

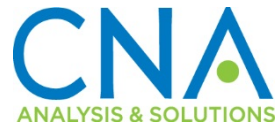
Hidden in Plain Sight: CNA and the Soviet Navy

N. Bradford Dismukes

February 2018



Approved for public release.



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Distribution

Approved for public release.

Approved by:

February 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Deal'.

Kim Deal
Chief Research Officer

Foreword

In honor of CNA's 75th Anniversary, we hosted a series of "Spotlight" seminars, presentations focused on key moments from CNA's history recalled by those who have lived it. One such seminar focused on an analysis of Soviet naval strategy through open-source techniques. Bradford Dismukes was intimately involved in this work from the 1970s through the 1980s. This report is his retelling of these events as presented to an audience of CNAers and guests on November 7, 2017.

His remarks begin during the 1970s, the early days of open-source (or "literary") intelligence. CNA analysts, attempting to discern the Soviet navy's war plans, examined Russian-language naval journals and other publications for clues. Their conclusions were in stark contrast to the Pentagon's assumptions. CNA analysts concluded that the Soviets would not pursue a naval strategy similar to Germany's approach to submarine warfare during World War II, but rather intended to devote their navy to protecting ballistic missile submarines in "bastions" near Soviet waters. The US Navy discounted this interpretation until later intelligence intercepts confirmed that the bastions theory was, indeed, correct. The Navy accepted this view of Soviet strategy and planned the US Maritime Strategy of the 1980s accordingly.

Dismukes joined CNA in 1969. He started his professional career as a Navy intelligence officer when the Navy sent him to start a Ph.D. in international relations. While in school, he heard about CNA and jumped ship. In his later years, Brad went on to serve in the field advising admirals on the strategic use of the Navy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. His analysis was used before, during, and after the first Gulf War and earned a Navy Civilian Service Medal for his work. Dismukes retired from CNA in 2000.

This report captures the memories of Dismukes.

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CNA and the SOVIET NAVY

First, please know that I am speaking not just for myself but on behalf of the many people who worked on the Soviet Navy at CNA.

The most well known of course are Jamie McConnell and Bob Weinland. But there were many others who did memorable work—Susan Clarke, Mary Fitzgerald, Ken Kennedy, Hung Nguyen, Charlie Petersen, Richard Remnek, Abe Shulsky, Lauren Van Meter, and Barry Blechman (who published a monograph on the Soviet Navy at Brookings soon after he left CNA).

The CNA wiring diagram put my name in a box labeled "manager," but dedicated and talented people like these hardly needed "managing." My job, then, was just not to slow them down. My job today is just to tell a story. The content of that story is entirely to the credit of these people.

Our focus here is the Soviet Navy in war. We also worked on its role in peacetime and published a book, *Soviet Naval Diplomacy*, but that's another subject.

CNA and the Soviet Navy in War

- Too complex to analyze directly
- Must approach through metaphor

CNA and the Soviet Navy in war? All the analysts here have run into problems that are just too complex to analyze directly. Some problems have to be approached through analogy—or even metaphor. Today we'll be taking the metaphorical road. What do I mean?

GREEK TRAGEDY



Hero does not make it to last act

CNA's fate

The panel today is dealing with an ancient Greek tragedy. In a Greek tragedy everybody knows from the start that the hero is not going to win, in fact, he may not even make it to the last act. Which is exactly what happened to CNA. So, here's the CNA story, told as a 10-year long Greek tragedy.

The Players

- CNA - weak, armed with “magic weapon”
 - Open Source Analysis: Public statements reveal true beliefs
- ONI - opaque, powerful

First, the players.

The good guys—that would be CNA—small and weak but possessing a magical weapon, known by its lyrical name as “open source analysis.” We have to define it because it’s really what this whole panel is about. It means looking at what your adversary says in public and inferring from that his true beliefs and intentions.

Next, some other good guys—that would be the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI)—an opaque force of enormous power.

(Full disclosure: I actually played on both these teams—full time at CNA and part time as a weekend warrior in the Naval Intelligence Reserve.)

OFFICIAL TRUTH

National Intelligence Estimate (NIE)

So those are the players. Now, what's the issue? What are they fighting about? That would be what we at CNA always called "official truth." Its most awesome manifestation is the National Intelligence Estimate, the NIE. Under the direction of the CIA, the entire Intelligence Community writes an NIE. What it says is like a Supreme Court decision. It is the law of the land. There is no appeal.

