NAVAL POLICY AND HISTORY

# Maritime Diplomacy in the 21st Century

## Drivers and Challenges

Christian Le Mière

ROUTLEDGE

# Maritime Diplomacy in the 21st Century

This book aims to redefine maritime diplomacy for the modern era.

Maritime diplomacy encompasses a spectrum of activities, from co-operative measures such as port visits, exercises and humanitarian assistance to persuasive deployment and coercion. It is an activity no longer confined to just navies, but in the modern era is pursued by coastguards, civilian vessels and non-state groups. As states such as China and India develop, they are increasingly using this most flexible form of soft and hard power.

*Maritime Diplomacy in the 21st Century* describes and analyses the concept of maritime diplomacy, which has been largely neglected in academic literature. The use of such diplomacy can be interesting not just for the parochial effects of any activity, but because any event can reflect changes in the international order, while acting as an excellent gauge for the existence and severity of international tension. Further, maritime diplomacy can act as a valve through which any tension can be released without resort to conflict. Written in an accessible but authoritative style, this book describes the continued use of coercion outside of war by navies, while also situating it more clearly within the various roles and effects that maritime forces have in peacetime.

This book will be of much interest to students of seapower, naval history, strategic studies, diplomacy and international relations.

**Christian Le Mière** is a senior fellow for naval forces and maritime security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London.

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# Maritime Diplomacy in the 21st Century

## Drivers and Challenges

**Christian Le Mière**

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# Contents


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *List of figures* | x |
| | *List of tables* | xi |
| | *Acknowledgements* | xii |
| | Introduction | 1 |
| 1 | Defining maritime diplomacy | 6 |
| 2 | Paragunboat diplomacy | 30 |
| 3 | Categories and properties of maritime diplomacy | 48 |
| 4 | The utility of maritime diplomacy | 66 |
| 5 | Contemporary drivers of maritime diplomacy | 83 |
| 6 | Maritime diplomacy and game theory | 103 |
| | Conclusion | 119 |
| | Appendix: case study – East Asian maritime diplomacy in the twenty-first century | 126 |
| | *Bibliography* | 139 |
| | *Index* | 145 |

# Figures


1.1 Forms of co-operative maritime diplomacy and its goals 9
3.1 Visualising the *Panther* to Agadir 61
3.2 The Baltic patrol and the *Panther* compared 62
3.3 US intervention in Taiwan and Exercise Dawn Blitz compared 64
5.1 Global armed conflicts by type, 1946–2012 94
6.1 Sequential modelling of a crisis 113
6.2 The 1973 Mediterranean stand-off modelled sequentially 114
6.3 The 2013 Syrian crisis modelled sequentially 115
C.1 The seapower diamond: maritime forces and their roles mapped 122
A.1 The 2009 *Impeccable* incident visualised 129
A.2 The 2012 Scarborough Shoal stand-off sequentially mapped 132
A.3 The 2010 Chinese trawler incident sequentially mapped 133

# Tables


1.1 The political application of naval power: a typology according to Edward Luttwak 22
1.2 Defining maritime diplomacy in relation to other definitions 26
6.1 The Prisoners' Dilemma 105
6.2 The Stag Hunt Game 106
6.3 The Hedging Game 106
6.4 The Stand-off Game 107
6.5 The Beckham or Stravinsky Game 109
6.6 The Exercises Game 109
A.1 The 2012 Scarborough Shoal stand-off pay-off matrix 131

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# Introduction

> The navy has always been an instrument of the policy of states, an important aid to diplomacy in peacetime.
>
> Admiral of the Soviet Fleet Sergei Gorshkov, 1979[1]

Gunboat diplomacy is a term that seems most suited to a bygone era. The phrase conjures up images of European warships, sitting askance off the coast of a developing country, occasionally bombarding coastal forts in order to exact recompense. It seems to be a quasi-oxymoronic term used by powerful states to veil their bullying, imperial tactics, in an era when military inequality and insufficient international law allowed brazen acts of intimidation. This seems increasingly irrelevant as the unipolarity of the 1990s and early 2000s is ceding ground to a progressively more multipolar world, meaning that the former victims of imperialism, particularly in Asia, are now able to deal with their erstwhile colonial rulers.

Yet, gunboat diplomacy is not an activity or an idea confined to history. Gunboat diplomacy has been used by both developed and developing countries in recent years. It maintains its relevance through its utility; gunboat diplomacy is a pursuit that allows actors to coerce others while avoiding large-scale conflict and its attendant costs.

Recent examples abound. In December 2011 and January 2012, Iran held the Velayat 90 naval exercises, which showcased a variety of naval capabilities, from anti-ship missiles to submarines. The stated intent of the exercises was to demonstrate (and therefore implicitly threaten) an ability to close the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important maritime chokepoint. Just days later, the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, one of the world's largest warships, sailed through the strait flanked by American cruisers and destroyers, while a British and a French frigate also accompanied her. The transit was part of a routine rotation of a US aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf, but the international flavour of the flotilla was a strong message of unity among the Western allies in the face of overt Iranian threats.[2]

Given the rise of powers in the region, it is unsurprising that East Asia has been a particular crucible for recent gunboat diplomacy. The most obvious recent

examples have involved another US aircraft carrier, the USS *George Washington*, which in July 2010 participated in the Invincible Spirit exercises in the East Sea (Sea of Japan). Organised in response to the sinking of the *Cheonan*, a South Korean corvette, in March of that year, the exercises were performed to demonstrate to North Korea Washington's resolve in and capabilities to support Seoul. The same carrier was used in November 2010 in joint exercises in the Yellow Sea with South Korea, announced a day after North Korea shelled Yeongpyeong Island, with a similar goal in mind.[3]

In fact, gunboat diplomacy has never disappeared, even in post-imperial times. Amid the apparent certainty of the bipolar Cold War world, when the Soviet Union and the US acted as restraints on each other's and other states' actions, gunboat diplomacy was used by actors as diverse as the Korean People's Navy and the Royal Navy.

It is true, however, that gunboat diplomacy seems a phrase unsuited to the 21st century, with its drones, missiles and satellites. In the modern era of guided missile frigates and destroyers, the very term gunboat seems anachronistic and hence the concept outdated. While the activity persists, therefore, the misnomer of gunboat diplomacy is ripe for updating and redefinition.

That is the primary goal of this book: to describe better the continued use of coercion outside of war by navies, while also situating it more clearly within the various roles and effects that maritime forces have in peacetime. The main thesis is that gunboat diplomacy is now just a subset of a much wider group of operations short of war undertaken by navies, which can usefully be defined as maritime diplomacy. This wider classification, expounded in Chapter 1, would include a spectrum of activities, from those 'co-operative maritime diplomatic' activities, such as port calls, joint exercises and training, through 'persuasive maritime diplomatic' activities, such as naval presence roles, to 'coercive maritime diplomatic' activities, which would incorporate the historical term 'gunboat diplomacy'.

Readers may already be confused by the use of two separate but seemingly similar terms, namely 'naval' and 'maritime'. As Chapter 2 will suggest, the term maritime diplomacy is used, rather than naval diplomacy, as there are a variety of non-military agencies that can have similar diplomatic effects to those traditionally reserved for navies. Indeed, maritime constabulary or paramilitary agencies have, in certain areas of the world, become the primary agents for effecting diplomacy at sea rather than the more confrontational navies.

What this new definition does is recognise that a range of maritime activities have an intended or unintended diplomatic effect. It essentially highlights a grey area between war and politics that is filled by diplomacy undertaken by state-run security services.

This suggests that the Clausewitzian description of war as a 'continuation of policy by other means' is too broad, as military operations other than war, such as those described in this book, are clearly also policy through the use of other means. Eminent German lawyer and theorist Wolfgang G Friedmann has already suggested such a state by claiming that there could be 'a state of "intermediacy" between peace and war … characterised by … hostility between the opposing

parties … but accompanied by an absence of intention or decision to go to war'.[4] Maritime diplomacy is not usually intended to lead to war, but rather to signal to allies and rivals the intent of one's policies and capabilities of one's security forces. Its effects are created through reassurance, deterrence or compellence, but maritime diplomacy has often failed if it leads to war.

Maritime diplomacy therefore remains a unique and useful tool for navies and governments worldwide, and one that continues to be utilised to further state interests.[5] It inhabits an exclusive position in the pantheon of a state's diplomatic arsenal, involving the actual use of security forces to affect another actor's policy through the use, demonstration or threat of limited sea-based force.

Despite this utility, and the evident benefit to be gained from a fuller understanding of what maritime diplomacy is, why it happens and what it means, there is scant analysis of this phenomenon in international relations. As former US naval commander Harlan Ullman put it, '[t]here is virtually little or no evidence, analysis or rigorous examination on which to make a fair and objective assessment of the benefits, costs, advantages and downsides of presence [a concept enshrined within maritime diplomacy].'[6]

This is also despite the fact that maritime diplomacy is one of the best indicators of changes in the global or a regional balance of power and thus an invaluable tool for international relations analysis. Aside from a thrice-issued short book on gunboat diplomacy written by the eminent British naval theoretician and diplomat James Cable, naval and international relations literature has been stark in its avoidance of this rich topic. Chapter 3 therefore attempts to describe in more detail how to analyse maritime diplomacy through a breakdown of the properties of maritime diplomatic activities.

Maritime diplomacy is both an excellent measure of stress in the international system and a valve through which that stress can be released. Where coercive maritime diplomacy happens, it is inevitable that a disagreement between actors has occurred or is likely to occur. The incidence of maritime diplomacy itself can mitigate any potential conflict, deterring adversaries, removing threats or solving disagreements through the use or threat of limited force. It is, therefore, both a predictive and preventive tool, often used by governments and navies to avoid and deter conflict, but also to make a political point.

At a theoretical level, there is little reason why other services beyond navies could not also engage in such diplomacy. Armies and air forces are occasionally used in diplomacy and logically can also coerce rivals or support allies, particularly in those parts of the world inaccessible to maritime forces. However, as Chapter 4 will outline, navies and maritime constabulary forces are peculiarly well suited to such reassurance or coercion owing to their ability to preposition (or position themselves in a theatre of operations before conflict breaks out), their ability to escalate through graduated levels of increasingly intense violence and the longevity of their presence in an area outside of national jurisdiction. Given the characteristics of navies and vagaries of the international maritime system, maritime diplomacy is geographically flexible, temporally adaptable, potentially deniable and extremely targeted.

To better understand why maritime diplomacy is of particular relevance to the current global international system, Chapter 5 investigates what the contemporary drivers are for the incidence of maritime diplomacy. It is hoped that such an analysis can show how maritime diplomacy illuminates where frictions are occurring and their severity.

Chapter 6 reflects an effort to bring the rich literature of game theory to the current analysis of maritime diplomacy. As each maritime diplomatic event offers a discrete, interactive, multiparty series of decisions (moves), it is hypothetically possible to game theorise any incident. With luck, this will allow practitioners to better understand the decision-making processes at work during maritime diplomatic incidents, and how best to manage them to avoid unwanted escalation.

Finally, the book will endeavour to bring together the various aspects of the earlier chapters with a geographical-historical overview of the use of maritime diplomacy in East Asia. The region provides numerous instances of maritime diplomatic events over the past 14 years, as the US has bolstered its presence and positioned itself to reassure allies, while China has engaged in what is regionally seen as a more assertive posture in its near-seas. East Asian navies and paramilitaries have been active users of maritime diplomacy to further their goals, whether coercive, persuasive or co-operative. A description of the various forms of co-operative and coercive maritime diplomatic events will help elucidate the theories of the book for more practical readers.

Maritime diplomacy is a far more complex and subtle undertaking than the popular imagination might have it through the memories of imperial-era gunboats. It can involve grey-painted naval hulls or white-painted constabulary forces (or even the various colours of civilian fishing or shipping fleets). It is not merely the use of navies' grey hulls to bully others, but rather the deployment of a wide range of assets that together comprise a country's seapower to bring about a whole host of possible diplomatic outcomes. There are far more shades of grey to the analysis of maritime diplomacy than has previously been believed.

## Notes

1 Gorshkov, *The Sea Power*, p. 248.
2 See Binnie, Jeremy, 'Iran Flexes Sea Denial Muscles', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 5 January 2012; 'USS *Abraham Lincoln* in Strait of Hormuz Voyage', BBC News, 14 February 2012.
3 See Dow, Devon, 'George Washington Strike Group Completes Exercise Invincible Spirit', US 7th Fleet website, 29 July 2010 (accessed in May 2013); Rogan, Tom, 'Washington's Message to Pyongyang', *Guardian*, 27 November 2010.
4 Friedmann, *Changing Structure*, p. 271.
5 It is arguable, (and has been argued by individuals such as McGwire, Booth and McDonnell (*Soviet Naval Policy*) and J.J. Widen ('Naval Diplomacy'), that the very term gunboat diplomacy is unhelpful, as it suggests an imperial endeavour and is unnecessarily bellicose in its tenor. However, the term has been used for centuries, providing a ready and innate understanding of its general meaning, and, while evocative, is no less useful for it. Indeed, it is probable that there is no more succinct term that

encapsulates both the military means and political ends of coercive naval diplomacy. As such, this book will continue to use the term, in part to define more clearly the activity and distinguish it from some of the more historical or lurid popular imaginings of what gunboat diplomacy is and has been, and in part to demonstrate how the traditional term now nestles within the broader concept of maritime diplomacy espoused here.

6 Ullman, Harlan, cited in Gouré, 'Tyranny', p. 16.

# 1 Defining maritime diplomacy

> A fleet of British ships of war are the best negotiators in Europe.
> Vice Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson, 1801[1]

The 20-m. tall red cross painted on the bow of the ship left no doubt as to its intentions. This was the Type 920, pennant number 866, more commonly known by its name *Peace Ark*. China's first purpose-built hospital ship, it was greeted with smiles and handshakes in Djibouti, Kenya and Tanzania in 2010 on its first African voyage, where the crew of the *Peace Ark* diligently set about administering medicines and nursing to local populations.

The visit of this vessel appears to be a happy tale of nations co-operating and lending resources to assist those less able or wealthy. And so it should be viewed, but states rarely act outside of their own self-interest. Thus, the question must be raised: why did China build a 10,000-tonne single-purpose vessel and then proceed to send it on expensive voyages to Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America?

The answer is that such voyages have strong diplomatic benefits as well as their altruistic, philanthropic effects. The *Peace Ark* is able to transmit a message of peace, build influence in nations receiving the assistance, strengthen partnerships and alliances and encourage a perception of China's navy as benign. The latter is an important goal for Beijing, which since the mid 2000s has seen its neighbours bridle at its growing power and willingness to use limited maritime force for its own ends.

The *Peace Ark* is not the only vessel to be sent on such diplomatic missions by Beijing. The *Zheng He* is a People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) training vessel that has now conducted two global goodwill voyages, and was the first PLAN vessel to visit the US during a 1989 trip to Hawaii. The ship's visit demonstrated that diplomatic goodwill missions can be used not only to build influence among allies, but to reassure potential rivals and enemies. The name of the ship is carefully chosen: *Zheng He* was a eunuch–admiral of the Ming dynasty, who led seven voyages throughout Asia and as far afield as the eastern African coastline. The fleets Zheng commanded were far in advance of anything comparable in the early fifteenth century, both in size and sophistication. Such

expeditions could theoretically have subjugated entire nations. Zheng's missions, however, were not intended to invade those countries he visited, although he did insist on some subservient respect to be paid to the Chinese emperor. He has thus been resurrected by the Chinese government as a potent symbol of the so-called 'peaceful rise' that China suggests it is undertaking, where its growing naval power will not be used for imperial domination or hegemony. The *Zheng He* is thus meant to be a symbol of the PLAN's benevolent role.

## Co-operative maritime diplomacy

With the *Peace Ark* and *Zheng He*, we are already talking about two very different operations. One involves a training vessel being sent on goodwill missions to developed and developing countries, the other a hospital ship undertaking humanitarian assistance missions in some of the poorest countries of the world. Yet, both would fit neatly under the rubric of maritime diplomacy.

Diplomacy is, after all, simply the management of international relations, and maritime diplomacy is therefore the management of international relations through the maritime domain. This does not mean the use of diplomacy to manage maritime tensions, through the codification of international law, for instance, but the use of maritime assets to manage the relations themselves.

These two instances of modern diplomacy undertaken by naval vessels are thus excellent examples of the concept of maritime diplomacy broadly, and specifically of the sub-concept of co-operative maritime diplomacy. As defined in the introduction, maritime diplomacy can most succinctly be divided into co-operative, persuasive and coercive maritime diplomacy. The former encompasses missions such as port visits, joint exercises, training and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The range of operations that fall under the aegis of 'co-operative maritime diplomacy' is testament to the particular flexibility of naval forces. Indeed, given the hardware and technology to hand, the military of a country is often seen as the actor most suited to those missions in remote and difficult-to-reach areas. Within a military, the navy is the service that can operate most freely overseas, without requiring basing or overflight rights while being able to operate from politically neutral international waters. The growing popularity of multirole vessels, with a combination of helicopters, weapons and small boats on board, allows vessels to not only engage in warfighting but also land forces to areas with little infrastructure and lift aid to inaccessible areas.

Navies have therefore increasingly found themselves being called upon in missions that would, during and prior to the Cold War, have seemed anathema to the highly trained killing machines they were deemed to be. This is particularly true for the use of naval or maritime paramilitary vessels for philanthropic purposes, particularly humanitarian assistance and disaster relief roles, which has become a more important mission for various forces worldwide.

In fact, the use of naval vessels designed to fight wars in humanitarian roles could pithily be described as a form of 'gunboat philanthropy' – a phrase that

demonstrates the kinds of assets being used and the effects sought, but also recalls gunboat diplomacy and reflects the influence that can be fostered through such activity. It is perhaps best exemplified by the multinational response to the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia, when countries such as the US, Singapore and Australia all sent forces to aid in relief efforts. While in recent years, the presence of an American carrier strike group and expeditionary strike group, and the awesome firepower they possess, has often been a deeply unwelcome occurrence for a majority Muslim country, during Operation Unified Assistance implemented after the tsunami the 24 US Navy ships off the coast of Indonesia were seen as saviours. Speaking at Australia's Parliament House in 2010, Indonesian President Yudhoyono noted that during Indonesia's 'darkest tragedy ever', he was 'so proud to see Australian and TNI [Tentara Nasional Indonesia, or Indonesian National Armed Forces] troops working together to save lives and bring relief to the suffering'.[2] The fact that Australian forces were welcomed onto Indonesian soil just five years after the Australian-led international intervention force in East Timor attempted to end Indonesian rule over the former Portuguese colony was a stark reminder of the positive diplomatic effects that can be gleaned from such operations.

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions can have diplomatic effects as they demonstrate the willingness of a navy to support a friend while also emphasising the roles other than war that militaries can be used for: think, for instance, of the US military's robust response to the Japanese earthquake and tsunami in March 2011. Not only was this a welcome fillip to rescue efforts for a beleaguered government, but it also could be seen as a public relations exercise for an organisation often seen with suspicion in areas of Japan where they are based, such as Okinawa.

Such operations are essentially an attempt to win hearts and minds. In this fashion, they bear a great similarity to the theory of soft power expounded by Joseph Nye. Nye explained that soft power was 'getting others to want the outcome that you want', and 'rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others'.[3] It uses co-option rather than coercion as its primary tool, attracting others to a point of view, way of life or singular policy. If soft power is 'the ability to shape the preferences of others', it relies on 'intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority'.[4] It is fair to say that involvement in disaster response is perceived internationally as far more legitimate than, say, the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Co-operative maritime diplomacy can therefore be an attempt to support soft power through the use of hard power assets. In fact, co-operative maritime diplomacy could arguably be well described as 'soft maritime diplomacy', contrasted with the 'hard maritime diplomacy' that involves gunboats launching limited punitive operations against recalcitrant fleets.

This is but one of the goals of a co-operative maritime diplomatic mission, however. The regular port visits by naval forces to nations great and small are often intended to build diplomatic influence and strengthen alliances. Training

exercises aim to build capacity within less capable or knowledgeable navies, but also have the ancillary benefit of reinforcing a friendship and making the naval forces more compatible. Joint exercises or maritime security operations may also strengthen bonds between allies or reassure potential rivals as to the non-threatening nature of one's navy. Co-operative maritime diplomacy can therefore also be designed to build coalitions, support allies through capacity building, training and harmonisation of techniques and build confidence among nations wary of one's naval power (see Figure 1.1).

Rear Admiral Bob Davidson of the Royal Canadian Navy described this aspect of co-operative maritime diplomacy well, when recounting his time commanding his country's task group to the Middle East to lead Combined Task Force 150. He suggests such diplomacy can be seen as 'maritime influence' operations. After describing his sailors as 'mini-ambassadors, representing the country and its interests and values in every port of call', he notes that

> the modern naval deployment has potential far beyond the limited concept of gunboat diplomacy. Maritime influence operations … can be conceived and implemented with a view to enhancing Canada's reputation in a broad spectrum of areas that cross the boundaries of many government departments.[5]

Navies are particularly well-suited to these missions. As Geoffrey Till notes, they have a variety of attributes that allow them to perform roles that would be more difficult for other military services, including independence from host nation support; an expansive reach; flexibility and options to deliver a variety of effects from onboard capabilities; the ability to control outcomes to a greater extent than ground or air forces; and strategic mobility not available to large formations of infantry troops or aircraft.[6] (These attributes will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 below.)

Yet, it is not just naval vessels that can be used in such a role. Coastguards and maritime constabulary agencies are just as able to undertake co-operative maritime diplomatic operations where their capabilities allow. Operation Unified Assistance off the coast of Sumatra, for example, involved not just the US Navy in force, but also the *Hamilton*-class coastguard cutter, USCGC *Munro*.

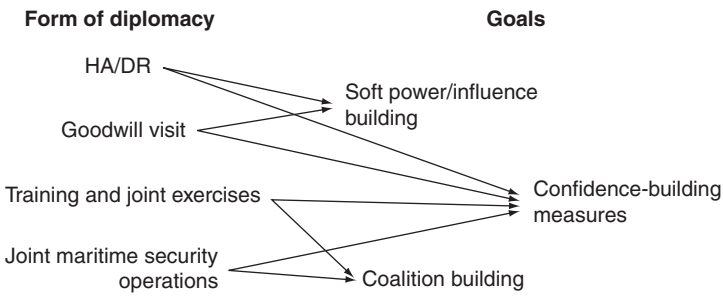



*Figure 1.1* Forms of co-operative maritime diplomacy and its goals.

Given their primary responsibility for maritime safety and security, coastguards and maritime constabulary forces have a great need to engage in co-operative activities. This makes them excellently positioned to drive the process of co-operative maritime diplomacy, particularly between countries with few military–military ties. It is easier to contemplate the co-ordination of coastguard activities as a low level of maritime co-operation than it is to envisage the side-by-side working of naval forces of countries with a history of conflict or mistrust.

The North Pacific Coast Guard Forum (NPCGF) is a case in point, bringing together the maritime constabulary agencies of Canada, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the US in order to enhance maritime security and share knowledge. It is difficult to imagine a similar formal body existing among the same group of countries' militaries, which includes two NATO allies, two strong US allies in East Asia, and the often antagonistic China and Russia.

The NPCGF exists not just to support constabulary operations in the region, but also to build links between often mistrustful states in the maritime domain. But joint maritime security exercises or operations need not involve formal institutions to govern behaviour – Japan pledged in its FY2013 budget to train Philippine and Vietnamese coastguard personnel. The choice of these two countries to receive this training was highly diplomatic, as while Japan has suffered from an assertive Chinese maritime policy around the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands since September 2012, so Vietnam and the Philippines have struggled to react to a similar Chinese policy in the disputed waters of the South China Sea. By capacity building in these two states, Tokyo hopes not only to be able to create a more effective force to respond to China's perceived maritime assertiveness, but also to build a stronger alliance with two countries facing similar issues with Beijing and to develop its influence in China's periphery.[7]

Co-operative maritime diplomacy may also not be the primary goal of any particular activity. The counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2008 have drawn together a diverse range of navies, all of which have deployed primarily in order to secure sea lines of communication and ensure good order at sea. During their mission, though, they have also involved unprecedented co-ordination from navies from China, Russia, Iran and the US, supporting the maritime diplomatic goal of confidence-building.

## Defining co-operative maritime diplomacy

As the above suggests, co-operative maritime diplomacy encompasses a diverse range of activities involving numerous possible actors. It is, though, possible to draw together the similarities between these operations, missions and agencies to craft a more cohesive definition of the endeavour itself.

First, it should be noted that, as the name suggests, co-operative maritime diplomacy is necessarily co-operative. Why does this redundancy matter? It highlights the fact that all parties in a co-operative maritime diplomatic incident are involved willingly (even if, in the case of HA/DR (Humanitarian

Assistance/Disaster Response) missions, it is as the result of unfortunate circumstances). Thus, the first visit of a US aircraft carrier to Vietnamese waters since the Vietnam War in 2009 was as a result of Hanoi's deliberate policy of enmeshing the US more deeply with regional security issues.[8] Allies exercising together, rivals engaged in joint maritime security operations and the training of weaker navies all occur owing to collaborative agreement by all parties.

The activity also involved the use of maritime assets capable of using force. An unspoken aspect of co-operative maritime diplomacy is that the vessels being used could, in other circumstances, also be involved in conflict, coercion or security operations. Even unarmed maritime constabulary vessels can have a forceful role, as they act as agencies of the state and, as such, have the implicit security guarantee of a government behind them. In a co-operative maritime diplomatic event, however, such vessels are not utilising their capabilities for violence or force against another party, and are engaging instead in purely peaceful activities (even if those activities might involve live-fire exercises).

A very broad definition of co-operative maritime diplomacy could in fact involve maritime personnel engaged in such activity. Exchanges of personnel regularly occur between navies and coastguards, while naval colleges such as Britannia Royal Navy College in Dartmouth take a number of international students from overseas navies every year. Similarly, confidence-building measures such as the Sino-US Military Maritime Consultative Agreement created in 1998 are intended purely to develop trust between two potentially rival militaries through greater transparency.[9] It could also be argued that sailors and maritime personnel, along with their knowledge base and skill sets are part and parcel of a nation's seapower, above and beyond the ships, weapons, rigs, shipyards and ports that are usually seen as encompassing the entirety of seapower. For the main, this book will be concerned with a narrower definition that entails events that happen at sea (which, for instance, can include bridge visits as a form of personnel exchange), but education programmes, personal visits and collaborative meetings could equally be seen as an influence- and confidence-building form of co-operative maritime diplomacy.

And finally, co-operative maritime diplomatic events all share a common pool of political goals towards which they aim. Each event is seeking to build either influence, coalitions/alliances or confidence. Co-operative maritime diplomacy does not aim to bully, deter or compel, nor to forcefully persuade. Rather, it uses the tools of attraction, co-option and inspiration to entice or reassure other governments.

This is not a new activity – countries have engaged in co-operative maritime diplomacy for millennia – but it is one increasingly used by a wider variety of navies. With a greater number of countries now able to deploy their navies further afield and with greater frequency, major powers more eager to manage their relations with these emerging powers with tact, and the rise of countries such as China disturbing the balance of power and encouraging further alliance building, co-operative maritime diplomacy is an activity occurring with regularity in the twenty-first century.

## Persuasive maritime diplomacy

There are various ways in which navies and maritime agencies are used for political purposes in peacetime, however, that are not co-operative.

One of these can be known as 'persuasive maritime diplomacy'. This sits in a subtle sliver of space between co-operative maritime diplomacy and what will be discussed subsequently, coercive maritime diplomacy.

Persuasive diplomacy is distinguished from its co-operative cousin by the lack of collaboration in the diplomatic effects reached through the activity. Similarly, it is differentiated from coercive diplomacy by the fact that it aims neither to deter nor compel.

Rather, the goals of persuasive maritime diplomacy are to increase recognition of one's maritime or national power, and build prestige for the nation on the international stage. It is neither directed towards a particular recipient nor intended to strike fear into potential opponents. Rather, it aims to persuade others that one's own navy (or general military) is present and effective.

Persuasive maritime diplomacy is therefore highly similar to what used to be known as 'showing the flag', whereby naval vessels are used to merely signal one's presence and capability without necessarily seeking to influence the policies of another state.

Perhaps the clearest example of such a diplomatic event was the Great White Fleet that circumnavigated the globe between December 1907 and February 1909. Consisting of two squadrons of battleships and their escorts, US President Theodore Roosevelt painted these military ships white to indicate their peaceful purpose and sent them off on a round-the-world tour.

There were, of course, co-operative maritime diplomatic goals involved in the fleet's lengthy journey, as the vessels made a variety of port calls to strengthen alliances and build US influence. However, with the Spanish–American War of 1898 and the resulting occupation of Guam, the Philippines and Puerto Rico having signalled the US's entry into global politics, the primary aim of the Great White Fleet was to indicate America's rise to the top table of world powers. Fearing no invasion given its privileged geographical position, the fleet was not aiming to deter any particular aggression; equally, it did not seek to compel any foreign power to do anything specific. In fact, it was not even meant to influence the policies of any foreign power. It was, simply, a gesture of the US's newfound status as a global power. In a phrase used by Roosevelt himself on several occasions in different contexts, the intent was to 'speak softly and carry a big stick'.[10]

A further example of persuasive maritime diplomacy can be found in the passage of the German battleship SMS *Deutschland* to the Memel region in March 1939. Memel had just been ceded to Germany by Lithuania following a direct threat from the Third Reich that the Wehrmacht would invade were it not handed over. Memel had, previously, been separated from Germany following the Versailles Treaty after the First World War. The threat to invade, coming just days after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, was explicit and immediate, and hence there was little that the much weaker power of Lithuania, lacking the

support of the UK and France, could do but agree. Combined with the arrival of infantry and mechanised units to secure the territory, the *Deutschland* carried Adolf Hitler into the newly acquired lands. The symbolism of the journey was twofold: first, to allow Hitler to arrive in Memel without setting foot in the disputed Polish corridor, and second to demonstrate unquestionable German domination over the region. Thus, the *Deutschland* was not intended to coerce anyone, nor could it be described as co-operative in any sense, but it was certainly meant to persuade regional and major powers that Memel was now part of East Prussia.[11]

Persuasive maritime diplomacy is often less common than either co-operative or coercive diplomacy, as its effects are often vague and naval or maritime operations can be expensive. It is therefore difficult to justify the cost of a flotilla, squadron or even single ship's journey without a more definite outcome. For this reason, persuasive maritime diplomatic events are often wrapped up in other activities and their effects may even be unintentional. (Sceptics would argue that no diplomatic effect is unintentional given the amount of planning that goes into each and every ship movement, but it should be noted that the multiplicity of effects arising from just one voyage given the number of actors that may be influenced makes it impossible to calculate all the effects.)

Nonetheless, there continue to be modern uses of such diplomatic activities, particularly among developing countries where navies are seeking to prove themselves on the international stage. Thus, in February 2011 the Iranian navy sent a small flotilla through the Suez Canal for the first time since the country's revolution against the shah in 1979. The voyage was intended to build stronger relations with Iran's single Arab ally, Syria, by visiting its Mediterranean coast. However, a more general goal of the flotilla was to demonstrate Iran's ability to be present in the Mediterranean Sea. As Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said: 'The world should know that the presence of Iranian warships in the Suez Canal has taken place … through the deep guidance of the Supreme Leader.' Israeli Vice-President Silvan Shalom suggested that the goal of the flotilla was to indicate to Arab states 'who is the new leader in the Middle East'.[12] The flotilla, therefore, was designed to showcase Iran's growing strategic reach, although it had little deterrent or compellent effect.

This reflects the main purpose of persuasive maritime diplomacy: to instil within others a sense of a maritime force's presence, without attempting to affect other actors' policies. This is, as it suggests, a difficult balance to strike and for this reason persuasive maritime diplomacy is perhaps the most nebulous of the three forms of maritime diplomacy described here.

## Coercive maritime diplomacy

The final form of maritime diplomacy being outlined here, coercive maritime diplomacy, is also perhaps the most well known.

This is a topic that has garnered much more commentary and analysis than either co-operative or persuasive maritime diplomacy, and hence there is much

already to unpick. Perhaps the easiest way to approach the topic is from the already documented work on an activity that resembles coercive maritime diplomacy: gunboat diplomacy.

Defining gunboat diplomacy appears at first to be a simple task, given the phrase itself: it is merely the pursuit of diplomacy through the use of gunboats (or naval capabilities). But an unambiguous and authoritative definition of gunboat diplomacy has been surprisingly elusive, made all the more difficult by the many forms and incidences of the limited use of force over the centuries.

Certain events of the European imperial period have come to epitomise the use of the term: the Don Pacifico affair of the mid nineteenth century is perhaps the most often cited. In that example, a Royal Navy squadron was dispatched to seize Greek ships and property in 1850, following the vandalisation and plundering by an anti-Semitic mob of the property of David (Don) Pacifico, a Gibraltar-born Jew. The squadron also blockaded Athens, before a settlement was reached.[13]

The despatch of the German SMS *Panther* to Agadir in 1911 provides a circumstance of the threat but not use of violence as a form of gunboat diplomacy. Amid the naval competition between the UK and Germany at the start of the twentieth century, and Berlin's desire for a share of imperial spoils globally, the gunboat was sent to the Moroccan port while a rebellion seethed on land. The message was clear: Germany now had aspirations as an imperial state and the means to pursue them. The result was equally well defined: while Germany accepted France's dominion over Morocco, land was ceded from the French Congo that nearly doubled the size of German West Africa (now Cameroon).[14]

The sailing of Commodore Perry's 'Black Ships' to Edo (now Tokyo) in 1853 was perhaps the best-known example of early US gunboat diplomacy and marked not only the rise to imperial power of America, but the entry into the global trading system of Japan. The threat of just four warships, two steam frigates and two sloops-of-war, as well as some strongly worded correspondence from US Navy Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, was enough to encourage the Japanese to draft the Convention of Kanagawa that opened two Japanese ports (Shimoda and Hakodate) to US trade. Similar treaties with the UK (1854), Russia (1855) and France (1858) swiftly followed, decisively and irreversibly opening Japan up to international trade, with all the positive and negative effects that had for the world in the twentieth century.[15]

Other Western incidences of gunboat diplomacy not only further exemplified the instrument that we now define, but also shaped the international order, particularly in Asia. During the Paknam incident in 1893, France sailed a sloop-of-war and a gunboat up the Chao Praya River to Bangkok, directly threatening the Grand Palace, subsequently blockaded Siam and eventually forced the cession of Laos to the European power.[16] The first opium war in 1839–42 was, particularly in its earlier stages, arguably a series of gunboat diplomatic engagements by the Royal Navy to exact a political price from China: the resumption of the opium trade and the cession of Hong Kong.[17] Such events, and the unequal treaties that followed them, continue to colour the relations between Western and Asian

nations today, with the so-called 'century of humiliation' still keenly felt by the Chinese populace and a potential source of nationalistic fervour for that country's political leaders.

In time, this most effective of diplomatic tools was learned by the victims. In 1876, the Japanese gunboat *Unyo* sailed to Ganghwa Island and attacked two Korean ports. The subsequent Treaty of Ganghwa opened up Busan, Inchon and Wusan for trade and granted rights such as extraterritoriality to Japanese citizens in Korea. This clearly reflected the earlier unequal treaties forced upon the Asian powers by European states.

Other events have further complicated the issue of defining gunboat diplomacy. North Korea initiated a form of gunboat diplomatic event in 1968 that targeted the US. The capture of the USS *Pueblo*, an intelligence-gathering vessel, by North Korea in January of that year, was a propaganda coup for Pyongyang and successfully reached a political goal (deterring further US intelligence-gathering missions for a period) with the use of only very limited and containable force.[18] The *Pueblo* remains moored on the Taedong river today, where it is used as a propaganda tool for the domestic population and foreign visitors alike.

All of these examples, which comprise just a small percentage of gunboat diplomatic incidents over recent centuries, vary widely in their tactics, goals and success. It seems almost impossible to group them together under one category, and yet this is exactly what happens whenever the elusive term gunboat diplomacy is used to describe them. It is unsurprising given their diversity that a precise definition has proven so elusive, with a gulf between the popular usage of the term and its perhaps more technical definition.

This hasn't stopped some from trying, and perhaps the most referenced definition hails from that most celebrated of gunboat diplomatic theorists, James Cable. Cable described the phenomenon as:

> the use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise as an act of war, in order to secure advantage or to avert loss, either in the furtherance of an international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or the jurisdiction of their own state.[19]

This is just one among various definitions, but given the position of Cable's work in the literature on gunboat diplomacy, it is worthwhile considering this definition first. While there are various elements within it that are still relevant today, there are also a number of omissions and inaccuracies in this complex definition. Perhaps the easiest manner in which to analyse the definition itself is to consider it in three constituent ingredients, namely in its definition of the actor involved, the activity itself and the goals and victim of the diplomacy.

## A state-based and naval occupation?

For a start, as demonstrated by the use of the terms 'foreign nationals' and 'international dispute', Cable believes only nation states and their navies can engage

in gunboat diplomacy. Although this was an easy conclusion to reach when *Gunboat Diplomacy* was first written in the 1970s, it seems less obvious now. In the post-Cold War world, where non-state actors have assumed a greater role in international affairs, and after ten years of a long-running series of conflicts waged by the US and its allies specifically on non-state actors, there seems little reason why a non-state group could not *theoretically* engage in gunboat diplomacy. Indeed, expressions or demonstrations of potential force to act as a deterrent – the sine qua non of gunboat diplomacy – already exist among non-state militaries: note the militaristic (although unarmed) parades of Lebanese non-state armed group Hizbullah, with flag-flying marches of troops intended not only to stir support among their intended constituency, but more importantly also to signal their capabilities and intent to potential adversaries.[20]

That such events have been less common among non-state maritime forces is partially owing to the lack of such armed forces generally and partially to the peculiar vulnerability of such forces to attack. The now-defunct Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), defeated militarily by an emboldened Sri Lankan military in 2009, was perhaps the first 'navy' to be operated by an insurgent group, but never held 'fleet days' that would showcase its strength. Small demonstrations of the existence of the Sea Tigers did occur, however, as during the Heroes' Day celebrations on 27 November 2005 when a lightly armed patrol boat was displayed in front of Tamil crowds in Kallapadu, Mullaithivu.[21] If such demonstrations were intended to merely inspire Tamils as to the LTTE's capabilities, then it obviously lacks a diplomatic element, but if the idea was subsequently to disseminate information on the event in order to demonstrate capabilities to the Sri Lankan government and deter aggression from them, it is a clear case of gunboat diplomacy. Whatever the case, it is evident that there is no fundamental reason why non-state organisations could not engage in some form of gunboat diplomacy.[22]

The target of any maritime diplomacy need not be state actors either. In May 2012, the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) tasked with countering piracy off the coast of Somalia and assisting the delivery of World Food Programme aid, attacked a suspected pirate base in Galmudug on the Somali coast. The strike, which involved a solitary helicopter, intentionally avoided human casualties and instead destroyed skiffs, equipment and fuel storage. It remains the only kinetic action by EUNAVFOR on land, and given this fact, as well as the limited nature of the operation, it appears to have been more of a diplomatic operation than a tactical one. While there may have been minor tactical benefits to disruption of this pirate action group, it seemed to act more as a message to Somali pirates: EUNAVFOR now had a mandate to attack them on land and the means to do so. It was essentially an attempt by a coalition of governmental navies to deter activity by a ragtag collection of Somali civilians engaging in criminal activity.[23]

There is also no particular reason why gunboat diplomacy needs to be undertaken by navies. Other governmental agencies are feasible (and, as discussed later, useful) representatives through which to manage international relations

with limited maritime force. Coastguards, constabulary agencies and even unofficial non-state organisations offer deniability, flexibility and 'containability' when they attempt to further foreign policy goals through force.

Even civilian assets can be commandeered or persuaded to sail to certain locations, such as fishing fleets, and can therefore be useful vessels for a willing actor. The voyage of a flotilla of armed Chinese fishing vessels to the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea in 1978 was a good example of an occasion when civilians and their boats were used for diplomatic effect.[24] This allows for a greater deniability for the government in question, as the actions can be passed off as just boisterous patriotism or uncontrollable actions by independently minded civilians. Yet, it is an undeniably useful tool for those countries that may not have the money or hulls to risk naval or constabulary vessels.

