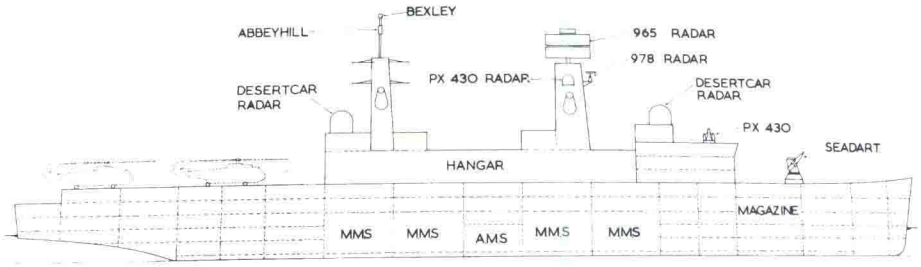
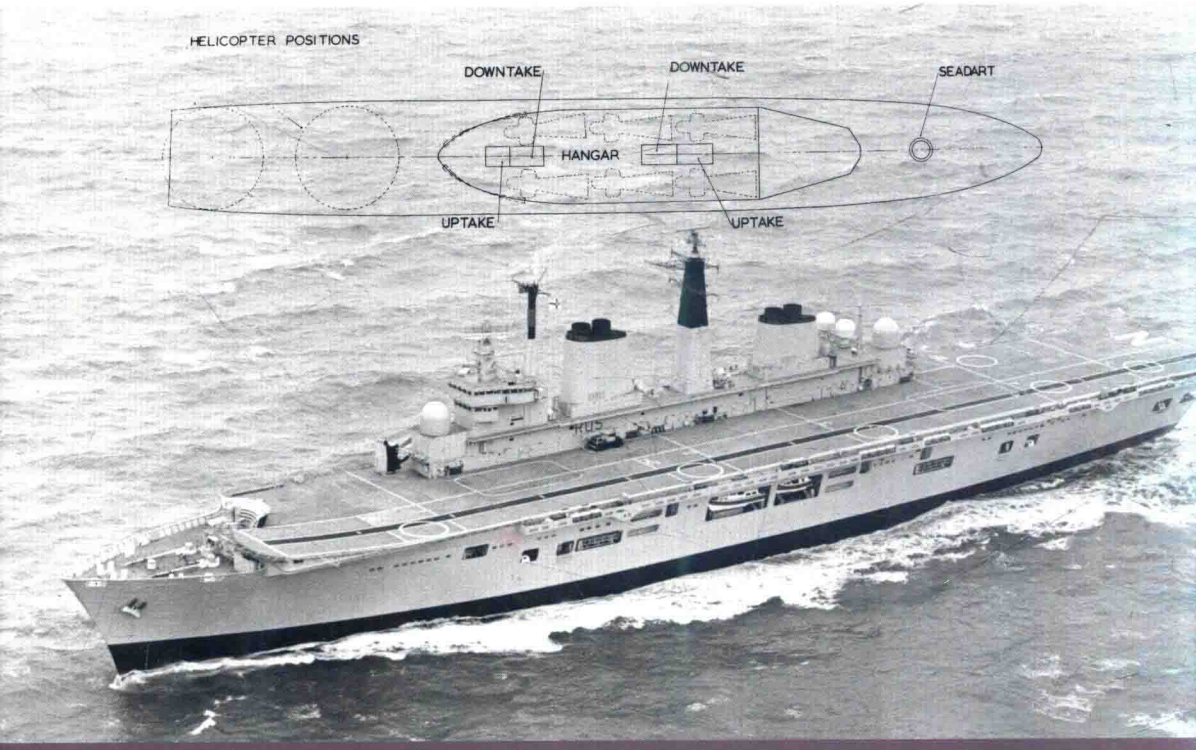
CORBETT CENTRE FOR MARITIME POLICY STUDIES SERIES