OFFICIAL TRUTH

was not true

So, what's the problem with official truth? Well, it turns out not to be true. In fact, not true for a very long time.

So those are the players. Official truth is the issue.

Let's start our story with a postscript.

HOW SUBMARINE INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION MADE A DIFFERENCE



A SUBMARINE HISTORY SEMINAR
APRIL 11, 2007

In 2007, there was a conference celebrating the history of US Navy submarine intelligence collection. At the conference a civilian deputy director of ONI, in a question-and-answer session, spoke about CNA's work 30 years earlier.

Deputy Director, ONI speaking in 2007

I would also say, and to give people their due, there were people like... Brad Dismukes, Jamie McConnell, people who were reading what the Russians were saying to themselves ... who told us for nearly fifteen years that we had it wrong. And, frankly, the system ignored them. CNA kept paying them. I mean, it wasn't as though the Navy deliberately, you know, tried to stifle those voices. But they also paid precious little attention to the message.

Here's what he said:

“I would also say, and to give people their due, there were people like... Brad Dismukes, Jamie McConnell, people who were reading what the Russians were saying to themselves, not necessarily colored by some, you know, inside bias, who told us for nearly fifteen years that we had it wrong. And, frankly, the system ignored them. CNA kept paying them. I mean, it wasn't as though the Navy deliberately, you know, tried to stifle those voices. But they also paid precious little attention to the message.”

Let's look at few bits of this more closely.

He said...

reading what the Russians were saying
to themselves

told us for nearly fifteen years
that we had it wrong

it wasn't as though the Navy
deliberately, you know, tried to stifle
those voices.

the system ignored them

He meant...

really "publicly," but acknowledging
CNA's use of open source analysis

CNA had it right

But we thought about it

exactly that

He said: *reading what the Russians were saying to themselves.*

He meant: *obviously not "to themselves" but "publicly," and so acknowledging CNA's use of open source.*

He said: *told us for nearly fifteen years that we had it wrong.*

He meant: *CNA had it right.*

He said : *it wasn't as though the Navy deliberately, you know, tried to stifle those voices.*

He meant: *But we thought about it.*

He said: *frankly, the system ignored them*

He meant: *Exactly that.*

So there we have it.

CNA: Great Work Zero Impact

Is the Panel over?

No...

Tragedy can tell us much

Our tragedy ends as we knew it must. CNA did great work but it had no impact whatsoever on Official Truth. Maybe we should just declare this panel over? No, wait.

That's why we took a metaphorical approach. We've loved tragedies for three thousand years. Let's take a look at what happened in this one. It's a fun story, loaded with irony, and there could be things to learn.

(And by the way, when I say "CNA" here, I'm only speaking about the CNA I could see from a vantage point in the analytical trenches.)

ONI: Soviet Navy in the 1960s

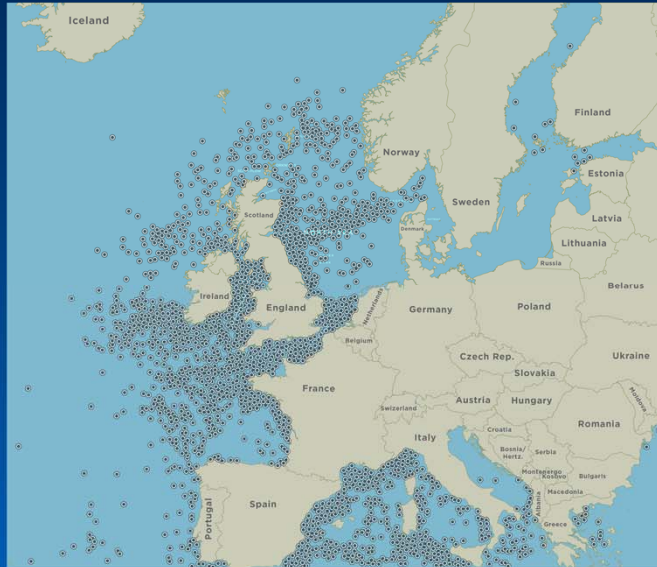
- World War III would mean Battle of the Atlantic III
- Attack SLOCs
- Planners' and ONI's views merged
- Conclusion based more on plausibility, than evidence

Let's rewind to the 1960s. At that time there was no NIE on the Soviet Navy. Official Truth was what ONI said it was. And ONI—with stout endorsement of Navy Planners—said that in World War III, the Soviets intended to fight the Battle of the Atlantic III—to attack the sea lines of communications, SLOCs for short, in the Atlantic. I must point out, in defense of the planners, that to hedge against uncertainty, the planner always fights an enemy who's actually tougher than the one that the intel depicts.

