although they were fully conscious of the potential military build-up rivalry in the region.

India regarded the Soviet role in Asia, as conducive to its own overall interests. Hence it was logical to view the Soviet role in the Indian Ocean, as primarily geared to the overall needs of Soviet trade, commerce and contacts with Asian countries.

**Evaluation of the Soviet Strategy in the Indian Ocean.**

Besides ideology and economic factors, geopolitical and strategic considerations also played a vital role in shaping the Soviet policy in the Indian Ocean region in those troubled times.

In the political and military configurations of the Soviet Union, the role of naval forces ranked second only to strategic missile troops. Soviet Admiral Gorshkov emphasised that "a navy enables a state to 'survive' in war, to make 'grand political moves' in war" by
threatening from the sea'. to force the enemy to 'conclude peace' on favourable terms if one is winning on the ground, and to secure an 'honourable peace' if one is losing.\(^5\) To quote him again.

"The implementation of party plans for the creation of an ocean-going fleet, fully responsive to the tasks of national defence in the atomic age, and its transformation into a real force capable of ensuring the state interests of the Soviet Union in the world ocean and successfully taking up the fight with the enemy's strong navy, repelling its strikes from ocean axes, has played an enormous role in strengthening our national defence capabilities and those of the entire socialist commonwealth."\(^6\)

The Soviet Navy's ability to accomplish 'national defence tasks', to ensure the USSR's state interests abroad and to combat the strike forces...
of the enemy fleet figured centrally in the Soviet national defence system.\(^7\)

An analysis of Soviet naval doctrine and its characteristics would be helpful in evaluating her naval policy in the Indian Ocean. The evolution of Soviet naval doctrine and strategy must be viewed in the context of developments in strategic weapons. Regardless of changes in the international balance of power, the need for a powerful fleet as an essential constituent of the armed force had been the main concern of the Russian state at all stages of its history.\(^8\) The policy was pursued most probably due to Russian geographic realities. Substantial naval forces were required to defend against the likelihood of any assault from the sea, and to thwart attempts by hostile maritime power to control areas adjoining the then USSR.\(^9\) In consequence, the Soviet naval policy was increasingly dominated by the requirement

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to defend four widely separated fleet areas against seaborne aggression. It was logical, therefore, to maintain a large Soviet Navy in recognition of the significance of sea power. However, the effectiveness of the Russian Navy fluctuated widely and its areas of operations remained limited.

Long after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviet Navy remained essentially coastal and defensive. However, the traditional perception of Russia's naval requirements greatly contributed towards the expansion and modernisation of the Soviet Navy. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the need for a modern and well-equipped Soviet naval force was first emphasised by Stalin. He was determined to build a powerful fleet in order to defend the sea approaches to the Soviet Union and promote political and strategic objectives in the adjacent regions.

On the doctrinal level, the pre-war concept of defence in depth and co-ordinated attacks by air,

1. Throughout most of the 1930s, the Soviets concentrated mainly on submarines, torpedo boats and naval aircrafts. The Third five year plan ending in 1943 was ambitious with regard to naval construction. In June 1941, the Soviets had the target submarine force.
submarine and surface units remained the essential feature of the new strategy. The most important ingredient was an enormous expansion programme. Post-war naval construction envisaged building 1,200 submarines, 200 escorts, 200 destroyers, about 36 cruisers, four battle-cruisers and four aircraft carriers in addition to 5,000 aircraft in the naval air force over the next 20 years. Among naval tasks, Soviet policy-makers assigned the highest priority to anti-amphibious operations against the most likely Western incursions in adjacent waters. The main thrust of post-war naval strategy was on 'area defence', which included outer and inner defence perimeters, the outer zone guarded by submarines. Thus, the basic role of the navy was to defend territorial waters and adjoining zones against the Western threat.

12. Ibid.
The post-Stalin leadership under Khrushchev reviewed the options of defence policy in 1954. The threat of a seaborne invasion by Western conventional naval forces was seen as a remote possibility. Now, however, the danger of a surprise nuclear attack by strategic bombers acquired first priority in naval construction and operational planning.