The intense competition for whaling grounds around Spitsbergen in the early seventeenth century provides a useful historical example of the importance of commercial vessels used as proxies by sovereigns, acting both in the diplomatic interests of the monarch but also the profit-seeking interests of the overseeing company. In 1613, a flotilla sent by the London-based Muscovy Company to hunt whales in the vicinity was led by the *Tiger*, a 21-gun vessel, which warned off at least 17 other foreign whalers. Intermittent conflict between whalers, often given royal charter, continued for decades in the area, all with the intention of deterring foreign whalers from fishing in the disputed grounds.[25]

The use of constabulary agencies or civilian assets such as fishing or shipping fleets is indicative of a broader trend: an identification of seapower not just as the total force contained within one's navy. Alfred Thayer Mahan, that doyen of naval and strategic analysis, defined seapower not just as a nation's power at sea, but the power that hailed from the sea. It was thus a combination of maritime trade, overseas bases and merchant and naval shipping.[26] Geoffrey Till notes a virtuous circle of seapower, whereby maritime trade begets maritime resources, which funds greater naval strength and in turn leads to maritime supremacy, which ensures security of maritime trade. As Till notes,

> [w]hat was distinctive about the European approach to seapower at this time [of imperial conquest] was that like the Chinese and others before them, they had discovered the huge advantage to be derived from the close association between the military and mercantile aspects of seapower.[27]

Admiral Gorshkov, commander-in-chief of the Soviet Navy, also noted the important of fishing, mercantile and oceanographic fleets, as well as a maritime culture, to the overall sea power of a state.[28]

For China, that rising great power, it is not just military power that is of import to a country, but its 'comprehensive national power' (综合国力 *zonghe guoli)*, which comprises military and non-military power.[29] Taking such a concept to the sea, comprehensive seapower would entail the sum of one's navy, constabulary agencies, merchant fleets and other maritime assets, from fishing vessels to offshore oil rigs. It is, then, perhaps unsurprising for countries such as

China, and those that have traditionally relied on seapower such as the US or European powers, to consider civilian and non-naval assets as key tools in maritime diplomacy.

## The limits of force

Cable goes on to suggest that the act of gunboat diplomacy is, in essence, the use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise as an act of war. It is important to note the use of the term 'force' here, rather than 'power'. Naval power is the ability to control a maritime environment, naval force is the use of that ability to affect another's policy or military posture.

There is little with which to disagree in this statement, but greater specificity may be required. Certainly, gunboat diplomacy occurs outside of war: any use of armed force during a war is merely a military operation, designed to achieve or work towards the military or policy goals of that particular conflict at that particular time. The sinking of the *Belgrano* in 1982 was not a gunboat diplomatic event, as the UK and Argentina were to all intents and purposes at war (even if it was not declared as such by London). Even though the sinking sent a strong political message, the motivation behind HMS *Conqueror*'s successful torpedo strike was essentially military: to prevent the *Belgrano* and her escorts from entering a 200-nautical-mile exclusion zone around the Falklands (Malvinas) and potentially threatening the British task force.[30] As the term suggests, gunboat diplomacy is not the pursuit of wartime goals, but peacetime diplomatic goals. War starts when diplomacy, gunboat or otherwise, fails. In this vein, gunboat diplomacy is an attempt to use naval force to manage international relations without resorting to a declaration of war.

Cable is also right to suggest that all acts of gunboat diplomacy will, necessarily and as the name suggests, involve at the very least a threat of the use of force. However, this threat need not be explicit. In reality, it is the *possibility* of force and the implicit threat within it that can also affect another's foreign policy.

Here it is useful to distinguish between capabilities and intent, where in this context the former is the ability to wage violence, and the latter is the desire to do so. Cable's definition suggests that at the very least the intent must be demonstrated to characterise any event as gunboat diplomacy: any actor must be signalling their willingness to use force in order to be using naval forces diplomatically. However, is it not possible for even more subtle forms of gunboat diplomacy to occur? It seems evident that no letter need be written to a foreign power signalling an intent to use force, nor shots fired demonstrating an escalation in tension. Rather, the sheer demonstration of an actor's capabilities (not intent) can act as a form of gunboat diplomacy, signalling to another party the ability to act if provoked, and therefore the damage that will be done to the other party should this situation occur.

This clearly differentiates capabilities from intent: gunboat diplomacy may be a demonstration of both, but it need not be so. At its most passive, a naval force

may simply be showcasing its capabilities to an adversary in order to deter an attack. The sixtieth anniversary naval parade by China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in April 2009 was an excellent example of this kind of diplomacy: no threats were issued, but the muscular parade, involving 52 vessels, including the first public outing of the Type 092 nuclear submarine, was a clear exhibition of the navy's newfound prowess and an indication to foreign powers (such as Japan and the US) that the PLAN was not to be trifled with.[31]

By contrast, Iran's Velayat 90 exercises were a demonstration of both capabilities and intent, with the manoeuvres aimed to reveal the asymmetric capabilities that might be used should Tehran wish to disrupt shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, amid public warnings that it would use such tactics if pressured.[32] The stereotypical, imperial image of gunboat diplomacy, involving the brief shelling of coastal forts, is an even clearer example of the use of limited force to demonstrate both capabilities and intent: limited violence is actually used against an opponent to persuade them of the even more overwhelming force that could be subsequently used and dissuade any further disagreement.

## Goals and victims

Cable's definition also deals with the goals of gunboat diplomacy: 'to secure advantage or to avert loss'. This is an exceptionally broad definition, which essentially encompasses all activities undertaken by navies that involve violence or the threat of violence to further foreign policy goals. Such a definition includes operations that are not diplomatic in any sense, in that they do not involve the management of a state's (or non-state's) international (or external) relations. Cable's definition simply includes all naval operations that involve violence or conspicuous threats of violence against other states that do not lead to war. In the third edition of his book, and in an attempt to demonstrate the continued relevance of gunboat diplomacy in a post-Cold War world, Cable intimates that this definition would allow for operations designed to counter illegal immigration, piracy, trafficking, pollution control and assertion of the freedom of the seas when in the territorial waters of another state. Such a definition would also include opposed non-combatant evacuation operations, such as the use of helicopters from USS *Guam* and USS *Trenton* to evacuate the US embassy in Mogadishu in 1991, as they would involve the use of limited naval force 'to avert loss'.[33]

It is not clear that such operations are diplomatic in any way. Counter-piracy operations, for instance, have a simple military goal at heart, namely to stop pirates attacking international shipping. Non-combatant evacuation operations, such as the Chinese operation from Libya in 2011 that involved the first use of a warship in an active operation beyond Chinese seas, almost always have a single aim: to prevent harm to a group's or nation's citizens amid instability or disaster. These events do not manage international relations or intend to affect the policy of another actor, rather they simply aim to mitigate risk to citizens or national interests overseas.

Finally, the Cable definition indicates the victims of gunboat diplomacy, as it occurs 'either in the furtherance of an international dispute or against the foreign nationals within the territory or jurisdiction of their own state'. Yet, in the most passive forms of gunboat diplomacy, those that were described as demonstrating the capabilities of a maritime force if not the intent, there is not necessarily a dispute in play or a target clearly identified. Substantial military exercises may have a specific target in mind, as did the US Invincible Spirit exercises in 2010. However, they may also not have a specific target in mind: China's remarkable naval exercises in April 2010, involving 16 warships from all three fleets within the navy (North, East and South Sea) was, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a clear demonstration that 'the PLAN had achieved its greatest-ever level of operational flexibility in the simultaneous deployment of underwater, surface and air assets', as well as 'the confidence to sail over longer distances' given the route of the flotilla through the Bashi channel and into the South China Sea.[34] These exercises signal capabilities, but it is not clear to whom: it could be Japan, the US, Southeast Asian disputants to the Spratly Islands or all of these.

The identification of possible victims of gunboat diplomacy by Cable as 'foreign nationals within their territory' also brings up the possibility that patrols in foreign waters would be classed as gunboat diplomacy. Thus, Cable frequently mentions the British weekly convoy system used in the 1920s on the Yangtze River in China to protect its shipping and citizens from banditry and river piracy. While evidently the use of limited naval force against foreign nationals to avert loss, it is not apparent what the diplomatic element of these convoys was, as there was no attempt to manage international relations. The convoys seemed to be an attempt to protect British citizens and interests without recourse to the sovereignty of the country in which they found themselves: almost the antithesis of diplomacy, which attempts to administer, rather than ignore, relations with foreign powers.

Rather, the goal of gunboat diplomacy is perhaps much more straightforward than Cable suggested: to affect diplomacy through the use of maritime force. This is a self-evident conclusion based on the phrase gunboat diplomacy itself, but one that is worth reiterating given confusion over the term. Through the use or threat of limited maritime force, actors attempt to manage their external relations and affect the policies of other actors. This makes gunboat diplomacy an entirely political venture, rather than a military one, and it is this political goal that defines whether an event may be described as gunboat diplomatic or not.

## Redefining gunboat diplomacy

What, then, does this tell us about how we can define gunboat diplomacy? Three principles can thus far be drawn out: it is an activity that can be undertaken by states and non-state actors alike, albeit far more frequently by the former than the latter; it is the threat or use of limited maritime (as opposed to naval) force to

display or utilise military capabilities and/or intent; and the goals of gunboat diplomacy are to affect the policies of other actors.

Cable's description has not been the only definition of gunboat diplomacy or related activities. Two very similar concepts have also been formulated by US thinkers. The first comes from US Navy Vice Admiral Stansfield Turner, who within a seminal article in the *Naval War College Review* in 1974 outlined the four missions for the US Navy, namely: strategic deterrence, sea control, power projection and naval presence. It is the latter that is most relevant to us as Turner defined it as 'the use of naval forces, short of war, to achieve political objectives'.[35] This is obviously extremely close to an abbreviated form of the three principles outlined above. However, Turner's definition was intended to be broader than simply describing gunboat diplomacy. As he noted himself:

> During the 19th century, the term 'gunboat diplomacy' came into the naval vocabulary. In the quest for colonies, nations paraded their naval forces to intimidate sheiks and pashas and to serve warning on one another. In time the range of this activity extended from warning and coercion to demonstrations of good will. It has come to be known as the Naval Presence mission.[36]

For Turner, then, gunboat diplomacy is a part of a wider role for the US Navy (and, by extension, other navies as well). This wider role includes those port and ship visits that build relations between militaries to encourage understanding and transparency.

Similarly, US academic Edward Luttwak coined the term 'naval suasion', which he defined as the naval form of armed suasion, that is

> all reactions, political or tactical, elicited by all parties – allies, adversaries or neutrals – to the existence, display, manipulation or symbolic use of an instrument of military power, whether or not such reactions reflect any deliberate intent of the deploying party.[37]

Luttwak distinguished between active and latent naval suasion, the latter being those routine deployments of naval forces that inadvertently have the effects of supporting allies or deterring/compelling adversaries. He further subdivided his definition by suggesting that within active suasion there is supportive (that is, reassuring allies) or coercive suasion (that is, deterring or compelling rivals) (see Table 1.1).

Luttwak does not mention gunboat diplomacy, but it is possible to glean from his description where the activity would lie. Implicit within the three statements above defining gunboat diplomacy was the idea of intentionality. A gunboat diplomatic incident must be intentionally attempting to coerce (either through deterrence or compellence), rather than inadvertently doing so. This is the difference between Luttwak's latent and active suasion. Latent suasion refers to those routine or undirected deployments that unintentionally coerce rivals through

*Table 1.1* The political application of naval power: a typology according to Edward Luttwak

| *Armed suasion in general* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Naval suasion (specific to sea-based/sea-related forces)* | | | | |
| *Latent naval suasion (reactions evoked by routine and/or undirected deployments)* | | *Active naval suasion (reactions evoked by any deliberate action or signal)* | | |
| *Deterrent mode* | *Supportive mode* | *Supportive* | *Coercive* | |
| | | | Positive (i.e. compellence) | Negative (i.e. deterrence) |

Source: Luttwak, Edward N., *The Political Uses of Sea Power* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974).

their very presence. Active suasion, on the other hand, consciously undertakes an activity with the intent of coercion or support. Gunboat diplomacy is necessarily active: its very essence is the deliberate movement, display or use of maritime forces to evoke a response in another party or parties. The audience may not be clearly elucidated (indeed, most gunboat diplomatic incidents will occur without an expression of who the intended audience is) or defined (it for example may be an attempt to deter a general or vague threat or multiple adversaries), but gunboat diplomacy requires purpose behind its action.

What's more, gunboat diplomacy may involve incidents of supporting allies, but with the intention of deterring rivals through the very demonstration of that support. The friendly port visit by an aircraft carrier to support an ally has two related effects: one is to reassure the ally and the other is to warn and deter the rival. A perfect example of this output was the visit of the battleship USS *Missouri* to Istanbul in April 1946. The *Missouri* delivered the remains of the Turkish ambassador to the US, Münir Ertegün, who had died of natural causes in Washington two years previously. The battleship's visit was avowedly peaceful. But in her very presence and the 19-gun salutes offered, she was also a clear sign not only that the US was committed to aiding future NATO ally Turkey, then under diplomatic pressure from the Soviet Union to renegotiate the 1936 Montreux Convention that regulates traffic through the Bosporus and Dardanelles and provides Turkey with control over the straits, but that it was also implicitly signalling to Moscow to refrain from any military adventurism.[38] It is this latter fact that transforms the event from a naval diplomatic incident to a gunboat diplomatic one.

Both Turner and Luttwak locate gunboat diplomacy alongside the idea of naval diplomacy in their broader definitions, but the two activities are different. As opposed to naval diplomacy, the goals sought in gunboat diplomacy are not collaborative (even if the act is). Engaging in bilateral naval exercises for the mutual improvement of relations and skills is not gunboat diplomacy, but simply

naval diplomacy. Gunboat diplomacy attempts to achieve its goals, which will be either coercive or deterrent, through intimidation. Gunboat diplomacy can involve the offer of support to an ally, but the actual goal is to deter an adversary from considering aggression against that ally. Thus, the sailing of a US aircraft carrier battle group to the waters near Taiwan and another to the Philippine Sea in remote support in 1996 amid Chinese missile exercises in the Strait of Taiwan was a sign of US willingness to support Taiwan, but what made it a gunboat diplomatic incident was the fact that this support was intended to deter further Chinese aggression and force Beijing to cease further exercises. It was a clear signal of both intent and capabilities by the US Navy, suggesting to China that the US would intervene in any Sino-Taiwanese conflict, and therefore deterring the initiation of that conflict by China.[39]

This is not to say that gunboat diplomacy is always non-consensual. It is possible that a consensual act could still be considered as gunboat diplomatic. Port calls by a muscular naval force can serve as a form of coercive maritime diplomacy, even though they require the acceptance (and often invitation) of the state being visited, as they act as a reminder to the intended audience of the capabilities of the visiting navy, and hence a possible deterrent to aggression or policies inimical to the interests of the visiting state.

It is not always clear where the line between co-operative/persuasive maritime diplomacy and coercive maritime diplomacy lies. Regular military exercises between allies may just be a form of co-operative maritime diplomacy, but when they are deliberately located in disputed waters or use capabilities that are directed at a third party, they become coercive. The CARAT 2011 exercises between the US and the Philippines in late June and early July 2011 were a good illustration of this difficulty of delineating between co-operative and coercive diplomacy: as they involved three US-guided missile destroyers in the South China Sea, Beijing viewed them as a belligerent form of coercive diplomacy.[40] The state-run *China Daily* ran an op-ed that claimed the exercises were 'sabre rattling [that] not only show a US–Philippine alliance but also targets China'.[41] But given their annual nature, the CARAT exercises are arguably merely a continuation of a longstanding bilateral military relationship.[42]

To confuse matters even more, there is a third category of activities within the naval presence mission that is neither maritime nor gunboat diplomacy. In fact, it is sometimes not really diplomatic at all. This is simply maritime positioning: the movement or presence of maritime forces in a particular area for possible use at a later date. Maritime positioning is necessary as the transit times for ships and vessels can be weeks from a homeport to a particular area of crisis or conflict. To prevent this delay between decision to act and action, naval forces will often need to be prepositioned. This may just be the sailing of a vessel to an area where it may be useful at a later date, as with the movement of HMS *Gloucester* off the shore of Lebanon in 2006 to assist subsequently in non-combatant evacuation operations during the Israel–Hizbullah war, or it may involve forward deploying vessels in overseas or foreign territories, such as the US naval base in Guam or the US naval presences in Japan and Bahrain.[43]

Maritime positioning complicates the categorisation of any particular decision to move naval forces even further, as it is less clear whether those forces are being moved for logistical, diplomatic or even cost reasons. In April 2012, the US deployed a second aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf amid tensions with Iran over its nuclear programme, and elicited a flurry of international media reports.[44] However, the US Navy claimed the two-carrier presence was merely a routine rotational deployment and unrelated to the tensions in the region.

Whether or not the US Navy claim is true, this underlines the fact that different types of maritime positioning exist. In fact, it is possible to identify two separate kinds of maritime positioning: regular and irregular. The first is the rotation or placement of forces in a region or area that may, at some unidentified point in the future and for reasons as yet unknown, be useful in crisis management or intervention. Given the difficulties in predicting where maritime forces may be needed in the future, the larger navies in the world opt to either forward deploy or routinely patrol their forces in areas of general interest. Such positioning does not have a specific incident or potential crisis in mind, but allows for maritime forces to be in position should something occur and intervention be required. An example would be the regular South Atlantic patrols for the Royal Navy, which enable a presence for the service and allow for small-scale naval operations if required. Such deployments may have diplomatic effects, much as the RN's South Atlantic patrol may to some extent deter Argentinean military adventurism towards the Falkland Islands, but this is not their core goal. In this sense, any deterrent effect that may be achieved is similar to Luttwak's idea of latent naval suasion.

The second, irregular, is the positioning of maritime forces in response to a specific incident or with an outcome in mind. This could be a tactical manoeuvre, with the purpose of enabling intervention. In such a role, maritime forces may be present not to affect the situation on land or deliver immediate political effect, but to use force if the situation requires in the future. Arguably, the surge of US forces to the Persian Gulf before the Iraq war in 2003 was demonstrative of this form of positioning: their primary role was not to place diplomatic pressure on the Iraqi regime, but to launch the subsequent Operation Iraqi Freedom that deposed Saddam Hussein. In this sense, any coercive diplomatic achievement is inadvertent or, at least, not the primary goal.

Alternatively, irregular positioning could also be purely diplomatic in nature. This involves the movement of or shift in maritime forces to place pressure on a rival actor and encourage a shift in policy. The maritime forces are deployed in order to facilitate a future military operation, but this is not necessarily the primary desired effect, as conflict may prove costly. Rather, their presence is as a deterrent or compellent catalyst. The deployment of the Soviet Fifth Eskadra to the Mediterranean in 1973 to shadow and potentially intimidate the US Sixth Fleet's three carrier groups that were deployed in support of Israel during the Yom Kippur War was clearly the stationing of naval forces for diplomatic means, and hence an excellent example of political maritime positioning.[45]

The delineation between tactical and political positioning is not always clear. Force deployment may be essentially a hedging strategy: intended to act as a deterrent, but equally available for military activity should diplomacy fail. Thus, the ostentatious deployment of US naval and Marine forces in East Asia in 2012 as part of its 'pivot' to the region was a clear sign to China that the US was committed to its allies in the region, and hence a deterrent to possible aggression. However, their positioning also held tactical benefits, enabling more rapid deployment to the contested waters of the South China Sea, with Littoral Combat Ships to be deployed in Singapore, and dispersing the US military presence throughout the region in a bid to undermine China's defensive strategy known as anti-access/area denial.[46]

A final perplexity in defining coercive maritime diplomacy, and those non-warfighting roles from which it needs to be distinguished, derives from a separate attempt to define these missions by former US Navy captain Charles D Allen Jr. In his short but direct book, Allen outlined three types of what he called signalling, which helped sketch the spectrum of intensity in naval operations short of war. These accord closely with the delineations just described, along the following lines: first, Allen's choice of 'latent, relatively unfocused signals generated on a continuous basis by routine peacetime presence' is highly similar to routine positioning; second, a show of interest, which Allen defined as 'strengthen[ing] the credibility of diplomatic pronouncements', reflects the idea of tactical, irregular maritime positioning; and finally, the show of resolve ('to signal a commitment to a friend or to give a potential enemy occasion to pause' and the show of force (where 'the use of force is threatened to resolve a crisis or to influence its resolution') together make up the idea of gunboat diplomacy. In fact, Allen's show of resolve and force imitates the earlier discussion that gunboat diplomacy may involve the display, use or threat of either intent (that is, resolve) or capabilities (that is, force).[47]

The overlapping melange of definitions of naval missions may seem intractably complicated, but in truth it is fairly simple to demonstrate where these ideas intersect and how they relate to the concept of gunboat diplomacy being formulated here. The easiest way in which to demonstrate this would be diagrammatically, as in Table 1.2.

Beyond these incrementally escalating activities lies limited, conventional and nuclear warfare, but the below table suggests a brief sketch of those peacetime activities that maritime forces undertake in a bid to engage allies and coerce rivals. It should be noted that the distinction between a display of intent and a display of capabilities is somewhat arbitrary as coercive diplomatic incidents often will involve both in order to be effective. Perhaps the least aggressive of coercive diplomatic incidents, a simple exhibition of a particular naval capability, will usually involve the display of both intent and capabilities. Thus, the sailing of a US Navy destroyer division through the Strait of Makassar in 1958 in response to Indonesia's Djuanda Declaration the previous year, which laid a claim of sovereignty over the strategic straits through the archipelago, demonstrated both Washington's intent to maintain freedom of the seas through the straits and its immense capability to do so, without a shot being fired.[48]

*Table 1.2* Defining maritime diplomacy in relation to other definitions

| *Maritime diplomacy* | | | *Positioning* | *Cable* | *Turner* | *Luttwak* | *Allen* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Co-operative | Persuasive | Coercive | Regular | | Naval presence | Latent suasion | Routine presence |
| Co-operative | Persuasive | Coercive | Irregular tactical | | Naval presence | Latent suasion | |
| Co-operative | Persuasive | Coercive | Irregular (political) | Gunboat diplomacy | Naval presence | Latent suasion | Show of interest |
| | | Coercive | Irregular (political) | Gunboat diplomacy | Naval presence | Active suasion | Show of resolve (display of intent) |
| | | Coercive | Irregular (political) | Gunboat diplomacy | Naval presence | Active suasion | Show of force (display of capabilities) |

Given the convoluted journey we have just taken through the descriptions of gunboat diplomacy, it now seems possible to untangle ourselves from the web of explanations that has been spun, and instead attempt to draw together the various threads into one cohesive definition. Bearing in mind the three propositions gleaned from the analysis of Cable's original definition, and the similarities to different aspects of Luttwak's, Turner's and Allen's work, a far more specific definition of coercive maritime diplomacy could be described as:

> The overt display, demonstration, threat or use of limited sea-based force by a state or non-state actor designed to coerce an opponent to further a political goal, often unstated, by compellence or deterrence.

The phrase sea-based force is a deliberately broad one, as it includes not only naval vessels, but also aircraft and amphibious capabilities, as well as maritime paramilitary vessels. This is a significant departure from previous conceptions of gunboat diplomacy, but one that allows for a more fitting description of the broad range of incidents that involve the use of maritime force to pursue political goals.

This definition leaves little doubt that coercive maritime diplomacy is essentially a muscular form of negotiation, with gunboats (or any maritime force) as the instrument.

## Defining maritime diplomacy

The above discussion seeks to outline the various forms maritime diplomacy can take. In its breadth, it suggests that maritime forces, when acting in peacetime, are involved in diplomatic activities almost all of the time.

This may seem difficult to believe, but it is necessarily true. Navies, coastguards and other maritime forces are usually the agents of the state. Given the international character of most maritime operations, they are therefore necessarily acting as diplomatic tools.

There are, of course, a range of operations and roles that maritime forces can undertake short of war that will not be diplomatic in nature. Mine or explosive ordnance clearance, domestic maritime security operations, counter-narcotics operations and so forth may be purely operational in nature, involving no display of intent and/or capabilities or interaction with other countries.

Nevertheless, it is now clear that maritime diplomacy is an activity that assumes a vast amount of time and resources for maritime forces.

Maritime diplomacy is equally not a standalone activity. Rather, it is a spectrum of activities that range from the co-operative to the coercive. It is in fact the same spectrum that stretches further to include most forms of warfighting, suggesting that maritime diplomacy is indeed the continuation of policy with other means but one that stops short of war. Essentially, maritime diplomacy fills the void between military war and civilian diplomacy, providing a range of instruments and options to policy makers that allow more incremental escalations to fulfil their immediate and long-term objectives.

But there is an abbreviated description of maritime diplomacy that is able to summarise the wide range of activities the term encompasses. What co-operative, persuasive and coercive diplomacy have in common is that they are all essentially a form of signalling to allies and rivals of one's intent and capabilities. Whether that be to deter a rival, compel a weaker state to undertake an onerous task or build closer alliances, each diplomatic incident involves a tacit or explicit signal of one's benign intentions, significant capabilities or presence, or unwanted consequences that could be meted out.

## Notes

1 Letter to Emma Hamilton, 16 March 1801.
2 Speech by Dr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono before the Australian Parliament, 10 March 2010. Available at: www.presidenri.go.id/index.php/eng/pidato/2010/03/10/1353.html (accessed in May 2013).
3 Nye, *Soft Power*, p. 5.
4 Nye, *Soft Power*, pp. 5–6.
5 Davidson, 'Modern Naval Diplomacy'.
6 Till, *Seapower*, pp. 260–1.
7 'Japan Plans to Give Patrol Boats to Manila – Report', Agence France-Presse, 11 February 2013.
8 Ruwitch, John, 'Vietnamese Officers Visit US Aircraft Carrier as China Celebrates Navy Anniversary', Reuters, 23 April 2009.
9 For a discussion of the MCA, see Griffiths, David, 'US–China Maritime Confidence Building: Paradigms, Precedents and Prospects', China Maritime Study No. 6, July 2010, US Naval War College.
10 For a description of the diplomatic value of the fleet, see also Marks, *Velvet on Iron*, Ch. 2.
11 For a description of the seizure of Memel, see 'Hitler Enters Memel: German March Alarms Small Nations', Australian Associated Press, 23 March 1939.
12 Boudreaux, Richard, 'Iran Sends Two Naval Vessels Through Egypt's Suez Canal', *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 February 2011.
13 See Taylor, *Don Pacifico*.
14 Barraclough, *From Agadir to Armageddon*.
15 Feifer, *Breaking Open Japan*.
16 Tips, *Siam's Struggle for Survival*.
17 Indeed, there is a case to be made for the entire 'war' to be branded a series of gunboat diplomatic events, given that they were motivated by a single political cause, designed to avoid lengthy land-based conflict with China and followed a declaration of war by the Indian government on behalf of the United Kingdom, but not specifically London itself. The fact that the campaign was so lengthy suggests that as discrete diplomatic incidents, each event failed in its task and hence diplomacy slid into war of sorts. See Perdue, *The First Opium War*, for a factual description of the hostilities.
18 Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident*.
19 Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p. 14.
20 Imagery of Hizbullah parades are readily available on social media websites, such as YouTube. See also 'Hezbollah Displays Military Might with Parade', Associated Press, 28 October 2005.
21 An anonymous pictorial of the events were posted online at http://seatigers2005.blogspot.co.uk (accessed in April 2012).

22 This tallies with the idea that diplomacy is no longer strictly the purview of nation states, as non-state actors, particularly non-state armed groups, non-government organisations and commercial organisations, all affect and attempt to influence the international relations of state actors. See for instance Langhorne, 'Diplomacy', and Hocking, 'Privatizing Diplomacy?', pp. 147–52.
23 Stone, Mark, 'EU Naval Forces Attack Somali Pirate Bases', Sky News, 15 May 2012.
24 Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p. 205.
25 See Mazo, 'Hot War'.
26 Mahan, *Influence*.
27 Till, *Seapower*, p. 34.
28 Gorshkov, *Sea Power*, Ch. 1.
29 Pillsbury, C*hina Debates*, Ch. 5.
30 Woodward, *One Hundred Days*.
31 Hille, Kathrin, 'China's Show of Sea Power Challenges US', *Financial Times*, 24 April 2009.
32 'MP Describes Navy Wargames as Serious Warning to Western Powers', Fars News Agency, 26 December 2011.
33 Ohls, 'Eastern Exit'.
34 'China's Three-Point Naval Strategy', *Strategic Comments*, September 2010 (London: IISS).
35 Turner, 'Missions', p. 14.
36 Turner, 'Missions', p. 4.
37 Luttwak, *Political Uses*, pp. 10–11.
38 Cable, *Political Influence*, p. 178.
39 Kozaryn, Linda D., 'Perry Says Second Carrier Task Force Moving to Taiwan', Armed Forces Press Service, 11 March 1996.
40 'US–China Spat over South China Sea Military Exercises', BBC News, 11 July 2011.
41 Wang Hui, 'Neighbors Threaten China's Peace', *China Daily*, 7 July 2011.
42 'US, Philippines Navies Join for 17th CARAT Exercise in Palawan', US Navy website, 28 June 2011.
43 For the Royal Navy operation off Lebanon, see 'Navy Sails Evacuees from Lebanon', BBC News, 18 July 2006.
44 See, for instance, 'US Navy Deploys 2nd Aircraft Carrier to Gulf,' Associated Press, 9 April 2012.
45 For a description of the US–Soviet stand-off, see Allen Jr, *Uses of Navies*, Ch. 4.
46 For a detailed explanation of the US's bid to counter anti-access/area denial strategies through force dispersal, see Le Mière, 'America's Pivot'.
47 For a description of Allen's signalling categories, see Allen Jr, *Uses of Navies*, Ch. 2.
48 For a description of the event, see Kwan, 'Brinkmanship'.

# 2 Paragunboat diplomacy

> Diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments.
>
> Frederick the Great (1712–86)[1]

Much of the book thus far has dealt with the use of navies for diplomatic goals. This is unsurprising: all texts that analyse maritime diplomacy naturally draw on the wealth of evidence that navies have produced in their interactions. It is also far more academically enticing to be writing about the historical usage of naval gunboats in well-known events from which emanate clear political shifts and from which one can draw clear theoretical conclusions.

However, there have also been notable references to the potential or actual use of maritime constabulary agencies in the pursuit of diplomatic goals. In fact, the use of the term maritime diplomacy, as opposed to naval or gunboat diplomacy, is specifically intended to reflect the fact that diplomacy can be undertaken with any maritime agency or even non-state actor with a maritime force.

The first chapter mentioned the use of maritime constabulary agencies in the pursuit of co-operative diplomacy. This is effectively a display of intent by an actor, but not of capabilities. In a bid to build closer co-operation, an actor may signal the collaborative and non-threatening objective of its maritime presence by encouraging interaction between unarmed or lightly armed paramilitary vessels.

This is not the only way such maritime constabulary agencies can be used, however. One of the more noticeable trends in recent years has been the use of maritime paramilitaries to influence the policies of other actors in disputed areas. These events, whereby similar tactics are pursued as in any naval coercive diplomatic incident but just with non-military or paramilitary forces, is a relatively new form of what might be called ‘paragunboat diplomacy’. It fits within the definition of coercive maritime diplomacy offered in Chapter 1, as even unarmed paramilitaries represent sea-based force if they are used to threaten, harass or endanger other vessels and crews. But without the extensive armaments available to naval vessels, the tenor of the coercion is very different. Given a paucity of literature on this particular activity, it is worthwhile studying in more detail how and why maritime constabulary agencies might be used for coercive diplomacy, and what that means for international relations.

## The growth of paragunboat diplomacy

The reasons for the growth in maritime paramilitary diplomacy are multiple, from a desire to avoid broader conflict to a policy of demonstrating de facto sovereignty over disputed areas and a form of 'demilitarisation' of maritime disputes. At the same time, the increasing use of maritime paramilitaries as coercive diplomatic tools also brings risks, particularly the possibility that it lowers the barriers of entry for any confrontation. Precisely because the diplomatic ramifications will not be as great with a paramilitary as with a military force, the former may be encouraged to take more aggressive action and make more contentious deployments.

The difficulties in analysing this version of coercive maritime diplomacy become apparent when viewing the historical record. There are simply fewer examples of maritime paramilitaries being used to exert diplomatic pressure on rivals, largely because maritime paramilitaries are newer agencies in many countries than navies, but also because their capabilities are usually confined to regional or national operations (notwithstanding the global reach of the US Coast Guard) and hence have not traditionally been used for the distant gunboat diplomatic operations of the imperial era.

Nonetheless, there has been a growing incidence of maritime paramilitary confrontations over recent years, almost entirely in the Asia-Pacific region. Rather than deploying muscular, military forces to enforce claims to disputed maritime areas in the East and South China Seas, littoral states are instead favouring lightly armed paramilitary forces. The rapidly growing economies and more confident states of East Asia are able to invest in these coastguards and other forces as instruments to pursue contentious foreign policies.

Most significantly, a stand-off between China and the Philippines in April/May 2012 demonstrated both the vehemence with which both countries maintain their claims of sovereignty over the disputed Scarborough Shoal and the increasing use of maritime paramilitaries to support political goals and coerce neighbours. An initial altercation between the Philippine Navy flagship, BRP *Gregorio del Pilar*, and eight Chinese fishing vessels, led to the intervention of two China Marine Surveillance (CMS) vessels, an unarmed maritime law enforcement organisation. As the Philippine Navy prepared to arrest the Chinese fishermen, whom the navy claimed were illegally fishing, the CMS vessels positioned themselves between the *Gregorio del Pilar* and the fishing boats. The Philippine Navy vessel was replaced after two days by a Philippine Coast Guard vessel, although the Chinese presence was bolstered by a further paramilitary vessel. The original Chinese fishing boats slipped away, but the presence of the maritime paramilitary vessels continued for more than one month, with both sides keen to exercise their constabulary rights and coerce the other into submission. By the end of May 2012, more than one hundred Chinese fishing vessels were near the island group, as well as four Chinese paramilitary vessels, in a clear show of strength and attempt at non-military intimidation by Beijing.[2]

Given the multilateral and complex sovereignty disputes that lie at the heart of the South China Sea, the Southeast Asian waters have been the site of several

such incidents. In May 2011, Vietnam claimed that three vessels, identified by a video as being from China Marine Surveillance, deliberately harassed a vessel chartered by PetroVietnam (the state-owned oil and gas company of Vietnam) and cut its towed sonar array (a cable dragged behind the ship that uses sonar to detect objects or map territory).[3] Just two weeks later, Vietnam claimed that a Chinese civilian fishing vessel supported by two maritime paramilitary vessels attempted to cut another towed cable being used by a PetroVietnam seismic survey craft (China claimed it was an innocent accident and caused by Vietnamese vessels harassing the fishing craft).[4] Another incident occurred between China and the Philippines in March 2011, when a Philippine Department of Energy research vessel was allegedly harassed and forced to withdraw by two CMS vessels.[5] In June 2010, an unverified report from Japan's *Manichi Shimbun* suggested that the *Yuzheng*-311 and another Chinese fisheries-enforcement vessel had confronted an Indonesian naval patrol boat. Having been ordered to leave an area of the South China Sea, the *Yuzheng*-311 apparently refused and trained its guns on the Indonesian vessel, demanding the release of a recently detained Chinese fishing boat. No shots were fired and the Chinese trawler was released.[6]

Such events have even involved states from outside the region in disputes over perceived sovereignty violations, as with the USNS *Impeccable* incident in March 2009 when a US surveillance ship was harassed by five Chinese vessels, two of which were paramilitary.[7] That incident seemed to demonstrate the growing confidence of China in confronting a US vessel, but it also reflected the new trend of deploying paramilitary or civilian vessels in disputes.

Taken together, this string of incidents all have one thing in common: Chinese vessels have been involved. This has alarmed countries in the region to such an extent that even the US has noted the trend. In its 2012 annual report to Congress on China's military developments, the Pentagon noted China's 'continued willingness (particularly through the use of paramilitary maritime law enforcement assets) to assert Chinese claims'.[8] However, it is not just China that has been forthright in deploying maritime paramilitary or constabulary forces to bolster territorial claims: Japan's Coast Guard, Malaysia's Maritime Enforcement Agency and South Korea's Coast Guard have all been employed to enforce perceived sovereign rights over disputed waters, to a greater or lesser extent.

Do these events conform to this book's definition of coercive maritime diplomacy? Despite many of these vessels being lightly armed or unarmed, they still represent the use of sea-based force to coerce an opponent. The coercion is evident not just in the events themselves, but the symbolism that is attached to them: by cutting towed array sonars or harassing surveillance ships, the constabulary forces are not just aiming to prevent that particular process occurring at that time, but also expressing dismay about the exploitation of resources in disputed waters or surveillance near Chinese territorial waters more generally. Much like the seizure of the USS *Pueblo* in 1968 by North Korea, which aimed not only to land a propaganda coup through the ship's capture but also to dissuade further surveillance by US forces, these maritime paramilitary operations

aim to coerce other states or corporations acting on behalf of a state from continuing with a particular activity in the future.

Such paragunboat diplomatic events have become more frequent as these maritime paramilitary forces, which in Japan's case involves a vessel displacing more than 9,000 tonnes, larger than most destroyers, are expanding in size and mandate. This could be viewed as a positive commitment to the maintenance of law and order at sea in a region plagued by piracy and illicit maritime trafficking. It may also reflect a conciliatory attitude towards maritime disputes and an unwillingness to create diplomatic furores by using military forces to support claims. By using paramilitary forces, states can credibly claim to be pursuing a demilitarised policy at sea. This helps foster more measured diplomatic responses to crises.

But the expansion of maritime paramilitary forces and their continued deployment to disputed areas also reflects more destabilising trends. Many of these vessels still comprise an armed presence, if a less conspicuous one, in contested waters. Given the lower-calibre weaponry of such paramilitaries and the perception that the use of deadly force in pursuit of law and order is more legitimate than in the pursuit of politics, there is a lower threshold for violence. There is therefore a danger that, through the greater likelihood of small-scale events at sea due to the rise in paramilitary activity, a particular event could be used as an excuse to air grievances and trigger conflict. The heated rhetoric and open contemplation of military force by Chinese state-run media during the 2012 Scarborough Shoal stand-off has only highlighted this possibility.

## Growing paramilitary capabilities

Arguably, one of the reasons maritime paramilitary vessels have increasingly been used for diplomatic purposes has simply been the growing fleets available to the fast-developing nations in Asia. Yet, there is a chicken-and-egg conundrum to this development as well: has paragunboat diplomacy become more frequent because the fleets exist, or have the fleets come into existence to further paragunboat diplomatic goals? The answer is, naturally, that both statements are correct.

Although some paramilitaries have existed since just after the end of the Second World War, the growth and consolidation of most East Asian maritime law-enforcement agencies is relatively new.[9] This is to be expected in a developing region with plenty of land-bound security issues and a range of international land border disputes, where the development of maritime constabulary forces has necessarily assumed a low priority.

Nonetheless, three trends in particular have recently emerged. The first is a simple growth in size and sometimes in mandate of the paramilitary forces, notably in the economically most significant states of Japan, China and South Korea. The second is a centralisation of maritime constabulary roles into single paramilitary organisations, for example in China, Taiwan and Malaysia. The third is the creation of newly independent maritime paramilitary organisations in

countries where the navy will most likely retain the prime role in maritime security, as in Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia.