Unfortunately, by the 1960s the views of Navy Planners and those of ONI had essentially merged.

For ONI-cum-Navy Planning, a third Battle of the Atlantic seemed entirely plausible. Note that I did not say “evidence-based.”

Battle of the Atlantic I



British Merchant Ship Losses, 1917

After all, in both world wars, German submarines nearly brought Britain to her knees. In World War I, the Germans sank half the British merchant marine (the largest in the world), and Britain faced the real prospect of national famine for lack of imported food. The dots on this map represent British merchant ship sinkings in 1917.

Battle of the Atlantic II

Over 3,500 merchant ships lost

350 US ships lost in US waters,
Jan-June, 1942

World War II saw even more appalling destruction at sea—more than 3,500 merchant ships were sunk in the Atlantic alone. And for our Navy, the battle started very close to home. In the first half of 1942, that is, in only six months, well over 300 US freighter and tankers were sunk in US waters, many plainly visible from the East Coast.



The tanker *Dixie Arrow* after it was torpedoed off Cape Hatteras, NC. on 26 March 1942

This one is off Cape Hatteras, and, if you'd been walking on the beach in Rehoboth you'd have seen others burning on the horizon at night. The nation at large didn't know about this debacle because of wartime press censorship. But our Navy, chastened by its slow and ineffective response, certainly did.

Battle of the Atlantic

Profound effect on US Navy thinking
(Led to CNA's foundation)

The requirement to defend the Atlantic SLOCs shaped US Navy thinking for decades, into the 1980s. As we all know, the second Battle of the Atlantic led to the foundation of CNA.

Soviet subs: massive potential threat

By 1968, over 500 diesel subs

Question: What will the Soviets do with all these submarines?

Answer: Silly question

By the late 1960s, the Soviets had built over 500 attack submarines, all more capable than those the Germans had had. If you'd asked ONI or a Navy Planner back then, "What do the Soviets intend to do with all of those subs?" The polite answer would have been, "Please don't ask silly questions."

CNA's job: ask questions

- By 1970, CNA's conclusion: Soviet Navy put low priority on attacking Western SLOCs
- If not the SLOCs, then what?
- By 1973, CNA's answer: Pro-SSBN mission

But part of CNA's job description then—just as today—is exactly to ask questions, silly or not. And that we did.

By 1970, CNA was reporting that the Soviet Navy in fact gave a low priority to attacking the SLOCs in the North Atlantic. But if not the SLOCs, then what? By 1973, CNA answered that, instead of anti-SLOC, the main mission of the Soviet general purpose force Navy was most probably “pro-SSBN,” to defend SSBNs—Soviet ballistic missile submarines—in sea bastions near the USSR. The nuclear missiles on these subs could reach targets practically anywhere in the US.

European Theater



Here's the geography we're talking about. First, the European theater. The dark diagonals show the areas the Soviets sought to control—meaning to prevent even Western submarines from operating there. Soviet SSBNs would operate deep within this area, well north of the Norwegian Sea. Within the blue shaded area behind the arc shown here, the Soviets would seek to deny Western navies the ability to operate surface ships, on behalf of the “Pro-SSBN” mission as well as to defend the Soviet homeland. No need to point out how remote these areas are from the North Atlantic SLOCs.

Pacific Theater



The sea control bastion in the Pacific would be centered in the Sea of Okhotsk, with the sea denial arc reaching well south of Japan. Here's fleet headquarters at Vladivostok and the main submarine operating base at Petro-Pavlovsk Kamchatski.

“Pro-SSBN”

Faced double doubts by Navy Planners

Soviets describing war plans in public?

Use your whole Navy to defend SSBNs?

The main point here is pro-SSBN—a term that faced double doubts. Let me try to capture how Navy Planners responded. (This is a sort of composite of my experience, with a dash of poetic license):

First, about CNA’s open source evidence:

“Oh! CNA analysts believe the Soviet Navy is announcing its war plans in its radio and TV broadcasts, its daily newspapers, its monthly magazines?”

Of course they are!