The naval threat of the Western seapowers was perceived in more limited terms of nuclear strikes by carrier-borne aircraft primarily against naval bases. This led to a radical reappraisal of naval requirements and to the decision to place primary reliance on long-range cruise missiles, a weapon that produced significant changes in naval strategy, tactics and ship designs. 14

The cruise missile weapon system was to be delivered by small- to medium-size surface ships, diesel submarines and aircraft. The new concept of operation stressed engaging enemy carrier groups within the range of shore-based air cover. A defensive strategy envisaged co-

ordinated missile attacks by strike aircraft, conventional submarines and large-scale destroyers. 15

The deployment of the Polaris A-1 and Polaris A II ballistic missile submarines by the US posed a still greater threat than the long-range aircraft of the carrier groups.

The defence against US Polaris submarines posed multiple problems for the Soviet Navy. The lack of ASW technology and the adverse geographic situation made the detection, location and tracking of US submarines extremely difficult. Khrushchev's primary focus on the strategic rocket force in essence countered the Western concept of nuclear deterrence and ignored the traditional reliance on balanced forces and war-fighting capabilities.16

Therefore, the 22nd Party Congress reversed Khrushchev's lopsided defence policy, biased in favour of nuclear weapons, and marked a return to a balanced naval structure.

16. Ibid. Pages 158-159.
The introduction of the Polaris system in Western defence strategy was also viewed by the Soviets as a major shift from a land- to a sea- based nuclear delivery system. The triple potential of these systems, as part of the initial exchange, as the core of the West's strategic reserve, and as the means of preventing Soviet use of NATO Europe, ranked them high in Soviet threat calculations. The relative invulnerability and the capacity of seabased systems to survive the initial exchange provided an 'assured response' to the Western forces. This development implied that more nuclear missiles could be held back to remain available for use at a subsequent stage of war, determining the final outcome of the conflict. The survivability of the Western SLBMs had a great impact on the Soviet military doctrine. The need for a strategic reserve became integral to the Soviet concept of war- fighting capability with nuclear weapons.

A shift in the Soviet strategic outlook emphasised the improvement of offensive capabilities against the American sea-based systems. In addition to
creating a national strategic reserve, the primary objective of Soviet policy was to destroy the second-strike capability of the Western alliance. This required that the US submarine carrier forces be attacked at the very out-set of war and that Soviet forces would have to be within weapon-range contact at the vital moment.\textsuperscript{17}

This also required that the Soviet surface ships and submarines must be pre-deployed in zones of potential threat.

The Soviet emphasis on a forward-deployed sea power policy reflected the impact of nuclear weapons, SLBM survivability and the need to seek strategic parity in the world oceans. The Soviet naval doctrine of forward deployment was meant to break the arc of the SLBM threat completed with the occasional deployment of the US Polaris A-3 in the Indian Ocean (range 2,500 miles).

The first requirement to meet the sea-based nuclear threat was to extend the limits of the outer

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, Page 161.
defence zone and then progressively develop the capability to contest and perhaps ultimately to deny the use of these waters by Western long-range nuclear forces. This involved an increasingly active naval presence, backed by shore-based missiles and aircraft. It also generated the need to develop new anti-submarine systems in outer defence areas.

The second requirement was to acquire the capability for naval and air operations beyond this outer defence zone, in order to develop a counter to the long-range Polaris A-3 system and its successors, and also to cover carrier deployments from American bases. In pursuit of this policy, the Soviet Navy was required to move forward into seas where the West had enjoyed an overwhelming maritime preponderance. Distant operations in areas like the Indian Ocean necessitated naval shore facilities along with development of autonomous systems such as reconnaissance satellites, anti-naval missiles and new classes of submarines. Despite the steadily increasing emphasis on ASW, however, the Soviets could not deploy an effective challenge to the Polaris submarine.
The Soviet naval entry into the Indian Ocean must be seen in the strategic context of forward deployment. The Arabian Sea was perceived as providing a better target coverage of the Soviet Union and China by a 2,500-mile missile range than any other area. Long-standing Soviet suspicions about its use as a launch area for the Polaris submarines were fuelled by the 1963 agreement to build a US Navy VLF communication station at North West Cape in Australia. Those suspicions were reinforced by the creation of the BIOT and the subsequent establishment of a communication station at Diego Garcia and its expansion to a naval support facility. Soviet counter measures focused on the consolidation of ASW capability in the newly extended outer defence zone in order to exclude Polaris and Poseidon submarines from the most favourable launch area.