ASHGATE

From East of Suez to the Eastern Atlantic

British Naval Policy 1964–70





Edward Hampshire

From East of Suez to the Eastern Atlantic

British Naval Policy 1964–70

EDWARD HAMPSHIRE
The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, UK

ASHGATE

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7PT
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
110 Cherry Street
Suite 3-1
Burlington, VT 05401-4405
USA

www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Hampshire, Edward.
From east of Suez to the eastern Atlantic : British naval policy 1964–70. -- (Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies series)
1. Sea-power – Great Britain – History – 20th century. 2. Great Britain – History, Naval – 20th century. 3. Great Britain. Navy Dept – History – 20th century. 4. Great Britain. Royal Navy – History – 20th century. 5. Great Britain – Politics and government – 1964-1979.
I. Title II. Series
359'.03'0941'09046-dc23

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:
Hampshire, Edward.
From east of Suez to the eastern Atlantic : British naval policy, 1964–70 / by Edward Hampshire.
p. cm. – (Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies series)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-7546-6972-2 (hardcover) 1. Sea-power – Great Britain–History – 20th century. 2. Great Britain–History, Naval – 20th century. 3. Great Britain. Royal Navy – History – 20th century. 4. Great Britain – Politics and government – 1964-1979. 5. Naval strategy – History – 20th century. I. Title.
VA454.H26 2013
359'.03094109046--dc23

ISBN 9780754669722 (hbk)
ISBN 9781409466130 (ebk – PDF)
ISBN 9781409466147 (ebk – ePUB)

Printed and bound in Great Britain by the MPG Books Group, UK

FROM EAST OF SUEZ TO THE EASTERN ATLANTIC

Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series

Series editors:
Professor Greg Kennedy, Dr Tim Benbow and Dr Jon Robb-Webb,
Defence Studies Department, Joint Services Command and Staff College, UK

The Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series is the publishing platform of the Corbett Centre. Drawing on the expertise and wider networks of the Defence Studies Department of King's College London, and based at the Joint Services Command and Staff College in the UK Defence Academy, the Corbett Centre is already a leading centre for academic expertise and education in maritime and naval studies. It enjoys close links with several other institutions, both academic and governmental, that have an interest in maritime matters, including the Developments, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), the Naval Staff of the Ministry of Defence and the Naval Historical Branch.

The centre and its publishing output aims to promote the understanding and analysis of maritime history and policy and to provide a forum for the interaction of academics, policy-makers and practitioners. Books published under the eagis of the Corbett Centre series reflect these aims and provide an opportunity to stimulate research and debate into a broad range of maritime related themes. The core subject matter for the series is maritime strategy and policy, conceived broadly to include theory, history and practice, military and civil, historical and contemporary, British and international aspects.

As a result this series offers a unique opportunity to examine key issues such as maritime security, the future of naval power, and the commercial uses of the sea, from an exceptionally broad chronological, geographical and thematic range. Truly interdisciplinary in its approach, the series welcomes books from across the humanities, social sciences and professional worlds, providing an unrivalled opportunity for authors and readers to enhance the national and international visibility of maritime affairs, and provide a forum for policy debate and analysis.

For Ellie.

List of Tables

1.1	Major RAF aircraft programmes	20
1.2	Aircraft carriers, in service and planned 1964	27
1.3	Strike and fighter carrier aircraft, in service and planned 1964	28
1.4	Breakdown of carrier programme costs (1965–75), 14 December 1964	30
1.5	Cruisers, destroyers and frigates, in service and under construction 1964	31
1.6	Major weapon systems in service and under development	34
4.1	Proposed aircraft carrier programmes 1964–66	129