The most eminent and historic of all the constabulary maritime forces is the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG). The agency was founded in 1948 as the Maritime Safety Agency, but changed both name and mandate in 2000. By 2005 it had developed a fleet equivalent in tonnage to 60 per cent of China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) surface fleet.[10] Its largest vessels include three helicopter-carrying offshore patrol vessels, one *Shikishima*-class with a displacement of 9,350 tonnes and two *Mizuho*-class at 5,200 tonnes.[11] In comparison, the largest and most capable destroyers in Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Forces, the *Kongou*-class vessels, displace approximately 9,500 tonnes. Most destroyers are between 4,000 and 5,000 tonnes. In total, the Japanese Coast Guard maintains approximately 121 vessels capable of offshore patrolling, 234 smaller patrol craft, 63 surveillance craft and 37 hydrographic, tendering or training vessels.[12] In October 2001, the Coast Guard Law was revised to allow the outright use of force to prevent maritime intrusion. Now, the force's mandate extends far beyond the usual constabulary roles of ensuring safety at sea and preventing illegal fishing and smuggling, to include guarding territorial seas, patrolling disputed waters and countering suspected espionage vessels. In 2012, the mandate was extended again, in light of an incident in September 2010 when a Chinese fishing trawler rammed a JCG vessel, with a diplomatic furore arising out of the subsequent arrest of the trawler captain. The most recent changes include enabling the investigation of illegal entry and destruction of facilities on remote islands, including the disputed islands in the East China Sea.[13]

In China's case, there have historically been no fewer than five agencies with jurisdiction over various areas of maritime law enforcement. This is now in the process of change. In March 2013, the Chinese government announced that four of the five agencies would henceforth be unified under one bureaucratic structure, the State Oceanic Administration (the fifth, the Maritime Safety Administration, remains separate).[14]

The smallest of the four to be unified is the anti-smuggling maritime arm of the General Administration of Customs. It is unclear exactly how large the customs fleet is, with the best estimate being approximately 150 vessels, but it certainly retains a small number of armed patrol vessels that operate in harbours and ports to prevent smuggling.[15]

The equivalent of the coastguard, the Maritime Police, is also relatively small compared to the other maritime law-enforcement agencies. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Security, the Maritime Police is essentially the sea-based border unit of the People's Armed Police, an organisation that has developed rapidly since its inception in the early 1980s to allow for more effective suppression of perceived security threats. The Maritime Police, however, has lagged behind its parent body's evolution, and its fleet remains largely composed of small patrol boats that are often poorly maintained. Dominated by approximately one hundred Type-218 small patrol boats, its largest vessels include a *Pudong*-class cutter armed with a 37 mm gun and two former

Type-053 *Jianghu*-1-class frigates, fitted with dual 37 mm guns and two dual anti-aircraft machine guns.[16]

The Fisheries Law Enforcement Command previously operated under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture. It has until now had three regional headquarters in Yantai, Shanghai and Guangzhou, with responsibility for the Yellow Sea, East China Sea and South China Sea respectively. Its total fleet of approximately 135 hulls comprises just nine vessels larger than 1,000 tonnes, some former auxiliary ships within the PLAN, and more than 100 smaller patrol boats. It also retains a large fleet of riverine patrol craft. Its largest vessel, *Yuzheng*-88, is a former naval replenishment ship displacing 15,000 tonnes. Other large ships include the 2,500-tonne, helicopter-carrying *Yuzheng*-310, the fastest hull in the fisheries command fleet that made its maiden voyage around the disputed waters of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in November 2010, and the 4,450-tonne, helicopter-carrying *Yuzheng*-311, a former PLAN submarine salvage vessel that has conducted patrols in the disputed waters of the South China Sea. This fleet will be augmented by a further five 3,000-tonne vessels over the next five years.[17] Despite its mandate only covering the prevention of illegal fishing, some ships from the force are fitted with machine and anti-aircraft guns, and a fisheries enforcement vessel was among the five ships that confronted the USNS *Impeccable* in March 2009.

The services that have gained the most domestic political and financial attention recently are actually unarmed. Perhaps due to the fact that these services will not be viewed by other states as particularly threatening, they have seen substantial investment and expansion in recent years. The two unarmed agencies are China Marine Surveillance and the Maritime Safety Administration (the latter remains separate).

It is the China Marine Surveillance force that became the spearhead on Beijing's maritime constabulary spear. The agency was formed in 1998 and has always come under the auspices of the State Oceanic Administration (it is the only agency of the four to be restructured that will remain under its current bureaucratic administration). Ostensibly a survey-focused agency, in reality China Marine Surveillance has a law-enforcement role, as it has responsibility for environmental protection. In this guise, its vessels have undertaken patrols in the disputed waters of the East China Sea. Comprising perhaps 70 vessels, its largest asset is the *Haijian*-83, a 3,000-tonne, unarmed research ship. Speaking in October 2010, a State Oceanic Administration official claimed that 36 more vessels are to be added to the fleet in coming years, seven of 1,500 tonnes, 15 1,000-tonne ships and 14 600-tonne vessels.[18] The growth of the fleet is being undertaken with a clear goal of expanding China's de facto sovereignty over disputed waters at a period of heightened tensions.

The unification of these four agencies under one umbrella is a further sign of the growth in capabilities and mandate of China's law enforcement fleets. On the one hand, the creation of a single constabulary agency is positive for regional stability as it removes ambiguity over bureaucratic ownership and undermines inter-agency competition that could lead to rash deployments. On the other, it is a

clear sign, along with the creation of other bureaucratic bodies such as a leading small group on protecting maritime interests in 2012, that China is eager to further extend its control of its near-seas through the use of constabulary agencies.[19]

The Maritime Safety Administration, which comes under the Ministry of Transport and will not be restructured but will continue to operate as an individual agency, has responsibility for ensuring the safety of traffic. The MSA is also seeing substantial expansion, and now boasts a fleet of approximately 207 patrol boats.[20] The majority are small, even riverine, vessels, and only two are over 1,000 tonnes.[21] By and large, the agency concentrates on safety and security at sea, including search and rescue, an area that has received significant attention since the *Dashun* disaster in November 1999 that killed over 280 civilians. Nonetheless, it also counts the surveillance of ships and offshore installations among its tasks, which adds a patrol function to its responsibilities.

The other major Northeast Asian maritime paramilitary organisation is South Korea's coastguard. Founded in 1953, the service was for several decades a part of the national police service, but became independent in 1996. It maintains a fleet of more than 70 patrol craft, with approximately 15 over 1,000 tonnes.[22] The largest patrol ship, the *Sambong-ho*, displaces 5,000 tonnes but is lightly armed, with two 20 mm guns. The coastguard has as one of its primary goals the maintenance of maritime sovereignty. Five new patrol ships, including an offshore patrol ship of 3,000 tonnes, were ordered from Hyundai in July 2009, for delivery from 2012.[23]

Other maritime paramilitaries in East Asia tend to be recent constructions. Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration was founded in 2000, combining customs, marine police and coastguard organisations into one service represented at cabinet level. It has a fleet of approximately 150 patrol craft, the largest being two *Ho Hsing*-class ships displacing 1,800 tonnes and carrying two 12.7 mm machine guns. An air arm was created in 2001. Another notable recent addition to maritime paramilitaries is the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency. The agency was officially launched in March 2006, bringing together elements of the navy, police, fisheries, customs and immigration departments. It maintains a fleet of more than 100 patrol craft, although with only a few large offshore patrol craft transferred from the navy at the agency's inception. The largest vessel in the fleet is the *Langkawi*-class helicopter-carrying offshore patrol vessel, at 1,300 tonnes with a 57 mm gun on board.

Finally, there are a number of small, recently formed maritime paramilitaries that are not yet of sufficient size or domestic importance to be used as foreign-policy tools. Vietnam's Marine Police was founded in 1998, and only became independent of the military in 2008. A small service, with perhaps just 1,000 employees, the Marine Police was renamed the Coast Guard in October 2013, but still pales in relation to the Vietnamese People's Navy. The Philippines Coast Guard, formed in 1967 and separated from the navy in 1998, maintains a small fleet of armed patrol boats, with no real ocean-going capacity. Thailand formed its coastguard in 2008, but it remains short of manpower and assets. Indonesia has yet to establish an independent coastguard, although the possibility was discussed at cabinet level in 2010.

The growth in size and number of these maritime paramilitaries has been matched by an expansion in their deployment. These services are not just used for ensuring law and order at sea, or maintaining maritime safety, but also for pursuing foreign-policy goals and reinforcing claims of sovereignty.

The Japanese Coast Guard now has a self-avowed goal of maintaining sovereignty over disputed islands such as the East China Sea islands known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China, as well as monitoring the movements of surveillance and other vessels of foreign navies. It has even funded the construction of a light beacon on Okinotorishima, a disputed islet in the Pacific Ocean that Beijing claims is an uninhabitable rock rather than a permanent habitable feature, and therefore unable to be used for claims to an expanded exclusive economic zone. The beacon began operation under Japanese Coast Guard supervision in 2007.

Similarly, Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration maintains a deployment of more than one hundred personnel on Itu Aba, the largest of the disputed Spratly Islands and the only feature occupied by Taiwanese personnel. The coastguard presence replaced a detachment of marines in 2000. This deployment could thus be viewed as a demilitarisation of the Spratly Island dispute without a weakening of Taiwan's claims or presence in the islands. Following an incident in March 2012, when a Vietnamese naval vessel entered the waters around Itu Aba, Taiwan has begun to increase the muscularity of its CGA presence.[24] (Since 2000, Taiwan has also built a 1,150 m runway that dominates the entire islet). The coastguard has also escorted protesters sailing to the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, with 12 vessels escorting a single protest boat in September 2010 at the height of the Sino-Japanese spat.[25]

South Korea's coastguard has been stationed on the disputed Dokdo islands (known as Takeshima in Japan) since 1954, and regularly conducts patrols near the two islets. The decision to base coastguard forces on the islands came a year after a Japanese Maritime Safety Agency patrol boat was fired upon by South Korean forces. Periodic tensions arise around the islands and lead to heightened patrols: in 2006, South Korea deployed 18 coastguard vessels to the islets and the Japanese Coast Guard sent two vessels as an escort for a surveillance vessel to the disputed waters.[26]

China's Coast Guard and related agencies also regularly patrol the disputed waters of the East and South China Seas. Vessels from these agencies have been involved in international quarrels, with the harassment of the USNS *Impeccable* in 2009 the most significant incident. This event, which appeared to have been premeditated and to have involved coordination across agencies, with both a fisheries-enforcement and China Marine Surveillance vessel as well as a PLA Navy intelligence vessel, suggests that the mandate of enforcing fishery law is at the least interpreted very broadly. But more than that, the *Impeccable* incident is perhaps the clearest example of these civilian agencies as proxies for what would traditionally have been military activity aiming to coerce opponents into a policy change. The event was significant not only for the harassment of a single vessel, but the wider symbolism, indicating that China is irritated by the US's continued

surveillance just outside its territorial waters. The *Impeccable* incident was therefore designed to discourage not just that one vessel, but all such activity. Through this coercion, even with unarmed vessels, China was practising a form of paragunboat diplomacy.

## Demilitarisation of maritime disputes

This expansion in the mandates of the maritime paramilitaries beyond traditional coastguard activities such as search and rescue, marine safety and interdiction of smuggling seems to give the agencies a status more akin to auxiliary navies, albeit lightly armed or unarmed ones.

This is not unique to East Asia: the US Coast Guard is a fully fledged military service under the Department for Homeland Security and in wartime reports to the Secretary of the Navy, and many other coastguards serve as auxiliary navies in wartime. Nevertheless, the proliferation of maritime paramilitaries with responsibility for defending national sovereignty is significant for stability in East Asia given the range of maritime disputes in the region.

Despite their expansion in size, these maritime paramilitaries are not well armed. The *Shikishima* maintains some of the heaviest armaments in the region, with two 35 mm guns capable of firing over 1,000 rounds per minute, but most vessels will be fitted with a single machine gun or 20 mm cannon. This makes these forces capable of engaging similarly weakly armed targets, as was demonstrated in December 2001 when the Japanese Coast Guard sank a North Korean trawler. Although the vessel appeared to be civilian in nature, it was apparently armed, leading to a six-hour firefight that included the use of rocket-propelled grenades by the North Koreans. The trawler sank after an explosion on board.[27] But there is little possibility that the constabulary forces will be able to engage more heavily armed naval vessels: the June 2010 episode between China's FLEC vessel and an Indonesian naval patrol boat was only possible given the small size and light armament of the Indonesian vessel, while the *Impeccable* incident was relatively low risk as the surveillance ship is unarmed and the knowledge of strict rules of engagement on any US Navy vessels that might come to its aid made armed confrontation highly unlikely.

This lack of armaments helps explain one of the primary reasons for the expansion in the sizes and occasionally the mandates of such forces. By relying on civilian agencies, albeit sometimes armed, to enforce law and order on the seas and maintain claims of sovereignty to disputed maritime areas, states are pursuing a far less confrontational path than they might. As an example, consider the sinking of the Taiwanese trawler *Lien Ho* by the Japanese Coast Guard in 2008, which lead to a diplomatic furore and mutual recall of representatives. While a serious, if temporary, diplomatic rift occurred as a result of the sinking, had the incident involved a Maritime Self-Defence Forces vessel the outcry would no doubt have been much greater. Similarly, the use of white-painted Japanese Coast Guard, Korean Coast Guard or Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency vessels in the arrest of fishermen or patrolling of disputed waters appears

less antagonistic than if these activities were undertaken by grey-painted naval vessels.

The *Impeccable* incident is another case in point: the United States sent a destroyer to support the *Impeccable* after the harassment, but had the Sealift Command surveillance vessel been harassed by armed People's Liberation Army Navy ships, such as frigates and destroyers, Washington's reaction might have been more extreme. The April 2001 incident in which a US EP-3E signals-intelligence aircraft was grounded following a collision with a People's Liberation Army Air Force fighter offers an example of the tension that can arise when military assets literally bump into each other.

The use of paramilitaries is thus a way to demilitarise potentially fraught disagreements and pursue foreign policies resolutely but without recourse to military forces. Rather than risk the international and public opprobrium that might arise from a military deployment to disputed areas or a clumsy military response to a perceived slight, paramilitaries and constabulary forces allow for a more measured reaction. This is particularly important for Japan, where constitutional restrictions effectively prevent the deployment of military forces for anything other than self-defence.

At the same time, maritime paramilitaries may be preferred over military forces as their actions are not as escalatory. Given their limited armaments, they are unlikely to escalate skirmishes into significant sea battles and will very rarely engage in a force-on-force clash with each other or with naval vessels. In fact, there are simply fewer choices for the graduated escalation in violence that can be used by naval vessels. Constabulary or paramilitary vessels can move from rhetoric to aggressive manoeuvring, warning shots with machine guns, fire directed at the hull/engine block and finally ramming. In comparison to a naval vessel, however, which can escalate aggression through the smaller guns to the larger guns and even missiles that are capable of sinking a vessel with one round, there are far fewer options for violence, both controlled and unlimited, available to paramilitary forces.

These restricted options, and a culture that is more focused on law enforcement than the efficient waging of violence, make it unlikely that even the most aggressive of constabulary forces will engage in an extensive exchange of fire with either fishermen or other maritime paramilitary forces. The possibility exists, however improbable, that one of the larger constabulary vessels could sink a smaller opponent, but on the high seas, where larger ships are necessary to travel the longer distances and patrol for days on end, the armaments available are simply too limited to easily sink another paramilitary ship while travelling. The crew members might be at risk at any one point if small arms are used, but it is highly improbable that a large Japanese Coast Guard vessel will be sunk by a CMS ship, with all 40 crew members going down with her.

There have been rare occasions when a constabulary force has felt sufficiently emboldened to confront a navy, but even then this is largely owing to knowledge that the rules of engagement in most navies will prevent a rapid escalation of force against unarmed ships. The UK–Iceland Cod Wars are an excellent

example of this. In a bid to prevent the expansion of Iceland's territorial claims and fishing rights, the Royal Navy was deployed to escort UK trawlers in the North Sea on three separate occasions in 1958, 1972 and 1975–76. The actions of the Icelandic Coast Guard were a good example of paragunboat diplomacy, as they aimed to both protect Icelandic trawlers and cut the nets of British trawlers to discourage UK fishermen from operating in its claimed economic zone. The British response to this and a series of incidents in which British trawlers rammed Icelandic Coast Guard ships, was to use Royal Navy vessels to try and intimidate the Icelanders through their sheer presence. In a classic case of gunboat diplomacy, at its peak 22 Royal Navy frigates were deployed to protect British trawlers, although a maximum of nine would be in the area of operations at any one time. But the result was not what London would have liked: the international media portrayed the Royal Navy as a bullying force attempting to cow the smaller, less-well-armed Icelandic force. The use of a coastguard, albeit the only option available to Iceland, meant no shots were ever fired by the British, perhaps aware of the negative press this would generate. The Cod Wars were, effectively, a defeat for the British, and a demonstration of how constabulary forces can be useful tools to pursue political goals without resorting to conflict.[28]

## De facto sovereignty

The use of unarmed or lightly armed maritime forces has other benefits as well for states engaging in such activities.

One further reason for the preference for constabulary forces rather than military forces is the fact that such forces can demonstrate that a de facto sovereignty exists over a disputed area. An analogy is useful: if there exists a village in a disputed land border area, it is in the interests of one of the disputants to police that village. Doing so suggests the assumption of responsibility for those citizens, the ability to collect tax from them and an occupation of the land that will later only further strengthen the claim that the land is owned and managed by that state. Similarly, in disputed waters the expansion in the patrols of maritime constabulary forces can be an attempt to suggest that de facto sovereignty exists over the area. It shows that the state is going to the trouble of policing the waters, as well as issuing licences for fishermen to exploit the fish stocks (or, conversely, issuing fishing moratoria as China has done annually in areas of the South China Sea since 1999) and encouraging the exploration and exploitation of undersea resources by companies commissioned by the state.

A subsidiary benefit is that these forces are able actively to coerce fishermen and other state's vessels away from the area, thereby reinforcing the first state's claim of sovereignty. Of course, in the village analogy such a strategy can only be undertaken if the other disputant does not also send its constabulary forces. At sea, however, it is possible for various constabulary forces to be in operation at the same time. Section 3 of Part II of the UN's Convention of the Law on the Sea (UNCLOS), the most comprehensive and universal legal regime on conduct at sea, states that even military vessels are able to pass though territorial waters

provided they are doing so as innocent passage.[29] Thus, various constabulary forces can operate in the same area, and only when they start to harass each other or the fishing vessels of another state will those claiming sovereignty be able to object legally.

The presence of these constabulary forces therefore has several goals. First, by clearly staking a stronger claim to a disputed area of sea and patrolling the area more regularly and forcefully, a disputant aims to reinforce a claim of sovereignty, with the simple idea that de facto policing of a territory will support a de jure claim. Legally, this may be an attempt to claim sovereignty on the basis of 'effective occupation' or on a claim of historic title (the possession and/or use of an ancient title to territory). This legal goal also helps partially explain the competition for islands in the South China Sea that saw naval clashes in 1974 and 1988 between China and Vietnam, and tension between China and the Philippines in 1995 as Beijing expanded the number of islands occupied by its forces. Second, and conversely, the presence of constabulary forces is aimed at weakening the claims of others: the very presence of these constabulary forces demonstrates that others are unable to or do not use these waters or occupy the islands within them. Finally, and perhaps more symbolically, the presence of constabulary forces acts as a continuous latent threat to the constabulary forces and fishing vessels of other states, and hence an attempt to coerce other states to refrain from similar patrols.

It should be noted that despite these gunboat diplomatic characteristics of the use of constabulary forces in disputed waters, some diplomatic effects from maritime incidents are not intentionally paragunboat diplomatic. Most famously, in September 2010, the captain of a Chinese trawler that had been fishing in disputed waters near the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, claimed by Japan, China and Taiwan, was detained by the Japanese Coast Guard after a collision between their vessels.[30] The subsequent weeks saw increasing tension between China and Japan and accusations from Tokyo that an unannounced, official embargo of rare earth metal exports to Japan had been placed by Beijing. While the effects of the arrest were certainly in the realm of diplomacy, the specific aims of this incident were not political, but constabulary. While the JCG presence and patrols near the disputed islands are in general a form of paragunboat diplomacy through enforcing de facto sovereignty, this particular event had unintended diplomatic consequences that were unrelated to the paragunboat diplomatic effects.

## Barriers to entry

The use of maritime paramilitaries therefore has various benefits for participating states, from allowing for a restrained assertion of sovereignty in disputed waters to being more likely to avoid escalation. However, it also bring risks. The growth in the size of paramilitary fleets, and the vessels within them, means that they can patrol further from the coast and for longer periods, making it more possible for them to assert their claims of sovereignty in distant waters on a more regular basis. This obviously increases the opportunities for confrontation in the

area of contention. In addition, the increased size of the vessels makes them more threatening to smaller rival vessels or fishing boats, cutting an imposing presence on the horizon.

More theoretically, the use of paramilitaries may also lower the barriers to entry into confrontation. The concept of barriers to entry, which is one not often applied in strategy or diplomatic studies, emanates from economics. Simply defined, in the microeconomic realm it refers to initial costs or obstacles to a notional company entering into an industry. Such costs do not need to be borne by those already in the industry, as they have already passed those hurdles. Hence, there are high barriers to entry in the airline industry, because aircraft are so expensive, the technological and piloting expertise needed takes years to perfect and international regulation is stringent.

In conflict, the barriers to entry could be seen as the high costs of procuring warfighting equipment, the years needed to learn how to use such equipment efficiently, international or cultural norms against the use of violence, future opportunity costs in any relationship affected by the conflict and the possibility of retaliatory action from an opponent should conflict be waged. Thus, Luxembourg will be highly unlikely to wage war against Germany (above and beyond any political issues) because it is unable to afford the equipment necessary, it does not currently have the experience and training to manage effectively the large-scale armed forces needed to invade Germany, there is a strong public antipathy to the use of violence as a political tool, severe harm would be made to its relationship with Germany (its main trading partner), and the Luxembourgian government will rightly be concerned that the German retaliation would be extremely punitive.

In the kind of paragunboat diplomacy under discussion here, these barriers of entry into some form of confrontation are reduced. Constabulary vessels are cheaper to purchase and easier to handle, as they involve far fewer complex armaments, and hence lack the complications of weapons storage and handling. There is also less of an international norm against the use of constabulary forces in minor altercations in support of law enforcement than the use of naval forces. A notable example of naval forces being used for law enforcement with strong international backing is currently under way in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden with multinational counter-piracy operations, while the Royal Navy has a rotating presence in the Caribbean to aid counter-narcotics operations. However, such transnational criminal activity is both violent and harmful to a wide range of actors and hence it is possible to garner wide international support for the use of limited naval force. When it comes to less well-armed or transnational threats to good order, such as illegal fishing, the use of naval vessels is seen as disproportionate to the threat faced.

There are also likely to be fewer ramifications in bilateral relations. It is impossible to prove a counterfactual, but it can be stated with some confidence that while China's relationships with fellow East Asian states have suffered at times from its use of paramilitaries, and the September 2010 Japan Coast Guard incident was an excellent illustration of how diplomacy can be affected by these

episodes, the forceful use of naval vessels in such a situation would cause greater concern and disrupt relations to a much more significant extent.

It is arguable, for example, that while the sinking of a Taiwanese trawler by a Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force vessel would cause uproar, it would also be unlikely to occur, as naval vessels act with more restraint and more restrictive rules of engagement than paramilitary forces. Precisely because the diplomatic ramifications will not be as great with a paramilitary as with a military force, the former may be encouraged to take more aggressive action and make more contentious deployments. Following the experience of the naval interception of the USNS *Bowditch* in 2001 and 2002, when the People's Liberation Army Navy sent a Jianghu III-class frigate to confront the US hydrographic survey ship and elicited a stern diplomatic response from Washington, it is difficult to conceive that the Chinese would have sent a frigate to challenge the USNS *Impeccable*, while a paramilitary squadron was more acceptable.

Given the improbability that relations will be severely disrupted, there is therefore less of a fear that retaliation following any event will be punitive. There is also less concern that any immediate retaliation from other constabulary force will be substantial given the lack of graduated violence available to paramilitary vessels.

All of these factors lower the barriers to entry to confrontation with the use of maritime paramilitaries in comparison with the barriers to entry to confrontation with the use of naval forces. By reducing the initial costs, circumventing international normative opprobrium, avoiding significant rifts in relations and evading conflict, maritime paramilitaries are likely to be used more frequently and more aggressively than naval vessels. This could be seen as a positive development, as growing international norms against the use of violence lessen the incidence of naval coercion and conflict. However, it obviously also raises the probability that states will use these forces assertively, emboldened by the relative impunity with which they can be operated.

## The future of paragunboat diplomacy

There are other, more regional, reasons for the use of constabulary forces for diplomatic reasons in East Asia, and in particular in the South China Sea. The Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea is an agreement that was drawn up between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China in 2002 in a bid to ease tensions in the disputed waters of Southeast Asia. It was not legally binding, but certainly reflected an attempt to develop regional norms over the disputed region. That document encouraged signatories to 'undertake to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force'.[31] As suggested here, constabulary or paramilitary forces are still an example of sea-based force, and hence certainly violate the letter of the agreement, but states could argue that the intention of article 4 of the Declaration was to prevent naval forces being used to coerce other states.

This raises an interesting question: is the current spate of paragunboat diplomacy specific to the current, parochial disputes in East Asia, and hence the trend will wither if these disputes are ever resolved, or might the benefits of paragunboat diplomacy encourage other states to engage in the same process?

Certainly, the development of paragunboat diplomacy to the extent that it has occurred in the twenty-first century appears to be symptomatic of the era and area in which it occurs. Such a practice would seem to be unfeasible in previous ages as there were few international norms against the use of military force to further national interests. There was therefore little reason to use maritime paramilitary forces instead of naval forces, and doing so would likely hinder any state that found itself within the European strategic competition that characterised that period.

Nonetheless, paramilitary vessels have been used in previous eras to further state interests. Perhaps the most famous example is the preface to the uniquely named War of Jenkins' Ear. That particular conflict, which in reality was simply the continued, decades-long confrontation between England (and latterly the United Kingdom) and Spain for influence in Europe and access to the lucrative trade routes of Latin America, began when a Spanish coastguard vessel, *La Isabela*, boarded a British brig off the coast of then-Spanish Florida in 1731. Following the boarding, the captain of *La Isabela*, Julio León Fandiño, severed the ear of the British captain, Robert Jenkins. What followed was a series of diplomatic demarches and, just as they were all proving unsuccessful, an emotive appearance of Jenkins (with his severed ear) in the British parliament in 1738 that contributed to the outbreak of conflict in 1739 and finally the gradual subsuming of this confrontation into the Europe-wide War of the Austrian Succession.[32]

*La Isabela* was a vessel of the *guarda-costa*, a semi-official force licensed by the Spanish government to enforce the 1713 agreement (known as the *asiento*) that allowed British vessels limited access to the lucrative slave trade in Spanish territories in the Americas. While they had Spanish governmental backing, in reality such ships were privateers licensed to enforce Spanish rights over shipping and plunder those foreign vessels that were found transgressing these rights. As such, Madrid was using a proxy or maritime paramilitary not only to enforce a trade agreement, but to use punitive measures to discourage any transgression of the agreement. Although there is no evidence that Jenkins' ear was severed owing to a direct order from Spain to send a message, the use of such privateers often involved such brutality, and hence it was an accepted and even desirable factor that would discourage further trade misdemeanours. As such, the licensing of *La Isabela*, and her subsequent actions, were effectively a form of coercion and hence paragunboat diplomacy. This is why their actions could lead to diplomatic difficulties and even warfare, particularly because such semi-official vessels were difficult to control.

Privateering, which involved private vessels authorised by letters of marque to attack foreign shipping, was actually used relatively frequently in the early years of imperial Europe as they were a low-cost way for states to engage in

*guerres de course* (or commerce raiding). They offered the privateering state the opportunity to disrupt a rival's trade, a level of deniability (these were, after all, not naval vessels doing the plundering) and the ability to encourage by proxy other states and their companies to abandon trade routes (through the obvious coercion the privateers provided). All this was gained without the prohibitive expense of a standing navy, a major barrier to entry of naval warfare. Privateering was at times essentially another form of paragunboat diplomacy, as although the privateers themselves may only have had financial incentives, the motivations for the state authorising such activity were certainly political as well as economic, and at times coercive. As operations short of war using sea-based power to coerce rivals through compellence, some episodes of privateering that aimed to damage another nation's trade and therefore affect its policies are a clear example of paragunboat diplomacy.[33]

The concept of paragunboat diplomacy is therefore not confined to the twenty-first century, and as the example of privateering suggests, neither is it specific to the Asia-Pacific region. In fact, a further example should highlight that such events still occur today outside East Asia, even among developed and friendly countries. In a bizarre continuation of the historical Spanish–British rivalry described above, in May 2012, the Gibraltarian police, supported by the Royal Navy, were involved in a three-hour stand-off with the Spanish Civil Guard in the waters off the British overseas territory. The cause of the spat was the presence of Spanish fishing boats in Gibraltarian waters: although Madrid accepts that it ceded sovereignty of Gibraltar in the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, it claims this was merely to the rock itself, not the waters surrounding it. A 1999 Spanish–UK agreement to allow Spanish fishing rights in Gibraltarian waters was rejected by the Gibraltarian government as unconstitutional. Since then, infrequent quarrels between the paramilitary forces of both sides have occurred, as Spain has used its maritime paramilitary vessels ostensibly to protect illegal fishing vessels, but at the same time overtly to demonstrate a claim to sovereignty in the waters around Gibraltar. The May 2012 incident was only the latest in paramilitary spats, but was certainly the most bellicose thus far, involving a Guardia Civil helicopter and a small Royal Navy presence. This lead Fabian Picardo, head of the Gibraltarian government, to accuse Spain of exactly the kind of paragunboat diplomacy described above. In response to the stand-off, Picardo claimed that the event was an 'obviously carefully premeditated challenge to our indisputable sovereignty' and that Spain was 'trying to advance their position out at sea as if in the 18th century'.[34]

These incidents, which are highly similar to those in the South and East China Seas as they represent an attempt by Spain to enforce de facto sovereignty over the waters, demonstrate that such paragunboat diplomacy is not confined to East Asian waters. It is still likely that the Asia-Pacific will be the region most affected by paragunboat diplomacy for the foreseeable future, owing to a combination of hotly contested maritime disputes and national policies aiming to avoid more kinetic conflict. Given the limited range of most paramilitary or constabulary forces, such tactics are most likely to be used against neighbours.

Nonetheless, paragunboat diplomacy is a method that could be utilised by a range of countries in the wide variety of maritime disputes that exist today. Given growing international norms against the use of violence to pursue state policy and the low costs of paragunboat diplomacy, it is arguable that the tactics will be an increasingly popular way to coerce rivals.

## Notes

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# 3 Categories and properties of maritime diplomacy

> Diplomacy not backed by strength will always be ineffectual at best, dangerous at worst.
>
> Former US Secretary of State George Schultz[1]

The examples sprinkled through the previous chapters suggest that maritime diplomacy is an activity still used with alacrity by actors for the benefit of their organisations or populations. Maritime diplomacy, though, is not just useful for policy makers to reach certain goals in international relations which they believe necessary for their constituents' well-being or safety. It is also useful for analysts and academics to gauge trends in international relations and global security.

Not only does maritime diplomacy reflect alliances and rivalries in the international system and therefore any changes that may be occurring in the international order (as suggested by, for example, the US naval visits to Vietnam in recent years), but it is also an excellent gauge for the existence and severity of international tension. In this way, maritime diplomacy can resemble or occur in conjunction with an arms race, whereby a rapid, competitive procurement of military equipment suggests underlying mistrust

Coercive maritime diplomacy is essentially a demonstration of the intent and/or capabilities of an actor in a dispute, disagreement or political dialogue. The intensity of the diplomacy, the assets used and the threats or statements issued at the time are all excellent signs of the importance of an issue to that actor and the lengths to which they will go to protect these interests. It is, then, not just a preventive tool at times, but also a particularly useful predictive tool for bystanders.

Thus, the years preceding the First World War were peppered with numerous examples of gunboat diplomatic incidents, most infamously the voyage of the German gunboat SMS *Panther* to the Moroccan port of Agadir in 1911. The rise of Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was clearly indicated by the Ganghwa incident and treaty of 1876 and a series of subsequent maritime diplomatic incidents and conflicts. The arrival of a Russian fleet off the coast of Port Arthur (now Lüshun) in 1897, a year prior to the cession of the port and the surrounding Liaodong peninsula by China, was indicative of rising tension in Northeast Asia and presaged the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–05.

The use of maritime diplomacy as a predictive tool is not as straightforward as these examples would suggest, however. Often, the predictive and preventive aspects of diplomacy will counteract each other. The use of coercive maritime diplomacy is almost always an attempt to reach one's diplomatic goals without resorting to war, and hence an incidence of maritime diplomacy will not suggest a slide into conflict, even if it does reflect a more fractious international climate. The sailing of the USS *Independence* carrier battle group to Taiwan in March 1996 demonstrated the heightened cross-strait tension at the time, but was intended to reduce tensions rather than raise them.

Similarly, some maritime diplomatic incidents may well be reactive. The naval blockade instituted around Cuba at the height of the missile crisis in 1962 was not a premeditated move to coerce Cuba, but purely a reactive one to the discovery of Soviet missiles on the island. In these cases, the diplomacy has not preceded the tension, but has occurred as a response to it.

The fact that maritime diplomacy does not always indicate a slide into war does not mean that the activity is not a useful analytical, and often predictive, tool. It simply suggests that a more in-depth investigation of the characteristics of any particular event may be necessary to enable a more clear-sighted view of its importance. Understanding the characteristics of any specific event and categorising maritime diplomacy may then lead to the development of an analytical tool of great utility for international relations practitioners and experts.

## Cable's categories

As might be expected, James Cable in his extensive study of gunboat diplomacy attempted to create a comprehensive categorisation in order to better analyse the activity.

Cable suggested that four categories existed: definitive, purposeful, catalytic and expressive. The former referred to those incidents where the deployment of force is sufficient to ensure victory should conflict ensue, and hence the only options left for the victim are acquiescence or defeat. In such circumstances, a fait accompli is presented to the recipient and the outcome is rarely in doubt. Purposeful force is used to describe those gunboat diplomatic incidents that seek to change another's policy, and hence allows the addressee of the diplomacy greater choice than definitive diplomacy. Catalytic events were those that began with little clarity on the intended outcome or likely trajectory of the diplomacy. Catalytic force is used when 'a situation arises pregnant with a formless menace or offering obscure opportunities', and a naval task force or flotilla is deployed to profit from it, prevent injury or protect interests and citizens.[2] Finally, expressive gunboat diplomacy is the use of limited naval force 'to emphasise attitudes, to lend verisimilitude to otherwise unconvincing statements, or to provide an outlet for emotion'.[3] It is, in other words, the sending of messages with navies.

These categories are elegant, but they are also confused. It is unclear, for instance, that definitive force need be diplomatic at all. The prime example used by Cable to illustrate this form of gunboat diplomacy was the *Altmark* incident

of 1940. The *Altmark* was a German tanker transporting nearly 300 captured British merchant seamen back to Germany through neutral Norwegian waters. At the behest of the British government, Norwegian vessels inspected the *Altmark* for the prisoners, but only in a cursory fashion and after discovering nothing provided escort to the tanker. The British government, unwilling to see so many prisoners of war slip into Germany, deployed two destroyers to intercept the cargo. After a prolonged stand-off, HMS *Cossack* informed the Norwegian flotilla that had gathered that it intended to board the *Altmark*, and facing the technological superiority of the Royal Navy, the Norwegians acquiesced. Certainly, this was the use of limited naval force for a definite objective, namely the liberation of 299 prisoners of war, and it occurred in a very sensitive diplomatic context, involving an avowedly neutral nation caught between two belligerent states. But it did not appear to be diplomatic itself: it was a tactical operation that was intended to avoid affecting international relations or diplomacy in any way.

Equally, these categories appear to conflate the ends of a particular event with the means. Definitive force is characterised by the certainty that the operation will be successful, according to Cable, whereas purposeful force appears to have a clear political objective and catalytic force is merely an ambiguous deployment of force in a situation that may call for it. It is difficult to disentangle the various aspects of the categories Cable offered, and hence their utility as definitions that aid analysis may be somewhat lacking. As Edward Luttwak has noted, these categories 'intermingle functional and intensity criteria'.[4]

## Means not ends

The goal of categorising, and thereby classifying, maritime diplomatic incidents is a valid one: it would allow for clearer analysis of any particular event. This would help in ascertaining whether a maritime diplomatic incident was reflective of wider trends in international relations or order. It would also provide a more effective way to analyse whether any particular event is indicative of a deteriorating security environment and thus can help deduce whether policy action might be beneficial.

However, it is unclear whether maritime diplomatic events can, in fact, be so neatly classified into discrete categories beyond those very basic groupings described in Chapter 1. Those classifications focused on the effects desired from any maritime diplomacy, suggesting a spectrum from support, through influence to deterrence and compellence, defining in turn the categories of co-operative, persuasive and coercive forms of maritime diplomacy.

Beyond these categories, each maritime diplomatic event appears to be so unique as to avoid simple classification. What is possible, though, and what would help in the analysis of such events and their reflection on international security, is to study maritime diplomacy according to alternative spectra that go beyond merely the objective. The properties of any particular event can help discern the motivations behind it and the intention as to the future.

For example, as well as the ends the means are often key to understanding the intent behind a maritime diplomatic incident, as they can demonstrate the import of an issue to a country and thus the likely trajectory of its policy in certain circumstances.

Here, the key factor is likely to lie in the type of force used by any particular actor, and whether or not it is, in the euphemistic language often employed by militaries, kinetic. The distinction between kinetic and non-kinetic operations is at times vague: the former are generally regarded to be those operations involving the use of active force to achieve their goals, whereas the latter may well be the deployment of a military for peacebuilding operations or 'winning hearts and minds' through reconstruction. This is not the same as the distinction between lethal and non-lethal operations, as kinetic operations can easily be non-lethal should no one be killed. Similarly, it is also distinguished from the idea of violent and non-violent events, as even non-violent diplomacy can involve the testing of a missile or the firing of a gun in warning.

The term kinetic is somewhat misleading: kinetic energy is simply that needed to accelerate or decelerate a body to a certain velocity. Given that maritime forces are necessarily mobile, all operations will involve some kinetic energy to reach their destination, and usually some mechanical kinetic energy to cruise, patrol or otherwise move around an area, even before any shots are fired.

Nonetheless, it is a useful, if modern, usage of the term for our purposes here as it indicates a level of commitment to any particular diplomatic event. The kinetic or non-kinetic nature of any particular incident would signal to any adversary or ally the importance in which the protagonist holds the objective at stake. The use of lethal force, whether it be in a blockade, the capture of a territory or the prevention of an adversary's movement, would clearly demonstrate the willingness to kill (and therefore a presumed willingness to kill further) for whatever is at stake. Conversely, a lack of weaponry could easily suggest either a lack of resolve to reach a certain outcome or a desire to prevent an escalatory antagonism and hence a willingness to negotiate over any dispute.

The spectrum of kinetic effect that can be delivered by maritime forces is broad, ranging from aggressive manoeuvres in an unarmed boat, to warning shots across the bow, missile tests, aircraft sorties and buzzes and finally targeted violence. Not all kinetic effect must be coercive. Indeed, a live-fire exercise with an ally uses kinetic weapons, but may be undertaken purely to demonstrate one's resolve and support. Similarly, non-kinetic events can be coercive: as mentioned previously, the success or otherwise of a coercive maritime diplomatic event is often contingent upon the perception of the victim, and that can be manipulated through the sheer presence of a naval or constabulary vessel.

The level of kinetic weaponry used is therefore not simply a description of the coercive, persuasive or co-operative objectives, but more a reflection of the level of intent of the assailant. Take, for example, the perceived assertiveness of China's maritime forces in its near-abroad since the late 2000s. The vast majority of incidents of coercion by China have involved, first and foremost, its lightly

armed or unarmed law enforcement vessels, whether from the Fisheries Law Enforcement Command or China Marine Surveillance.[5] The method used, often of simply presence or at times action such as cable-cutting or aggressive manoeuvres, is non-kinetic but seen as threatening. In part, this is owing to the implicit presence of the formidable South Sea Fleet of the People's Liberation Army Navy, but during the episodes themselves the PLAN are usually absent. By using such vessels and non-kinetic methods, China is essentially signalling its intent to protect its perceived sovereignty over disputed islands in the South and East China Seas, but also its desire to avoid an unnecessary conflict.