Come on! What are those people smoking over there?”

Second, and more serious, pro-SSBN was an alien strategic concept. Navy Planners asked:

“Tell me again what pro-SSBN means.

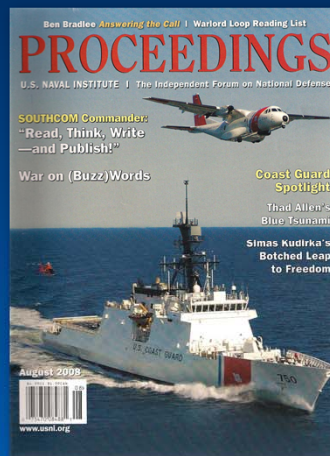
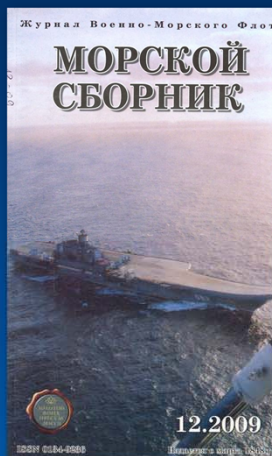
Oh, holding your main forces back in a permanent defensive crouch to protect your missile submarines?”

Come on!

No competent naval leadership would ever use its navy like that!

We would never do it. Why would the Soviets?

What are those people smoking over there?”



As it happened, just at that time, over a one-year period (1972 to 1973) the Soviets were publishing a totally unprecedented series of 11 articles in *Morskoy sbornik*, the Soviet monthly *Naval Digest*, their equivalent of our US Naval Institute *Proceedings*. In that series Soviets were answering the why-pro-SSBN question.



“Navies in War and Peace”

The series was “authored” by the head of the Soviet Navy Sergei Georgyevich Gorshkov—shown here in full regalia. It was formally titled “Navies in War and Peace.” We’d never seen anything like it before. Page after page, month after month, strategic doctrine was arriving like a TV series we see today—except you had to wait a month between episodes and you didn’t know whether this month’s episode was the last. We waited, we weren’t sure how even to label what we were seeing. Analytical tensions built up, and, in the end, the results were climactic.

It was James M. McConnell who gave the definitive exegesis. This formed the linchpin of CNA’s interpretation of Soviet strategic priorities.

SSBNs: Strategic Reserve

- In war that could go nuclear
- Submarine missiles withheld
- To deter nuclear attack, dictate the peace

Jamie concluded that the Soviets saw their SSBNs as a strategic reserve in a war they expected would go nuclear. Submarine missiles would not be fired in the first nuclear strikes. They would be withheld—a threat that would deter nuclear attacks on the USSR and dictate the shape of the peace.

Gorshkov on Sea Power

Armies may win wars
But Navies determine peace

Soviet Navy: Guarantor of Soviet State

Clausewitzian claim for sea power

Rejected by ONI

And Gorshkov went on, seeming to deal with the very nature of war in the modern era. Armies might win wars, he said. But navies determine the peace—navies achieve the war's political objectives. Soviet naval power had become nothing less than the ultimate guarantor of the Soviet state.

A breathtaking claim on behalf of sea power, wouldn't you say? Step aside Mahan! Big, really big, Clausewitzian stuff!

But, oops, I'm sorry to have to remind you, this high-flying rhetoric was roundly rejected by ONI and by Navy Planners as well—in 1974, when CNA first reported it, and for the six eventful years that followed.

Surprise Intelligence Collection Breakthrough, 1980

Special Compartmented Intelligence (SCI)

Confirmed pro-SSBN bastions and the
withholding strategy for sea-based missiles.

Stunned ONI and Navy leadership

So let's jump over that six years to the final act. In 1980, there was a surprise breakthrough in Special Compartmented Intelligence (SCI for short). It provided ONI with crystal-clear evidence that basically confirmed in every detail what CNA had been reporting about pro-SSBN bastions and the withholding strategy for sea-based missiles.

This was shocking news—it stunned ONI, much of the Intelligence Community, and, of course, Navy Planners. In fact, it took many months for the Navy's leadership to absorb and accept it.

CNA excluded from SCI

From SCI evidence and
Navy follow-up planning

So everybody was stunned—except the analysts at CNA. But that didn't matter much because, at exactly that moment, we were completely sidelined by ONI. We were excluded from access to the SCI evidence and from the changes for US planning it implied.