List of Abbreviations

AAC	Army Air Corps
ACAS (Pol)	Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Policy)
ADA	Action Data Automation: computer command system for larger British warships
AEW	Airborne Early Warning
AUS	Assistant Under-Secretary of State
CAAIS	Computer Assisted Action Information System: computer command system for smaller British warships
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff
CDS	Chief of the Defence Staff
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization ('Baghdad Pact')
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CinCCHAN	Commander-in-Chief, English Channel (NATO)
CNS	Chief of the Naval Staff
CoS	Chiefs of Staff
CSA	Chief Scientific Adviser (Ministry of Defence)
DCNS	Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff
DNP	Director of Naval Plans
DPS	Defence Planning Staff
DOAE	Defence Operational Analysis Establishment, Byfleet
DOPC	alternative abbreviation for OPD
DS 1	Defence Secretariat, Branch 1 – Policy (Ministry of Defence)
DS 4	Defence Secretariat, Branch 4 – Naval Policy (Ministry of Defence)
DS 12	Defence Secretariat, Branch 12 – Defence Staff (Ministry of Defence)
DS 22	Defence Secretariat, Branch 22 – Policy (Ministry of Defence)
DNTWP	Director of Naval Tactical and Weapons Policy (Naval Staff)
DUS	Deputy Under-Secretary of State
EASTLANT	Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Atlantic (NATO)
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
FAA	Fleet Air Arm (of the Royal Navy)
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office

FO	Foreign Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
LTCs	Long-Term Costings
M1(N)	Military Branch 1 (Navy Department of Ministry of Defence)
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OPD	Oversea (*sic*) Policy and Defence Committee (of Cabinet)
OPD(O)	Oversea Policy and Defence Committee – official (i.e. Civil Servants only) sub-committee
OPDO(DR)	OPD: defence review sub-committee of official sub-committee
ORC	Operational Requirements Committee (Ministry of Defence)
PEG	Programme Evaluation Group (of Ministry of Defence)
PUS	Permanent Under-Secretary of State (except where stated, at Ministry of Defence)
RAF	Royal Air Force
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (NATO)
SACLANT	Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic (NATO)
SAS	Special Air Service
SEATO	South-East Asia Treaty Organization
SSBN	Nuclear-powered ballistic-missile carrying submarine
SSN	Nuclear-powered 'hunter-killer' submarine
STOL	Short Take-Off and Landing aircraft
STRIKEFLTLANT	Commander NATO Strike Fleet, Atlantic
VCAS	Vice Chief of the Air Staff
VCDS	Vice Chief of the Defence Staff
VCGS	Vice Chief of the General Staff
VCNS	Vice Chief of the Naval Staff
VSTOL	Vertical and Short Take-Off and Landing aircraft
VTOL	Vertical Take-Off and Landing aircraft
WDC	Weapon Development Committee (Ministry of Defence)
WESTLANT	Commander-in-Chief, Western Atlantic (NATO)

Glossary

AS-12	French-built helicopter-launched anti-ship missile
Broomstick	Codename for Type 988 radar
Buccaneer	British-designed maritime strike aircraft. Modified versions: Buccaneer 2, Buccaneer 2* and Buccaneer 2**
C-130	US-built transport aircraft (known as Hercules)
Comet	British-built passenger aircraft, modified for maritime reconnaissance or anti-submarine warfare
Commando ship	helicopter carrier specialising in amphibious operations
Confessor	early designation of Sea Wolf
CoS (62)1	Chiefs of Staff paper no. 1 of 1962: strategy paper accepting the possibility of the need to support the anding of substantial troops against a 'dug-in' enemy
CVA-01	British-planned strike aircraft carrier
CVA-02	sister ship of CVA-01
ET.316	early designation of Rapier British-built land-launched light anti-aircraft missile system
F-111	Large US-designed swing-wing strike aircraft
GWS-1	British-built Sea Slug area defence anti-aircraft missile system
GWS-30	British-designed Sea Dart area defence anti-aircraft missile system
GWS-31	pared-down version of GWS-30
Hercules	see C-130
HS.681	British design for a STOL transport aircraft
Ikara	Australian-designed anti-submarine torpedo launching missile system
J79	Original US-designed engine for Phantom aircraft
Lynx	British-design for small naval anti-submarine helicopter
Ondine	British design for submarine launched anti-ship missile system
P.1127	Subsonic VSTOL British-designed aircraft, developed into the Harrier
P.1154	Supersonic VSTOL British-designed aircraft
Phantom	US-designed fighter aircraft
PX.430	Early designation of Sea Wolf
Scimitar	British-built maritime strike aircraft