It is not always easy to gauge the level of kinetic effect intended in any particular instance of maritime diplomacy. Given the tactical flexibility of naval vessels, it is feasible for a particular ship to escalate or de-escalate through its kinetic options, according to the progress of the incident itself. Nonetheless, most commanders and captains will have orders to follow and hence will attempt to stay within levels of violence acceptable to their political masters.

Thus, the level of kinetic effect delivered, which in itself takes into account other factors such as the lethality of the weaponry and the intentionality of targeting to strike an opponent, can be a useful guide to the intentions of actors engaged in maritime diplomacy. It can also, therefore, inform the analyst as to the likelihood or otherwise of further violence over the issue at hand, and hence act as a bellwether for tension in a particular dispute or region.

## Medium and the message

It is not just in the force delivered itself, but in the messaging around it that the intent behind any maritime diplomacy may be laid bare. The manner in which any message behind the diplomacy – and let us remember that all maritime diplomacy is essentially signalling of intent and/or capabilities – is delivered can speak volumes as to the position held by the protagonists involved.

There are two areas of interest here: the medium and the message. For the latter, it is possible for the message to be delivered along a spectrum of explicitness, ranging from the lack of a message at all, through to implicit messaging within another message through to direct and explicit messaging that outlines a nation's goals, desires, capabilities and threats.

The example of Commodore Perry and his Black Ships is an excellent one for demonstrating nearly the entire range of message explicitness. Perry visited Japan twice in 1853 and 1854. On his first voyage, he carried with him a letter from President Fillmore written nine months previously in November 1852. Fillmore's message was placatory and overtly pacific, noting that the president had 'charged Commodore Perry to abstain from every act which could possibly disturb the tranquillity of your imperial majesty's dominions'. There were only very oblique mentions that might appear intimidating, such as the description of sending 'Commodore Perry, with a powerful squadron, to pay a visit to your imperial majesty's renowned city of Edo: [to ask for] friendship, commerce, a supply of coal and provisions, and protection for our shipwrecked people'.

Along with the letter from the president, Perry also presented his own letter dated 7 July 1853. This was of quite a different tone, suggesting that 'no friendship can exist, unless Japan ceases to act towards Americans as if they were her enemies', and exhorting the Japanese to 'see the necessity of averting unfriendly collision between the two nations, by responding favourably to the propositions of amity, which are now made in all sincerity'. If this was not plain enough, Perry went on to write that

> [m]any of the large ships of war destined to visit Japan have not yet arrived on these seas, though they are hourly expected … and as an evidence of [my] friendly intentions, [I have] brought but four of the smaller ones, designing, should it become necessary, to return to Edo in the ensuing spring with a much larger force.

Perry concluded by suggesting such a return trip could be rendered unnecessary if the Japanese 'acced[ed] at once to the very reasonable and pacific overtures contained in the President's letter'.[6]

The two letters, contrasting as they are in tone, demonstrate clearly the different ways in which maritime force can be presented and how the messages behind such force can differ. Perry's letter, as one might expect from a plain-speaking military man, was direct and to the point; Fillmore's letter, however, was more circuitous but in its presentation by a naval officer, and the preceding attempts to open Japan up to trade by various diplomats, also contained within it the implicit message that the US Navy was a powerful force that could be used to support political goals.

Messages are sometimes neither explicitly announced nor implied, however, as they may be left entirely unsaid. The voyage of the US Coast Guard cutter USCGC *Polar Sea* through the Northwest Passage in 1985 was ostensibly for purely pragmatic reasons: it was the shortest route for the resupply operation required. However, the US's avoidance of a request for permission for transit and the passage of the cutter itself also had diplomatic value: to reinforce Washington's position that the Northwest Passage is an international strait, in direct contravention of Canada's perception of the passage as internal waters. Even when it became obvious that the transit would cause friction with the Canadian government and controversy among the populace, the *Polar Sea* was still sent through the strait, much to the chagrin of Ottawa.[7]

In fact, it is occasionally the case that diplomatic goals that may lie behind naval activity are in fact robustly and specifically denied, although this often does little to undermine the perception that the event is aimed at a particular party. It has been a common refrain in the early twenty-first century in overt messages relayed by the Chinese political establishment and military elite that its exercises are not designed to deter other states or coerce neighbours. During Joint Sea 2013, the largest bilateral naval exercise between China and Russia in history, Deputy Commander of the PLAN in Jinan Military Region Ding Yiping explicitly stated that '[t]he joint military drill is not aimed at any third party'.[8]

And yet this official message was contested by Western media representation, which viewed the Sino-Russian exercises as a challenge to the US pivot to Asia and a signal that Beijing could also build alliances where necessary. Even 'unofficial' commentary from China suggested this was the main reason for the exercises. Professor Wang Ning of Shanghai International Studies University noted that the joint training 'shows the two countries will support each other on the world stage'.[9]

The fact that a diplomatic message may convey almost the opposite of what a maritime diplomatic event is meant to convey is a point of intellectual interest. It in fact brings to mind the celebrated work of Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian thinker of the twentieth century, who coined the memorable phrase 'the medium is the message'. For McLuhan, the terms 'medium' and 'message' were far more abstract than just a way to transmit information and the information itself. Rather, a medium was 'any extension of ourselves' and the message was a 'change of scale or pace or pattern' in human affairs. Thus, the medium of a light bulb is the important message, that is, the changes wrought by electric light in human society. The importance of a television news broadcast about crime may not be the fact of a murder taking place, but the changes wrought by the introduction of television into the home, and the climate of fear engendered by such lurid criminal tales being broadcast in one's own house.[10]

As an extension to the field of maritime diplomacy, the medium (the new development and deployment of advanced naval or maritime capabilities in supportive or coercive roles) is often the message in and of itself. The diplomatic statements that surround a particular deployment can be just misleading noise, but the presence of an aircraft carrier or the test firing of a ballistic missile defence system is indicative of the changes in international relations in their entirety.

While this can be true, it is also important to remember that there is a reason why diplomatic messages and signals are actually sent. All of these different messages carry with them different senses of threat, coercion, cooperation or persuasion. Their enunciation is important for the receiver to understand the situation at hand, even if the true message is in fact being transmitted by the medium of grey-hulled ships menacing one's shoreline.

There are indeed reasons for a particular message-sender to opt for explicitness, implicitness, muteness or denial. An explicit message ensures that the signals desired to be sent cannot be misconstrued in any fashion. This avoids unnecessary escalation, conflict and misinterpretation. It also demonstrates resolve to fulfil a certain diplomatic goal; by explicitly stating the goal it becomes politically difficult for any actor then to back down. This latter fact is similar to the idea apparently often espoused by Vice-President Joe Biden's advisor Tony Blinken during discussions over an intervention in Syria in 2012 and 2013, given a previous commitment that the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime constituted a 'red line' for Washington that would necessitate intervention. Blinken succinctly noted that 'superpowers don't bluff', neatly encapsulating the idea that once an explicit threat has been made, it must be

followed through as otherwise respect may be lost and the law of diminishing credibility (explained in Chapter 4) will be invoked. Once the Obama administration identified the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime in 2013, therefore, and with Blinken recently promoted to deputy national security adviser, it was difficult for Washington not to react; in the end, an announcement of military aid for Syrian rebels was made.[11]

Thus, in August 1923, Italy demanded reparations of 50 million lire from Greece for the murder of an Italian general and two other officers while in the town of Kakavia. A deadline of 24 hours was set, which was met with a contrite apology deemed insufficient by Rome. There was then little doubt about subsequent Italian intentions. A communiqué drafted by Mussolini and transmitted to the Greek government stated that

> I have therefore communicated the order for the landing on the island of Corfu of a contingent of Italian troops.… Italy does not intend an act of war but only to defend its own prestige and to manifest its inflexible will to obtain the reparations due to it.[12]

What followed within hours was a brief bombardment of Corfu by the Italian Navy and an invasion with several thousand troops. Casualties were minimal, but the occupation of the island and weakness of the League of Nations meant that the Greek government was convinced to settle its alleged debt of 50 million lire; by the end of September the Italians had withdrawn once the money had been transferred. Mussolini's explicit message and coercive maritime diplomacy, in what was essentially a strategic international protection racket, were highly successful in delivering the results desired with little effort and preventing any miscommunication that could have led to a general war.

An implicit message, however, may be seen as more politic in certain situations, as it allows an opposing government to save face and acquiesce without as much embarrassment. President Fillmore's letter was intended to convey to the Japanese emperor US desires for concessions in trade and support without an explicit threat in order to present such an outcome in friendly and co-operative terms that might be acceptable to the Japanese political elite. In any co-operative diplomacy, an implicit message also allows any signal of reassurance to be sent but lessens the possibility of a perception of a direct or indirect threat that could lead to a deterioration in relations with a third party. Thus, various US exercises with its treaty allies the Philippines have since the mid 2000s implicitly deterred China by practising amphibious invasions of small islands, without being as explicit so as to lead to a public Chinese outburst or significant physical response.[13]

Finally, an unspoken or misleading message heightens the possibility of misunderstanding. The Able Archer NATO exercises in 1983 were heavily misconstrued. Occurring amid a background of deteriorating Soviet–US relations, a series of submarine operations and flights designed to test Soviet defences and intense Soviet paranoia, the ten-day exercises led to Moscow placing nuclear

bomber aircraft on high alert in Eastern Europe. Ostensibly a co-operative exercise therefore led to a delicate situation that could easily have slipped to unconstrained war.

At the same time, unspoken messages also ensure flexibility in future negotiations: should a limited conflict ensue, then the victor can claim a far greater prize than might at first have been demanded. Hence, the Opium Wars were conducted on the pretext of guaranteeing access to the Chinese market for British opium salesmen, but the reparations sought were far greater, in the cession of Hong Kong and Kowloon and the 99-year lease of the New Territories. Alternatively, should the opponent prove too strong or resolute, then a withdrawal can be made without public embarrassment. The concentration of a Turkish fleet off the coast of Iskanderun in January 1964, amid ethnic violence in Cyprus, finally led to its setting sail in February and then in March embarking troops. In the end, no invasion of Cyprus took place (at that time), and the fact that Ankara had not issued any threats meant that the withdrawal of the fleet would not be seen as a concession or a sign of weakness.[14]

The messages transmitted, and the way they are transmitted, can therefore reveal certain aspects of a protagonist's aims, resolve and also the danger inherent within any particular activity. Explicit messages allow for little chance of miscommunication, a clarity which should, theoretically, set boundaries within which each maritime diplomatic event can unfold (for instance, by stopping short of war if it is announced to be outside the scope of possible outcomes by an aggressor). The explicitness also suggests resolve on the part of the announcer, as not to follow through with a particular threat or message of support would be diplomatically embarrassing and potentially harmful to that actor's international position. Messages sent implicitly via diplomatic or obscurantist language suggest a desire to avoid public injury of an opponent or avoid conflict, but also raise the possibility of miscalculation as messages are missed or misunderstood. Finally, entirely unspoken messages may reflect a lack of resolve on the part of the protagonist or simply a desire to keep all options open for maximalist negotiations in the future. At times, it may be difficult to denote exactly which characteristic is being displayed by a particular message or lack thereof, and analysis of them may well be more art than science. Nonetheless, with luck a fuller understanding of the kinds of messages that can be transmitted and the manner in which they are, can help illuminate the severity of any maritime diplomatic event and the future stability of a relationship.

## Time and tide

A further differentiation, and a simple one, can also be drawn between different diplomatic activities in the temporal field.

The property of time is instructive for the analyst of maritime diplomacy in two ways. First, the duration of any event can suggest the level of commitment to a particular diplomatic strategy. A form of diplomacy that lasts for months, or even longer, suggests a clear desire by the protagonist to reach desired

diplomatic goals come what may. The Beira patrol, for example, was a blockade enacted by the Royal Navy against the southern states of the former colony of Rhodesia, which had just declared independence under a white-minority government (London had included in its preconditions for independence racial equality and hence likely rule by the black majority). Between 1966 and 1975, the Royal Navy maintained a patrol aiming to prevent the shipment of oil to the Mozambican port of Beira, and from there via pipeline to the Rhodesian refinery in Umtali.

The Beira patrol was not successful in ending oil shipments to Rhodesia. The former colony was able to continue to supply its meagre needs via road from South Africa (where a white-minority government had some sympathy with the government of Prime Minister Ian Smith), or rail through South Africa and Mozambique. It was also a costly operation for such a limited outcome (a total of 47 tankers were intercepted, of which 42 were allowed to continue on their journey; by contrast, between April 1966 and May 1967 169 tankers entered the alternative Mozambican port of Lourenço Marques/Maputo), with the Ministry of Defence arguing that the assets dedicated to the patrol would greatly reduce the country's ability to respond to other extra-European contingencies. Yet, the political decision to maintain the patrol was in order to demonstrate the UK's continued commitment to regime change in Rhodesia. Even as the patrol was gradually thinned out (moving from two frigates to one and dropping the air component in 1971 and then providing only 161 ship-days from 1973 onwards), it was still considered expedient to signal London's ongoing resolve to sanctions against the wayward colony. Given that the British government had, early on in the crisis, foresworn military intervention in Rhodesia, the patrols were a way to demonstrate enduring military commitment to the diplomatic strategy of sanctions.[15]

That is not to say that abbreviated forms of maritime diplomacy indicate a lack of resolve: the use of overwhelming force in an ephemeral campaign can be just as demonstrative of determination to reach a particular outcome. However, the sustainment of military pressure or support over a prolonged period of time is a clear indication of commitment to a policy, as the cost and potential risk involved reflects the value placed on the goal at hand. If, by contrast, a potentially prolonged campaign is foreshortened, this suggests a desire to unburden oneself from the price of commitment.

The Anglo-German blockade of Venezuela in 1902–03 is a good example of the temporality of maritime diplomacy reflecting the commitment to a goal. Not only was an Anglo-German blockade unusual given the international context at the time (Rudyard Kipling criticised the agreement in his poem, 'The Rowers'), but the abbreviated nature of the blockade, at just two months from December 1902 until February 1903, underlined the lack of resolve in both nations to expend much energy and time over the matter of the repayment of defaulted or unpaid debts. With a US naval presence looming in the Caribbean, rumours of the blockade transgressing the Monroe Doctrine, and thus fears in London that the UK–US relationship might be negatively affected and suggestions of threats

made directly by Washington to Berlin, the potential costs involved in the blockade seemed to outweigh the potential gains of a complete repayment of debts. In the end, London and Berlin settled for half of the initial claims to be repaid through customs income and a referral of the principle of preferential treatment to international arbitration.[16]

The endurance of the maritime diplomacy is therefore redolent of the commitment of the powers involved, whether it be coercive or co-operative, but the sequencing of events can also be enlightening.

Most maritime diplomatic events are pre-emptive. Planned long in advance and with a certain goal in mind, the co-operative or coercive signal being sent is carefully calibrated to the recipient and other observers. In such a scenario, the protagonist is presumably relatively confident about the likely outcome or the response of potential opponents or allies. At times, however, maritime diplomacy can be reactive to events occurring, which introduces greater uncertainty into the trajectory of a situation. The deployment of a US carrier battle group to Taiwan in 1996 was a response to Chinese sabre rattling through missile tests and exercises. The signal sent was effective, but the fact that Washington was reacting to perceived Chinese aggression meant that the outcome of the diplomacy was far from assured. Reactive maritime diplomacy leaves less time for planning and the lengthy thought processes required to model out potential scenarios emanating from a particular incident. Reactive maritime diplomacy is therefore more dangerous and inherently escalatory than pre-emptive maritime diplomacy.

## Balance of power

One final characteristic of maritime diplomacy that can help illuminate the dynamics within any particular event and hence the potential future is the balance of power.

Traditionally, coercive maritime diplomacy has entailed a stronger power bullying a weaker power and encouraging a change in policy. There has therefore been an asymmetry in their capabilities that makes it possible for one to compel the other. This need not just be in coercive maritime diplomacy: in the more co-operative category the strong may also support the weak against a possible aggressor. The US's support for many of its allies provides regular instances of asymmetric co-operative maritime diplomacy.

Moreover, it is not necessarily the case that it is the stronger power engaging in the diplomacy; a weaker power may also attempt to use maritime diplomacy as an effective tool in order to gain a diplomatic victory without risking wider conflict. The capture of the USS *Pueblo* or the sinking of the *Cheonan* are two examples of a weaker power (North Korea) using limited naval force to gain a political victory against stronger powers (the US and South Korea respectively) while minimising the risk of a broad conflict.

Maritime diplomacy need not even be asymmetric. Nations of a similar level of capability can engage in co-operative maritime diplomacy either to

demonstrate their alliance or to build confidence between rivals. Alternatively, similarly matched opponents can still attempt to intimidate one or the other, albeit in a higher-risk game of poker, if there is a belief that the other party will attempt to avoid potentially mutually damaging conflict. The appearance of the *Panther* off the coast of Agadir was not owing to Germany's inherent military superiority to France, but the belief that Paris would be unwilling to risk wider conflict with its neighbour over the issue of distant African colonies.

Nevertheless, the symmetry or asymmetry of a particular event can enlighten the observer as to the motivations for the protagonist and any further effects on stability that might be forthcoming. An asymmetric coercive event perpetrated by a stronger power will likely be contained to the maritime diplomatic sphere, with the victim unable to react militarily given their relative weakness. An asymmetric coercive event perpetrated by a weaker power creates the possibility of retaliation for what may have been a rash miscalculation, although the possibility also exists of a kinetic reaction appearing to be too aggressive. The riskiest form of coercive diplomacy is between symmetrically opposed powers, where either party might consider themselves in a stronger position.

In co-operative diplomacy, it is not usually the symmetry of the parties involved in the diplomacy itself that may be of import, but any intended third party that might be deterred by the support offered. Here, the symmetry is less revealing as to the intent and capabilities of the protagonist, as it is just as feasible for a hegemon to support a much weaker power than it is for two similarly matched allies to support each other. Nonetheless, this does hint at the context in which such events occur: an asymmetrical co-operative event may suggest a smaller power feeling pressure from a hegemonic power and attempting to ally with a stronger state, while a symmetrical co-operative event can (although clearly does not necessarily) suggest a broader, more challenging atmosphere involving rivalry between peer competitors that could be more damaging.

## Properties of maritime diplomacy visualised

There are, therefore, a range of characteristics of any maritime diplomacy that can aid an analyst in examining the importance of the event, the dynamics between the various powers involved and the level of tension that may be driving the activity.

Most of these properties exist on a spectrum. Maritime diplomatic events can be kinetic or non-kinetic; explicitly telegraphed, indirectly implied or simply unaccompanied by language; sustained or abbreviated; reactive or pre-emptive; and symmetric or asymmetric.

Dissecting these various facets should much better explain what any particular event means both for the present and the future.

We can take, as an example, the *Panther* incident at Agadir. On the various properties we outlined, this was the most pre-emptive of moves; the German deployment was made in full knowledge of the potentially negative reaction from France. Just two years earlier in 1909, an agreement was reached between

France and Germany that ensured that Paris would not impede German commercial interests in Morocco, and that Berlin would not undermine France's supremacy in the sultanate. The arrival of the *Panther* seemed to undermine this young agreement, particularly with the 1905 visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II to Tangiers to offer support to the sultan fresh in French minds.

The Agadir crisis also, essentially, involved two well-matched opponents in France and Germany. This was a symmetrical competition between the two. (It is important to note that symmetry generally applies not to the particular units and assets used in the event itself, but to the balance of power between the two actors involved.) This symmetry made the situation all the more dangerous and underlined tensions in Europe between these major powers that would erupt in just three years.

While the *Panther* (and subsequently the *Berlin*) deployments were not accompanied by specific, explicit threats, there was subsequent communication between the two sides. The meeting of German Foreign Secretary Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter and French ambassador to Berlin Jules Cambon on 9 July 1911, eight days after initial deployment of the *Panther*, allowed both sides to lay out their goals clearly. In Germany's case, while their initial concern was focused on German mining interests in southern Morocco, the meeting allowed them also to express their desire for African colonial interests; the French were also able to express their intent to remain the hegemonic power in Morocco. (This enunciation of goals was particularly important as an explicit messaging, as prior to the previous Moroccan crisis in 1905–06, the Germans had, through Italian auspices, threatened the French with war if they intervened in Morocco. Given that in the second Moroccan crisis of 1911 Paris did indeed send a force to Morocco, Germany's explicit messaging this time around prevented Paris from believing that its deployment would lead to an escalatory crisis.)

Thus far, the properties of the event suggest a lack of desire to escalate the situation to war, and more a calculated intervention that would lead to limited tension. The pre-emptive nature of the decision highlighted German premeditation and calculations; the delineation of German goals allowed for negotiation within a specific set of guidelines; and the symmetrical nature of the competition underlined the risk of conflict. This was also reinforced by the non-kinetic and limited nature of the deployment. The *Panther* fired no guns nor did it threaten directly any French military assets. The deployment of the light cruiser *Berlin* four days after the *Panther* added a more muscular tone to the diplomacy, but it again did not involve kinetic effect being delivered. These vessels merely indicated Germany's interest in the affairs of Morocco and beyond that in Africa more generally.

Finally, the sustained presence of at least one German gunboat near Agadir throughout the entirety of the crisis reflected Berlin's commitment to its goals. Those goals were limited to diplomatic benefits falling short of war, but given the disappointing way the First Moroccan Crisis ended for Germany just a few years previously, Berlin appeared committed to gaining something out of the current crisis. This commitment suggests a willingness to use force if necessary

(and indeed various officials were advocating for war), even when other signals are being sent that this is not the desired outcome.

Overall, the various properties of the 'Panther leap' that sparked the Second Moroccan Crisis could have been interpreted at the time to suggest that war was not imminent over that particular event, but equally indicated Germany's growing resentment over its lack of imperial estates. It reflected the tensions in Europe just a few years prior to the First World War, and the growing confidence of Germany's diplomacy towards its European peers. Equally, it suggested that negotiation and peaceful diplomacy offered a potential resolution to the matter at hand through its non-kinetic, limited deployment aiming to send a restrained coercive message.

These various properties of the maritime diplomatic event can be visualised to enable easier understanding. The simplest form of visualisation takes the form of a spider or radar diagram, which plots the values along five axes. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the Panther leap as a maritime diplomatic event (with relatively arbitrary values provided for each of the five criteria). The southward emphasis on the diagram reflects the calculated nature of the event and the commitment of the German polity to seeing through their goals.

Alternative events can provide a very different picture. The Royal Navy's Baltic Patrol from late 1918 until 1921 was a sporadically violent naval deployment over a series of years with extremely ill-defined objectives. The first commander of the deployment, Rear Admiral Sir Edwyn Alexander-Sinclair, received orders to 'show the British flag and support British policy as circumstances dictate'. The goals of the mission varied from supporting Baltic autonomy and independence to hampering German shipping and supporting the White Russians in their conflict with the Bolsheviks.

The relative asymmetry of power in the region, with the defeated Germans and recently revolutionary Russians unable to compete with the post-war might of the Royal Navy, made the patrol possible and the UK confident that it could

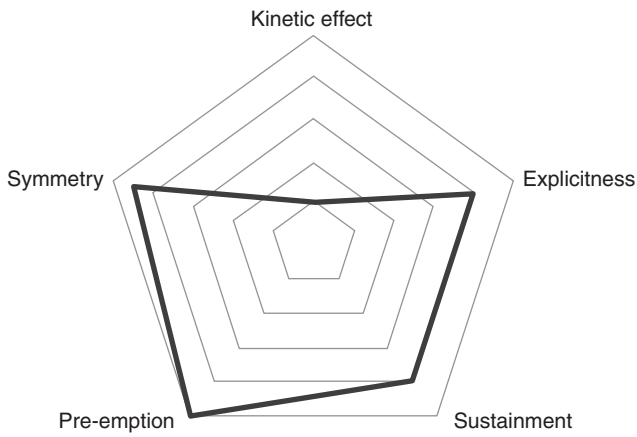



*Figure 3.1* Visualising the *Panther* to Agadir.

remain. This not only made the situation relatively stable, as it was unlikely that other powers would react to the deployment and escalate the situation, but the UK was able to sustain this patrol for several years, suggesting a desire to accomplish the ill-defined goals. While the patrol was not entirely reactive to events, it was also equally not entirely premeditated to accomplish a specific goal. The patrol was deployed in response to the Russian revolution and the complications of the region.[17]

When visualised in a similar fashion and compared to the Panther's leap, the Baltic patrol would thus look something like Figure 3.2.

The different shape of the two diagrams underline the uncertain and occasionally violent nature of the Baltic patrol, in comparison to the non-kinetic but highly choreographed nature of the Panther's deployment. It equally highlights how both Germany and the UK were keen to commit to their goals, even if those goals were unclear in the Baltic example.

Such an analysis is also possible with co-operative maritime diplomacy. We can take, for example, the deployment of a US carrier battle group to the waters off one of its primary Asian allies, Taiwan in 1996. The deployment had a coercive aspect: to deter China from continuing with military exercises and missile tests that were perceived as bellicose in Taiwan. Yet, it also had a co-operative aspect: to reassure Taiwan that the US remained a staunch supporter, even if the Taiwan Relations Act did not commit Washington indubitably to intervention in a Sino-Taiwanese conflict. As Professor Robert Ross notes, in the face of China's perceived aggression, 'The United States' reputation as a "loyal" ally was at stake'.[18]

This was a supportive gesture, albeit one conducted with only vague utterances of the US's strategic interests in the region and the wherewithal to protect

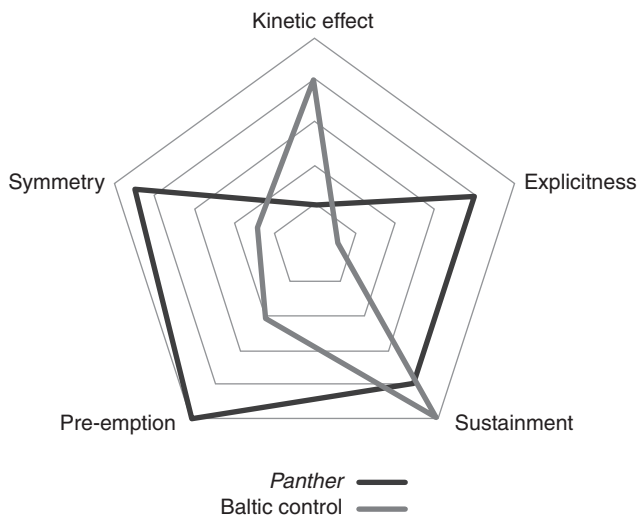



*Figure 3.2* The Baltic patrol and the *Panther* compared.

them. There was no kinetic effect delivered: no guns were fired, no planes were flown, no missiles were tested. And it was a relatively brief deployment – just long enough to make its presence known without being so sustained so as to inspire sufficient anger in China. A reactive deployment, it was also to aid a much weaker ally and therefore lacked much symmetry between the protagonist (the US) and the recipient (Taiwan). (The symmetry in a co-operative maritime diplomatic event largely refers to the ally being supported or the country being reassured, rather than any others that may be deterred by the same event, in what would be its coercive element.)

By contrast, the Dawn Blitz exercises in 2013 were similarly aimed to support and reassure a US Asian ally: this time, Japan. The exercises were planned well in advance, occurred between two relatively powerful countries and demonstrated some kinetic capabilities. They were necessarily brief, although sustained for the length of time initially planned and deemed necessary. The Dawn Blitz exercises were similarly vague in their intended goal, which is largely to reassure Japan about the rising power of China and the US's willingness to support its Asian ally. Oblique comments were made as to the import of the exercises: Brig. Gen. John Broadmeadow of the US Marines 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade noted that 'Dawn Blitz 2013 builds on an already close partnership between Canadian, Japanese and New Zealand militaries, which strengthens our capacity to respond to a variety of regional challenges, including regional disasters'.[19] However, such comments only indirectly refer to the specific aims of encouraging interoperability, and the capability to deploy in a joint fashion, between the US and Japanese militaries in amphibious assault and therefore allowing for better deployments to outer Japanese islands that may be threatened by China, such as the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. The inclusion of regional disasters into the potential contingencies only highlights the tactful lack of reference to China or maritime disputes in the region.

Contrasting these two examples of co-operative maritime diplomacy, therefore, would allow a visualisation along the lines shown in Figure 3.3.

This seems to suggest that the US carrier battle group deployment to Taiwan was not intended to escalate significantly, given the lack of kinetic effect, but occurred in a more febrile context given its reactive nature and the fact that a much weaker ally was being supported. Dawn Blitz, however, was intended to send a definite message of commitment, including the possible use of force, even though the exercises occurred thousands of miles from the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. The vagueness of messaging at both events also hints at a somewhat risky atmosphere, as the US seeks to avoid provocation of China even as it aims to reassure its allies.

Such visualisations of the properties of maritime diplomatic events and definitions of their properties help to outline their motives, drivers and importance within international affairs. It is very far from being an exact science. This is necessarily so as the objective is not to achieve the impossible and provide a clear, consistent set of categories into which all events will fall. Rather, the goal must be to better elucidate the characteristics of each unique event along similar

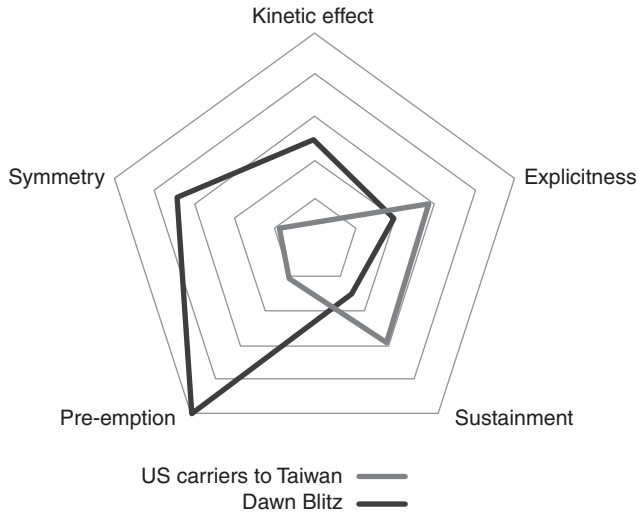



*Figure 3.3* US intervention in Taiwan and Exercise Dawn Blitz compared.

spectra that would allow comparison and further knowledge about the events and the context in which they occur.

It is hoped that such a system allows for more effective analysis of such events. This is not meant to be a definitive description of the properties of maritime diplomatic events, nor is there no room for improvement. On the contrary, aware that the above analysis may well be flawed in many aspects, I would like to encourage wider debate over the ways in which maritime diplomacy can help describe and enunciate the unspoken tensions or frictions in international relations and therefore lead to a better diagnosis of international security. Armed with such knowledge, practitioners, policy makers and academics can then develop policies that seek to mitigate conflict and promote stability.

## Notes

1 Schultz, 'Ethics of Power'.
2 Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p. 46.
3 Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, p. 62.
4 Luttwak, *Political Uses*, p. 3.
5 China has, historically, had five separate constabulary maritime agencies, including FLEC, CMS, the Coast Guard, the Marine Police and the Maritime Safety Administration. It was announced in March 2013, however, that the first four of these would be unified under one bureaucratic umbrella of the State Oceanic Administration.
6 Letter from President Fillmore and Commodore Perry can be found in *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to China and Japan*, pp. 256–59.
7 Cawley, Janet, 'US, Canada in Cold War Over Who Rules the Arctic Waters', *Chicago Tribune*, 18 August 1985.
8 'China, Russia Hold Joint Naval Drills', Xinhua, 5 July 2013.

9 Perlez, Jane, 'China and Russia, in a Display of Unity, Hold Naval Exercises', *New York Times*, 10 July 2013.
10 McLuhan, *Understanding Media*.
11 Entous, Adam, 'Behind Obama's About-Face on Syria', *Wall Street Journal*, 15 June 2013.
12 Barros, 'Corfu Incident'.
13 In particular, the Balikatan exercises in 2011 and 2013, and the Karat exercise in 2013, all involved amphibious operations in the South China Sea.
14 Moran, *Cyprus*, pp. 89–90.
15 For a good review of the Beira patrol, see Mobley, 'Beira Patrol'.
16 Hood, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, Ch. 10.
17 For a description of the Baltic patrol, see Moran, 'Baltic Patrol'.
18 Ross, 'Taiwan Strait Confrontation'.
19 'US Navy, Marine Corps Begin Multinational Amphibious Exercise Dawn Blitz 2013', 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade press release, 11 June 2013. It can be found online here (accessed in September 2013): www.imef.marines.mil/News/NewsArticleDisplay/tabid/3963/Article/144267/us-navy-and-marine-corps-begin-multinational-amphibious-excercise-dawn-blitz-20.aspx.

# 4 The utility of maritime diplomacy

> The familiar attributes of an oceanic navy – inherent mobility, tactical flexibility, and a wide geographic reach – render it peculiarly useful as an instrument of policy.[1]

Maritime diplomacy, whether in its coercive, persuasive or co-operative form, or using military or civilian actors, is perhaps the most significant role for maritime agencies in peacetime.

This runs counter to some previous predictions made on the use of, particularly, coercive maritime diplomacy. After the Cold War, several commentators suggested that coercive maritime diplomacy would decrease in importance and frequency. Citing the issues of expense and increased global norms against the use of military force, the peace dividend of the post-Cold War era lent credence to such ideas.

Writing in 1984, Peter Nailor claimed that:

> The use, or threat of use, of force was a practical and legitimate tool of statecraft in a world where no one state was so powerful that its pretensions were incontestable.… But now, with all the changes in method that exist, and all the alternatives to military force that can be deployed, it seems that the utility, as well as the salience of applied force may have declined.[2]

According to Nailor, the post-imperial world saw a decreased use of coercive maritime diplomacy, not only owing to the unpopularity of the use of applied force for foreign policy goals amid post-imperial decline, but also because of the loss of overseas bases, making such diplomacy more costly, more difficult to arrange and more difficult politically. Hence, 'the act of "sending a gunboat" 5,000 miles, to support an interest, seems to demonstrate a higher level of political determination than to send one 500 miles'.[3]

Ken Booth, while acknowledging the continued utility of navies as diplomatic instruments, echoed Nailor's view, suggesting that '[w]arships in forward deployment can still attempt many missions, but all the costs involved in discharging them are growing. This suggests that the utility of the historic concept of naval presence is in decline.'[4]

Elizabeth Young was another influential voice suggesting that maritime diplomacy may be of less utility in the future. Writing in the 1970s, Young suggested that the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea would render maritime presence 'a more folkloristic manifestation to be performed only in the territorial waters of already friendly and aligned states' and that clearer delineations of exclusive economic zones and larger territorial waters would deprive seapower of its usefulness.[5]

Even naval practitioners have questioned the relevance of maritime diplomacy, citing international law and technological challenges. Lt Cdr Richard Meyer of the US Navy wrote in 2007 that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 'prevents a warship from arriving unannounced at a foreign port and visibly showing the flag within sight of the native population', while 'in addition to sophisticated weaponry, presence in the littoral region has become more dangerous due to asymmetric tactics utilised by our emerging enemies'.[6]

Despite these predictions, there are a number of reasons why maritime diplomacy continues to be a tool used by navies and law enforcement agencies worldwide. As the first two chapters attempted to outline, the activity is one of enduring utility for a variety of reasons.

## The attraction of operations short of war

In fact, one of the primary reasons for the continued utility of maritime diplomacy has actually been cited previously as a reason for its expected decline.

Since the end of the Second World War, and particularly since the end of the Cold War, norms against the use of warfare and organised violence have arguably become more widespread. The horrors of the Second World War were salutary for populations worldwide, while democratisation of a number of societies, introduction of international law and supranational bodies, greater education and the swift and effective transmission of information through the internet and more competitive media have all combined to increase the checks on the use of force by any government or state.

Of course, there are several recent examples of Western governments overriding the will of the population to go to war. The Iraq War from 2003 was launched despite unprecedented protests in the streets of European and North American capital cities, for example, and any use of force by a democratic government will inevitably have to overcome some level of opposition. However, there is indubitably at least a greater rhetorical reference to increasing norms during the conduct of war and discouraging the use of force. The prelude to the Iraq War was marked by intense diplomatic efforts on the part of the US and its allies to pass first UN Security Council Resolution 1441 in November 2002 (the latest in a long line of resolutions censuring Iraq for alleged weapons of mass destruction programmes) and subsequently a failure to pass another resolution that could justify the use of force. The failure to pass the latter given objections from three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (France, Russia and China) did not prevent the war, but the attempts to pass the

resolution in the first place as a legal fig leaf for the impending invasion were at least a nod towards the perceived need to satisfy international norms on the use of violence.

Public opposition to reckless, failed or expensive conflicts has long been a staple of democratic, and even tyrannical or monarchical regimes. However, it has rarely been on moral objections to a war. The Magna Carta was signed in 1215 after a baronial rebellion against the high taxes exacted by King John I to repay debts accrued during the war against France over Normandy; the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 was at least partially inspired by the taxation raised for the Hundred Years War.

Ethical objections to war became more commonplace during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and were often fuelled by popular descriptions of the war itself. The growing disparity in technological capabilities between the advanced militaries of Western Europe and the less developed nations coupled with the increasing industrialisation of warfare (and its concomitant efficiency in killing individuals) and the growing access to journalistic or literary accounts of war among the increasingly educated populace, combined to build stronger opposition to these conflicts. Thus, Hilaire Belloc's 1898 satirical poem, 'The Modern Traveller', described how the buccaneer William Blood:

> Preserved us all from death.
> He stood upon a little mound,
> Cast his lethargic eyes around,
> And said beneath his breath:
> Whatever happens we have got
> The Maxim Gun, and they have not.

The amoral stance of Blood contrasted with the often high-handed rhetoric surrounding imperial campaigns and the concept of the 'white man's burden'. On-the-ground accounts from such wars further shifted popular opinion, particularly when they were delivered through the elegant prose of writers such as Winston Churchill, who wrote about the slaughter of the Dervishes in Sudan that '[t]here was nothing *dulce et decorum* about the Dervish dead; nothing of the dignity of unconquerable manhood; all was filthy corruption'. The terrible narratives that infused the First World War poets (such as Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est' that pilloried the phrase cited by Churchill from the deserts of Sudan) and the first-hand accounts of returnees from the front lines further alienated sections of society from the concept of expeditionary warfare and bolstered the burgeoning pacifist movement.

These modern examples of media influence on public perception of war were necessarily less immediate than the 24-hours news coverage that ensures the proliferation of information to a ready populace and can instantly shape the agenda around current or potential conflicts. Gone, then, are the days when events on the battlefield would be reported only days or weeks after they occur. (To prevent

such information reaching the population now, modern militaries must instead manipulate the media (for instance through 'embedding' of reporters) or ensure higher operational security).

Such an all-encompassing media environment – the so-called 'CNN effect' that suggests policy makers are now forced to act quickly and may be restricted in their actions by blanket rolling coverage – has certainly led to broader and faster awareness of international affairs. The development of media technology also means that reportage from war zones is now much more visual, arguably increasing the effect on the media consumer. While Belloc and Owen had to rely on the written word, and hence the reader's imagination, more modern forms of media have been able to introduce powerful imagery to influence the reader's understanding of warfare. Photography and moving image was able to illuminate the battlefield for a wider audience from the early twentieth century, although it was often tinged by reportage that suffered from nationalistic bias. The Vietnam War, with its troupe of intrepid and usually independent photojournalists, provided some of the starkest, most critical and most influential war images, such as the infamous Pulitzer-prize winning 1972 photograph by Nick Ut of Vietnamese children running scared and in one case naked and injured from a napalm attack. These very visceral static images have now been augmented by realistic moving images, which can act as a catalyst to popular dissatisfaction with the use of violence in certain circumstances. The power of such images is now clearly acknowledged by governments, as indicated by the US government's previous policy of barring media photographs of coffins returning from conflict zones that might influence public opinion.[7]

Waging war is also potentially a much costlier escapade in the modern era in terms of lives lost, when compared to earlier periods in history. The mechanisation of war, with the introduction first of the machine gun and then the tank, aircraft, missile and finally nuclear weapons, made militaries far more effective at their primary role of destruction. The death tolls in wars increased rapidly in the first half of the twentieth century, partially as the number of belligerents in the First and Second World Wars increased, and partially as the industrialisation of war made killing machines more lethal. The introduction of precision-guided weaponry should, theoretically, have made warfare more discriminating, but in reality some of the most recent wars, such as Iraq, have still led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people – a figure incomprehensible to the warfighters of the pre-modern era.