The Soviet deployments, in addition to the regular presence, have been shaped by the nature of US

and Western responses to the regional crisis. During the 1979-80 crisis in Afghanistan and Iran, the Soviets sent reinforcements to balance the United States' naval strength in the area. The second Soviet aircraft carrier 'Minsk', a Kara-class cruiser, and the 'Ivan Rogov', the first ship of a new class of amphibious assault ship, augmented Soviet capabilities. The Ivan Rogov represents a qualitative leap in Soviet amphibious warfare capability. In addition, 'Kresta' and 'Krivak' class guided missile destroyers, several mine-sweepers, supply and maintenance vessels have significantly improved Soviet capacity for a limited conventional war in the region.19

The Soviet Union developed its first significant naval presence at the southern end of the Red Sea, in the Gulf of Aden. The Soviets gained access to the port of Berbera in 1974 and converted it into a major naval base in a relatively short period of time. In addition to a naval communication station, the facility provided an expanded airstrip, POL storage tanks repair

to the Red Sea had greatly compensated for the Soviet losses in Somalia. The Soviets tried to establish a naval base on the Eritrean Red Sea island of Dahalak, after reaching an agreement with Ethiopian President Mengisto Haile Mariam and the Soviet leaders during Mariam's 1980 visit to Moscow. 22 In the western Indian Ocean, the Horn of Africa had become the focus of strategic rivalry in recent years. The Horn has a considerable geopolitical importance in the context of the Arab-Israeli dispute and the Persian Gulf oil resources. Any power dominating one side of the Red Sea would have the potential to influence the use of the Suez Canal. American acquisition of base rights in Berbera (1980) and a substantial French presence in Djibouti might balance Soviet strategic gains in Ethiopia. The Soviet naval deployments in the horn and access to port facilities gained considerable importance in light of their impact on regional alliances and liberation movements in Southern Africa.

The Soviet Union had also broadened her naval activities at Aden, in South Yemen, after her expulsion from Berbera. Aden had become a base for TU-16 bombers and for the Soviet surveillance of the Arabian Sea. The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) had been a primary recipient of substantial Soviet and Cuban military assistance, including military personnel. The first Soviet carrier task force to be deployed in the Indian Ocean, consisting of the carrier "Minsk," and the new amphibious warfare ship "Ivan Rogov," visited Aden in May 1980 to demonstrate Soviet interest. The availability of missile boat support bases and anti-ship missile sites in Berbera had provided the capability, however reduced significantly by the Soviet withdrawal from Somalia.

In the context of Indian Ocean developments, the Soviets substantially built up the major Vietnam military base of Cam Ranh Bay for use by their naval and air forces in South-east coast of Vietnam. Cam Ranh

Bay became Moscow's most important supply base for Pacific Fleet warships halfway between Vladivostok and the Indian Ocean. The superb natural anchorage at Cam Ranh and the extension of the port installations could accommodate even the biggest Soviet warships.  

The fire on the Soviet nuclear submarine Echo-I (20 August 1980) in the Pacific off the Japanese island of Okinawa indicated regular operation of Soviet nuclear submarines along the oil route from the Persian Gulf to the Far East. The Soviet Union increased its overall patrolling along this route over the past few years.

The Soviets also had limited naval access to India, Iraq, Singapore and Mozambique. Soviet naval facilities were neither substantial nor comparable to those of American deployments. Moscow had apparently preferred to keep its presence in the Indian Ocean minimal following the loss of Berbera.

Parity in long-range nuclear weapons and lowered risks of confrontation with the West increased Soviet confidence in an overseas role for her military presence. The Soviet view of detente and the international system as a dynamic historical process of change highlighted the requirement for worldwide naval facilities. The gradual efforts to increase the Soviet Union's share of world domination matured into an ideological emphasis on wars of 'national liberation'.