Sea Cat	British-built anti-aircraft point defence missile
Sea Dart	British design for an anti-aircraft area defence missile
Sea King	US-designed, British-built large helicopter, successor to Wessex
Sea Skua	British design for a helicopter launched anti-ship missile
Sea Slug	British-built anti-aircraft area defence missile
Sea Sparrow	US-built anti-aircraft point defence missile
Sea Wolf	British design for an anti-aircraft point defence missile
Sea Vixen	British-built maritime fighter
SH-3D	US-designed helicopter (known as Sea King in British naval service)
Spey	Rolls Royce engine for Phantom aircraft
Sub-Harpoon	US design for a submarine-launched anti-ship missile
TSR-2	Large British-designed swing wing strike aircraft design
Type 12	British-built 1st rate anti-submarine frigate
Type 14	British-built 2nd rate anti-submarine frigate
Type 15	Anti-submarine frigate converted from British-built destroyer
Type 19	British design for a light frigate
Type 21	British design for an anti-submarine frigate
Type 22	British design for an anti-submarine frigate
Type 41	British-built 1st rate anti-aircraft frigate
Type 42	British design for an air-defence destroyer
Type 61	British-built 1st rate aircraft direction frigate
Type 81	British-built general purpose frigate
Type 82	British design for an air-defence destroyer
Type 902	British-built guidance radar for Sea Slug
Type 965	British-built air search radar
Type 988	Dutch-designed large air search radar
Victor	RAF tanker aircraft
Wasp	British-built small naval anti-submarine helicopter
Wessex	British-built large anti-submarine or commando helicopter

Preface

The period of the 1964 to 1970 Labour governments was pivotal one for the post-war Royal Navy, not least because of the cancellation of the strike carrier programme and the decision to phase out fixed-wing aviation, but also because the years immediately following these decisions saw the rebuilding of the Navy's position and self-confidence within the defence bureaucracy. The subject also has numerous contemporary resonances, with rolling defence reviews, expensive strike carrier procurement, inter-service rivalry and involvement in conflicts east of the Suez Canal being present both within the papers of the archives I researched and also in the news as I wrote this book and the dissertation on which it is based.

The quotation from the Zuckerman papers in Chapter 1, p. xx, has been made with permission, University of East Anglia Archives. I would like to thank the Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives for permission to cite the Mayhew papers in Chapters 4 and 5, p. xx and p. xx; and to thank Admiral Sir William O'Brien for allowing me to use quotations from his unpublished memoirs. I would also like to thank Professor John Young for pointing me in the direction two very useful collections of private papers, and for sending me copies of the diaries of David K.E. Bruce. I would also like to thank the Virginia Historical Society and Dr Nelson Lankford of that body for permission to consult these copies and to cite from them.

I could not have completed the work without all of those who have helped and supported me over this period. My supervisor, Professor Joe Maiolo, helped me through the highs and lows of research and writing, and the late Professor Saki Dockrill and Professor Ken Young provided help and support during the early and middle stages of research respectively. I would like to thanks Professors Geoffrey Till and Eric Grove for their helpful advice and constructive criticism, and for Dr Tim Benbow for accepting my manuscript for publishing. Drs Dan Gilfoyle, Ceci Flinn, Matt Ford and Duncan Redford were all generous with their time by reading chapters and commenting on drafts of this book. I would like to thank my colleagues and managers at the National Archives for allowing me the time off to undertake and complete this work, in particular Dr Stephen Twigge, Caroline Williams and Ann Morton. I would also like to thank my parents for their help and support throughout the process and in particular to my father for helping to stoke my interest in naval history from an early age. Above all I would like to thank my wife Ellie and daughter Florence for bearing with my naval history obsessions, the late nights working and the visits to archives across the country. Without Ellie's support and steady editorial hand the doctorate and this book would never have been completed.