All of which is to state that changes in media provision, the mechanisation of warfare, international legal systems and the number of democratic societies have all increased international norms against the use of violence in warfare. Paradoxically, given the more widespread norms against the use of warfare, and the higher threshold against its use both in the international community and among domestic populations, maritime diplomacy is therefore more useful now as a tool to avoid conflict but still try to reach one's diplomatic goals.

There is one further development that may also explain why maritime diplomacy is likely to be increasingly seen as a useful tool. The increasingly diffuse

power in the international order in the twenty-first century, with the rise of states in Asia to compete with the established powers in Europe, North America, Japan and Australasia, means more state actors are now capable of engaging in maritime diplomacy. It also means that greater deterrent barriers to conflict should exist: in the immediate post-Cold War environment, the overwhelming dominance of the US in the international system meant that there were few practical (even if there were more moral and popular) barriers to conflict. Increasing these barriers makes it more appealing for states to try to bring about their diplomatic goals through the use of operations other than war. One way to do so is to stop short of the use of unlimited violence and instead to engage in the signalling of intent and capabilities that is the definition of maritime diplomacy.

## The suitability of maritime forces

If this is the case, that there are increasing norms against the use of warfare and unlimited violence to achieve one's diplomatic goals, why in particular might *maritime* diplomacy be the most effective tool? Could other forces – armies and air forces – not be just as successful in signalling to rivals and allies? Further, could the more modern technologies of cyber and space not possess some capabilities that make them eminently more suitable to such uses?

In reality, maritime forces are uniquely well positioned to engage in diplomatic missions for a number of reasons. Navies and maritime constabulary agencies operate on the global commons rather than requiring access to sovereign territory; they can be deployed for several weeks, allowing for prepositioning and longer-term pressure being applied; they offer a series of military options that can be carefully calibrated to raise or lower tensions; and they can undertake their diplomatic business in a location difficult for independent media to access.

Various writers have pointed out the inherent attributes of maritime forces that make them well suited to diplomatic activities. Many of these overlap or have common characteristics. Luttwak noted, for instance, the 'inherent mobility, tactical flexibility, and a wide geographic reach',[8] as key benefits for maritime forces, while Colin Gray mentions that 'the continuity of the world's seas and oceans translates into a global mobility and agility for maritime forces and for merchant shipping which can have no continental parallel'.[9] Geoffrey Till outlines five areas where navies hold an advantage over their sister services: independence, reach, flexibility, controllability and strategic mobility.[10]

By and large, the benefits of navies and other maritime forces over land-based or air-based forces fall into two categories: geography and capability. In the geographic realm, what sea-based agencies benefit from is their reliance on one of the world's few global commons. The oceans, outside of the 12-nautical-mile territorial sea guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, are regarded as high seas, where any vessel, military or civilian, can transit. This 12-nautical-mile limit is, through its historical development, itself an indication of the utility of naval diplomacy. Prior to the codification of international maritime law, pioneering legal theorists, such as the Dutchmen Hugo Grotius

and Cornelius Binkershoek, suggested in the former case that the seas were international territory for anyone's use and in the latter that the only exception to this should be an expanse adjacent to a coast's territory. This became generally accepted as three miles, which was perceived as roughly the greatest range possible for cannon shot in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and therefore marked not only the extent of a country's ability to enforce sovereignty over its adjacent waters from land, but also created a belt of safety around each country in which it could be more confident that rival navies could not interpose themselves and threaten the use of force.

The ability to use the high seas, and even to pass through the narrow confines of the 12-nautical-mile territorial zones as long as it is for innocent passage, is therefore a key advantage maritime forces have over other forces. Land-based forces can, of course, be used to threaten or coerce a neighbouring country through their deployment near the border. In the modern era, where intercontinental ballistic missiles are able to reach 12,000 miles around the world, it's also possible for land-based missiles to be deployed as a warning or intimidation for other countries. The regular missile tests by, for example, North Korea are not only assessments of the equipment for domestic use but regular reminders for a more international audience of the country's growing capability to strike overseas. The deployment of two mobile ballistic missiles to North Korea's east coast launch pad in April 2013 amid a period of heightened tension, and their subsequent withdrawal in early May, was an apparent attempt to influence other powers through the signalling of North Korea's capabilities, much like maritime diplomacy.[11] Similarly, the deployment of up to 2,500 US Marines to Darwin, Australia, as part of the US 'pivot' to Asia announced in 2012 was a clear attempt to signal to allies the US's continued commitment to the region, and to show China Washington's resolve and capabilities.[12]

The key difference between such events and maritime diplomacy, however, is that land forces must necessarily be deployed within one's own or a close ally's territory. This is an inherently limiting factor in the use of coercive and even cooperative land force diplomacy, as the intended recipient of any diplomatic event may be remote from the location of the deployment or exercise. Further, it is an unreliable feature of such diplomacy: even for a global superpower such as the US, which can rely on a network of overseas bases and allies to enable deployment around the world for its ground troops, such relationships are not entirely dependable and are subject to the vagaries of domestic politics and sensitivities within the ally.

Air forces suffer from a similar limitation: not only must most aircraft have a base near the area in which they must be deployed (with the obvious exception of strategic bombers such as the B-2), but they must gain overflight rights if they are to cross any other country's territory.

Maritime forces, able to transit close to a rival's shore without asking for permission, are thus much more *geographically flexible* than other forces. As Eyre Crowe wrote in his infamous memorandum on Anglo-French relations and the German threat in 1907:

> Sea power is more potent than land power, because it is as pervading as the element in which it moves and has its being. Its formidable character makes itself felt the more directly that a maritime State is, in the literal sense of the word, the neighbour of every country accessible by sea.[13]

Forces at sea also demonstrate flexibility by their ability to approach and retreat from a nation's shoreline legally and with relative ease. As Rear Admiral Bob Davidson noted, 'Naval forces therefore provide "influence on the ground" early while also remaining flexible and being able to be withdrawn readily should circumstances on the ground change.'[14]

This is further enabled by the fact that maritime forces are often *geographically sustainable*. Land forces, by their very nature, require extensive supply lines to ensure they remain well stocked in stores and ammunition. They can remain *in situ* for a prolonged period of time, but their mobility is restricted by their need for a fixed base for supplies and regular resupplies. Aircraft are deeply impressive machines, but are not particularly self-sustainable. Ocean-capable vessels, however, are often akin to floating towns or cities, with a population ranging from a hundred to several thousand and the food, supplies and ammunition on board to ensure the vessel can remain at sea for weeks at a time. This allows vessels to remain on station for a prolonged period, ensuring that the same vessel can engage in co-operative, persuasive or coercive maritime diplomacy, raising or lowering the threat or reassurance as required over that time. The effect is relatively immediate, as opposed to, say, the lengthy planning that needs to go into a withdrawal of a substantial land-based force. It also allows for positioning of forces prior to a particular crisis breaking out, as the naval forces can deploy to an area and remain there for a length of time, making it easier to engage in a situation as and when needed.

Most vessels deployed for diplomatic activities also benefit from good *geographic range*. As already mentioned, some elements of land forces, such as ballistic missiles, and air forces, such as strategic bombers, have a global reach. Navies and maritime forces clearly require refuelling, but a typical frigate or destroyer can travel for several thousand miles if steaming at a constant, average pace before needing to restock and refuel. This provides any particular vessel or flotilla with a good regional range, which can then be augmented by replenishment at sea or refuelling at shore-based facilities to enable a longer operation. Once again, Hedley Bull fluently articulates this fact, linking it to the loss of overseas bases for developed powers:

> The universality or pervasiveness of sea power is valued because many of the vast array of bases around the world which were once available to the United States and her allies have largely disappeared, those that remain are rapidly becoming untenable, and new bases are not likely to be found.… It is true that sea power generates its own requirements for bases or other shore facilities, but these are declining with the progress of techniques for refuelling and replenishment at sea, and of satellite communications systems.[15]

The second category of advantages maritime forces have over other services is to do with their onboard systems or inherent abilities, otherwise to be known as tactical capabilities. Naval vessels, for example, often fulfil a number of roles and will therefore be equipped with a broad range of capabilities. A typical destroyer may have on board rigid inflatable boats that can be lowered by davit for interdiction and maritime security deployments, as well as .50 calibre guns, 76 mm guns, surface-to-air missiles, surface-to-surface missiles and a host of other anti-surface or anti-submarine capabilities. This is related to the self-sustainability of ships as opposed to most land or aerial units; these vessels are often at sea for weeks or months on end, meaning they must be fully equipped for a broad range of potential scenarios. It also means, however, that such vessels are very well placed for *tactical flexibility*, being able to threaten or use a wide variety of offensive or defensive systems. This is a benefit not restricted to coercive diplomacy, however. The variety of capabilities on board a naval or other vessel makes them well suited to engage in a number of different exercises on any one voyage. By contrast, a land forces unit is often specifically trained to fulfil a certain function, and hence is less flexible when it comes to exercises or training.

With such tactical flexibility comes the ability to utilise a range of gradations of force to enable escalation or de-escalation as the commanding officer sees fit. While multirole aircraft may also be able to engage in the threat or use of either guns or missiles, the range of weapons and capabilities is far narrower for any pilot as opposed to any naval captain. Combined with the mobility and geographical flexibility mentioned above, this makes maritime forces uniquely well placed to reassure, deter or compel others through the subtle application of presence, threat and limited force.

Such mobility also enables maritime forces to utilise a greater level of *tactical surprise*. It is eminently difficult to move any significant number of land forces – enough to comprise a coercive diplomatic event – without a rival being made aware of it. The vastness of the oceans, however, and the almost constant movement of maritime vessels when at sea makes it often difficult to keep track of them, and means that there is a greater chance of shock at the appearance of a menacing grey-painted hull off one's coast or even the arrival of white-painted constabulary vessels at one's fishing grounds. This was particularly true in earlier periods in history, such as the age of sail, when the sophisticated information-gathering and -collation technologies of today were absent and the appearance of just a handful of well-armed vessels would be enough to inspire wariness in another government. Nonetheless, even today the impossibility of keeping track of every vessel at sea (particularly those that do not want to be found and hence may not transmit the Automatic Identification System beacon) means that tactical surprise can still occur. The ability of a submarine to travel undetected also allows for a level of surprise from these particular platforms: the surfacing of a Chinese Song-class vessel in October 2006 within nine miles of the USS *Kitty Hawk* carrier battle group during a Pacific Ocean exercise was, according to a NATO official at the time, 'as big a shock as the Russians

launching Sputnik', suggesting that the surfacing itself may have been diplomatic in nature in order to demonstrate to the US the ability of Chinese submarines to shadow aircraft carriers and therefore deter US intervention in the future.[16]

The vagaries of sea-based force also mean that naval and law enforcement vessels enjoy great *tactical controllability*. There is little chance of any collateral damage from an engagement at sea, given the lack of population centres of any kind. An ancillary effect of this fact is that naval or constabulary engagements are often seen as discrete events, happening far from the on-land concerns of the population. They therefore seem more remote and less emotional, which enables any altercation at sea to be less inherently escalatory than a land engagement. The fact that no media personnel are likely to be in the vicinity of a maritime incident and there are often few or no images to even verify that such an incident took place further adds to the distinct detachment of any particular event.

An excellent example of the difference between reactions to maritime and land incidents was the response to the sinking of the South Korean corvette, the *Cheonan*, in 2010 near some islands disputed with North Korea, which differed markedly from the artillery exchange on the same islands just eight months later. The former, which sank the vessel and led to the deaths of 46 sailors, was followed by an investigation into the incident, but the remoteness of the vessel at the time of the sinking and confusion over the causes of the sinking meant no forceful retaliation was feasible. In contrast, the shelling of Yeonpyeong island by North Korean artillery following a South Korean artillery exercise killed four people but was followed by an immediate counter-attack, with South Korean guns shelling North Korean positions. Indeed, the tactical controllability of maritime diplomatic incidents may help explain why the majority of violent incidents between the two Koreas in recent years have been at sea, from the sinking of the *Cheonan* in 2010, to a clash off the island of Daecheong in 2009 and two brief skirmishes near Yeongpyeong in 2002 and 1999.

These various geographical and tactical features of maritime forces and their activities combine to make these agencies well suited to the task of signalling through diplomatic events to other states and actors. Their ability to move at will through international waters and remain on station for weeks, with a range of capabilities to draw on, makes maritime forces subtle instruments through which to exercise co-operative or coercive diplomacy. In the words of US Navy Lt Cdr Thomas Goodall, coercive maritime diplomacy is akin to 'a screwdriver used to torque a particular screw, not a hammer used to drive home a point'.[17]

This is not to say that armies, air forces or border guards and police units do not have a role to play in similar diplomatic activities. However, such forces are less adaptable than their maritime counterparts, and hence they are unlikely to be used as frequently or easily in such roles.

Does the enduring utility of maritime diplomacy mean that it is set to continue to be a useful and used tool of actors worldwide? It seems almost anachronistic to consider maritime forces engaged in coercive diplomatic activities when the increasingly computerised economy and world makes physical presence less

necessary. Thus, while navies would previously have been vital in ensuring that any coercive economic diplomacy was successful, by enforcing sanctions and blockades, now sanctions against a particular country are often most effective if they involve simply preventing the movement of money through electronic bank transfers. Similarly, the use of limited cyber attacks may well be seen as preferable for many actors before the use of maritime diplomacy, given the difficulties in attribution of such activities and the lack of clarity over what is acceptable retaliation for a transgression in the cyber world. Thus, it has arguably been the STUXNET virus that has been the most effective hindrance to the Iranian nuclear programme in recent years, and not the Proliferation Security Initiative that seeks to prevent the transport by sea of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their delivery systems.

Nonetheless, it is also the case that there is little substitute for the physical and often imposing presence of a maritime vessel. Hedley Bull noted exactly this fact when he wrote that 'by being seen on the high seas or in foreign ports a navy can convey threats, provide reassurance, or earn prestige in a way that troops or aircraft in their home bases cannot do'.[18] The co-operative, persuasive and coercive benefits gained from, for example, the arrival of the supercarrier USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* into the Persian Gulf are impossible to replicate online. Dr Alessio Patalano put it elegantly when describing the symbolism of a ship and its name:

> A warship is no ordinary piece of military equipment. A naval vessel is first and foremost a reproduction in scale of a society. It encompasses all functions of life; it is a home and a working environment; it is a floating showcase of customs, culture and history. When visitors board a warship, they are visiting the country of its flag.[19]

With a global trade system that remains dominated by the sea, and an international system that has for the past five centuries favoured maritime nations, the utility and necessity of maritime diplomacy is likely to remain intact.

## Limits to maritime diplomacy's utility

There are, though, limits to the utility of maritime diplomacy and various instances where it can either go awry or should not be the tool of choice.

The most obvious is its limitation to the sea. While technological progress in weapons systems means that naval vessels can now strike deep inland, through the use of land-attack cruise missiles that can travel for up to 2,000 miles, there are still limitations to the operational range of naval vessels. Seaborne aircraft mitigate this range limitation to an extent, but of course suffer from the same geographical limitations of on-land aircraft of overflight rights (if they are a legal concern).

Thus, it is really only coastal or near-coastal states that can be affected significantly (whether positively or negatively) by maritime diplomacy. It is unlikely

that a country such as Afghanistan, surrounded by vast areas of land and formidable mountain ranges, or Bolivia, high in the Andes, will be affected by the co-operative deployment of a coastguard or the coercive presence of a destroyer. This is not a concern for much of the world: only approximately 20 per cent of countries are landlocked, most of which maintain a modest international diplomatic profile. Nonetheless, this still means there are more than 40 countries for which maritime diplomacy has no relevance.

Even then, maritime diplomacy will be most effective when the coastal state has a significant percentage of its population near the coast, thereby increasing the relative importance of the sea in a state's calculations (and hence its susceptibility to co-operative maritime diplomacy) as well as the vulnerability of the population to coercion. Even if the capital city is not on the coast, its presence on an accessible river can enable maritime diplomatic events, such as the French sailing up the Chao Praya river and blockading Bangkok in 1893. Thus, China was susceptible to maritime diplomacy in the nineteenth century, despite its vast hinterland far from the sea, as the majority of its population resided in coastal areas (and continues to do so), and Beijing is just 100 miles from the Bohai Sea.

Most coastal states have a significant proportion of their population within 200 miles of the sea. Indeed, half of the world's population lives within this distance of the coast.[20] However, there are certain countries where access to the coast is largely restricted, the majority of the population lives far from the coast or the coastline is relatively small in comparison to the rest of the country's territory. Iraq is a useful example. The country has a very low coastline-to-land-area ratio, although its coast is strategically important as it provides access to the Persian Gulf and therefore maritime transport for its oil supplies from the south of the country. Nonetheless, the capital city lies more than 300 miles from the coastline, and the population is dispersed throughout the east of the country. The country's small navy and lack of maritime constabulary agencies, particularly before the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, made it difficult to engage in co-operative maritime diplomacy, while the remoteness of the population from the sea detracted from the efficacy of any coercive maritime diplomacy. It is therefore apparent that the US, UK and allies used limited land-based air power to install a no-fly zone over northern and southern Iraq, and maritime diplomacy was largely absent.

By contrast, Libya, which despite its long coastline also has a relatively low coast-to-land-area ratio, has its population concentrated almost exclusively in a narrow strip along the coast. Hence, when the rebellion in Libya broke out in 2011, it largely travelled along the coasts. This meant that the kind of limited naval force used by NATO in Libya to enforce a no-fly zone and maritime exclusion zone was rapidly effective.

Maritime diplomacy may not be limited by just geographic or demographic factors. At times, it may just be the application of the diplomacy itself, which could be poorly handled or inappropriately directed. As Chapter 1 suggested, the primary aim of maritime diplomacy, whatever its format, is to send signals and

messages. However any message sent by a particular deployment, exercise or activity is easily misconstrued.

A good example of this fact occurred in 2006, with Operation Sea Breeze 2006, an intended multilateral exercise hosted by the US and Ukraine and involving 17 participating navies off the coast of the Crimean peninsula. The goal was to support the Ukrainian government, build influence in the former Soviet Union and develop partnerships with NATO aspirant countries. However, inconclusive parliamentary elections, a political elite riven with factional rivalry between pro-Russian and pro-Western parties and blocs, rumours of Russian influence and popular fears that the under-reported exercise was a backdoor attempt to establish a NATO presence in Ukraine led to a torrid reception for the US-flagged merchant vessel *Advantage*, sent with provisions and reservists to prepare for the exercise. Amid this confusing backdrop,

> Sea Breeze 2006 became a hostage to the political crisis in Kiev over the formation of a new coalition government. Within two weeks the ship would be forced out of port, its equipment and cargo impounded by Ukrainian customs, and the reservists forced to fly home, their mission unachieved.

Not only was the exercise a failure in that it was never held, but it actually set back the goals of building US influence in Ukraine:

> In 2005, President Yuschenko and his team had worked tirelessly to fulfil the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan and had committed themselves to signing a NATO Membership Action Plan by the end of 2006. Prime Minister Yanukovych and his cabinet … radically altered that policy. During a visit to Brussels in September 2006, Prime Minister Yanukovych stated that Ukraine was not yet ready to implement a formal plan for NATO membership.[21]

Thus, what was billed as an opportunity to build US and NATO influence in a state that had only 15 years previously left the Soviet Union, actually helped to undermine a burgeoning process for NATO membership that the new dominant party in the legislature was happy to facilitate. Three years later, Ukraine and Russia signed a treaty to extend Moscow's use of Sevastapol as a naval base for a further 25 years, until 2042. In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea in an explicit signal to NATO that its influence should not be undermined.

Given the multiplicity of actors in any particular region, it is also extremely difficult to tailor maritime diplomatic events to ensure that all parties are suitably influenced simultaneously. Such a concern resides behind the US 'pivot' to Asia, that policy mix announced by Washington in late 2011/early 2012 (although in reality a military 'pivot' has been ongoing since the early 2000s). The pivot in itself has two primary goals: to deter (but not provoke) China and to reassure US allies in the region. It is, thus, an excellent example of maritime diplomacy,

in conjunction with economic and political diplomacy, that is intended to signal to a broad range of actors in the Asia-Pacific region.[22]

It is questionable, though, whether the signals have been well transmitted or received. There is ample evidence that China feels not just deterred but contained or encircled by the US, which raises the possibility of a destabilising arms race in the region.[23] Similarly, Washington's allies may have been comforted by stronger announcements of the US presence and commitment, but fiscal austerity and continued obligations in the Middle East have raised concern that there exists a gap between optimistic US rhetoric and stifling reality. Indeed, the fact that Washington is encouraging its allies in Asia to assume a greater share of the defence burden and build closer defence relationships with each other ironically reflects the doubts allies have about the US's long-term commitment to the region.[24]

The messages that the US is trying to send through both co-operative and coercive maritime diplomacy are therefore arguably being only partially received or simply misconstrued. This reflects an inherent limitation in all maritime diplomacy: that success relies on the perceptions and reactions of the intended recipient and other relevant parties. If one actor attempts to coerce another, it will only be successful should the second actor consider the threat to be credible.

## Law of diminishing marginal credibility

This, neatly, brings us to the final limitation of maritime diplomacy. For coercive maritime diplomacy to be successful, there must be a belief in the recipient that the particular threat being made is credible. Similarly, co-operative maritime diplomacy may hinge upon the credibility of commitment. Such credibility, in turn, relies on a demonstrable use of force on occasion to prove resolve.

Coercive maritime diplomacy, like any implicit threat, can therefore suffer from what we might call the law of diminishing marginal credibility. The more frequently the tactic is used without any dire consequences, the less credible the implicit threat becomes. This is similar to the economic concept of a law of diminishing marginal returns, whereby a marginal increase of a particular factor of production, *ceteris paribus*, will lead to a decreasing marginal output in production. If one takes the example of a factory increasing its headcount: the first extra employee may add much more production, as it creates efficiencies through division of labour. However, eventually the number of employees will become too many for the factory floor, and each new employee with be marginally less productive (and, at some point, may begin to be *negatively* productive by hampering other employees' production).

Similarly, the use of maritime diplomacy can suffer from the law of diminishing marginal credibility. The first time a carrier battle group is deployed to threaten or reassure an ally is likely to be very effective. The second time may well also be useful in sending a message. However, if that carrier battle group returns on a frequent basis, and no violence is ever used, then a rival is likely to be decreasingly deterred each time and a rival decreasingly reassured.

Essentially, one aspect of maritime diplomacy (capability) is being increased while the other (intent) remains the same. The outcome is therefore a decreasing output of deterrence or reassurance. The US Navy's Lt Cdr Meyer put it succinctly when he wrote: 'If someone points a gun at your head every day for a year, you could easily reach a point where the gun just becomes part of the background, unnoticed and not feared.'[25]

Indeed, there may be at times an inverse relationship between the level of capability bared in a maritime diplomatic event and the coercive or reassurance output. A massive display of potential force could easily be seen as a bluff by a rival unwilling to believe that such a threat will be carried out. In his masterful treatise on coercion, Thomas C. Schelling examines the various aspects that make for effective deterrence or compellence, noting that the perception of irrationality, a lack of strategic options and other characteristics can make an opponent seem more likely to use violence. According to Schelling, in deterrence '[s]aying so, unfortunately, does not make it true; and if it is true, saying so does not always make it believed'.[26]

In this way, coercive maritime diplomacy was so successful for Western powers during the age of imperialism because the demonstrations of naval power would periodically translate into violence. The recipients of any threat would therefore be very aware that the threat was supported by a very real intent to use violence if it was believed to be advantageous.[27] Indeed, the level of capability that might need to be deployed at any one time to send a message could be relatively modest, but as it would be supported implicitly by the might of, say, the Royal Navy, its coercive or co-operative effect could be very great. In this way, as Luttwak points out, 'To speak softly while carrying a big stick may be less effective as a deterrent than to make a firm, overt commitment to use a rather smaller stick.'[28]

By contrast, there have been no significant naval clashes in East Asia, beyond the Korean peninsula, since 1988, when China wrested Johnson South Reef in the Spratly Islands from Vietnam. This may have created an expectation that violence will not be used, and helps explain why there has been a creeping robustness in China's rhetoric around its maritime disputes, eventually referring to them as 'core interests' akin to Taiwan and Tibet in 2010.[29] The use of the phrase core interests indicates plainly that Beijing would be willing to use force to protect what it sees as its sovereign rights in the region. It is, therefore, intended to ensure continued credibility in the coercion used over the various islands.

The same law of diminishing credibility can also be applied to co-operative maritime diplomacy, largely where its aim is to reassure or support an ally. The aim of such diplomacy is, at times, to set the minds of one's partners at ease in relation to the possibility of a future conflict one might share. Through its very presence, a military or paramilitary vessel indicates the interest of another state in the affairs of the recipient. This need not even be for a close ally, but even for a state with which one has relatively ambivalent relations. Thus, the US has since 2009 increased the frequency of its visits to erstwhile enemy communist Vietnam, since the first visit of a US aircraft carrier, the USS *John C. Stennis*, to Vietnamese waters.[30] The US has also repaired several vessels in Vietnam,

including in the former US and Soviet base of Cam Ranh Bay.[31] This is ostensibly purely co-operative diplomacy, and a way for Washington to build a stronger relationship with a country burgeoning economically. However, the timing of the visits, as China has become more assertive in the South China Sea, also suggests that the US is eager to demonstrate its interest in the region and the fate of both the dispute and Vietnam's relationship with its large northern neighbour.

Sometimes, though, the level of credibility of one's resolve can easily be tested, despite continued presence or exercises. Hence, in 1976 the US ballistic missile submarine USS *Sam Houston* surfaced in Chinhae port in South Korea, becoming only the second such submarine to sail onto a foreign port (the first visit was by the same boat to Izmir in Turkey in 1963 to reassure Ankara after the withdrawal of Jupiter missiles after the Cuban missile crisis). What followed between 1978 and 1981 were 34 more visits of various ballistic missile submarines.[32] The remarkable and unexplained series of visits for these most secretive of vessels may have something to do with waning South Korean belief in the credibility of the US nuclear umbrella (Seoul had, in fact, clandestinely begun its own nuclear research programme in 1974 for exactly this reason but was encouraged to close the programme in 1976 by the US).[33] By deploying the submarines, the US was sending a clear message to South Korea (and anyone else who wanted to listen) that Washington remained committed to its nuclear obligations with its ally. It was essentially a bid to reverse the trend of diminishing credibility as perceived by South Korea.

The need to reaffirm commitment and credibility can be particularly acute at times of heightened tension. During such periods, a continuation of similar levels of co-operative maritime diplomacy could be seen as an unwillingness to react to an immediate threat, and hence a lack of resolve as an ally. This explains why the co-operative diplomacy seen in regular exercises and ship rotations can quickly escalate to a form of coercive diplomacy to demonstrate more clearly the resolve of the allies. Hence, Japan and the US exercise together regularly, but in June 2013 the Japanese forces were invited for the first time to participate in the US amphibious exercise Dawn Blitz. The Japanese turned up in force, deploying their largest and most capable ship, the JS *Hyuga* helicopter carrier, an Aegis-equipped destroyer, a tank landing ship, Chinooks, Apaches and about 1,000 troops. The exercises, occurring as they did amid continued heightened tension over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea, were pointedly aimed at demonstrating the close relationship between the US and Japan and their capability (and intent) to launch contested amphibious operations on small islands. The message was heard loud and clear: China apparently requested that the amphibious landing part of the exercises be cancelled, presumably to avoid further tension.[34]

## The enduring utility of maritime diplomacy

There is, therefore, the possibility that co-operative, persuasive or coercive maritime diplomacy will be less effective as time goes on or it is used more. This is just one fact limiting its utility and efficacy, as certain scenarios preclude or discourage the use of such diplomacy, while even when used the signals and messages sent may be misconstrued or misplaced.

Nonetheless, there are a variety of reasons why maritime diplomacy remains a tool of choice for most countries around the world. It is often effective, highly flexible, relatively cost-efficient in any instance and provides actors with a wider array of options short of conflict.

While coercive maritime diplomacy may appear at first glance to be an indication of increasing tension, it can also be a stabilising mechanism. Coercive maritime diplomacy acts as a valve through which any tension can be released without resort to conflict. The activity allows actors to further their aims in a dispute or a diplomatic campaign while also avoiding, and possibly signalling a lack of desire to enter into, broader warfare. The Cuban missile crisis can be viewed in this sense: while there were various voices calling for more direct conflict with Cuba within President Kennedy's circle of advisors, the eventual action taken of a blockade effectively sent a message about the US's resolve on the issue while simultaneously punishing Cuba and preventing any further shipments to the island. The result was an increased pressure on Havana and Moscow to negotiate and the final agreement to withdraw missiles from Cuba and Turkey in a tit-for-tat move.[35] Maritime diplomacy is thus a useful preventive tool, even as it can be used as a coercive, persuasive or co-operative tool.

The consistent use of maritime diplomacy also becomes something of a commitment in itself. Once a state has begun to build influence through the deployment of its military or constabulary vessels on a regular basis, the failure to do so can be perceived as a signal in itself: of weakness, ambiguity or lack of resolve. While the activity is therefore highly useful for a range of actors, it can also become something of a burden. The consistent need to maintain maritime relationships that exist and have been built up, or the constant demand to maintain a deterrent posture without fail for fear of a perception of indifference are time-consuming and can over time become expensive.

This, though, is a further indication that maritime diplomacy will continue to be a tool used widely by governments and actors worldwide. The utility of the activity and the necessity of its consistent usage once implemented ensure that maritime diplomacy continues to be and will continue to be one of the many devices used by policy makers to try and influence others and ensure their own goals are met.

## Notes

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# 5 Contemporary drivers of maritime diplomacy

> We could not silence this 'language of force' even if we wanted.[1]

The enduring utility of maritime diplomacy is just one of several reasons why it continues to be used worldwide. There are, in fact, a variety of other, more contemporary factors that have bolstered rather than weakened the appeal of maritime diplomacy for policy makers.

These range from the legal to the political, the moral to the technological. Combined, they provide the motivation for the use of maritime diplomacy as a form of political activity short of war to fulfil certain goals.

The fact that maritime diplomacy has continued to be used has been demonstrated by the various examples laid out in the preceding chapters, with various countries around the world engaging in co-operative, persuasive or coercive forms of diplomacy. Some of the reasons for this continued use are strategic trends that are likely to continue, and hence further increase the allure of maritime diplomacy. Others, while helping to encourage the use of maritime diplomacy rather than war over recent decades, may in the future discourage even the use of coercive maritime diplomacy in favour of other forms of coercion or persuasion. There are still other trends that are as yet just nascent but could also suggest maritime diplomacy will have to compete with a wider range of forms of diplomacy and become relatively less important as a result.

For the present, however, it would befit this analysis just to look at recent and current drivers for the use of maritime diplomacy by a range of different actors in recent years.

## Nationalism and sovereignty

The post-Cold War international system has been characterised by a number of seemingly contradictory factors and trends. On the one hand, it is a unipolar system dominated by a single country with an overwhelming military and economic dominance. Despite the economic growth and concomitant increase in defence expenditure of countries such as China, India and others, the US continues to spend more than the rest of the world on defence.[2] At the same time,

globalisation has eroded the concept of the nation state and empowered small groups of geographically isolated and economically disadvantaged individuals (such as Al Qaeda) to affect international politics and relations in ways seemingly unthinkable even two decades ago.

A similar dichotomy has arisen over the way states think about themselves and interact with each other. In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, a host of populations were suddenly empowered to seek nationhood along ethnic lines, leading to internecine civil wars and genocides. Self-determination was encouraged by Western states, who saw the creation of new European countries as overturning the Soviet domination of the previous half-century and enabling a shift towards a 'Westernisation' of the east of the continent, even though similar trends saw countries in post-imperial Africa, no longer bound by their Cold War alliances, descend into chaotic warfare. Yet, at the same time as this trend towards self-determination in the developing world took hold, suggesting a fiercer form of nationalism, technology and the peace dividend of the post-Cold War world encouraged borders in the West to fade into near-meaninglessness. Nation states have voluntarily ceded some of their sovereignty, through political-military organisations such as the EU, UN and NATO and trade organisations such as the WTO or NAFTA, in order to guarantee greater prosperity and security. Travel across the European continent is now largely possible without a passport, even though a journey from Estonia to Portugal is likely to take one through ten separate countries.

On the face of it, the deterioration in the concept of nationalism among the most powerful countries in the world should undermine the use of maritime diplomacy. Previously, the nationalism of the powerful states, fuelling the desire to protect their citizens and prevent any embarrassment to the nation, encouraged the use of force to defend their interests overseas. As US Secretary of the Navy Curtis D. Wilbur noted in 1924,

> To defend America, we must be prepared to defend its interests and our flag in every corner of the globe.… An American child crying on the banks of the Yangtze a thousand miles from the coast can summon the ships of the American Navy up that river to protect it from unjust assault.[3]

This concept of protection of a nation's interests with force no matter how minor the slight is one that has come to seem increasingly anachronistic. Whereas in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it may have been seen as necessary to use overwhelming force to secure one's interests owing to a lack of rule of law and the imperial system in place, in the current environment it is more likely to be seen as counterproductive to shoot first and collaborate later. This is not to say that Western countries will shy away from the use of force where it is seen as necessary or offer full consular services to citizens in trouble, but the idea that a war might begin over a citizen's body part, as happened with the War of Jenkins' Ear in 1739, seems absurd in the current era. Then, the severing of a British merchant sailor's ear by Spanish coastguard officials was used

as the pretext, eight years after the event, for a war with Spain to resolve some of the ongoing European power struggles.

Thus, the lack of virulent nationalism and the fact that it is no longer seen as necessary for once-imperial countries to save face in order to discourage any violence against a country's interests or citizens overseas makes the use of coercive maritime diplomacy less likely. Hence, when the US's ambassador to Libya and three other ambassadorial staff were killed in Benghazi, Libya in 2012, no warships were sent to flex American muscles or threaten onshore governments.

Persuasive or coercive maritime diplomacy, particularly through the naval presence mission, can still be powerful tools to be used, and the use of limited naval force is a much more palatable option than a full-scale war and occupation. Such an activity may be used for a variety of reasons, but nationalistic identity is decreasingly one of them among developed countries. But, arguably, the decline of nationalism and dilution of the concept of absolute sovereignty on defence issues has encouraged the use of co-operative maritime diplomacy among developed countries.

Eager to save costs and avoid violence where unnecessary, developed countries use co-operative maritime diplomacy to build capacity among less developed countries to enable them to assume responsibility for their own defence and security. The creation of the US's Africa Command, for example, in 2008 was largely aimed at developing greater outreach and engagement with African militaries in order to build capacity among African nations and prevent the development of ungoverned space, whether at sea or on land.

Co-operative maritime diplomacy among the developed countries has also become commonplace as these states attempt to increase their ability to operate with each other in coalitions. This is related to another aspect of the diminution of nationalism, the establishment and expansion of multilateral defence and security organisations. As developed countries have integrated themselves into multilateral organisations, and the post-Cold War peace dividend has removed immediate threats to their territory, defence budgets have declined significantly. (In 2012, for example, defence spending in European NATO states was 11 per cent lower than in 2006, according to *The Military Balance*.)[4] This, ironically, forces these countries to further integrate into multilateral defence and political organisations to ensure their security. Thus, the UK armed forces now explicitly state that their primary force planning involves the assumption that major operations will involve coalitions and allies.[5] This has three effects: it reduces the ability of some of the most powerful militaries in the world to launch independent operations overseas, thereby encouraging the use of more limited forms of force where necessary. Second, it forces countries to work in multilateral coalitions, where partners may have very differing goals and varying willingness to use force. Thus, there is the possibility that coalition action will be defined by the lowest common denominator – that is, the level of intervention acceptable to countries such as Germany who are constrained by constitutional and historical factors in overseas operations. And third, it necessarily encourages co-operative maritime diplomacy as the various countries within the coalitions

and organisations seek to further their military–military relations and ensure interoperability. Thus, NATO and NATO allies hold a series of exercises every year to enable their various agencies and organisations to work together more effectively.

At the same time as developed countries are confining themselves within multilateral organisations and (particularly in Europe) seeing a reduction in nationalistic policies that once would have encouraged the use of violence, nationalistic developing countries are becoming more able to use all forms of maritime diplomacy further afield, as their power projection capabilities improve and overseas interests increase. The growth in overseas trade and investment among developing countries such as India and China means they now have a vested interest in securing sea lines of communication, the continued operation of their commercial ventures and the safety of their citizens. The rapid economic growth among, in particular, Asian developing countries has also meant a sharply increased ability to project power further overseas and therefore utilise limited maritime force where necessary. It is these same countries that, following centuries of imperial domination and a sense that their rightful position in the international system is returning, retain a strong sense of nationalism that has not been diluted by integration into multilateral organisations. Thus, while a lack of nationalism in developed countries may discourage extreme violence and encourage co-operative or limited coercive maritime diplomacy, a stronger sense of nationalism in developing countries, married with their increasing ability to act, encourages the use, for the first time, of maritime diplomacy in all its forms. The clearest example of this trend is occurring in the East and South China Seas, where the toxic combination of nationalism, a sense of injustice and an increased ability to secure the seas has led to near-continuous and at times assertive patrols with constabulary forces occasionally punctuated by sabre rattling through pointed naval exercises. The willingness to use maritime diplomacy further afield is currently at a nascent stage and currently all co-operative: China engaged in its first exercises in the Mediterranean in 2007, for example, and its navy sailed into the Black Sea for the first time in 2012.[6] At the same time, the counter-piracy operations in which China has participated in the Indian Ocean since 2008 and its first active operation in the Mediterranean in 2011 to assist in non-combatant evacuation operations, while tactical in nature and not diplomatic, suggest a growing propensity to use naval force overseas to secure interest. It may just be a matter of time, therefore, before coercive maritime diplomacy becomes a staple of the navies of developing countries as they seek to ensure their continued economic growth.

## International law

A further way in which most countries have restricted their own sovereignty willingly for mutual benefit has been through the adoption and codification of international law.

The path of international law over the past several hundred years has been to gradually codify norms that restrict action within warfare and constrain moves

towards the use of warfare. Rear Admiral James F. McNulty has described this process, saying:

> Beginning with the Covenant of the League of Nations after World War I, progressing through the Pact of Paris in 1928 and culminating in the Charter of the United Nations signed in 1945, the international community steadily progressed toward the official banishment of war as an acceptable 'legal' means of solving international differences.[7]

The primary international legal system in the maritime domain is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Finalised in 1982 and coming into force in 1994, a year after the sixtieth country deposited its ratification, the convention formalised the current tiered system of zones of sea territory over which states may claim sovereignty or sovereign rights. It also clarified the rights of all states in international waters (beyond 12 nautical miles from a state's coastline) and in territorial waters, within 12 nautical miles. This included the rights of all states to pass through territorial waters, even with warships, as long as it was for innocent purposes, as well as the right of all vessels to use the high seas without restriction as long as it was for peaceful purposes.

UNCLOS also mandated that all state parties, theoretically, would use negotiation or peaceful dispute resolution mechanisms to resolve any outstanding disagreements among them. While certain states have used the perfectly legal right to opt out of these otherwise mandatory dispute resolution mechanisms, such as China, through the evocation of Article 298, most state parties have agreed that such resolution mechanisms will be used. A number of landmark cases have since played out in international arbitration, either through the International Court of Justice of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea. In 2008, for example, Malaysia and Singapore agreed to abide by an ICJ ruling that apportioned Pedra Branca and Middle Rocks between the two; in 2012, Bangladesh and Myanmar accepted the ruling from ITLOS over a maritime delimitation dispute.[8]

The codification of international maritime law has therefore had a number of effects. First, it has become the de facto instrument by which disputant parties agree to resolve disputes, even where it is seen as largely a dispute management rather than resolution instrument. Thus, in the South China Sea all disputant parties (save for Taiwan, which is forbidden from signing UNCLOS given its lack of UN status), agreed through the 2002 Declaration of Conduct for Parties in the South China Sea to use UNCLOS as the primary legal and dispute resolution mechanism. Equally, in the Arctic, the Ilulissat Declaration of 2008 included an acceptance by all five Arctic littoral states that disagreements would be managed either through bilateral negotiation or under the auspices of UNCLOS. This does not mean that UNCLOS will ever be used to actually resolve the disputes, as the statement that the disagreements will be managed under the auspices of UNCLOS could be seen as just a confidence-building measure in and of itself without any particular desire to actually take the disputes to arbitration or seek a final resolution as appears to be the case with the South China Sea.