Immediate Effect

No CNA “Cassandras” saying
“I told you so”

It was said that security rules meant SCI was off limits to contractors like CNA. That may well have been true. Whatever the case, the immediate effect was that ONI didn't have a bunch of CNA Cassandras hanging around saying, “we told you so.” (Cassandra, you remember, was the Trojan priestess cursed by the gods, who could foretell the future perfectly only to find that no one would believe her. So it was with CNA.)

Long Term Effects on Navy Leadership

- Didn't learn of the power of open source analysis
- Never recognized it was fighting the **WRONG** enemy
- Result: Futile war plans, misdirected analyses, wrong mission priorities, opportunities forgone

Far more important were the long-term effects on the Navy's leadership. First, the leadership didn't become aware of the power of open source analysis—that its conclusions had been completely accurate and had beaten SCI by six years.

Second, it never recognized or acknowledged that for at least six years, the Navy had been confronting the wrong enemy. It had been crafting smart but futile war plans. Naval warfare analysts, like those here at CNA, were bringing sophisticated analytical techniques to bear on highly improbable campaigns and combat scenarios. Force structure decisions were focusing on the wrong mission priorities. Our Navy was forgoing rich opportunities to exploit its adversary's greatest vulnerability.

What Did It All Mean?

- Official truth was finally true
- Navy Planners quickly developed the US Maritime Strategy
- CNA had done its job

So, our play is over but what did it all mean, what happened then? Let's finish by naming three good things.

First, Official Truth (no thanks to CNA, as we've seen) was at long last true. Hallelujah!

Second, Navy Planners quickly developed and adopted "The Maritime Strategy"—which attacked Soviet strategy as vigorously as Soviet weapons—the planner's highest goal.

Finally, this whole experience showed that our small part of CNA did work in keeping with why CNA was created. CNA had done its job. It spoke an unpopular truth to power and it did so over many years. I could not be more proud than to have been a part of that.

How CNA did it

- Open Source was key methodology
 - At tactical level, read literally
 - At strategic level, infer true beliefs and intentions

Now we're focusing on how CNA did what it did.

We looked at all the familiar kinds of evidence, but our strength was open source analysis. I'll define it more fully here as reading an adversary's public statements and interpreting them at two levels: at the tactical level, just pretty much taking them literally. At the strategic level, reading what they say and inferring their true beliefs and intentions. It's the strategic the level that this panel is about.

Some of you are doing open source work today. I doubt I'll say much here that's new to you. In fact, it may sound a bit retrograde. Obviously, we're dealing with a 40-year time warp; so bear with me and just fast forward over computer-assisted search, data mining, social media, etc.

Original Russian or Translation?

- Two different Russian words are translated as one English word “defense”
- Only Russian linguist can see the difference

First, original Russian or translations? There is no question whatsoever that working with the original Russian is superior—sometimes crucial. Here’s an example: Russian has two words for “defense.” Both are translated as the single word in English “defense.”

A person working from translation would see them both as “defense.” Only a Russian linguist would see the difference.

Crucial Analytical Difference

- ❖ *zashchita* (защита) military tasks assigned by General Staff to win the war
- ❖ *oborona* (оборона) political tasks assigned by Defense Council to guarantee the peace

Only an enlightened Russian linguist like Jamie McConnell could see the difference can be HUGE. The two Russian words are *zashchita* and *oborona*. *Zashchita* defense tasks were assigned by the General Staff, roughly our Joint Chiefs of Staff. The land-based missiles of the Strategic Rocket Forces were for *zashchita*—(English) “defense” to fight and win a war. *Oborona* defense tasks were assigned by the Defense Council, the highest political body dealing with defense, the equivalent of our National Security Council. The missiles of the Soviet Navy—to be withheld from initial strikes, as we discussed in the first session—were for *oborona*— (English) “defense” to achieve the war’s political goals. This linguistic difference was decisive in Jamie’s interpretation of the Gorshkov series.

(By the way, if you want a more nuanced, could I say elegant, description of this, read Steve Walt’s Professional Paper 458, “Analysts in War and Peace.” Many of you may know that Steve now holds an endowed chair at Harvard.)