Contents

List of Tables *vii*
List of Abbreviations *ix*
Glossary *xi*
Preface *xiii*

Introduction 1

1 The Royal Navy in 1964 7

2 Emerging from Mountbatten's Shadow 41

3 The Navy Alone 77

4 The Cancellation of CVA-01 107

5 The Navy and the Defence Expenditure Studies 141

6 The Mediterranean Strategy 165

7 Building a New Fleet 191

8 Conclusion 223

Bibliography *235*
Index *245*

Introduction

One of the British government's oldest collective decision-making bodies met for the last time in its 300-year existence on Thursday 26 March 1964.[1] Around the table in the Board Room of the Admiralty building were sat the eight Commissioners for Executing the Office of Lord High Admiral, collectively and commonly known as the Board of Admiralty. First appointed when the ancient position of Lord High Admiral was split and replaced by a Board in 1673, the Board conducted its business for the last time under the gaze of Lord Nelson.

The First Lord of the Admiralty, a civilian minister in the government, chaired the Board and at this last meeting the First Lord was appropriately enough Lord Jellicoe, son of the commander of the Grand Fleet in the Great War. Jellicoe ruminated on the previous First Lords who had sat in his seat, from Lord Barham, who had received the news of the victory at Trafalgar at one in the morning from that room, to Sir Winston Churchill. Around the table sat the other Lords of the Admiralty, five of whom were 'Sea Lords', naval officers at the height of their profession, each with a specific responsibility for different aspects of naval administration and policy. Photographs were taken and television pictures recorded for broadcast as the Board of Admiralty dissolved itself, the Commissioners rescinding their Commissions and the post of Lord High Admiral being ceremonially re-created with the Queen now incongruously the holder.[2]

Britain's wealth, Empire and very survival had been built on seaborne communications and their successful defence. It might therefore appear to be appropriate that the dissolution of the Board of Admiralty, the historic centre of British world naval command, occurred in the midst of the most intense period of retreat from Empire, commitments and world power. Between 1949 and 1964 most major British territories were given their independence, whilst from 1964 to 1971 most of Britain's overseas commitments – often supporting recently independent former colonies – were given up. During the same period the Royal Navy dropped from being the next largest navy after the United States Navy to third in size, slipping behind the rising power of the navy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Did not the end of the Board of Admiralty signal both the real and the formal end of British world naval power?

The reality was not as straightforward. Less than two months later the same men sat around the same table in the same room discussing the same types of

[1] National Archives (TNA), Public Record Office (PRO): Admiralty and Navy Department papers: ADM 167/163, minutes 5649–5650, meeting of 26/3/64.

[2] Ibid.

matters that the Board of Admiralty had done before it.[3] This new body, with the deliberately similar-sounding title of the Admiralty Board, obtained its powers and remit from a new committee called the Defence Council, rather than directly from the Queen. In 1964 the Royal Navy might numerically be inferior to the Soviet Navy, but alongside the United States Navy, it was the only maritime armed force with a global reach, bases across the planet, a powerful amphibious capability and an aircraft carrier strike force: the ultimate symbol of naval power projection. The Soviet Union lacked a worldwide reach, its vessels rarely venturing into the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, the Southern Atlantic or the Southern Pacific. It had neither an ocean-going amphibious capability nor any aircraft carriers, both vessel types being the main way in which modern navies projected their power ashore.