However, it is an indication of the primacy of UNCLOS as a legal instrument, the ubiquity of reference to UNCLOS as a dispute management and resolution device and the normative pressure on states to use international law as a framework to prevent a descent into conflict. (This is despite the fact that the most powerful country in the world, the US, has yet to ratify UNCLOS and therefore remains outside of its strictures. The US Navy, however, has repeatedly noted its adherence to the principles of UNCLOS and international maritime law more generally. In unequivocal terms, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey stated in testimony to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in May 2012 that he joined 'Secretary [of State Hillary], Secretary [of Defense Leon] Panetta, the Joint Chiefs and every Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and every Chief of Naval Operations since the Convention was submitted to the Senate in 1994 in offering my unqualified support for this treaty'.)[9]

The South China Sea, however, is an excellent example of the fact that while international law can be seen to discourage the use of violence broadly and to use legal recourse as a dispute management mechanism, the limit to the use of warfare does not extend to maritime diplomacy. Rather, the fact that UNCLOS mandates for the innocent passage of vessels through territorial waters or more importantly the use of international waters by all vessels legally codifies the ability of states to sail naval or constabulary vessels through another state's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone. It is notable, for instance, that in the East China Sea Beijing has attempted to avoid deploying its constabulary vessels in the 12-nautical-mile claimed territorial water around the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands on a regular basis and has instead for the majority of visits restricted them to the contiguous waters that run from 12 to 24 nautical miles from the coast of these islands. (By end July 2013, of the 322 days since the deployments began, 229 days saw deployments to the contiguous zone and only 54 days to territorial waters.)[10] This allows China to obey the letter of the law, even if the spirit is arguably transgressed by the near-continuous deployment of its constabulary vessels to these waters in order to suggest Chinese territorial claims.

In fact, perhaps because of the increased perception of international law's universal importance and the concomitant idea that legal recourse should be pursued rather than warfare, maritime diplomacy has become a more useful tool for policy makers who may feel constrained in their use of violence. Diplomatic points can be made and coercion or co-operation encouraged, without breaking any international maritime law. In the contemporary context, it is also notable than most instances of coercive maritime diplomacy, from exercises to forceful deployments of naval vessels, occur within the acceptable boundaries of UNCLOS, either in the 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of a consenting state but close enough to its target to make a point, such as the US exercises in conjunction with South Korea in the Yellow Sea and Sea of Japan, or in high seas, such as the deployment of US aircraft carriers to the Pacific near Taiwan in 1996.

UNCLOS has also furthered the use of maritime diplomacy by more clearly defining the rights of states, and therefore which rights must be protected, and a number of other naval missions and roles. The exact clear definition given to the

zones of territorial waters, contiguous waters, exclusive economic zones and extended continental shelves within UNCLOS have clarified exactly what states can claim at sea and what areas are legally available for resource extraction. It has therefore become more imperative for developing states to better patrol and secure these waters and resources, while developed states are energised to assist those less wealthy countries to govern their maritime space and ensure areas of sea do not become hot spots for piracy and maritime crime that may affect international interests or destabilise the coastal state. The Australian Pacific Patrol Boat Programme is an excellent example of this kind of co-operative maritime diplomacy. Recognising the inability of small Pacific states to police their vast exclusive economic zones in the wake of the signing of UNCLOS in 1982 that delineated the maritime rights of such island states, Australia announced the Pacific patrol boat programme in 1983. By 1997, 22 patrol boats had been donated to 12 Pacific Island countries in a bid to improve maritime governance and prevent illegal fishing. While the primary role for the programme has been to protect fishing in the islands' vast EEZs totaling millions of square kilometres, they have also provided maritime surveillance and engaged in counter-trafficking and -narcotics operations. Australia continues to offer training and support, providing Canberra with the ability to assist in the policing and governance of these large areas of sea and, in turn, receive intelligence and information from the participating states.

Equally, the extension of EEZs to 200 nautical miles and the fact that this has created various overlapping claims along the state parties has catalysed the signatories to try to enforce their claims through coercive and at times muscular maritime diplomacy where legal solutions are not seen as viable. Thus, countries have been emboldened by the fact that they now perceive a legal right to their maritime claims, even when they intersect with others. This encourages intractability in actual maritime claims and therefore a desire to assert these claims through a maritime presence where necessary. The positions held by the disputants in the South China Sea, which are in the case of China, Taiwan and Vietnam maximalist in scope and lacking in clarity, are increasingly supported through a maritime constabulary presence. As Hedley Bull wrote, 'As the long arms of maritime nations reach out across the sea and meet, there arises at sea a new source of international conflict which previously existed only on land: disputed frontiers.'[11]

Other, more esoteric, sets of missions have also been better defined by UNCLOS and therefore could almost be perceived to be legally mandated by codified international law. Take, as an example, the global public good of freedom of navigation. While this has been ensured by the US since the end of the Second World War, and before that by the Royal Navy, the concept of freedom of navigation was not necessarily universally accepted or clearly defined and demonstrably agreed upon by states. Even though many countries may have agreed with the principle, it was not clear where freedom of navigation should be enforced or what rights and responsibilities coastal states had. UNCLOS has seemingly clarified this issue, with almost all countries in the

world agreeing on the principle of freedom of navigation, those international straits that must be kept open and free for all maritime traffic, and the zones of territorial or sovereign rights each state has (and therefore where other states should not try to enforce freedom of navigation). Thus, 'UNCLOS has actually helped the US and other countries more clearly define a subset of the naval presence mission, that of ensuring freedom of navigation.'[12]

International law, as manifested through UNCLOS, has therefore simultaneously discouraged the use of violence to resolve disputes and encouraged the use of co-operative and coercive maritime diplomacy as an acceptable form of maritime activity to fulfil certain goals of territorial claims and freedom of navigation. It has essentially provided a legal and ethical standard to which countries can refer when engaging in maritime diplomacy, in order to justify their actions.

## Multipolarity of power

If international law is simultaneously a constraint on the use of warfare and a catalyst for the use of maritime diplomacy, what does the shape and equilibrium of the current international system suggest for the activity?

The end of the Cold War introduced a highly imbalanced international system. The collapse of the Soviet Union essentially removed the single competitor to the US in particular and the West in general. The differential in power between the US and the rest of the world in 1991 was stark and enormous. Washington could, therefore, act with almost total impunity, without fearing that a rival would retaliate in any form. In an earlier time, such a disparity in power would almost certainly have led to imperialistic expansion and the conquering of foreign lands: were it not for self-restraint and a desire to act within the restrictive boundaries of contemporary law and norms, this may have been the case in the post-Cold War era.

In terms of what this means for maritime diplomacy, some analysts believed that the removal of the only rival would lead to a far greater propensity to use coercive diplomacy whenever desired. Luttwak claims that

> [a]s a general principle, it may be asserted that in a world which is decreasingly bipolar (though not greatly multipolar either) the scope for armed suasion is greater, and the risks smaller, since the likelihood of countersuasion by the other super power is also much smaller.[13]

This is true to an extent, although arguably there were few restrictions to armed intervention by either superpower during the Cold War, as demonstrated by the Korean War, Vietnam War, Grenada invasion, Bay of Pigs debacle, invasion of Panama, invasion of Dominican Republic, Soviet reaction to the Prague spring and the brutal campaign in Afghanistan, among many others.

Similarly, in European imperial times, intense rivalries existed among the European powers and conflict was common, but this was not a disincentive from

the use of violence to further each state's self-interest. Arguably, the competition with one's rivals actually added a note of urgency to the imperial land grabs, whether through the use of coercive diplomacy or warfare. Indeed, the disparity of power between European states and developing states made maritime diplomacy both effective and inexpensive. The ability to gain territory and influence simply through the deployment of a few battleships made it a very appealing form of foreign policy.

It is therefore not clear that the balance of power in the Cold War acted as a deterrent or restraint on the use of violence, either through war or through coercive maritime diplomacy, for either side. While conceptually this appears to be true, empirically there is a lack of evidence for it. Nonetheless, this belief did motivate to some extent US foreign policy in the 2000s. (Paradoxically, US foreign policy in the immediate aftermath of the end of the Cold War in the 1990s was more isolationist, with the US reluctantly involved in Haiti, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia but preferring, where possible, the use of stand-off weaponry from offshore (such as in Operation Infinite Reach in 1998 which involved cruise missile attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan) or limited force without taking the lead in on-the-ground commitments, as in Kosovo. The Clinton administration even withdrew from Somalia in 1993 after a handful of deaths despite the fact that the US military in Somalia represented perhaps the greatest imbalance of power between two entities in human history.)

The Bush administration, inspired by the views propounded by think tanks such as the now-defunct Project for a New American Century, sought to utilise the US's privileged position in the immediate post-Cold War environment.[14] The war in Iraq was an example of the foreign policy that came to be labelled as neo-conservative (but could perhaps be better known as neo-realist interventionist), which sought to utilise the US's newfound unchecked power to change the international system to its benefit through democratisation. (In discussing neo-conservatism in 2006, the *Independent* noted that 'the ideology is difficult to define. It used to be a blend of liberal democracy and hawkish foreign policy. Today the term refers to idealistic hawkishness'.)[15] However foolhardy it may seem in hindsight, the Iraq war was a vivid example that in such a unipolar context, few barriers exist to the use of violence, suggesting that full-scale war may be seen as a viable policy option, negating the need for the more affordable and subtle effects of maritime diplomacy. Indeed, the Iraq war actually superseded some coercive military diplomacy, in the form of two no-fly zones and a US-led international maritime coalition that enforced the UN-mandated sanctions on the country.

What is occurring now in the international system is a shift away from the unipolarity of the first two decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union towards a greater multipolarity. The primary driver behind this is the rise of emergent powers, such as China, India and Brazil, and to some extent the return of former great powers, such as Russia, to positions of relatively greater strength. A discussion over the future trajectory of each of these various states is beyond the scope of this chapter, but one of the major trends of the past three decades

has been the rapid economic growth of various developing countries, and with it the concomitant increase in their defence expenditures. The result is a fundamental shift in the balance of power, so that China now has the world's largest foreign reserves, has become the world's largest consumer of hydrocarbons and has the second largest defence budget in the world. India, Brazil and Russia have similarly seen their defence budgets and trade profiles increase, while other countries such as South Korea, Turkey and South Africa have also witnessed rapid growth, in some cases rivalling major Western European economies in size and dynamism.[16]

This has seen the US's power decline, if not in absolute terms then certainly in relative terms (although it can also be argued that the US's absolute power has also decreased since the global financial crisis of 2007–08). While the current international system may not be classified as 'multipolar' in that there are direct rivals and competitors to the US, it is certainly not as unipolar as it was in the early 1990s.

This situation, much as with the Cold War, should decrease the perception that states can act with impunity, as developing countries such as China are emboldened to voice concern and even diplomatically obstruct such policies. This may not prevent proxy wars, such as Vietnam and Korea in the Cold War, but it should undermine the hubristic confidence espoused by the intellectual core of the Bush administration. In such an environment, activities that can still achieve foreign policy goals without the costly and risky outcomes of a war, become more tempting. Maritime diplomacy therefore can become a tool of choice for the developed countries.

The other side of a polarising international system also suggests an increased willingness to use maritime diplomacy. Developing countries, now more confident in their ability to use coercion as well as cooperation in their military diplomacy as their relative power increases, facilitated by the improvements in their military capabilities, are now more likely to engage in maritime diplomacy. China is at the forefront of this trend. Having undertaken a variety of coercive diplomatic strategies in recent years, from the official and unofficial sanctions placed on countries such as Japan in 2010, the Philippines in 2012 and Norway since 2010, Beijing is simultaneously realising the value of its maritime forces and utilising them to reinforce its claims to sovereignty, as well as building influence in countries as far afield as Europe, Latin America and Africa. India has been more regionally focused in its maritime diplomacy in recent years, building influence in particular through its cooperative visits to countries such as the Seychelles, where two to three vessels visit on average per year.[17] New Delhi is no stranger to more coercive forms of maritime diplomacy, however, with two frigates deployed off the coast of Sri Lanka in 1987 to encourage adherence to a ceasefire agreement with the Tamil Tigers.[18] This was just one of several deployments in the Indian Ocean intended to ensure stability in India's smaller island neighbours.

There is one other aspect to developments in the international system that may have a significant effect on the use of maritime diplomacy: the trend toward

democratisation that has accelerated since the 1980s. The democratic peace theory has many critics, and counter-examples of democracies going to war against each other abound, perhaps most recently in 2008 between Russia and Georgia. Nonetheless, there is good evidence that democratic states have, historically, gone to war with each other less often than with other non-democratic states.[19] In a more democratic system, war is therefore theoretically less likely; most disagreements will be negotiated bilaterally or mediated through international organisations or third parties, both peaceful methods. However, the need for maritime security endures, and hence co-operative maritime diplomacy has become a useful tool for states to collaborate in shared goals. At the same time, those very occasional disagreements that require a more robust response, while never leading to warfare, may well develop into small-scale stand-offs between otherwise friendly democratic states. The seizure of Parsley Island, a Spanish-administered island off the coast of Morocco, in 2002 is one such example. Morocco landed a handful of soldiers on the tiny and unpopulated island to claim it once again; after objections were lodged but no ground was ceded, Spain responded with Operation Romeo-Sierra, which involved the landing of 28 special forces officers while the Spanish Navy secured the surrounding seas in an operation lasting less than an hour.[20] The fact that war between the two democratic neighbours is unfeasible does not mean that maritime diplomacy is not a valuable instrument for the furtherance of foreign policy goals, while preventing any unwanted escalation.

## Changing character of war

While nationalism, sovereignty, international law and the balance of power are all to do with the international system, there are other reasons for the continued use of maritime diplomacy in the contemporary context.

Much of the discussion thus far has focused on the limitations and restrictions placed on the use of war, whether normative, legal or systemic. While war may be a less probable instrument for governments to use in these circumstances, diplomatic goals have not disappeared and hence other policy tools that fall short of war become more useful. At the same time, a world without war is likely to be one in which there is greater collaboration among nations, with military services engaging in co-operative diplomacy to entrench these trends further.

That there has been a decline in warfare is empirically testable, and the evidence appears to support the assumption. The Uppsala Conflict Data Programme in Sweden has tallied the number of conflicts worldwide since the 1970s and backdated it to the end of the Second World War (see Figure 5.1). The data seems to suggest that, while the number of wars increased steadily throughout the Cold War, they have declined considerably since the wars of self-determination in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Perhaps more significantly, there has been a shift in the type of war occurring. While a substantial proportion of wars in the early post-war years were either ‘extra-systemic’ (that is, those imperial campaigns against insurgent groups in

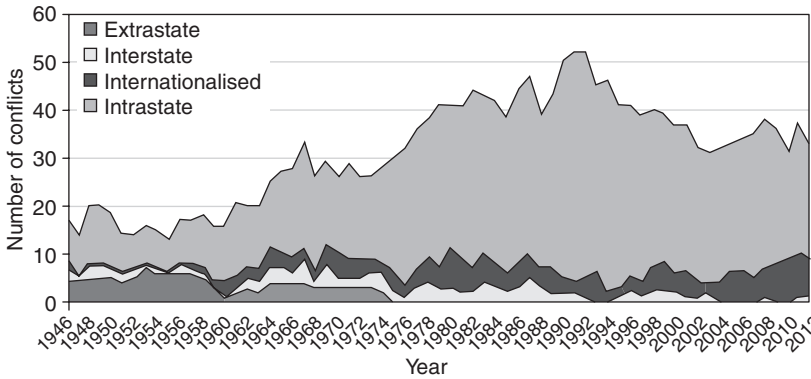



*Figure 5.1* Global armed conflicts by type, 1946–2012 (source: Themnér, Lotta and Wallensteen, Peter, 'Armed Conflict, 1946–2012', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (2013)).

the colonised country) or interstate, by the 2000s these forms of conflict had all but disappeared. Almost the entirety of growth in the number of conflicts during the Cold War was owing to an increase in the number of intrastate wars, as post-imperial countries witnessed internal struggles for power and decolonisation led to the rise of nationalistic self-determination in a number of states.

In his comprehensive overview of human violence, Steven Pinker took a much longer historical dataset and came to a similar conclusion: the number of war deaths throughout the world has declined substantially. Pinker called this the 'Pacification Process', the move away from a Hobbesian hunter-gatherer state of nature to settled, agricultural communities and thence to cities and states. His thesis attempted to reflect a steady decline in 'protracted, collective killings that can be called warfare' from human ancestors through prehistory to the various stages of civilizational development.[21]

It is not just the general decline in warfare that encourages the use of diplomacy short of war to achieve foreign policy goals, it is the development of warfare itself. One key theme that is emerging currently is the intent of various governments to avoid the lengthy land campaigns of the 2000s, which brought questionable strategic gain for overwhelming cost. Particularly since the traumatic experiences of the prolonged state-building campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, Western governments have begun to prioritise other ways of achieving their goals.

The US is at the forefront of this trend. The much-vaunted 'pivot' to Asia has been developed alongside a military concept known as AirSea Battle (ASBC). This concept emphasises the use of the maritime and air domains to ensure mobility and a lack of expensive land-based engagement, while ensuring freedom of navigation in the global commons. ASBC, and the wider Joint Operational Concept in which it is nested, have been designed specifically to

overcome what the US calls 'anti-access/area denial capabilities', which are those asymmetric military capabilities that would complicate US freedom of manoeuvre in littoral waters, such as anti-satellite weapons, anti-ship missiles, submarines and mines.[22]

What this reflects is a broader strategic trend in warfighting away from the land towards the maritime and air domains. It also underlines the growing desire for Western militaries to be able to influence other parties without the expensive, long-term interventions of the 2000s. This is what the former First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope called 'influence without embroilment', emphasising the suitability of maritime forces to deliver effect while maintaining a risk-free detachment.[23]

In a different domain, this delivery of effect without long-term engagement is amply demonstrated by the Obama administration's penchant for unmanned aerial vehicle strikes. According to the New America Foundation, the number of UAV strike missions (commonly known as drone strikes) in Pakistan jumped from just four in 2008 to 122 in 2010, before declining again to 73 in 2011 and 48 in 2012. This dataset does not include the increasing incidence of strikes in Yemen, where just one mission was launched in 2010, but 47 strikes were ordered in 2012.[24]

Such a use of UAVs reflects the renewed demand for stand-off, risk-free tactics from Western governments fearful of domestic discontent over foreign campaigns and constrained by an austere fiscal environment. It also highlights the changing nature of conflict. In 2010, the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre of the UK Ministry of Defence published the Future Character of Conflict, which tried to suggest what warfare might look like five years hence in 2014 and 30 years hence in 2029. It identified that conflict will be increasingly confusing, with state and non-state actors, symmetric and asymmetric capabilities merging. It also identified the battlespace as being congested, cluttered, contested, connected and constrained. This proved a prescient call given the US's subsequent focus on guaranteeing access in the littorals by overcoming anti-access/area denial capabilities. But it also highlighted that traditional Western warfighting is less effective in such environments, where the adversary may blend in with the civilian. Again, this highlights the difficulties Western governments face in waging on-land campaigns, and hence indicates the renewed preference for maritime effect.

Just as the US has shifted to the sea, so have other countries. China, for such a prolonged period of time a land-focused continentalist power under much of the Ming and Qing dynasties, has now begun to move towards a maritime strategy. While the commissioning of its first aircraft carrier may be the most ostentatious sign of its growing maritime power, a series of speeches and comments from the country's leaders reflect the ideological shift.[25] Other countries are similarly more interested in the sea than they have been in the past: in the same month that it was revealed that China may be building its first indigenous aircraft carrier (the *Liaoning* is a former Ukrainian hull), India launched its first indigenous carrier, while Japan launched a large helicopter carrier that seems to

suggest a growing willingness to project power despite its pacifistic constitution.[26] Brazil is also investing heavily in its navy, purchasing nuclear-powered submarines, while other Asian states such as Vietnam and the Philippines are similarly purchasing naval equipment to better secure their claimed water.[27] There is, therefore, a shift to the maritime among developing countries. This is particularly pronounced in Asia, traditionally a very maritime region with a strong history of oceanic trade, as countries emerge from internal ructions and wars and are better able to afford maritime projection capabilities.

There are, then, three complimentary trends in the character of war and trends in military procurement that suggest a greater use of the maritime domain generally, and greater use of maritime diplomacy more specifically: the long-term downward trend in interstate warfare, the shift to the maritime by developed countries seeking to avoid costly land-based campaigns and the shift to the maritime by developing countries suddenly able to focus on and secure their maritime periphery and overseas interests. All three can be seen as drivers for maritime diplomacy in the current era.

## Austerity and recession

It would be remiss, writing in 2013/14, not to mention perhaps the most influential event of the past decade in human affairs: the global financial crisis. The disaster that struck world economies, particularly in the developed world but increasingly also in the developing world, was initiated by a financial sector taking too many risks with complex derivative products in a highly leveraged environment. The effects, though, have been far-reaching, not just in job losses and home repossessions, but in politics, society and culture. Arguably the global financial crisis, and its various second- and third-order effects in global markets, has been a catalyst for the acceleration in the historic shift in the balance of power from Europe to Asia, the economic woes that inspired the Arab spring to course through the Middle East and North Africa and a host of other effects too complex to fathom.

In the world of warfare and diplomacy, however, the effects of the global financial crisis have been fairly straight-forward: a reduction in government, and therefore defence, budgets in the developed world.

This should have two countervailing effects on the appeal of maritime diplomacy. On the one hand, it only further entrenches the idea that Western governments will be keen to avoid the costly land campaigns of the 2000s. In fact, in the US the budgetary constraints being felt by the Department of Defense and falling disproportionately on the US Army, as it draws down from Afghanistan, are a further indication of the growing importance of the maritime. The Army, for example, is being asked to save US$18.5 billion over four years from 2013 to 2017 in efficiency savings, whereas the Navy is being asked for just US$5.7 billion worth of cuts. Between 2012 and 2013, the Army has already seen US$16.7 billion in cuts, all owing to the drawdown in Afghanistan and reductions in overseas contingency operations funding.[28] In such an environment, the

cost-effectiveness of maritime diplomacy, both in supporting allies and partners to share the defence burden and in signalling to adversaries intent and capabilities, becomes even more enticing.

However, on the other hand there are simply fewer assets to hand with which to undertake maritime diplomacy. As the Defence, Concept and Doctrine Centre noted in another paper in 2012,

> the dramatic reduction in quantitative terms of Western naval capabilities over the last 2 decades is forecast to continue. This is especially true for the classes of relatively inexpensive ships that are needed to maintain a continuous naval presence in areas of national strategic interest.[29]

On balance, it is naturally impossible to gauge accurately whether this will lead to an increase or decrease in maritime diplomacy, because each particular event will depend on the interests, capabilities and risks in play. However, there are recent examples that help inform our analysis and prediction of the current and future environments. One is the NATO campaign off the coast of Libya in 2011. Then, the UK and France were eager to deliver effect, prevent the Ghaddafi regime from retaking Benghazi and possibly exacting punitive revenge, and support the rebels in their attempted ouster of the mercurial colonel. Both countries, however, were in the throes of a multi-year depression with insufficient funds or popular support for a prolonged campaign. Equally, the US was less than enthusiastic for another land-based campaign that could expend resources and lives for unknown outcomes. What was cobbled together was a NATO operation (Unified Protector) led by the UK and France, with the US 'leading from behind', in the words of a White House staffer.[30] Hampered by popular scepticism and straitened finances, the countries involved opted for a no-fly zone, maritime exclusion zone and arming the rebels rather than becoming directly involved in an on-the-ground intervention. Even this limited operation proved a strain on resources: Italy withdrew their small aircraft carrier *Giuseppe Garibaldi* early on in the operation owing to a concern over costs, with the Centre for European Reform claiming this to be the first time a NATO member state had sent home a key unit in the middle of a conflict owing to a lack of funds.[31] A month later, the French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* was withdrawn for maintenance, having spent a number of months at sea prior to the Libya crisis escalating.[32]

This seems to suggest that if the political will exists, states will continue to use force where required, and given the constraints of popular opinion and finances at home, a preferred option can be limited force from the sea and air (the latter in the case of Libya being launched both from sea and land). Of course, austerity is not something currently afflicting most rapidly developing emerging economies, where the primary constraint on the use of maritime diplomacy is capability. However, for the more advanced militaries in the world, austerity may well be a factor that encourages greater use of maritime diplomacy, to strengthen allies and coerce adversaries without on-land

intervention. Upon taking up his new position in August 2013, the UK's Chief of Defence Staff General Sir Nicholas Houghton hinted at this possibility by saying, 'I think the whole of Defence feels the impact of national austerity, but this can liberate our thinking about more efficient and effective ways of doing business.'[33]

## Maritime diplomacy and technology

Most of the factors mentioned thus far – globalisation, multilateralisation of diplomacy, a rebalance of power, shifts in conflict and austerity – point to a more conducive atmosphere for maritime diplomacy currently and for the foreseeable future. There is one area, though, that has the potential to undermine the attraction of maritime diplomacy in the more distant future: technology.

Advances in naval and weapons technology have thus far not nullified the utility of limited naval force. Indeed, it is arguable that they have increased the ability of maritime forces to project their power inland, and therefore increased the efficacy of coercion from the sea. As mentioned in chapter 4, long-range cruise missiles now mean that naval forces can extend their reach several thousand miles inland, while naval aviation allows the delivery of multiple weapons several hundred miles from the vessel carrying the aircraft. The effect that can be delivered from the sea has therefore multiplied in scope and range, and is no longer restricted to the 30-mile range of the largest naval guns ever produced.

However, technological advances in other military domains have the potential to make maritime diplomacy less appealing as a cheap and effective form of coercion. The advent of unmanned aerial vehicles opens up the possibility of strategic-range UAVs in the future, which by being able to deliver a payload globally after being launched from land bases enables a government to threaten a military strike without risk to a human operator. Other UAVs with shorter ranges, such as medium-altitude, long-endurance UAVs, replicate to some extent the ability of a naval vessel to loiter with intent. The MQ-1 Predator can loiter over a target for several hours, mirroring, to a far less extent, the geographical sustainability of maritime forces.

These technologies are not yet at the stage where they can rival the geographical and tactical flexibility of maritime forces. Moreover, there are inherent and innate problems to the use of aerial forces in some coercive diplomatic situations, in that they almost always must enter another country's airspace, while maritime forces can by and large remain in international waters. Further, this does not undermine in any way the utility of maritime forces in co-operative diplomacy, nor the symbolism of a large vessel manned by hundreds of sailors, which is a far different signal to send than UAVs with no human operators on board or particular mass of which to speak. Nonetheless, unmanned vehicles could provide alternatives for policy makers, particularly for the use of limited force in other states, and their frequent use by the Obama administration suggests they are already fulfilling certain roles that would otherwise by filled by targeted assassinations by special forces or intelligence agents, or the use of stand-off

weaponry by naval vessels. It is feasible, for instance, that were Operation Infinite Reach to be launched today, the US would favour the use of UAVs to ensure greater accuracy and target identification prior to the strike than cruise missiles launched from ships.

Another area of technology that is providing options for policy makers in coercive diplomacy is cyber. The reliance of modern economies and militaries on information technology makes them acutely vulnerable to attacks on and disruption of this technology. The experience of Estonia in 2007 serves to illustrate this point, where a series of distributed denial-of-service attacks on government, media and banking websites took place over a series of weeks.[34] The attacks occurred after the relocation of a Soviet Second World War memorial, statue and war graves, and were likely launched by a disparate group of disaffected hackers, although suspicion of Russian tacit encouragement or involvement abides. In many ways, the Estonian attacks were akin to a naval blockade of previous years, with economic activity affected, particularly given the country's reliance on internet banking.[35] It is unclear whether the aim of the attacks was to compel or merely to punish, and hence whether they can be considered as a form of coercive diplomacy, but nonetheless the events of 2007 clearly indicated the utility of cyber operations in crippling an adversary and therefore making them vulnerable to coercion, without risking lives or expending much energy and money doing so.

Other forms of cyber operations also underline the unique usefulness of this domain for remote attacks and potentially diplomatic effect. The STUXNET virus was discovered in June 2010 after having infected a number of Siemens control systems used by Iran in its nuclear programme. According to the Institute for Science and International Security, the virus may have destroyed up to 1,000 centrifuges in place at Iran's Natanz enrichment facility.[36] The sophistication of the virus led to speculation that it had to have had a governmental sponsor, a fact seemingly corroborated by a *New York Times* report in mid 2012 that explicitly tied the virus to the US and Israel.[37] The virus proved its worth in hampering the Iranian nuclear programme without endangering any lives (as opposed to deaths of Iranian nuclear scientists since 2010 that resemble a targeted assassination programme).[38] Again, this is not a form of coercive diplomacy, in that it is not attempting to manage relations between the US, Israel and Iran but merely achieve tactical effects through the hindering of the Iranian nuclear programme. Nevertheless, should an actor compel or deter an adversary through the threatened or actual deployment of such a virus (or even one with wider and more devastating effects), which remains a very feasible possibility, then it would be a cost-effective form of coercive diplomacy.

Again, this does not detract from the utility of maritime diplomacy in a cooperative fashion, nor from the iconic effect gained from the arrival of a vessel offshore. But it does offer a relatively violence-free and remote method of coercion that may prove appealing to governments in the future in place of maritime forces. The problems with cyber diplomacy, particularly in the lack of certainty over how an adversary would react (given the almost total dearth of experience

and explicit policy or international law on retaliation), makes this the stuff of Hollywood movies rather than reality for the present, but it is an area of potential value for the future.

## Drivers for maritime diplomacy

Maritime diplomacy is therefore not less useful in and of itself, but it may increasingly have to compete with other forms of coercive diplomacy. These may include not just military effects but also economic or political, with official and unofficial sanctions often preferred before the physical response of coercive military diplomacy. China, for example, has become much more willing to engage in limited sanctions against its adversaries as a form of (often temporary) coercive diplomacy, with an unofficial quota on the export of rare earth metals instituted in 2010 amid a row over the arrest of a Chinese trawler captain, an unofficial prevention of the import of Norwegian salmon ongoing since 2010 following the awarding of the Nobel peace prize to a Chinese dissident, and the restriction on fruit imports from the Philippines in 2012 while the stand-off over Scarborough Shoal was playing out. Such coercive trade diplomacy has not detracted from the use of maritime diplomacy, but it has provided Beijing with greater options in its relations given its increasing economic leverage.

Nevertheless, the current international system, legal environment, fiscal austerity in the developed world, economic growth and capability expansion in the developing world and shift towards sea-based influence rather than land-based campaigns are likely to increase the appeal of maritime diplomacy for the foreseeable future. This is true for both co-operative and coercive maritime diplomacy, with the former a cost-effective way to build alliances and maintain relationships. For the latter, it is impossible to gauge when developed countries might again launch another extended state-building operation, but where possible it seems likely that the preferred policy will be an avoidance of on-the-ground intervention. This does not suggest isolationism: globalisation has ensured that security threats are now international and diffuse, and it is difficult for any country with global interests to ignore instability overseas. However, it may suggest a shift towards offshore intervention rather than onshore warfighting.

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# 6 Maritime diplomacy and game theory

> Navies are not only critical, decisive and enabling in times of war, but they may be even more important in maintaining the peace.[1]
>
> Admiral Mike Mullen, US Navy Chief of Naval Operations

The attempts since the mid twentieth century to apply game theory to political science has created a vast corpus of work dedicated to understanding decision-making processes, strategies and the thoughts of potential adversaries. The publication of *Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour* by John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern kickstarted the interdisciplinary study of game theory, combining mathematical approaches to problem solving with the often slippery concepts of social sciences.

Much of early game theory work was, perhaps unsurprisingly, dedicated to understanding deterrence. During the height of the Cold War in the 1950s and in the shadow of the first nuclear weapons being used in anger in 1945 and the first Soviet nuclear tests in 1949, game theory allowed political theorists to understand seemingly scientifically how both sides in a dilemma or confrontation would reason, thereby enabling the most effective strategy to further self-interest and avoid an extremely costly nuclear war to be developed. The fact that game theory appeared to advocate for a mutually assured destruction strategy, as enacted in the Cold War and pilloried so effectively in Stanley Kubrick's satirical film *Dr Strangelove*, did not undermine the utility of attempting to model the strategic choices made by fictional actors.

Game theory is directly relevant to maritime diplomacy. Given that deterrence is part and parcel of coercive maritime diplomacy, there is therefore already a clear relevance in game theory to maritime diplomacy. In all forms of maritime diplomacy there are interactive decisions being made by the actors involved, which is the essence of game theory. However, there has not as yet been a comprehensive analysis of how game theory can be applied to maritime diplomacy specifically, and how it may assist in understanding how maritime diplomatic events unfold.

Any specific coercive maritime diplomatic event can be analysed through the prism of game theory (or interactive decision theory). Each event in coercive

maritime diplomacy offers a discrete, interactive, multiparty series of decisions (moves), and it is therefore hypothetically possible to game theorise any incident. In co-operative maritime diplomacy, actors are equally making judgements, often simultaneously, about the value of co-ordinating their actions, how this will affect their security and whether the co-operation is a positive move for them. As such, game theory is equally relevant to the less confrontational version of maritime diplomacy.

## Maritime diplomacy and non-cooperative games

When actors engage in co-operative behaviour it appears to be entirely non-zero-sum, and without negative consequences. It therefore seems to be what might colloquially be known as a 'no-brainer'. Why wouldn't governments and other actors co-operate in order to save money, ensure security and share information or expertise?

However, each co-operative event is, in reality, part of a wider strategic decision-making process that takes into account the effects on domestic industry and politics, the benefits to be directly gained from the co-operation in capacity building and burden sharing, as well as the benefits indirectly gained through extended deterrence or alliance building, and the disadvantages through the perceptions other actors may have of the co-operative relationship. The benefits of co-operating may be different for both parties, and may entail a level of trust that cannot be guaranteed.

Take, for example, the US and South Korea co-operating in naval exercises. For Seoul, the benefits are clear: a reaffirmation of the alliance with the US and the extended security guarantee that comes with it; access to high-technology military equipment that comes with the alliance; training with the most powerful and advanced military in the world; the deterrent effect of the mutual defence treaty with the US; and a close relationship with the world's largest economy. However, there are other consequences that South Korea must also take into account, namely the effect the presence of US troops and ships has in its relations with both North Korea and China. Any particular co-operative event can greatly antagonise either of South Korea's neighbours, and therefore worsen its immediate security environment even as its longer-term security is improved.

These decisions are not zero-sum as there are potential benefits to be gained by both parties involved which are not necessarily balanced by an equal loss from another party. However, the co-operative outcome is not necessarily assured simply because of the potential benefits to be gained. This can be easily demonstrated by game theory, and indeed perhaps that most famous example of game theory, the Prisoners' Dilemma.

In it, two prisoners are faced with prosecution for a crime they committed. As the police lack the evidence to convict both for the crime they suspect they have committed, they intend to charge them both for a lesser crime with one year in prison as the penalty. However, they tell both prisoners, who are unable to communicate, that if they confess and the other party corroborates, they will both

face two years in prison for the greater crime; however, if they confess and the other party denies involvement in the greater crime, then the confessor will be set free and the denier incarcerated for three years. The potential outcomes of the game can be presented in a payoff matrix, along the lines shown in Table 6.1.

Whereby, the best possible outcome for both prisoners is if they both deny the crime (and in essence co-operate in their denial), thereby each serving one year, but the most likely outcome is that each will try and maximise their own self-interest by confessing, thereby negating the possibility that the other prisoner will confess and avoiding the worst possible option (three years' imprisonment) while also leaving open the possibility of attaining the best possible outcome for oneself (that the confession will be met with the other prisoner's denial, thereby leading to an acquittal for the confessor). The most likely outcome is therefore that both parties confess and receive two years in prison.

The Prisoners' Dilemma encapsulated the lack of trust inherent in parties that are seeking to maximise their self-interest without communication, which therefore encourages them to avoid the best possible joint outcome (co-operation in their denial) and leads to a worse situation. This was seen as reflective of the situation during the Cold War (and arms races or security dilemmas generally), where fear of the other side's armament leads a country also to procure more advanced weapons, even though the best possible joint outcome would be co-ordinated disarmament.

This lack of communication is what makes the Prisoners' Dilemma an example of a non-cooperative game, where the actors involved are unable to reach binding agreements. Not all non-cooperative games lack communication, though: it is simply the inability to reach a binding agreement or contract that makes the game non-cooperative.

The potential lack of trust inherent in the Prisoners' Dilemma, which is exacerbated by the inability of the prisoners to communicate, is also exemplified in another non-cooperation game, known as the Stag Hunt. In it, two hunters have the option of either tracking and hunting a stag that may roam the Highland pastures or immediately kill a hare that is within sight. If both co-operate in hunting the stag, the potential amount of meat is 2 kg each. If either hunter attempts to hunt a hare, the meat to be gained is 1 kg. The game can thus be represented as shown in Table 6.2.

Whereby the best possible outcome for both players is if they co-operate in tracking and hunting a stag, but the risk of not finding a stag and the risk that the other hunter may choose to undermine the stag hunt by poaching any hares that are available means they may both prefer to hunt hares.

*Table 6.1* The Prisoners' Dilemma

| | *Prisoner B confesses* | *Prisoner B denies* |
|---|---|---|
| *Prisoner A confesses* | 2, 2 | 0, 3 |
| *Prisoner A denies* | 3, 0 | 1, 1 |

*Table 6.2* The Stag Hunt Game

| | *B hunts stag* | *B hunts hare* |
|---|---|---|
| *A hunts stag* | 2, 2 | 0, 1 |
| *A hunts hare* | 1, 0 | 1, 1 |

This is all very abstract, but it has clear applications to international relations and more specifically diplomacy, and for that reason co-operative and coercive maritime diplomacy. In a similarly theoretical format, let us imagine a situation whereby two small nations, A and B, agree to support each other to deter attack by a third, larger nation, C, but fail to reach a mutual defence treaty that binds them in such a case. There is then an incentive for both to co-operate, harmonising their defence postures, collaborating in defence procurement and develop a combined defence that may at best deter and at least disrupt an offensive by the larger country. However, there is also incentive for either nation to secretly collaborate with the larger nation, whose self-interest is served by dividing and conquering these smaller nations. By seeking engagement with the larger country, either smaller country may betray the other and reassure the larger country that it will not assist the other when it is attacked. The Hedging Game, as we might call it, could therefore look like Table 6.3.

Thus, there arrives a paradoxical situation where the best possible joint outcome for A and B is to co-operate fully in defence and hopefully deter attack by C on either, but the more probable outcome may be that each country collaborates with C to avoid the possibility of being the only one left vulnerable by a lack of engagement with the larger aggressor and therefore vulnerable to attack. The probable outcome is therefore that neither country prepares adequately for defence through co-operation, and both remain vulnerable to at least coercion and at most invasion.

This, in an extremely simplistic fashion, reflects the decision-making process in many aspects of military co-operation for the purpose of deterrence, and therefore of an activity that can encompass both co-operative and coercive (namely, deterrent) maritime diplomacy.