Translations a good second-best

- CNA reviewed volumes of Soviet published material
- “Clear” messages expressed in ritual propaganda form

So knowledge of the language can be crucial, but 40 years ago Russian speaking analysts were rare indeed. So we did a lot of work from translations, which proved to be a good second-best. We studied US government translations—in huge volume. Buried in the thickets of ritualized Soviet propaganda were “clear” messages and their interpretation was not, in fact, that difficult. Let me assert, without fear of contradiction, that if I could reach valid conclusions from translated writings, anybody in this room could do it.

Fundamental Point : Open Source

- At level of strategy, earliest, best source
- Usually, the only source
 - With rare, spectacular exceptions

Here's a fundamental point about the importance of Open Source. For the big strategic questions—like how our adversary might use his forces in war—the best and earliest answers come their public statements. The experience of the Cold War showed that insights into Soviet planning at the strategic level rarely came from any other source—the 1980 SCI breakthrough being the whopping exception that proves this rule.

Central Censorship Office

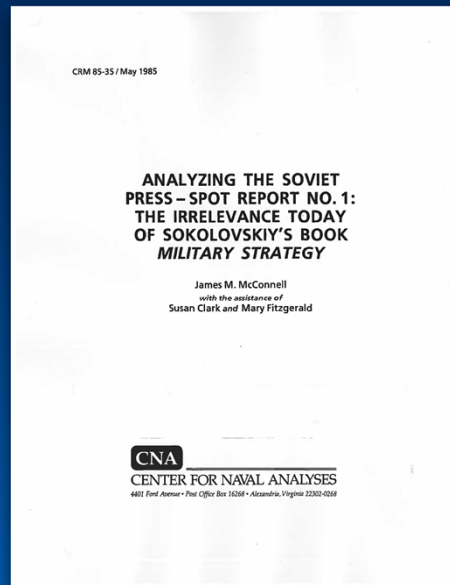
- Cleared all public materials
- Enforced uniformity
- Small variations become important
- Big reversals ring alarm bells

Second, and ironically, our greatest source of leverage was the Soviets' Central Office of Censorship (under various names). Its job was to prevent disclosure of Soviet secrets, but its actual role proved just the opposite. Everything said in public was vetted by it. So, everybody ended up saying pretty much the same things in the same ways. This meant that even small variations in standard formulas could be a tipoff of something of interest. And big reversals, when suddenly everyone changed direction, those really rang alarm bells.

McConnell's Approach

Soviets never stated,
only implied

Used “historical”
examples



Jamie's work captures this point. As he explained in this 1985 Professional Paper, the Soviets almost never stated a point, they only implied it, often using “analysis” of an historical event to express a contemporary idea.



Jellicoe's Strategic Reserve

One exception: Jutland

The famous example is Gorshkov's treatment of the Royal Navy's Admiral Jellicoe in World War I. You remember that, with one exception, the Battle of Jutland, Jellicoe did not commit the British Grand Fleet—as shown in this graphic. Instead he held the fleet back as a “strategic reserve” in protected “bastions” at Scapa Flow in the Orkneys, while a world war raged on hundreds of miles to the south.

Soviet Naval Historians on Jellicoe

- Excoriated strategic reserve
- Should have brought Britain's Grand Fleet to bear

For 40 years every Soviet naval historian, without fail, had excoriated Jellicoe. They said he should have come forward, destroyed the German navy, and help turn the tide (quite impossibly) in a frozen land war.

Gorshkov on Jellicoe

- Jellicoe was RIGHT!
 - Strategic Reserve is a great idea
 - Jellicoe had his
- *And I've got mine!*

Then, boom! It's 1973, and Gorshkov comes along to say, "Oh, no! Jellicoe was right! A strategic reserve is a wonderful thing. Jellicoe had his, AND—hint, hint, nudge, nudge—I've got mine."

Key Point

- Know your adversaries' historical, cultural, religious frames of reference
- Important information often conveyed in veiled language
 - Transparent to insiders; opaque to others

What a delicious analytical morsel to savor. But let's not overlook a key point: Jamie knew, and we all must know, the adversaries' historical, cultural, and perhaps even religious frames of reference. Often, important information is expressed obliquely through metaphor—in ways that are supposed to be transparent to an internal audience, but obscured to outsiders.

Why didn't we have the Maritime Strategy six years earlier?

- What did it cost us?

I'd like to shift gears now and pose a brutal question. If open source, in 1974, and SCI, in 1980, reached identical conclusions, why did we have to wait for SCI? Why didn't we have the US Maritime Strategy six years earlier than we did? Did it make any difference?