Theoretically, in peacetime, four types of objective justified deployment of military forces abroad with different levels of risk and degrees of political commitment. The protection of Soviet lives and property in third-party conflicts was important, but it was at the low end of the scale of political commitment. At the upper end, one could discern 'establishing the strategic infrastructure to support war related mission'. In between these extremes laid the general objective of 'increasing Soviet prestige and influence'. In naval terms, this encompassed a wide range of activities
ranging from showing the flag and port clearance to providing support for revolutionary forces or to regimes threatened by secessionist groups. Related to the general objective of influence-building was the more restricted one of 'countering imperialist aggression'. In terms to risking a major confrontation with the West, Soviet political commitment had been low.

The use of sea power to obtain political and strategic goals was an important element of Soviet policy with the achievement of a 'blue-water capability'. The Soviets developed and perfected the technique of naval diplomacy in the Mediterranean during the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict and the Jordanian crisis of 1970. During the 1967 war, the Soviets made three major military moves as part of their crisis diplomacy. They increased the size of their Mediterranean squadron, assigned combatants to 'battletale' each major Western carrier group, and mounted a resupply through air and sealifts to the Arabs. In the Jordanian crisis, despite the ambiguity of political objectives, the ability of the Soviets to claim credibly that the 6th Fleet could no longer be
employed as freely as it had been in the past, and also that Soviet interests was to be given greater weight before the US Navy could be directed to take any major action in Middle Eastern crisis, such as intervening ashore. Second, it supported the theme that the Soviet diplomatic stand protected the Arab world from Western military intervention. Soviet naval activities during the crisis enhanced the credibility of the Soviet claim.

The Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 provides another example of Soviet determination to support her allies and coerce her adversaries using naval diplomacy. The war lead to record deployment levels for both superpowers-14 combatants and auxiliaries for the US and 26 for the Soviets.25 When the war began, a Soviet destroyer and minesweeper in the Indian Ocean were nearing the end of their normal six month deployment. They were due to be

relieved by the 'SAM- Kotlin' destroyer (equipped with surface-to-air missiles). The Soviets decided not to withdraw the ships scheduled to be relieved and, in effect, routine rotation became a reinforcement. In selecting the augmentation forces, the Soviets apparently intended to form in the Indian Ocean a balanced ACW task group. Moscow ordered a "Kynda SSM" cruiser, a "Juliett"-class diesel submarine and a "Foxtrot" class diesel attack submarine to join the 'SAM- Kotlin' destroyer and 'Foxtrot' submarine already in the Indian Ocean. This gave the Soviet Indian Ocean detachment a total of five major combatants. As a reaction to US deployment of the 'Enterprise' and 'Task Force 74', the Soviets sent a second anticarrier task group from the Pacific Ocean Fleet. This group included a 'Kresta-I SSM' cruiser, a 'Kashin SAM' destroyer, an 'Echo-II' class nuclear-powered SSM submarine and two 'Foxtrot-class' conventional submarines. The Soviet deployment was


intended to demonstrate support for India, coerce Pakistan and offset the politico-military effects of the 'Enterprise'.

In 1975, the Soviets also demonstrated their capability and determination to influence the outcome of civil war in Angola. It was considered the first major overseas intervention using long-range airlift and support from naval units. Similarly, during the 1977-78 Ogaden conflict, the Soviets supported Ethiopia with military advisers, massive arms supplies and Cuban troops. More than 20 Soviet naval vessels were concentrated in the Red Sea area to support the conflict. Soviet warships were engaged in escorting military supplies being ferried from Aden to Ethiopia and used landing ships to deliver such supplies.

The role of a 'Soviet presence' in support of overseas objectives emerged as important in low-risk areas. In this regard, the employment of Soviet warships to ensure the safe arrival of logistical support, and their employment to prevent Western intervention
against a client state, were important factors in such a policy. However, the Soviet Union showed considerable reluctance to engage US naval forces. Meanwhile, it is important to note that the Soviet Navy's role in this assertive policy was secondary. The primary instruments were arms supply, military advice and training, the transport of men, ammunition and equipment by merchant-ship, and long-range air and direct participation by the combat troops of revolutionary states. The primary role of the navy had been to provide protection and support, and to serve as an earnest of Soviet commitment. 28

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