The men around the Board table reflected the importance of the aircraft carrier in the Royal Navy's self-image and its internal networks of power and influence. Admiral Hopkins, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff – and effectively the executive deputy head of the naval staff system in Whitehall – had been in the Fleet Air Arm in the war.[4] The first professional head of the Navy to be a Fleet Air Arm officer, Caspar John, had recently retired: his appointment had finally broken through the long-term ascendancy of gunnery officers in the naval leadership. Hopkins had followed in his fellow pilot's slipstream onto the Board of Admiralty and then the Admiralty Board. It was symbolic that the officers of the traditional offensive weapon of naval power were now sharing this power with an officer of one of the emerging offensive weapon systems. The other emerging offensive weapon was the submarine, and the new First Sea Lord, David Luce, had been a submariner for 10 years and was the first professional head of the Navy to come from that service. Luce had left submarines 20 years previously, and he like all but one of the other non-Fleet Air Arm members of the Board had commanded an aircraft carrier in the post-war years at least once.[5] Commanding a carrier, alongside other plum naval jobs (such as Head of the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth, and Director of Naval Plans at the Ministry of Defence), marked out an officer destined out for 'higher things' in the naval leadership. The key members of the naval staff also included an increasing number of former naval flyers, and many more who strongly supported carrier air power.[6]

---

[3] ADM 167/164: A/M (64) 1, 14 May 1964.

[4] Hopkins had been a FAA pilot until 1950 and then Flag Officer Flying Training 1960–62, *Who's Who*, various editions (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1965–75).

[5] Royston Wright (Second Sea Lord) had commanded the light carrier HMS *Triumph* 1953–54, Michael Le Fanu (Third Sea Lord) the fleet carrier *Eagle* 1957–58, J.B. Frewen (Fifth Sea Lord/VCNS) the fleet carrier *Eagle* 1955–57. R.S. Hawkins (Fourth Sea Lord) was another submariner and had been Rear Admiral Nuclear Propulsion as this was being introduced into the fleet. *Who's Who*, various editions.

[6] For example, Captain George Baldwin, Director of Naval Air Warfare in 1965–66. Also note the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Warfare) from 1966 and Third Sea Lord from

The aircraft carrier was therefore at the centre, not only of British naval power, but at the naval leadership's perception of what the Navy meant, the centre of its planning, strategy, operations, and to a very large extent its aspirations and world-view of the United Kingdom as a world power. The existing carrier fleet was aged or facing obsolescence and would need replacing. As would be expected for such a totemic piece of equipment, the naval leadership had lobbied hard for many years to get new aircraft carriers built. In early 1964, they had appeared to be successful: the Conservative government had provisionally approved the construction of a new carrier, the 60,000 ton CVA-01, to be named HMS *Queen Elizabeth*.[7] Two years later, however, CVA-01 was cancelled, the First Sea Lord and the Navy Minister resigned and the Navy's totemic fleet of aircraft carriers would be phased out by 1975 (later reduced to 1971, but in the event given a reprieve to 1977).

Why and how was the carrier cancelled? This is the first of three core questions to be investigated by this thesis. This has been addressed – with limitations – by a number of historians over the last 20 years. Eric Grove, author of the most substantial study of the cancellation of CVA-01 provided the following reasons: primarily poor presentation of the arguments by the naval leadership and insufficient ruthlessness in fighting the Whitehall battle, but also budgetary pressures, Treasury hostility, RAF fears of dissolution and resentment at losing the deterrent role, inconsistencies in costings, naval acceptance of the need for land-based strike, a refusal to countenance a smaller carrier and the new institutional structure of the Ministry of Defence.[8]

Philip Pugh's analysis of carriers has focused on the costs of carrier airpower – the increasing costs and size of carrier aircraft and therefore the concomitant rise in the carrier size and cost until the aircraft carrier becomes unaffordable. He argued that the comparison between carrier-based air strike and land-based air strike is finely balanced and that in the case of CVA-01 and the F-111 both were cancelled because the cost advantages of each were unclear and both were prohibitively expensive.[9] In this context, he argued, personalities, inter-service rivalries and the detailed technical merits were secondary.