Such a game naturally does not reflect the majority of cases of maritime diplomacy that exist, as it appears to suggest equality in power between countries A and B and a clear shared strategic goal of deterrence. In many cases of co-operative maritime diplomacy, the countries collaborating are of varying levels of military capability, as the stronger country, A, may be aiming to build

*Table 6.3* The Hedging Game

| | *Country A co-operates with B* | *Country A collaborates with C* |
|---|---|---|
| *Country B co-operates with A* | 2, 2 | –2, 0 |
| *Country B collaborates with C* | 0, –2 | 0, 0 |

capacity, develop influence or transfer skills through joint exercises, while the weaker country is seeking to benefit from these processes. The above example is also one of relatively imperfect information, whereby neither A nor B is aware of the clandestine diplomacy with the third country, C, which may not reflect the reality in a world with highly intrusive media. Nonetheless, it provides an elementary suggestion that game theory can apply to examples of diplomacy. If this general example were specified to represent two smaller countries co-operating in naval exercises to increase collective deterrence and prevent an attack from the sea from the third country, then it naturally becomes relevant to the discussion of maritime diplomacy.

While the above example represents the possibility of co-operative maritime diplomacy in order to coerce (deter) an opponent, this form of game theorisation can also be used in other types of maritime diplomacy, particularly coercion in the form of compellence. We can even use a real-life example, such as the shadowing of the Sixth Fleet by the Soviet Fifth Eskadra during the Yom Kippur War in 1973. With Moscow having decided to send a message to Washington about the potential repercussions of an attack, the preservation of Soviet interests in the region and the presence of the Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean, both the three aircraft carrier strike groups of the US Navy's Sixth Fleet and the various anti-carrier task groups of the Soviet Navy were left with essentially two broad policy options (albeit with a variety of nuanced policies within each wide policy position). Quite simply, they could choose to escalate or de-escalate. For the US, escalation would have involved a pre-emptive strike on the Soviet missile-carrying vessels in order to neutralise the possible threat and ensure greater security for the carrier groups; for the Soviets, it would have involved attacking the US carriers in order effectively to remove their support for Israel during the war.

It is impossible to predict exactly the outcome of such a counterfactual, but one could assume broad conclusions based on the respective level of capabilities arranged and the possible reactions of both states. In what we may call the 'Stand-off Game', the options available to the players look somewhat like Table 6.4.

The proviso within this scenario is that two moderately well-matched naval task groups of nuclear-armed superpowers face each other, with the only likely victory to be forthcoming from the party that strikes (escalates) first. If both navies escalate simultaneously or in rapid succession, the likely outcome is a military stalemate that sees great attrition in both naval task groups. If one escalates while the other falters, the likely outcome is a short, rapid naval victory

*Table 6.4* The Stand-off Game

| | *US escalates* | *US de-escalates* |
|---|---|---|
| *Soviets escalate* | –5, –5 | 5, –5 |
| *Soviets de-escalate* | 5, –5 | 0, 0 |

within the localised theatre of the fleets themselves. If neither escalates, then the situation would likely continue the status quo, with both fleets dispersing. In such a scenario, the only way to 'win' the game is to strike first, suggesting the equilibrium would be in the top-left quadrant (whereby both parties perceive their only possible chance of victory being to strike, and moreover the only way to avoid defeat is to strike first). The game is similar in some respects to the Peace–War game, whereby those who wage war when others seek peace gain the most, even though the most mutually beneficial result is for both to seek peace.

However, in the example of the 1973 Soviet–US stand-off, there was a further factor that meant the outcome was in fact the bottom-right quadrant, namely the possibility of further escalation to a wider war, even including non-conventional weapons. Here, then, it is not just the maritime diplomacy that influences the game, but the nuclear deterrence posture held by both states. Thus, while the above pay-off matrix might be suitable for a generic game involving two equally matched opponents with little opportunity or probability of escalation to warfare, for those situations where greater consequences might be forthcoming in other theatres or spheres, the consequences of escalation are potentially more negative.

## Co-operative games and co-operative maritime diplomacy

Not all game theory is equal. The forms of game theory that have been demonstrated thus far have involved non-cooperative games. This is useful for theorising situations involving simultaneous decision-making among players that are often not acting in their mutual interest. While there is the possibility of co-operation in games such as the Prisoners' Dilemma, the Stag Hunt and the Hedging Game, in reality the players are acting entirely in their self-interests and independently.

This makes it difficult to theorise co-operative maritime diplomacy within this framework. Co-operative maritime diplomacy often involves co-ordinated and mutually beneficial arrangements, with both sides discussing the best possible approach. From joint exercises to port visits, humanitarian assistance and disaster response, the decision over whether to accept the offer of co-operative diplomacy is not made simultaneously with a decision of the offer of diplomacy.

There are possible games that can be constructed, but they are somewhat convoluted and perhaps lacking in plausibility. One possible example of a game that can be adapted to the world of co-operative maritime diplomacy is the Battle of the Sexes (although we, in more equitable gender and same-sex relationship times, may decide instead to call it Beckham or Stravinsky). Within the game, two players, theoretically two people in a relationship, choose either to go to the opera of an evening, or watch the football, whereby one player far prefers the opera and the other the football. The matrix thus looks like Table 6.5.

A failure to choose the same pastime leads to neither party attending, and hence the result is contingent upon strategies played (and, of course, the empathy

*Table 6.5* The Beckham or Stravinsky Game

| | *Opera* | *Football* |
|---|---|---|
| *Opera* | 4, 1 | 0, 0 |
| *Football* | 0, 0 | 1, 4 |

of the players). Transferring this to maritime diplomacy, it is conceivable, for instance, that two nations may have to rapidly decide on the kind of co-operative diplomacy to be engaged in, either live-fire exercises or a port visit. The decision may be made in the context of a third country that poses a potential threat to one of the countries. For country A, therefore, to choose live-fire exercises would bring the benefit of building greater interoperability and capability at the same time as potentially antagonising its irritable neighbour. For the larger, extra-regional country B, the benefits of live-fire exercises are to build capacity in an ally but with the extra cost and potential loss of influence in other regional states that may resent its overbearing presence and interventionism.

The 'Exercises Game' may therefore look like Table 6.6.

If either state chooses a different exercise from its partner, then no diplomacy can occur. It is, therefore, a null score. If, however, they both agree on the type of exercise to be undertaken, it can take place, but with varying utility to both players. The equilibrium of such a game is most likely going to come down to the power dynamic between the two states: the weaker state, A, will fear most the possibility of no exercises occurring and will therefore attempt to opt for the same option as the stronger state, B. Thus, even while less utility is forthcoming for A in the live-fire exercises owing to negative reactions from other states, it may well prefer this particular option as it guarantees a form of co-operative maritime diplomacy that builds its alliance with its dominant partner and strengthens military–military relations.

As mentioned, such a game may be seen to be of limited utility and questionable validity given its reliance on the idea of simultaneous decision making in what is, generally, a collaborative and often long-winded discussion between partner states about their intended goals, available assets and chosen format.

For this reason, it might be more useful when discussing co-operative maritime diplomacy to engage with co-operative game theory. In co-operative game theory, the players are able to discuss and collaborate in the desired outcome, reaching binding agreements which are enforceable. The essential question of co-operative games is not whether players will co-operate (which is

*Table 6.6* The Exercises Game

| | *A choose live-fire* | *A chooses port visit* |
|---|---|---|
| *B chooses live-fire* | 1, 2 | 0, 0 |
| *B chooses port visit* | 0, 0 | 2, 1 |

the underlying question behind, for instance, the Prisoners' Dilemma), but how they will co-operate.

An example of such a game is the treasure hunt, whereby an expedition of intrepid hunters discovers a hoard of treasure in a remote location. Treasure can only be carried by a pair of people, not by single people. The result depends upon the number of people involved: if there is an even number of people, bargaining would suggest that the value of all treasure would be shared at the end. If there were six players, for example, and two two-person coalitions formed on the basis of sharing the treasure 50 : 50, but a third coalition formed on the basis that the profit would be shared 60 : 40, it is obviously in the interests of the lowest paid person (the '40' of the 60 : 40) to offer to someone in another coalition a 55 : 45 split, whereby both will profit. This inevitably trends towards everyone sharing 50 per cent of the profit, as otherwise bargaining would continue indefinitely. This indefinite bargaining is exactly what would happen if the number of players was odd, because there will always be a player who is receiving zero profit (by dint of the fact that he/she is carrying no treasure) and can always offer a player who is carrying treasure a better deal than they were getting (even a 99 : 1 split is better than nothing). This, then, leaves a player who is again receiving nothing, who will again offer a player a better deal.

The treasure hunt is clearly not a competitive game. The essence of the game is to model and therefore strategise what the negotiations in co-operation would look like. This does not mean that every player is not acting in their self-interest: indeed, the fact that negotiations are occurring at all is because each player wants to maximise their utility. Nevertheless, it is a game about how the players co-operate, not whether they do.

Other games have perhaps a stronger correlation to certain aspects of maritime diplomacy. An example could include the 'council game' whereby four members of a council are discussing how to divide a combined revenue of a sum (say $1 million) for public goods. Each member of the council may have separate priorities as they represent different parties and constituents, and hence negotiation must take place. In this game, though, one of the council members is chair and therefore has veto power: if the proposed dispersal of funds is not to the char's liking, it will be rejected. The result is that whatever split is proposed by the chair will necessarily be accepted by the council, as all others will be vetoed.

This is a simplistic game and arguably has little to encourage intellectual investigation, but the principle behind it (veto power, or the power of a dominant player to affect negotiations) can resemble the negotiations than can take place in an alliance, including that between nations co-operating in the maritime domain. Consider the current situation in East Asia, where the US is encouraging its allies to build closer military–military relations, particularly through the use of maritime diplomacy. The US is eager to transform the post-war 'hub-and-spoke' system it created, which involved bilateral relations with its allies, including Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines and Taiwan, to a 'spoke-to-spoke' system whereby the allies assume a greater burden of their own

defence and create strong relationships between them. The allies, however, have varying opinions on how quickly the system should develop and what it should look like: South Korea, for example, has struggled to build closer relations with Japan owing to a territorial dispute over the Dokdo/Takeshima islands, historical antipathy and a fear of isolating China. Ultimately, though, the direction of the maritime diplomacy between these states is being dictated by the country with effective veto power in negotiations: the US. Washington is able to encourage its allies to collaborate further than they might otherwise wish as it is the largest economy and the strongest military power and has the greatest leverage over all of these partners. Thus, since 2011 the navies of South Korea, Japan and the US have held joint exercises on an annual basis, even while the Japan–South Korean military–military relationship has stuttered amid political disagreements.[2]

This is but one of a number of examples that could be created when deliberating how nations co-operate in maritime diplomacy. One could also consider negotiations over whether a state will accept humanitarian assistance and disaster response being offered by another state (such as the US did to Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis in 2008), or the negotiations over the level and weighting of a port visit (for instance, when China refused the visit of a US carrier to Hong Kong in 2007, or the first reciprocal port visits between China and Japan in 2007/08). While game theory may not be able to model co-operative maritime diplomacy to any great extent, therefore, it is able to suggest outcomes and strategies for negotiations on how actors co-operate.

It should be noted that co-operative game theory does not have implications just for co-operative maritime diplomacy, even if the similar names suggest this is the case. Co-operative game theory can equally be used to model negotiations within a collective maritime deterrence alliance, a form of coercive maritime diplomacy, even if it involves co-operation among nation states. Similarly, co-operative game theory could be used to analyse the negotiations around the mandate and mission of, for example, NATO's Operation Unified Protector off the coast of Libya in 2011, a clear example of coercive maritime diplomacy. As such, co-operative game theory offers a way to analyse the negotiations and coalition building in all forms of maritime diplomacy, even as it is particularly well suited to co-operative maritime diplomatic analysis given its focus on how players collaborate.

## Sequential games and maritime diplomacy

Eagle-eyed readers may already have noticed that the non-cooperative and co-operative forms of game theory already discussed have both involved simultaneous decision making. That most famous example of game theory, the Prisoner's Dilemma, for example involves the players making their strategic decisions at the same time and in ignorance of the other's choice. However, strategic decisions are often not made simultaneously, but in response to the other actor's actions. One country may react to the threats, coercion or offer of co-operation from a rival, ally or neutral state. Given the often iterative nature of any coercive

maritime diplomatic incident, therefore, a different form of game theory may be more suitable: the sequential or extensive form game.

Sequential games do not map out the 'moves' within a game through a pay-off matrix as in the Prisoners' Dilemma, nor through the mathematical formulations and notations favoured by co-operative games, but through a 'decision tree' that outlines each possible decision, the other player's possible decisions, any further reactions and the probable outcomes.

The relevance of sequential games to maritime diplomacy has already been alluded to by other analysts, who have attempted to model crisis situations through game theory. 'Crises' are often in fact coercive maritime diplomatic events and are considered a 'crisis' as there is a possibility of escalation among the participants. The use of limited naval force to indicate one's capabilities and intentions is as described in this book a form of maritime diplomacy, but is often portrayed in the media as a 'crisis' as the use of such force could create a self-sustaining escalatory dynamic that leads to wider conflict.

One such analyst who has modelled 'crises' through game theory is James Fearon, a University of Chicago professor. Fearon's PhD thesis examined the threat of force and parts of it were subsequently published as journal articles. In one of them, Fearon clearly outlined the fact that sequential game theory may be more useful than other forms in examining these events, as 'the main problem with the standard arguments is that they do not grasp the consequences of strategic dynamics linked to the fact that crises are sequences of decisions to threaten or escalate'.[3]

In the same article, Fearon examined the use of the threat of force in crises involving proxies as media through which such signalling occurred. Each crisis involved a threat from a state to another, which was also protected by or allied to a third state, which in turn offered a deterrent statement of intent. While this is specifically tailored to a particular dataset, the sequential crisis modelled by Fearon is broadly applicable across a range of different events, involving four stages, such that:

> In the first step, the challenger considers whether to take an action that explicitly or implicitly threatens another state. If the challenger decides not to threaten, the status quo prevails. If threatened, the defender chooses in the second step whether to respond with some threat or warning of its own.... In the third step, after observing the defender's response, the challenger chooses whether or not to act on its initial threat, or to continue if it had already begun. If the challenger chooses not to act, the crisis ends. Finally, in the fourth step, if the challenger acts, the defender chooses whether or not to resist with military force.[4]

The game can therefore be modelled on a decision tree as in Figure 6.1.

Empirical analysis of this game with a dataset devised by Huth and Russett in 1988 for proxy crises led Fearon to draw conclusions that questioned what he saw as the received wisdom of crisis decision making.[5] Those conclusions are

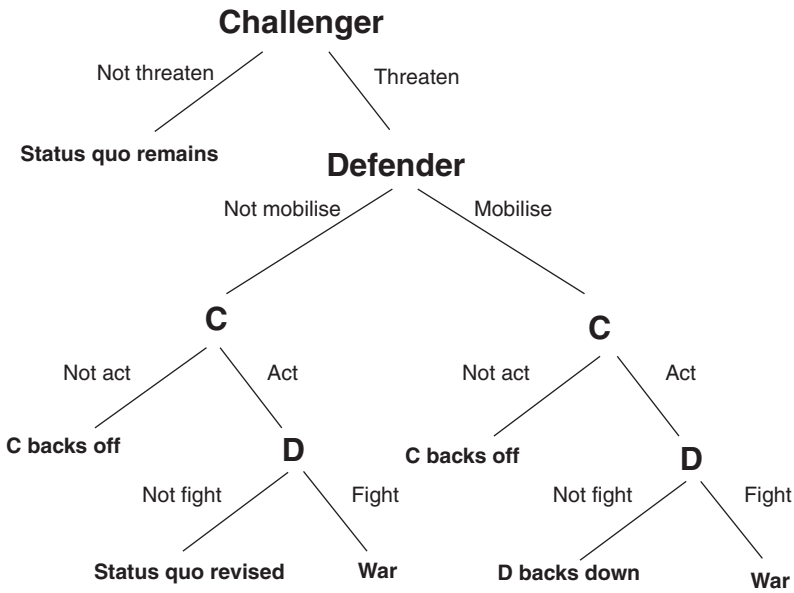



*Figure 6.1* Sequential modelling of a crisis (source: Fearon, James, 'Signaling Versus the Balance of Power and Interests: An Empirical Test of a Crisis Bargaining Model', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 38 (1994)).

not relevant here (although this is not to belittle the excellent analysis by Fearon), but rather the model outlined as a potential 'crisis game' that can be transferred to maritime diplomatic events. (Interestingly, Fearon also discussed in other publications the concept of 'audience costs' to a coercive signal, which suggest that the failure to follow through with a threat will weaken a political leader's domestic standing – this is similar although not as broad as the concept of diminishing marginal credibility outlined in chapter 4, which suggests that the credibility is held not by the domestic audience but by the rival or ally.)[6]

This model has obvious relevance to coercive maritime diplomacy. Such events often involve sequential decisions to be made on either escalation or capitulation by either side. As maritime diplomacy fills the space between peace and war, the decisions made during maritime diplomatic events dictate whether the relationship will head towards one or the other. Thus, any coercion where a deterrent or compelling threat is made must be answered either with force or with evasion or submission. The retaliatory use of force, or calling the challenger's bluff, will then lead to a decision within the challenger on whether its threats will be seen through. And so an escalatory cycle is either entered into or avoided, depending on the iterative decisions made.

The earlier example of the Soviet–US stand-off in the Mediterranean in 1973 could, for example, easily be modelled through the above multi-stage process,

whereby an implicit threat made by the Soviets to attack the US aircraft carriers was not met by a use of force by the US, and therefore also not by the threat being carried out by the Soviet anti-carrier groups. Thus, the status quo ante was maintained as the Soviet Union backed away from the threats and the US did not respond to any provocation, even though a valuable message had been sent by the Soviets (see Figure 6.2).

In a similar fashion, the possibility of US intervention in Syria in mid 2013, much heralded by President Obama despite public opposition in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack by the Assad regime, could also be so modelled. The US positioned five destroyers and at least one nuclear-powered submarine in the Eastern Mediterranean and directly threatened on a number of occasions to use this flotilla to launch a limited strike against Syria. This was, then, a form of coercive maritime diplomacy, with Washington threatening limited force to encourage change within Damascus. After much uncertainty over whether the US would proceed, Russia suggested Syria would cede its chemical weapons stockpile if the US would not attack. As the US Pentagon press secretary George Little noted, '[t]he credible threat of military force has been key to driving diplomatic progress'.[7] The moves played during this scenario, therefore, involved an initial threat by the US, a subsequent decision not to concede immediately by Syria (although threats were made), a further mobilisation by the US in positioning its flotilla in the Eastern Mediterranean and a final decision to agree to the Russian chemical weapons plan by Syria (see Figure 6.3).

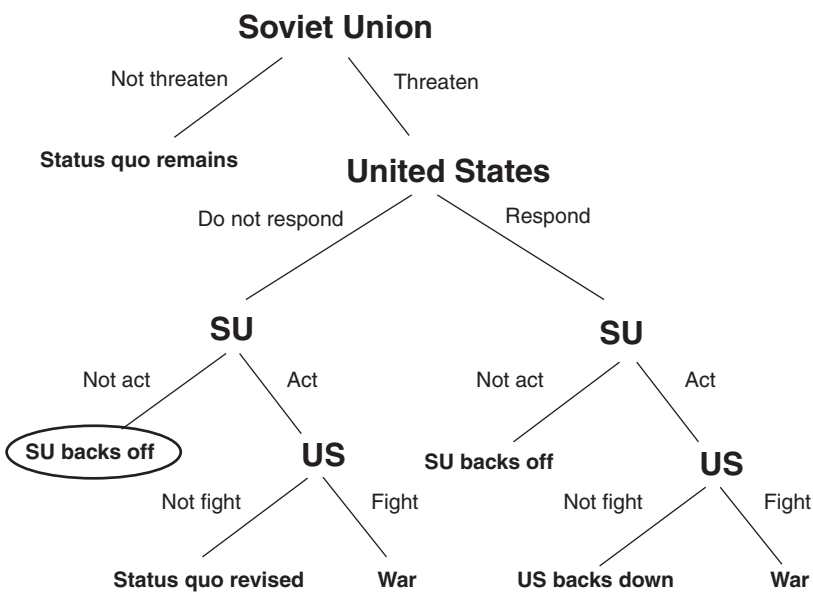



*Figure 6.2* The 1973 Mediterranean stand-off modelled sequentially.

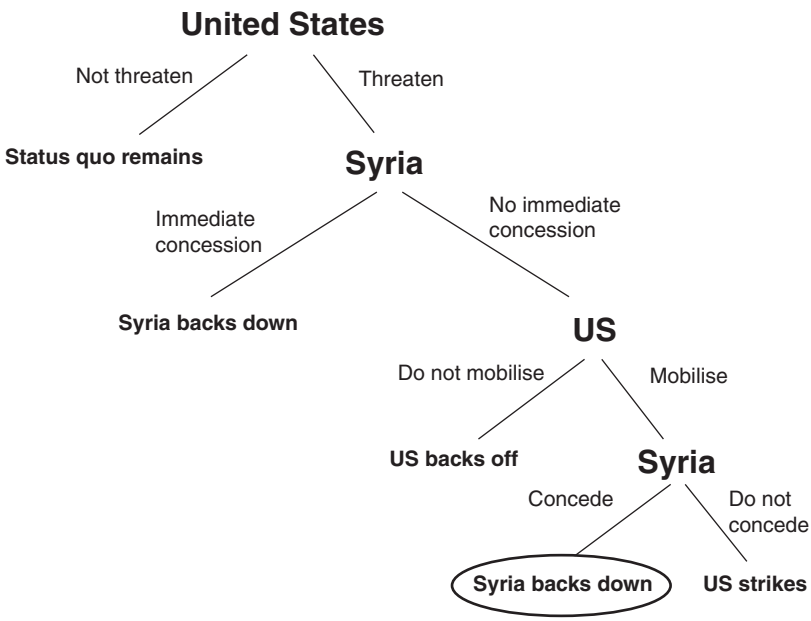



*Figure 6.3* The 2013 Syrian crisis modelled sequentially.

In this scenario, there is a clear power imbalance between the parties. However, this is not always the case in situations of coercive maritime diplomacy, as the adversaries may be well matched in their military capabilities. Alternatively, it may be that the stronger power in aggregate is in a weaker position at the time of the event. Such was the case with the seizure of 15 Royal Navy Marines by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in 2007. While the UK was overall a stronger power, at that place and time, Iran was the local hegemon.

Such an iterative game can also be used to model maritime diplomacy that fails as diplomacy – that is, leads to war. The Falklands War, for example, was essentially a limited use of force from the sea by Argentina to capture the South Georgia and Falkland Islands, and a series of threats by the UK to retaliate and retake the islands as it mobilised its forces. With Argentina failing to respond to these threats in a manner seen as acceptable to London, the UK then proceeded to launch operations to retake the islands in a series of engagements akin to war (the British government only ever labelled the Falklands operations as an 'emergency', but the battles and casualties meet most definitions of a short war).

A sequential game can be used to model not only coercive but also co-operative maritime diplomacy. In most instances of diplomacy, decisions are usually not taken simultaneously, but rather in succession. This is no less true when countries are co-operating rather than competing. A government will often

propose a potential area for co-operation, to which another government will respond, at which point the original government may decide whether to continue with this co-operation, suggest another possible area or renege on the initial offer.

A useful example can be found with the offer of assistance to a nation or region suffering from the after-effects of a natural disaster. After, for example, the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, various offers for logistical and financial assistance were made to Indonesia, where the province of Aceh was particularly heavily damaged. It was Indonesia's decision to accept the offers of assistance from a wide swathe of countries, and for these countries to follow through on their offer with alacrity. Such decisions seem easy ones to make, particularly when suffering from the worst natural disaster to befall your population in centuries. However, at times the offer of assistance is not as simple: after a typhoon in Taiwan in 2009, China offered to send military assistance to the island. It was Taipei's decision to reject the offer, whether or not it was made in good faith in the first place.[8]

Thus, maritime diplomacy, as an activity that often involves iterative decisions being made with reaction dynamics in these decisions, can often be modelled through the use of sequential game theory. In combination with other variants of games, this provides a host of analytical tools to analyse broadly how maritime diplomatic events have unfolded and are likely to do so in similar situations in the future.

## Limits of game theoretical analysis

The forms of game theory outlined above all have applications relevant to the various guises of maritime diplomacy. The suggestion has therefore been made that game theory can be a useful tool in the analysis of any maritime diplomatic event, as well as a methodology for predicting behaviour in fictional and potentially future events.

These games are not infallible, however, and there are several criticisms to be made about their suitability to such analysis. First, it should be noted that these generic games are just that: broad impressions of what a decision-making process could look like if theorised in an abstract fashion. While they have been brought to life with some relevant real-world examples, they are unable to capture the complexity of a world that involves a multiplicity of actors with different goals, strategic cultures, histories, mores and beliefs. As such, the development of each particular maritime diplomatic event will vary from instance to instance: the actions of each player in any one particular game will be affected by the relative capabilities, interests and perceptions of themselves and other players. Each game that attempts to replicate a real-world event will therefore have different pay-off matrices. It is also the case that repetition of the same game with the same players can lead to varying matrices as well. If we recall the theory of diminishing marginal credibility outlined in Chapter 4, when applied to game theory and maritime diplomacy this would suggest a change in the

chosen outcomes of each player with each particular repetition of the same game.

Further, the games outlined have a relatively simplistic view of the players themselves. In each of the examples outlined, players are presumed to be self-interested actors seeking to maximise their own utility without concern for other players unless it affects their position. This does not necessarily accord with how people, and at times governments, act in their relationships and dealings with each other. In the study of economics, the field of behavioural economics attempts to analyse the effects of social, cognitive and emotional factors on economic decisions, moving beyond the classical economic theory that rational self-interest and profit-maximisation lie behind all decisions. In a similar vein, the idea that self-interest is the only motivating factor is a very realist viewpoint in the field of international relations, and one which liberals and constructivists would disagree with. The latter two schools might emphasise goals such as furthering interpersonal or intergovernmental relationships for non-selfish reasons, or the sustainment of international law for the broader goal of maintaining a public good as other possible motivations for players in such a game. It is debatable, for instance, whether the US was interested in intervening in Syria in 2013 for reasons of self-interest (perhaps to support its ally, Israel, or encourage regime change, democracy and a new ally in the Levant), or for the broader goal of sustaining the international norm against the use of chemical weapons, an objective with fewer obvious reasons of immediate self-interest involved.

The games thus far described are also very limited in the options provided to the players. They largely revolve around a binary choice, where most governmental and non-state actors will have a smorgasbord of options laid out before them, even in crisis situations, which allow for a more nuanced process. Simplicity is necessary in almost all theorising, and game theory is no exception, but the balance between simplicity and real-world applicability needs to be found for each particular event. There are more complex games that can be brought to bear, with multiple players or options, but the more complex the game the more difficult it is to predict behaviour and identify strategies.

Finally, the relevance of game theory to maritime diplomacy is currently just theory. There does not currently exist, and it is beyond the scope of this book to provide, a comprehensive dataset of each maritime diplomatic event worldwide (or even in a region and timeframe), with specific categories noted. It is therefore difficult to empirically prove the results or equilibria of games when transferred to the real world. Even if such a dataset existed, there would naturally be a reduction in the subtleties and nuances of each event when being transformed into a series of numbers or entries from a restrictive list. Even identifying whether a particular maritime diplomatic event is a success or failure relies on simplification and interpretation: would one consider the Treaty of Ganghwa a victory for Japan, for instance, or just another step towards the country's imperial overstretch and ultimate defeat in the Second World War? Any use of empirical data in combination with game theory must therefore be with the requisite caveats on interpretation of data and generalisations that can affect results.

## Game theory and maritime diplomacy

Having said all this, the goal here has not been to demonstrate empirically how a particular game is of utility to a range of different events, to outline all possible uses of game theory in relation to maritime diplomacy, nor to discuss strategies and equilibria for various games in depth. Rather, the intention of this chapter has been to demonstrate the utility of game theory in analysing maritime diplomacy, the decisions that are made in any particular event and the probability that strategies could be unveiled for broad maritime diplomatic games that could guide future decision-making processes. It has been an attempt to encourage further discussion of the topic rather than a comprehensive and exhaustive analysis of the synthesis between game theory and maritime diplomacy

As discussed, for further exploration of the topic, a comprehensive empirical dataset would be required to test any hypotheses, preferably with this data restricted geographically and temporally to make it more manageable. A broader set of games relevant to maritime diplomacy, akin to the 'stand-off' game outlined above, would also help in identifying which game is applicable to which event.

Nevertheless, contained here is an argument that game theory could be used to understand better and model this most frequent of activities for the world's governments, navies, coastguards and other actors. Doing so would help further illuminate the otherwise murky depths of maritime diplomacy, particularly in combination with other methods and outlines listed within this book.

## Notes

1 RUSI Future Maritime Warfare Conference, London, 13 December 2005.
2 Kim, Kyu-won, 'S. Korean, US and Japanese Navies Hold Combined Military Exercises', *The Hankyoreh*, 16 May 2013.
3 Fearon, 'Signaling', p. 238.
4 Fearon, 'Signaling', p. 239.
5 Huth and Russett, 'Deterrence Failure'.
6 See Fearon, 'Domestic Political Audiences'.
7 Gordon, Michael R., 'US and Russia Reach Deal to Destroy Syria's Chemical Arms', *New York Times*, 14 September 2013.
8 'Taiwan Receives International Aid', BBC News, 17 August 2009.

# Conclusion

> To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.[1]
>
> Sun Zi

The quote chosen at the beginning of this conclusion is not a new one: it dates back over 2,500 years to the aphoristic wisdom noted down by China's most famous and most studied strategist, Sun Zi (also Sun Tzu), in his *Art of War*.

Its relevance to maritime diplomacy is only partial: some maritime diplomacy does indeed involve fighting, albeit of a limited form, while other forms of co-operative maritime diplomacy do not aim to subdue an enemy but to build a strong ally or influence other actors.

Despite this, the quote is applicable and very useful to bear in mind at this final juncture. What could be a more laudable aim for strategic decision makers and thinkers than to achieve their diplomatic goals with the minimum of cost in lives and money? Why risk war and the possibility of losing a conflict when one can attempt to 'subdue an enemy' or bolster a relationship through the use of limited sea-based force? And yet, the very activity that could achieve this – maritime diplomacy – is often disregarded or overlooked by those very practitioners and theorists that aim to further strategic interests via the sea.

It is strange, then, that maritime diplomacy has not been more significantly studied. It is even more curious when one considers that it is the role that assumes the greatest proportion of naval effort at any one time. Indeed, while navies must train and prepare for warfighting, in reality the actual incidence of war for most navies is infrequent, and even when in war it is extremely rare for a whole-of-service effort to be needed. There are a host of other non-diplomatic roles that a navy may engage in during peacetime or war, from search-and-rescue to humanitarian assistance and disaster response. But even when other missions are the focus of an operation, diplomacy is often inherent within a navy's deployment. At times, it is explicitly the sole reason for a naval vessel's or flotilla's journey. Even when it is not, it is a necessary adjunct to longer-duration deployments, as ships have to put in at foreign ports to refuel and replenish – the presence of a piece of military equipment in a foreign country is already a form of diplomacy, and the personnel on board will have to act accordingly.

For this reason, Rear Admiral Bob Davidson called sailors 'mini-ambassadors'. This is not to say that sailors overseas are always well behaved. Far from it: wherever there is a concentration of sailors that have been on board a ship for months and are granted shore leave, there is bound to be what may be called exuberance. Rather, it reflects the fact that the decision to put in at a particular port is one based not just on the ability to refuel and for the crew to party, but also a chance to manage relations and build influence. Similarly, the decision to accept a visiting ship, beyond those in distress or seeking shelter, is one also laden with diplomatic undertones. China's refusal to accept US Navy ships to refuel in Hong Kong, for example, as happened with the destroyer USS *Curtis Wilbur* in 2002 and the aircraft carrier USS *Kitty Hawk* in 2007, is usually seen as a protest at US policy towards China and a diplomatic snub for other misgivings.[2]

Such events demonstrate that even the seemingly most innocuous decisions regarding maritime capabilities can have diplomatic effects or reasoning, and the diplomatic aspect of maritime operations extends from port calls to philanthropic assistance, through joint training and exercises, all the way to the threat or use of force.

And yet, an activity that commands so much time and effort, indeed perhaps the majority of time for navies, while having great importance for a country's international standing is often disregarded in analysis of naval roles and missions. In a rare reference to the term diplomacy when outlining the roles of the most powerful navy in the world, a 1994 US Navy operational concept suggested that

> Naval forces are an indispensable and exceptional instrument of American foreign policy. From conducting routine ship visits to nations and regions that are of special interest, to sustaining larger demonstrations of support to long-standing regional security interests … US naval forces underscore US diplomatic initiatives overseas.[3]

This was an unusually direct mention of the diplomatic use of the US Navy, while referring to the skill set and missions that make up this most pervasive of naval activities. Traditionally, the US Navy has referred to maritime diplomacy through euphemistic terms or separated out the criteria of maritime diplomacy across different missions. In the 1970s, the four roles or capabilities of the US Navy were outlined as strategic deterrence, sea control, power projection and presence, where presence is the one that best fits the idea of maritime diplomacy.[4] Arguably, though, the term presence is somewhat misleading for the various missions it is meant to encompass. Presence is in fact not a role, but a physical state, and the focus on the word 'presence' reflects not only the US Navy's unique position as a forward deployed and global navy but also its perception of itself as the provider of public maritime goods and perhaps a concentration on the more coercive aspects of its maritime diplomacy. (Further, the case could be made that strategic deterrence is also a coercive maritime diplomatic operation, in that it represents the ultimate form of deterrence available at sea.)

The latest maritime strategy produced by the US Navy in 2007, *A Co-operative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, assumes the same four roles but adds two more: maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster response. Maritime diplomacy thus remains dispersed across the various roles outlined by the strategy, from deterrence to presence, HA/DR to sea control. Yet, the strategy did hint at the various themes outlined in this book on maritime diplomacy. The strategy was the first, for example, to be jointly produced by the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, reflecting the importance of paramilitary forces in delivering effect at sea. It was also publicly delivered at the International Seapower Symposium to representatives of over 100 navies, and emphasised co-operative relationships while coining the now oft-repeated phrase that 'trust and cooperation cannot be surged'.[5] (This came just two years after the idea of a '1,000-ship navy' was floated by Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Mike Mullen, who called for 'a proverbial 1,000 ship navy … comprised of all freedom-loving nations', suggesting a public recognition of the necessity of multinational co-operative maritime diplomacy among a wider range of actors.)[6]

The strategy also emphasised the importance of conflict prevention for the sea services. Here too, the document alludes to but does not specifically place this role specifically within the concept of maritime diplomacy. For maritime diplomacy is, as has been suggested in this book, also peculiarly useful as a tool to prevent or avoid wider conflict, through deterrence or coercion, and in this sense is often preferred by risk-averse politicians mindful of the negative domestic reactions to military adventurism and unnecessary cost and death.

There are mentions of maritime diplomatic roles in the strategy, such as when the document lays out that '[w]hether over the horizon or powerfully arrayed in plain sight, maritime forces can deter the ambitions of regional aggressors [and] assure friends and allies.'[7] Alternatively, the phrase 'forward deployed and engaged in mutually beneficial relationships with regional and global partners, maritime forces will promote frameworks that enhance security', seems to refer to some of the benefits of co-operative maritime diplomacy. Yet, the strategy frames all of these concepts in simplistic assessments of a navy's function and conflates diplomatic roles with functional ones. Throughout the entire strategy, the word diplomacy (or its derivatives) is not mentioned once.

## Refocusing on maritime diplomacy

There can, of course, be a variety of reasons for this omission to take place. Navies must concentrate on the day-to-day functions and operations that are part and parcel of a sailor's working life. Concepts such as sea control, deterrence and power projection appear to divide up a navy's functions neatly into 'offensive' and 'defensive' roles, and makes it easier to identify what equipment and platforms might be useful in achieving these objectives. Further, there may be political reasons for avoiding the term 'diplomacy', such as wanting to avoid assuming a greater role in government at the expense of the Department of State

(or foreign office/ministry) and therefore creating inter-governmental territorial struggles. It is also useful for a navy to emphasise those warfighting and kinetic activities that require expensive ships and weapons systems.

Yet, it is peculiar that diplomacy is not mentioned at all in the overall strategy for the most powerful navy ever to have floated on the seas. Other, more academic concepts of the functions of navies exist and reflect better the role played by maritime diplomacy. Ken Booth, for example, suggested that naval functions exist within a triangle, with the three sides formed by a diplomatic role, a military role and a policing role.[8] This is a useful distinction to make, but given that this book argues that maritime diplomacy is not a function of just the navy, and moreover that even the latest US Navy strategy document highlighted the role to be played by humanitarian assistance/disaster response missions that may or may not have a diplomatic function, it omits a fourth possible task for the collective seapower agents: maritime safety and assistance. Booth's triangle would therefore become a diamond, with the various single roles a maritime force can play distributed within it (see Figure C.1). The position of a particular role within the diamond would depend on how diplomatic each of the tasks was at the time.

The diagram is not meant to be a prescriptive list of all possible functions and where they sit within the maritime diamond, but simply an indication that these roles can sit along a four-way axis encompassing maritime safety, security,

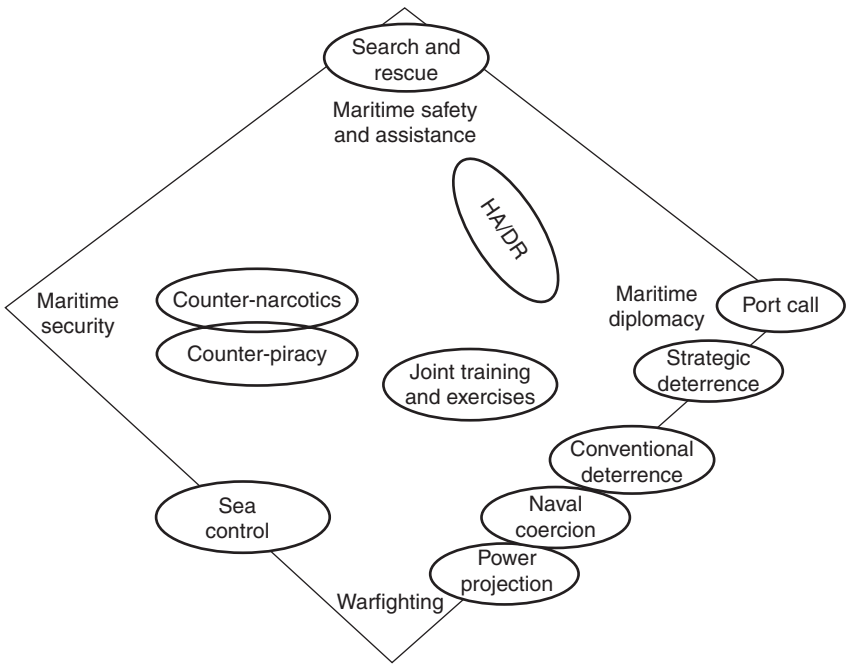



*Figure C.1* The seapower diamond: maritime forces and their roles mapped.

diplomacy and conflict. At any particular time, a greater diplomatic weighting in the event may shift its location over to the right of the diamond, or a lack of it to the other vertices.

The diamond diagram is a useful illustration of the central role maritime diplomacy can play in any maritime force's mix of day-to-day functions. Indeed, it reflects the fact that diplomacy may have a part to play in almost every role assigned to a navy or maritime constabulary force. Given this central role in naval (and non-military) operations and deployments, it has therefore been the intent of this book to redefine the concept of maritime diplomacy for a better understanding of what this role is and how useful it can be.

Maritime diplomacy is, according to this reworking of the concept, not just the gunboat diplomacy of old, or the naval suasion and presence mission of the Cold War. It is a spectrum of activities that runs from the co-operative through the persuasive to the coercive. These categories are not mutually exclusive: maritime diplomacy can be simultaneously co-operative and coercive, just as it can be either the sole reason for a naval deployment or just a partial motivation for a wider operation that may also encompass non-diplomatic objectives such as improving interoperability among navies or enhancing certain skill sets.

Nor is maritime diplomacy reserved purely for navies. It is rather a task for military forces, constabulary agencies and commercial fleets (at times), which can hail from a nation's overall seapower rather than just the narrow capabilities of its navy. It is not even just the bailiwick of nations, governments and multinational corporations. Increasingly, the diffusion of technology makes some elements of maritime diplomacy available for non-state groups that operate governance structures beyond the writ of a national government. Most examples of maritime diplomacy will still involve governments and navies, but the possibility exists for the activity to be practised by non-governmental non-military organisations.