ONI

- Orthodoxy became dogma
 - Analysts do not look for new evidence
 - Contrary existing evidence discounted
 - Never a major anti-SLOC exercise
 - Torpedo loads half for ASW, not anti-SLOC

Yes, it did. We talked earlier about the serious negative consequences for Navy Planners—preparing to fight an enemy wrongly understood. And for ONI the consequences were, if anything, worse. There, in my judgment, orthodoxy hardened into dogma. In dogmatic institutions, analysts do not look hard for evidence of something new—what’s the point? And they are likely to ignore existing evidence that contradicts established truth.

ONI simply knew that on D-day Soviet subs would be flooding through the GIUK Gap into the North Atlantic—despite the fact that the Soviet Navy had never once in its history carried out a big anti-SLOC exercise in the Atlantic, or anywhere else; or that half the standard torpedo load for their diesel subs was for antisubmarine warfare, not for sinking surface ships.

So the consequences of this delay were large and negative. And the question stands: “Why six years?”

The answer: because CNA’s conclusions were drawn from open sources, and open source had no standing. Open source was the Rodney Dangerfield of intelligence analysis. *It don’t get no respect.*

Community Blind Spot

- World War II - From Nazi propaganda, George forecast V1, V2, Kursk Offensive
 - Ignored
- Korean War - Forecast Chinese intervention
 - Ignored
- Cold War - Soviet Navy findings by Bob Herrick, Mike MccGwire
 - Rejected

This was not a new problem. The Community has had a blind spot to Open Source—starting way back.

World War II—Alexander George and others analyzed Nazi war propaganda and drew valid forecasts of important German moves like the V1 and the V2 missiles and their tank offensive at Kursk. All were totally ignored—as George documented in a doctoral thesis at Chicago.

Korean War—Open source work forecast the Chinese intervention if the US moved north. Totally ignored.

Cold War—Besides CNA's, important open source work of others were also ignored, rejected, or worse. Bob Herrick and Mike MccGwire being the most notable. Both were serving intelligence officers, but in different navies. Imagine being told, “your ideas are nonsense and, by the way, your career is over.”

Open Source Today?

- National Open Source Center
 - Asking the right questions?
 - Answers being taken seriously?
- NIEs reflecting Open Source input?

Seventy years of history should make us wonder about where open source stands today. Still the weak sister, the sickly sibling?

I hope not. Today we have an Assistant Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Open Source and a National Open Source Center—which pumps out an impressive volume of stuff. But are they asking the big questions and—most importantly—are the answer that Open Source produces being taken seriously?

I do not know the answer. But, I can suggest one metric that could shed some light. Do today's NIEs reflect a serious degree of input from open source materials? (This is an empirical question.) If they go not, they are not as deep and rich, nor as close to the truth, as they could be.

Meaning of “CNA and the Soviet Navy” Today

- You will give the only answer that counts
- My answer: Four desiderata

Let's shift gears yet again and ask a final question: What does the experience “CNA and the Soviet Navy” mean for open source work today? The only important answer, of course, will come from you.

But for me, coming back after a brief 40-year hiatus, there are four desiderata – four things I wish we'd done that I hope are being done today.

Four Desiderata

1. Deal with “disinformation”
2. Protect Open Source conclusions
3. Keep score:
 - Open Source vs traditional sources
 - Which methods work/which do not
4. Promote an Open Source “Community”

First, deal with the charge that open source findings are corrupted by “disinformation”—through systematic study of the phenomenon and detecting and guarding against it in everything we read.

Second, protect open source work. Just because the sources you’re analyzing are unclassified that doesn’t mean the conclusions you draw are unclassified as well. Our adversaries have no idea how deep our insights can be. Let’s keep them in the dark.

Third, keep systematic score: of how well open source performs versus other intelligence sources, and which open source methods are working and which aren’t.

Finally, promote and exploit an open source community. There’s great leverage to be gained.

So, that’s it. I leave you as an unabashed cheerleader for open source analysis—a most powerful and the least exploited way to understand the world we must deal with.

I wish you all the best—especially you bearing this particular torch forward.

CNA
ANALYSIS & SOLUTIONS



CNA is a not-for-profit research organization
That serves the public interest by providing
in-depth analysis and result-oriented solutions
to help government leaders choose
the best course of action
in setting policy and managing operations.

*Nobody gets closer—
to the people, to the data, to the problem.*