Paul Kennedy's analysis of the decline of British sea power stated cost as the key factor in deciding not to build CVA-01, but this was embedded in a much wider argument that stated that Britain's naval power was a result of its economic

---

1970, Admiral A.T.F.G. Griffin was the nephew of Admiral Phillips, who had commanded the force (despatched without any carrier air cover) sunk by Japanese torpedo bombers in December 1941. He was a strong advocate of carrier air power, as was Henry Leach (later First Sea Lord) whose father had been captain of the *Prince of Wales*, Phillips's flagship. Former naval pilots who were staff officers in this period later to become Sea Lords included Admirals Empson, Treacher and Lygo.

[7] ADM 1/29044: minute sheet by Head of Mat 1, 23/3/64.

[8] Eric Grove, *Vanguard to Trident* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987), pp. 267–79.

[9] Philip Pugh, *The Cost of Seapower* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1986), chapter 7, in particular pp. 197–208.

strength and that when that began to decline its naval power would inevitably decline also.[10] Cost, inter-service rivalry, the end of the East of Suez strategy and making a case poorly have been given as significant factors by a number of other writers and historians in much shorter analyses.[11] The autobiographies and other reflections of contemporaries involved in the carrier decision highlight a similar set of reasons to those set out by Grove, Pugh and Kennedy: Denis Healey, for example, cited cost, manpower, a case better put by the RAF leadership and an inability to demonstrate significant lost capabilities.[12]

Why analyse this again? All of the analyses referred to above did not benefit from direct access to government records, and those that have – mostly published in the period 2000–2010 – have been short and necessarily generalistic assessments over a few pages in works dealing with other or wider subjects.[13] How were the

[10] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Penguin, 1976), chapter 12, in particular pp. 343–4 for cancellation of carriers.

[11] Both C.J. Bartlett, *The Long Retreat* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 207–209, and Michael Dockrill, *British Defence since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 91–2, state cost issues and Denis Healey's belief that the F-111 / island strategy could replace the role of the carrier; Norman Friedman, *British Carrier Aviation* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1989), p. 344, highlights cost and a better case made by the RAF; Peter Nailor, 'The Development of the Royal Navy since 1945', in Geoffrey Till (ed.), *The Future of British Sea Power* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984), p. 20, gives the secondary relevance of carrier airpower in a NATO operational context where land-based air power and US carrier air power is available; David Steigman, 'Aircraft Carriers', in Norman Friedman (ed.), *Navies in the Nuclear Age* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1993), p. 30, gives the acceptance of the RAF island strategy by the government over the carrier as the key reason; Sir William Jackson and Lord Bramall, *The Chiefs: The Story of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff* (London: Brassey's, 1992), pp. 366–8, cites over-confidence, reliance on amphibious support operations to justify CVA-01 and ambivalence within the Navy Department.

[12] Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), pp. 275–6. Other published works by contemporaries are Lord Hill-Norton and John Dekker, *Sea Power* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 72, which mentions cost, and Group Captain H. Neubroch, 'The Great Carrier Controversy 1964–65: A Defence Planner's Recollections', *Royal Air Force Historical Society Journal*, 27 (2002): 63–7, cites arguments poorly put and poor use made of staff planners.

[13] The most substantial (although all are under 10 pages in length) recent analyses using primary sources are Ian Spellar, 'The Royal Navy, Expeditionary Operations and the End of Empire, 1956–75', in Greg Kennedy (ed.), *British Naval Strategy East of Suez 1900–2000* (London: Frank Cass, 2005) and the same author, 'The Seaborne/Airborne Concept: Littoral Manoeuvre in the 1960s?', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 29/1 (February 2006): 53–82, who in both articles cites cost combined with a lack of utility as the key factor in cancellation; Richard Hill in his biography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Lewin, *Lewin of Greenwich* (London: Cassell, 2000), pp. 266–73, who regards cost combined with utility as the most important reason; and Saki Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 138–44, who states cost and cost-effectiveness, the long time taken to procure the vessels and utility as the main reasons for cancellation. See also