It is an activity difficult to classify exactly as each instance of maritime diplomacy is unique, even if there are broad similarities between, for example, certain port calls. It is useful, though, to think more clearly about what makes up a maritime diplomatic event in order better to analyse its importance as a representation of the current international order and system. For maritime diplomacy is useful not only to those actors who use it, but also to analysts seeking to interpret the wider implications of the use of maritime diplomacy. It is a predictive tool and an analytical one that can reveal tensions, allude to current frictions, underline shifts in the international order and balance of power, identify changing diplomatic strategies and more clearly identify alliances and relationships.

The utility of maritime diplomacy to governments and significant actors should not be understated, though. Maritime forces lend themselves extremely well to the role of diplomacy, and they offer a cost-effective and often highly symbolic method of delivering diplomatic effect without going to war. Maritime diplomacy can deter conflict, it can prevent conflict and it can pre-empt conflict, filling the space between civilian diplomacy and military warfighting with a form of military diplomacy. It is a tool that can be used too much, particularly if

that will then start to erode its very efficacy by eating away at the credibility of any diplomacy. Nonetheless, because of its inherent utility it is a tool that has been used for hundreds of years and seems set to be used in a similar fashion for the foreseeable future.

This book, is deliberately entitled *Maritime Diplomacy in the 21st Century* as it seeks not only to resurrect the term and redefine the activity itself for a more modern, diffuse and globalised era, but also to suggest that there are key reasons why maritime diplomacy will continue to be used in the coming century. These reasons range from the shifting balance of power from west to east, which is empowering a number of emergent states and providing the tools for diplomacy at sea, to increasing normative, legal, financial and political constraints on war-fighting, whether over the longer term or the shorter, as the era of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan winds down. There are new technologies, particularly in the information realm, that might make maritime diplomacy seem increasingly anachronistic and unnecessarily expensive, but there are also technologies that may continue to keep it relevant whether they be unmanned vehicles or improved long-range precision strike capabilities. And as analysts learned from the Revolution in Military Affairs debate, to forecast the end of warfare as we know it is a risky business. Much as a businessman may prefer to catch a flight and shake the hand of a wealthy investor instead of telephoning to build a rapport, so there is an advantage to the very emblematic physical presence provided by maritime fleets.

How to comprehensively analyse maritime diplomacy is, though, still up for debate, but there are tested methodologies, such as game theory, that could provide insights into the phenomenon that will help elucidate the whys and wherefores of maritime diplomacy.

## Maritime diplomacy in the twenty-first century

This discussion on maritime diplomacy, comprising its utility as a political and analytical tool, is also intended to be timely. The twenty-first century has often been noted as the 'Asian century', given the rapid growth rates in East and South Asia, and the natural dominance that the region could have given its vast territory and populations. In particular, the rise of China and India seem to suggest a historic and strategic shift in the balance of power between west and east. In early 2013, a book I help produce, *The Military Balance*, suggested for the first time that Asian defence spending as a whole had overtaken that of Europe.

Asia's development has been reliant on and encouraged a rapid growth in maritime trade, and combined with a newfound ability to project their power on the sea, these countries are now becoming more willing and able to protect their sea lines of communication and overseas interests.

The situation is not much different from the rise of the US in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Then, as now, the rise of significant economies and powerful new nations inspired boldness at sea and a desire to control areas and regions that often required seaborne transit. The Monroe Doctrine, that infamous

policy introduced by President James Monroe in 1823 that suggested that the US would not accept European intervention in the Americas, was an early example for the US. The tensions in the South China Sea and East China Sea, and the concomitant repeated assertions by Beijing that they are Asian problems that do not require outside intervention, could easily be seen as a sort of soft Monroe doctrine.

This process is, to some, inevitable as powers rise. Alfred Thayer Mahan, history's most influential thinker on seapower, outlined why the sea was an increasingly important medium to Americans when he suggested that: 'Whether they will or not, Americans must now begin to look outward. The growing production of the country demands it. An increasing volume of public opinion demands it.' Such a sentiment neatly translates into the current trends in China, where an increasingly vocal public, empowered through electronic social media, is demanding a stronger foreign policy just as the country's economic dependencies and relationships require greater overseas interaction.

As these nations reach out, through their navies, coastguards and commercial fleets, so they will seek to build influence and power, through co-operation, persuasion and coercion. Does this mean that the twenty-first century will be not only the Asian century but also the maritime diplomacy century? Perhaps this is a statement too strong, but it does suggest that maritime diplomacy is an activity that will be seen on the world's seas for years to come.

## Notes

1 Tzu, *Art of War*, chapter 3.
2 Marshall, Tyler, 'US Ship Denied Port Call in Hong Kong', *Los Angeles Times*, 27 March 2002; Glaser, Bonnie and Murphy, Daniel, 'China and the USS *Kitty Hawk*', CSIS Critical Questions, 6 December 2007.
3 US Department of Defense, *Forward*, p. 6.
4 Turner, 'Missions', p. 5.
5 US Department of Defense, *Cooperative Strategy*.
6 Pepetti, 'Building the Global', p. 125.
7 US Department of Defense, *Cooperative Strategy*, p. 9.
8 Booth, *Navies*, pp. 225–33.

# Appendix

## Case study – East Asian maritime diplomacy in the twenty-first century

Gunboat diplomacy has not disappeared, it has just been reclassified. Maritime diplomacy, from the co-operative to the coercive, encompasses what was once known as gunboat diplomacy and is used by fleets worldwide.

In fact, the range and breadth of examples peppered throughout this book are meant to indicate that maritime diplomacy is not an activity confined to a particular region or era. From the time of the Peloponnesian War to the Syrian crisis in 2013, maritime diplomacy has been a significant role for navies to fulfil and delivered effect for policy makers and governments.

Still, it is instructive to apply the concept of maritime diplomacy to a specific geography and time period, in order to better demonstrate the applicability of the concept to the modern era and its relevance in a specific time and place.

Naturally, given the title of this book, it would be sensible to confine the time period to the twenty-first century. In terms of geography, there are a variety of examples to choose from since the turn of the century in regions such as the Middle East (including the maritime exclusion zone off the coast of Iraq before the 2003 invasion; international mine counter-measures exercises designed to both collaborate and deter; the capture of Royal Navy personnel by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps; and the persuasive diplomatic journeys of Iranian Navy flotillas), South Asia (specific counter-piracy operations intended to deter and compel; Indian and Chinese visits to smaller Indian Ocean states such as the Seychelles; and Myanmar and Bangladesh trading deterrent naval deployments) and Europe (such as the Royal Navy flotillas through the Mediterranean via Gibraltar; Russia's return to a permanent Mediterranean fleet; and NATO operations off Libya in 2011). However, arguably the best and most frequent examples of the use of the wide range of maritime diplomacy have occurred in East Asia.

Given the size of the country and the importance it increasingly plays in the regional economy, trade patterns and international order, the role of China is key to recent maritime diplomatic activity. The increasing ability of the country to deploy maritime force at sea, the increasing desire to secure its perceived sovereign waters, and the increasing willingness to use a broad set of diplomatic instruments to achieve its goals all play into the use of maritime diplomacy by China.

Of course, the US, as the primary maritime power in East Asia since the end of the Second World War, also has a major part to play in the region's maritime diplomacy. The US has maintained a powerful presence in the region since the Second World War, temporarily boosted by the Korean and Vietnam Wars and at its peak in 1968 reaching more than 750,000 troops.[1] This has afforded Washington the ability to deploy its navy at times of crisis for tactical or diplomatic reasons. The increase or decrease of US troops deployed in the region in itself can have diplomatic effects, even if unintended or undesired, and the continued US naval presence in East Asia is inherently diplomatic given that its intention is to reassure allies (particularly Japan and South Korea) and deter potential adversaries (currently China). (There are also practical, tactical reasons to have forward deployed forces, as it allows for a much more rapid deployment of power when needed, but the necessarily diplomatic characteristics have also been alluded to by US officials, such as Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert in 2012, when he said '[o]ur naval forces are at their best when they are forward, assuring allies and building partnerships, deterring aggression without escalation, defusing threats without fanfare, and containing conflict without regional disruption'.)[2]

## Coercive diplomacy in East Asia

The difference between a tactical and diplomatic presence has been amply demonstrated in this part of the world. The publicly announced 'pivot' to Asia in late 2011/early 2012 was essentially a form of co-operative and coercive diplomacy, intended to signal to US allies that its commitment to the region remained robust, while warning China that the US was now deliberately considering how to overcome Chinese capabilities. Yet, the pivot did not begin in 2011; rather, the US Navy has been pivoting to Asia since the turn of the century, as the Office of Net Assessments gradually began to realise China was the only possible peer competitor to the US.[3] As a result, the US Navy gradually, and somewhat surreptitiously, began developing Guam as a major strategic hub and base for nuclear-powered hunter-killer submarines in the region. In 1997, the first US aircraft carrier to visit the island for 30 years paid a port call; in 2001 the Navy noted that it would begin to station nuclear-powered submarines on the territory – the first arrived in 2002, followed by two more by 2007. In 2013, the Pentagon announced that it would up this commitment even further to four submarines.[4] This build-up on Guam was not secret: each deployment was publicly announced and some of the costs were built into a realignment agreement signed with Japan in 2006. But compared to the fanfare and press conferences focused around the declared 'pivot' in 2011/12, the Guam deployments, which weren't mentioned in the pivot, were markedly discreet. In this context, the loud broadcasts around the pivot were clearly a form of diplomatic signalling, while the quiet shift of submarines to Guam was simply a tactical deployment to make it easier to move effective undersea capabilities to potential crisis areas more quickly. The fact that submarines struggle to be effective diplomatic instruments because they are

by their very nature hidden and therefore not useful signalling devices when deployed also supports this narrative.

This US presence, increasingly focused on China, and the aforementioned increased willingness and ability of Beijing to deploy maritime forces to protect perceived interests and rights, have at times created friction and direct confrontation between the two. In 2001, the hydrographic survey USNS *Bowditch* was confronted by a Chinese Jianghu III-class frigate and ordered to leave the area in which it was operating (outside the 12-nautical-mile territorial waters of China but inside the 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone). Eight years later, the ocean surveillance vessel USNS *Impeccable* was confronted by a small flotilla of a Chinese naval intelligence ship, a Fisheries Law Enforcement Command (FLEC) patrol vessel, China Marine Surveillance (CMS) patrol vessel and two fishing trawlers. The trawlers manoeuvred within a dangerously close proximity of 25 feet to the *Impeccable* and even stopped in front of her, forcing evasive action. The incident took place approximately 75 nautical miles south of Hainan island in the South China Sea – again outside China's 12-nautical-mile territorial waters but inside its 200-nautical-mile EEZ. In both cases, the US surveillance ships left the area but returned the following day shadowed by US naval vessels.[5]

Both of these events are clear examples of coercive diplomacy, and they share several properties. They appeared to be clearly planned by Beijing: the deployment of a frigate in one case and a flotilla encompassing different agencies and even private citizens suggest a level of planning that could not be achieved via an opportunistic deployment. Moreover, the knowledge that confrontation with a US Navy would likely have political ramifications means Beijing is likely to tread carefully when deploying in such a manner. In both cases, the immediate and the wider message conveyed was fairly explicit, with the vessels ordering the US surveillance ships to leave the area, and thereby demonstrating China's unease with the presence of US intelligence gathering vessels so close to its shores and its submarine routes. In 2002 and 2009, China also refrained from using violence, although the *Bowditch* incident contained an implicit threat of violence and an element of physical coercion was involved in the *Impeccable* affair through the manoeuvring of the vessels. China also ensures that its forces outmatched those of the unarmed and unescorted US ship on both occasions. The corresponding diagram to these incidents can be represented as in Figure A.1.

As the diagram suggests, various factors in these incidents appear to have been calculated to avoid escalation. The explicit message and limited goal of the diplomacy – to remove the US surveillance ships and signal displeasure at their continued operation – makes it unlikely that any form of escalation could occur. The lack of significant kinetic effect also suggests that the Chinese were not seeking violence at this juncture. Finally, the fact that it was pre-empted (although this may not have been known to the crews of the *Bowditch* and *Impeccable* at the time) helps explain these various characteristics and the carefully balanced approach taken.

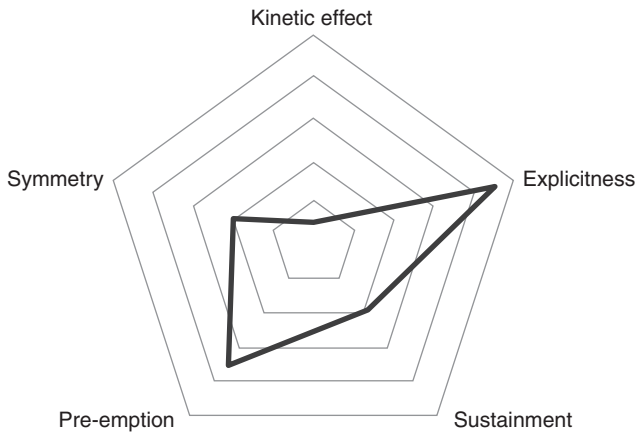



*Figure A.1* The 2009 *Impeccable* incident visualised.

There are, though, also crucial differences between the two. One is the use of non-military vessels in the *Impeccable* incident. Increasingly cognisant of the benefits to be gleaned from the use of law enforcement vessels rather than just naval vessels, China appears to have deployed a FLEC and a CMS ship within the flotilla. This also has the benefit of sending an implicit message that this is a constabulary issue for China and not a military one: Beijing perceives the US's activities to be unlawful and hence they will be handled by law enforcement vessels. The same event also included the use of non-state fishing vessels. Although it is unclear whether the fishing trawlers were corralled into accompanying, or asked to or volunteered to accompany the other vessels, their presence was significant for suggesting that the entirety of seapower (that is, private commercial as well as state-based military/paramilitary interests) was being brought to bear in the pursuit of maritime diplomacy. The use of non-military agencies and fishing vessels also adds to the sense that this is not a potentially escalatory situation. It would be difficult to foresee a US naval vessel, particularly one that is both unarmed and within the civilian-operated Military Sealift Command, reacting to unarmed paramilitary and fishing vessels with violence of any form. The use of non-state actors also allows Beijing to distance itself from the action, making it appear to be a coincidence of angry fishermen and confused law enforcement agencies rather than a well-directed operation to prevent US surveillance of Chinese waters and potentially submarines travelling to and from a new, underground ballistic missile submarine base built on Hainan island.

In its use of law enforcement and fishing vessels, the *Impeccable* incident was just one example among a spate of events involving these agencies and commercial interests by China since the turn of the century. Indeed, the *Bowditch* event could be seen as an early sign of China's increasing assertiveness in its

near-seas, demonstrating a newfound willingness within China to challenge other powers it perceives as transgressing its rights in the sea.

The frequency of events in recent years suggests that there was a concerted plan behind these operations, with the possibility that they were all unfortunate occurrences decreasingly probable with each instance. At times, these incidents have been explicitly and immediately coercive, as when Chinese law enforcement and fishing vessels cut the cable of Vietnamese and Philippine exploration vessels in 2011. But such incidents can also have a wider message being sent. China's 'assertiveness' in the South China Sea since approximately 2007 has been encouraged in Beijing by a perception that both Vietnam and the Philippines were undermining previous unspoken agreements not to disturb the delicate equilibrium in the region by more actively pursuing the hydrocarbon deposits under the sea. In fact, the maritime assertiveness followed a non-maritime diplomatic campaign to discourage exploration of these resources by China attempting to coerce foreign oil and gas companies not to sign deals with these South China Sea states.[6] In 2006 and 2007, Beijing lodged 18 objections with foreign companies about their possible involvement with Vietnam, at times threatening reduced access to the country's on-land resources and market if they cooperated with other South China Sea disputants.[7] The cable-cutting incidents therefore also served as useful, general messages being sent by China that not only should these particular vessels not explore disputed waters, but all exploration should cease.

This combination of fishing, paramilitary and at times military vessels was described somewhat poetically in May 2013 as a 'cabbage' strategy, referring to the layers of deployments as cabbage leaves. Major General Zhang Zhaozhong of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy suggested that

> [w]e have begun to take measures to seal and control the areas around Huangyan Island.… If the Philippines wants to go in, in the outermost area, it has to first ask whether our navy will allow it. Then it has to ask whether our fishery administration ships and marine surveillance ships will allow it.[8]

While there is no indication that the cabbage metaphor is one used by Beijing or the PLA officially, the description is fairly apt for the concentric rings of deployments seen at Scarborough Shoal (known as Huangyan Island in China and Panatag Shoal in the Philippines) in 2013. Having effectively driven Philippine fishing vessels from the shoal in mid 2012, China has allowed its own fishing fleets to make the most of the waters in and near the shoal, while shadowing them with closely deployed paramilitary vessels and occasionally more distantly deployed military vessels.

Ironically, the crisis that led to China's de facto assumption of control over Scarborough Shoal (although there are no deployments on the rocky outcrops themselves, just regular patrols in their surrounding waters) was initiated by the Philippines. After discovering Chinese fishermen engaged in what they believed to be illegal fishing, the Philippines deployed its new flagship, the *Gregorio del*

*Pilar*, to arrest them. China responded with two CMS vessels, and a stand-off ensued. As suggested in Chapter 6, the stand-off can be represented through either a game theory matrix, or a sequential decision tree.

In a simultaneous decision-making scenario, one could suggest that the options open to both the Philippines and China were to withdraw (and possibly bolster the presence) or remain. If both chose to remain and increase military positioning, it increased the possibility of violence, perhaps through a brief and contained conflict, a scenario reached in 1974 and 1988 in the South China Sea when China and Vietnam engaged in brief skirmishes over the occupation of islands (in, admittedly, battles premeditated by Beijing). While the Philippines retained the most powerful presence at the shoal at the time, in the guise of its flagship, it is likely that a reaction by China would have been a further escalation to deploy naval forces to the shoal, thereby leading to the loss of control of Scarborough Shoal for the Philippines and a potentially humiliating naval defeat, given the paucity of its naval capabilities. The best scenario for Manila would be to keep the *Gregorio del Pilar* present in the shoal and a withdrawal of the CMS vessels, perhaps encouraged by the Philippine vessel firing warning shots across the bows of the CMS vessels. This would suggest a willingness to let the Chinese fishermen be arrested. Such a scenario (shown in the top right of Table A.1), however, seems improbable given China's recent belligerent rhetoric over the South China Sea and, again, far superior military capabilities lurking in the background. Two other possibilities exist: a withdrawal even as China remains, which is essentially a cession of the shoal to Beijing, or a mutual withdrawal which leads to a return to the status quo ante with no power retaining overall control over the shoal.

Given these options, it is unsurprising that the Philippines chose mutual withdrawal (the bottom right quadrant), as the only profitable outcome was also the least likely. China, however, reneged on a spoken agreement to withdraw from the shoal, and essentially chose the most profitable quadrant for itself, the bottom left, where it remained (or rather did not withdraw as stated) and retained control over Scarborough Shoal. In order to improve the possible outcomes of another such event, and therefore the utility to be gained from each choice in the above matrix, the Philippines has begun to invest in military equipment to offer better chances of a naval victory in any particular stand-off, and therefore ensure that the top left quadrant (mutual escalation) becomes less attractive to China. This, in turn, will complicate China's policy choice as, although the most beneficial outcome for China would still be one-sided escalation, it now carries the risk that a harmful skirmish might occur.

*Table A.1* The 2012 Scarborough Shoal stand-off pay-off matrix

| | *China remains* | *China withdraws* |
|---|---|---|
| *Philippines remains* | –5, 3 | 5, –5 |
| *Philippines withdraws* | –5, 5 | 0, 0 |

The stand-off can also be modelled through a sequential decision tree, and arguably this better reflects the events that led to the actual stand-off given China's decision to deploy the CMS vessels after the Philippines' decision to send its flagship. In such a modelling scenario, the decision of the Philippines to deploy a naval vessel is the first step, followed by China's decision to reciprocate with law enforcement vessels. This provided the Philippines with a choice: follow through with the arrest of the fishermen or refrain from doing so. Had Manila chosen to arrest the fishermen, this then would have provided Beijing with the question of whether to forcibly resist them. This latter scenario would have led to a situation of violence, perhaps limited but equally with the possibility of escalation given the involvement of a naval vessel. In the end, the decision made by the Philippines at the third step was in fact to refrain from following through with the threat to arrest, and instead to withdraw its naval vessel in favour of a coastguard vessel (see Figure A.2).

Such diplomatic events that can be modelled through game theory need not involve governmental decision makers or state-run agencies. The arrest of a Chinese fishing trawler captain in 2010 by the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) could similarly be viewed through the prism of game theory (see Figure A.3). When confronted by the JCG for fishing in waters claimed by Japan, the captain faced a simple choice: accept his arrest and therefore pay the fine that would be forthcoming, or resist arrest. The latter choice was likely not taken in order to

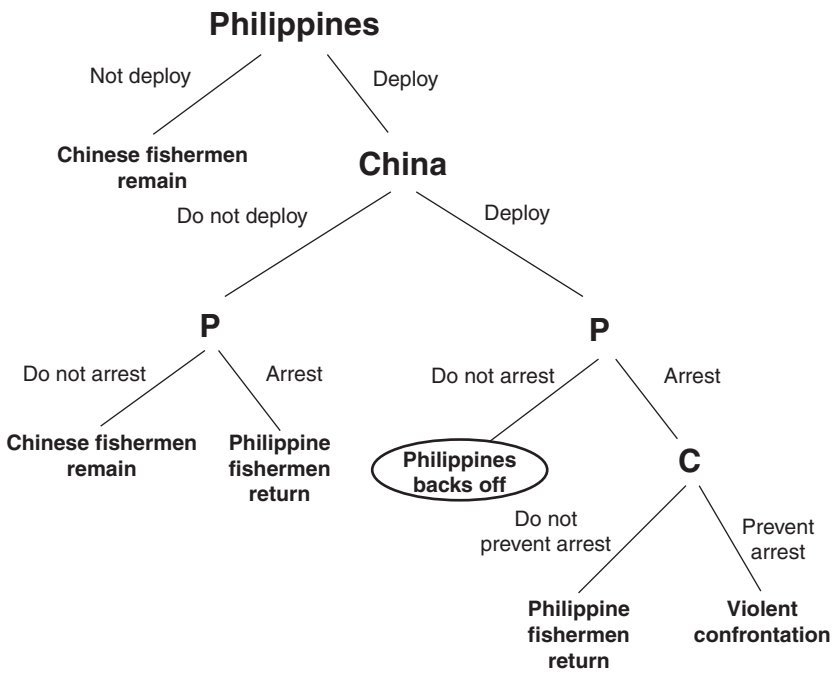



*Figure A.2* The 2012 Scarborough Shoal stand-off sequentially mapped.

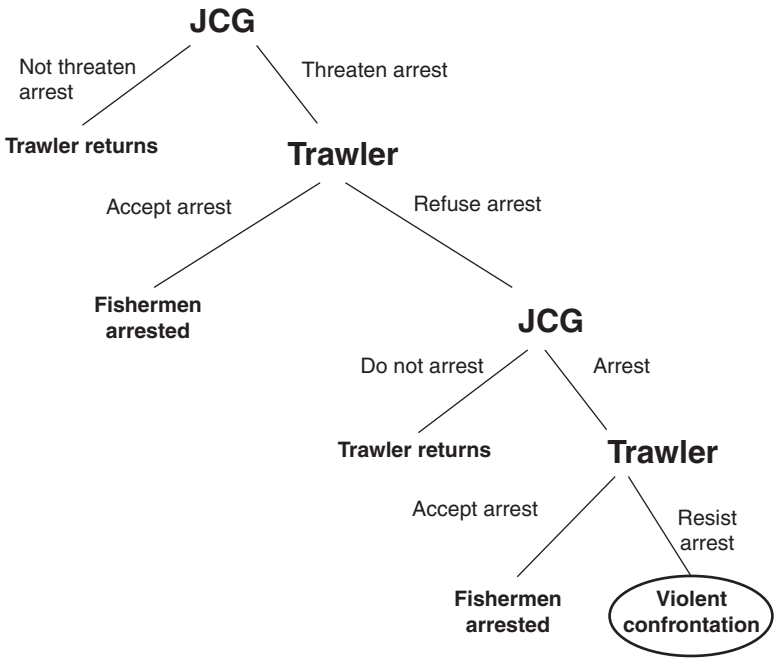



*Figure A.3* The 2010 Chinese trawler incident sequentially mapped.

avoid arrest entirely, but rather to make a point that he should not be arrested for fishing in waters that China claims.[9] The JCG also faced the choice of continuing through with its threat (of arresting the fishermen, perhaps with the use of violence) or of shepherding the trawler captain out of these waters in order to avoid the international incident that might occur. For the JCG, there is a significant bias in its decision making as it is mandated to make such arrests whatever the situation. Nonetheless, in confrontations law enforcement officials always face a choice that balances the correct procedures to uphold the laws they believe apply and the safety of all individuals involved.

Of interest in this above example in the East China Sea is that the trawler captain appears to be acting against his self-interest. There is little chance that he will evade arrest, given the evident superiority of the JCG's vessels in size, speed and even armament. It is therefore assured that he will be arrested, and there even exists the possibility that he might suffer violent repercussions or arrest, damaging his boat and perhaps leading to injury for himself and his crew. Still, perhaps to prove a point about the legality of his fishing in the disputed waters, a form of international maritime diplomacy meant to manage the relations between Japanese law enforcement agencies and Chinese fishing fleets broadly by coercing JCG vessels to stop the harassment of their fishing activities, the captain engaged in dangerous manoeuvres and in fact rammed the JCG

vessel. This suggests that the trawler captain was not acting in rational self-interest, demonstrating that while game theory can be useful in modelling such scenarios, it may prove challenging to accurately forecast all actors' choices if they fail to make their decisions according to rational perceptions of expected utility.

Further, not all incidents of violence, although they might be modelled by game theory, are indicative of maritime diplomacy. The deaths of Chinese, South Korean or other fishermen at the hands of law enforcement officials may not have diplomatic motivations, but rather simply constabulary operations that have escalated. Even when these incidents occur in disputed waters, where there is a latent diplomatic motivation for the operation of law enforcement vessels in these waters to signal a willingness to regulate these waters and therefore a demonstration of a claim to rights and responsibilities by the state involved, it is not clear that the actions of the fishermen have a diplomatic goal rather than just a desire to avoid arrest or miscommunication on all sides. The death of a Taiwanese fisherman at the hands of Philippine Coast Guard officials in 2013 certainly had diplomatic effects, as Taipei imposed minor sanctions on the Philippines, but the confrontation itself did not appear to be mutually diplomatic. While the Philippine Coast Guard presence is a maritime diplomatic signal to some extent, the deaths of the fishermen appear to be an unfortunate consequence of overzealous law enforcement officials rather than an attempt by the Philippines to coerce all Taiwanese fishermen avoid the disputed waters or by Taiwan to demonstrate Taiwan's claim.[10]

## Persuasive diplomacy in East Asia

Other forms of maritime diplomacy, beyond the coercive, have also been regularly seen in East Asia since the turn of the century, even if they do not garner as much media and analytical attention as the intriguing forms of coercion by military, paramilitary or commercial vessels.

Persuasive maritime diplomacy, while more difficult to identify, appears to have been used by a number of states, particularly China. In 2013, China sailed with the second-largest vessel in its fleet, a Type 071 amphibious assault vessel, to James Shoal. While there, the crew of the Type 071, supported by two other vessels, visited the submerged bank with a small number of troops and also held a ceremony where they pledged to maintain national sovereignty.[11] This operation was pure theatre, intended for a non-specific audience and designed to demonstrate the presence and effectiveness of the People's Liberation Army Navy. The use of a new, highly capable vessel with a far greater range than the rest of China's amphibious fleet was a deliberate message to send; the target of James Shoal was also well chosen: it sits just 100 km off the coast of Malaysia at approximately 4° N and represents the southernmost feature within China's expansive claim to the South China Sea. Beijing was therefore sending a persuasive diplomatic message that it was now able to land an amphibious force even at this range (more than 1,600 km from the southern coast of Hainan island).

The blurred lines between the various forms of maritime diplomacy are equally apparent, particularly in naval exercises in the region that could be perceived either as coercive in nature or as persuasive. In 2010, such an event occurred when China held its first tri-fleet exercises, involving assets from the North Sea, East Sea and South Sea Fleets. The live-fire exercises were a powerful indication of China's newfound capabilities, and could be seen therefore purely as an act of persuasion to regional and extra-regional countries as to the naval assets now at hand. This carries a simple message: 'China's navy has finally arrived.' Yet, the location of the exercises in the South China Sea could also be seen as a form of coercion, with an unspoken, implicit threat within the exercises intended to signal that these are Chinese waters and any challenge to this claim would be met with violence.

Similarly, the presence of diplomatic motives can also be unclear, or misunderstood. Beginning in 2011, China began an annual flotilla through the Miyako Strait in between Japanese islands. This flotilla, which was repeated in 2012 and 2013 with different vessels, was closely watched by Japan (which also released imagery of the flotilla including details of the vessels involved). In 2013, China's navy also transited the Soya Strait for the first time, and undertook its first circumnavigation of the Japanese archipelago, leading nationalistic military observers to proclaim that the country had 'cut the first island chain into several pieces'.[12] Given the proximity to Japan of the flotilla's route and the significant capabilities contained within it, it could be seen as a form of persuasive diplomacy (and arguably was seen as such within Japan), with China demonstrating to Japan and the rest of the world its ability and intention to deploy through Japanese waters to the open ocean. However, it may equally be the case that the PLAN simply wanted to undertake these missions to practice various skills in the more unpredictable waters of the Pacific Ocean. It is rare for the PLAN to be able to hone particular skills, such as replenishment-at-sea, which are vital for blue-water operations, and any navy that wishes to consider itself oceanic needs to put to sea regularly to ensure abilities and equipment are kept up to scratch. Thus, it is very occasionally difficult or even impossible, particularly given the opacity of the Chinese military and political establishments, to ascertain accurately whether any event is specifically diplomatic or not.

## Co-operative diplomacy in East Asia

The above examples paint a confrontational picture of maritime diplomacy in East Asia over the past few years. There have, though, been a number of examples of co-operative maritime diplomacy as well, even between potential rivals.

China and Japan, for example, have engaged in reciprocal port calls, for the first times in their modern history since the founding of the People's Republic of China and the fall of the Japanese empire, in order to build trust and influence between each other. The sailing of the Chinese destroyer *Shenzhen* to

Tokyo in 2007 and the Japanese destroyer *Sazanami* to Zhanjiang, Guangdong province seven months later in 2008 were clearly advertised as an attempt to restrain the potential tensions between the two states and ensure either country has greater confidence in their perception of the other's military activities.[13] As each military familiarises itself with the capabilities and intent of the other, it should reduce mistrust, encourage understanding and through the greater transparency reduce the possibility of miscalculation or unwanted escalation.

Such co-operative diplomacy has not been restricted to either port calls or to bilateral activities. In a bid to ease concerns about the impact of the rise of China and the qualitative growth of its navy, Beijing has on occasion sent forces to naval exercises. The announcement that China would join the Rim of the Pacific exercises for the first time in 2014, for instance, is intended to build greater confidence among the various militaries and states involved, with the dean of the Institute of Modern International Relations at Tsinghua University calling the move 'preventive diplomacy'.[14] There have, indeed, been examples of wary co-operative maritime diplomacy even on those occasions when the primary aim has been coercive or persuasive. In August 2013, for example, even while Tokyo regularly protested the presence of Chinese law enforcement vessels near the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, and each country's constabulary forces attempted to coerce each other from these waters, there was on occasion co-operation on shared operations. The passage of a Chinese yacht to the islands was perceived as a potentially inflammatory visit and therefore discouraged by both Japan and China. Despite claiming that the islands were sovereign Chinese territory, the Chinese law enforcement vessels were the ones that communicated with the yacht, prevented the skipper from landing or approaching the islands and eventually refuelled the private vessel when it ran out of fuel.[15]

Some naval exercises are not intended to build trust among potential rivals, but rather to strengthen alliances and indicate new or strengthened alignments. The annual trilateral naval exercises held between Japan, South Korea and the US since 2011 are such an example. While not intended to deter China per se, they do aim to build a closer relationship among the three countries' militaries at a time when Washington is encouraging a more diffuse and diverse alliance structure within East Asia to share the burden of defence amid austerity and a lack of political will.

## Maritime diplomacy in twenty-first century East Asia

These incidents do not represent the entire panoply of maritime diplomatic events that have occurred in East Asia over the past 14 years, nor do they reflect all diplomacy that has occurred using maritime personnel. Each visit to China by the commander of US Pacific Command is essentially a form of diplomacy undertaken by an admiral, in the broader definition of maritime diplomacy.

Nevertheless, they are an indication of the wide range of maritime diplomatic events that have taken place in the twenty-first century in East Asia. To a greater or lesser extent, they suggest that maritime diplomacy is no longer just the gunboat diplomacy of old; it can involve vessels beyond the narrow confines of the navy and may not even intend to deter or compel an adversary. They also, in aggregate, act as a barometer for the shifting balance of power within Asia and the world generally. Many of these events have at their root the deep suspicions being raised by the rise of China and a lack of clarity over that country's future strategic goals and willingness to act within the confines of currently accepted international law. This is driving countries to co-operate at sea to build trust even as it is also motivating a more assertive presence by various countries in order to persuade and coerce potential and current rivals. The use of maritime diplomacy in lieu of conflict, as happened in the South China Sea twice in the twentieth century, appears to be acting as a preventive measure, allowing countries to pursue their diplomatic goals without the resort to violence that may previously have been seen as necessary.

East Asia is not the only region where such diplomacy has taken place by a long shot, but it has been perhaps the most active in terms of the frequency of events and the breadth of agencies or individuals involved. The changes in the region are encouraging states to express themselves through signalling, using their military and non-military agents and proxies even as they aim to avoid a costly conflict. The unique characteristics of seapower, in its broadest sense encompassing everything from the military to the commercial, allow this to occur through the innate legal, practical and geographic flexibility of vessels and assets at sea.

Given these dynamics, and the manner in which the countries of the region are signalling to each other and outsiders through the medium of seapower, East Asia is therefore an example par excellence of maritime diplomacy in the twenty-first century.

## Notes

1 Kane, Tim, 'Global US Troop Deployment, 1950–2005', The Heritage Foundation, 24 May 2006.
2 Statement of Admiral Jonathan Greenert.
3 See Liao, 'Pentagon'.
4 Kan, Shirley A., 'Guam: US Defense Deployments', Congressional Research Service, 12 September 2013, p. 2.
5 Pedrozo, 'Close Encounters', p. 101.
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# Index


Able Archer, Exercise 55–6
Allen, Charles D 25
Altmark incident 1940 50
ARA *Belgrano* 18
Arctic, The 53, 87

Baltic patrol 61–2
barriers to entry to conflict 41–3
Beira patrol 57
Belloc, Hillaire 68
Binkershoek, Cornelius 71
black ships *see* Perry, Commdore
Booth, Ken 66
Bull, Hedley 72, 75, 89

Cable, James 3, 15–21, 49–50
CARAT 2011 exercises 23
China 6, 17–18, 19, 20, 30–1
  People's Liberation Army Navy 52, 53–4
Clausewitz, Carl von 2
CNN effect, The 69
coast guards 9–10, 31–43
  China Coast Guard 34–5, 37
  China Marine Surveillance 35
  Fisheries Law Enforcement Command 35, 52
  Japan Coast Guard 34, 37, 38, 41, 132
  Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency 36
  Maritime Safety Administration 36
  Philippine Coast Guard 36, 134
  South Korean Coast Guard 36, 37
  Taiwanese Coast Guard Administration 36, 37
  Vietnam Coast Guard 36
Cod Wars 39–40
coercive maritime diplomacy 2, 13–27, 78–9, 81, 84–5, 110–15, 127–34
comprehensive national power 17–18
co-operative maritime diplomacy 2, 7–11, 80–1, 85–6, 110–11, 115–16, 121, 135–6
Corfu incident 1923 55
Cuba missile crisis 49
Cyprus 56
Crowe, Eyre

Davidson, Rear Admiral Bob 9, 72, 120
Dawn Blitz, Exercise 63–4, 80
Defence, Concept and Doctrine Centre 95, 97
deterrence 103
Don Pacifico affair, The 14

East China Sea 17, 34, 35, 37, 41, 80, 86, 88, 132–4
exclusive economic zones 88–9
EUNAVFOR 16

Falklands War 115
Fearon, James 112–13
France 14
freedom of navigation 89
Friedmann, Wolfgang G 2

game theory 103–18
  Beckham or Stravinsky game 108
  council game 110
  Exercises Game 109
  hedging game 106
  Prisoners' Dilemma 105
  Stag Hunt game 105
  Stand-off Game 107
  treasure hunt game 110
Ganghwa, Treaty of 15
Germany 12
Gibraltar 45

Gorshkov, Sergei 1, 17
Gray, Colin 70
Great White Fleet 12
Grotius, Hugo 70–1
Gulf of Aden 10, 16
gunboat diplomacy 1–2, 14–15
gunboat philanthropy 7–8

Hizbullah 16
humanitarian assistance/disaster response 8

Iran 1, 13
Iraq war 1990 24, 76, 90

Japan 10, 14, 31, 52–3

kinetic effect 51
Korea, North 15, 71, 74
Korea, South 80
  Cheonan incident 2010 58, 74

law of diminishing marginal credibility 78–81
Lebanon 16, 23
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam 16
Libya operations 2011 76, 97
Lithuania 12
Luttwak, Edward 21–2, 50, 70, 79, 90

Mahan, Alfred Thayer 17, 125
maritime positioning 24
McLuhan, Marshall 54
McNulty, Rear Admiral James F 86
Monroe Doctrine 125
Morocco 14, 48
Nailor, Peter 66

nationalism 84–6
naval presence mission 21
naval suasion 21–2
norms against warfare 67–70
North Pacific Coast Guard Forum 10
Nye, Joseph 8

Operation Sea Breeze 77
Opium Wars 14, 56

Paknam incident 14
Parsley Island 93
Peace Ark, The 6
Perry, Commodore 14, 52–3
persuasive maritime diplomacy 2, 12–13, 134–5

Philippines, The 10, 23, 31
Pinker, Steven 94
privateering 44–5

Russia 48, 53–4, 77–8

Scarborough Shoal 31, 131–2
Schelling, Thomas C 79
Siam 14
SMS *Deutschland* 12
SMS *Panther* 14, 48, 59–61, 62
soft power 8
Somalia 19
South China Sea 10, 20, 31–2, 37, 41, 43, 80, 86–8, 130–2, 134
Spanish-American War 12
Spitsbergen 17
Sri Lanka 16, 92
Strait of Makassar
STUXNET virus 99
Suez Canal 13
Sun Zi 119
Syria 54–5, 114–15

Taiwan 23
  Taiwan Strait crisis 1996 49, 62–4
technology in warfare 69
Theory of the Democratic Peace 93
Till, Geoffrey 9, 17, 70
Tsunami, Indonesian 2004 8, 116
Turner, Vice Admiral Stansfield 21–2

Ullman, Harlan 3
UN Convention of the Law of the Sea 40, 67, 70, 86–90
Unified Assistance, Operation 9
unmanned aerial vehicles 95, 98
US vessels
  USCGC Munro 9
  USCGC Polar Sea 53
  USNS Bowditch 128
  USNS Impeccable incident 31, 35, 37, 38, 39, 43, 128–9
  USS Abraham Lincoln 1
  USS George Washington 2
  USS Invincible Spirit 2
  USS Missouri 22
  USS Pueblo 15, 32, 58
US pivot to Asia 25, 71, 78, 94, 127

Velayat 90 exercises 1, 19
Venezuela blockade 57–8
Vietnam 10–11, 31, 80

War of Jenkins' Ear 44
Wilbur, Curtis D 84

Yangtze River patrols 20
Yom Kippur War 24, 107, 113–14
Young, Elizabeth 67

Zheng He 6–7

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