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# The U.S. Navy in the 1990s: Alternatives for Action

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do uniquely, no mission or role that cannot also be performed by an existing platform—such as patrol aircraft, that can cover more area faster, or helicopters, that can hover better.

Whatever the reason, the departure of blimps from the naval scene is regrettable, for a blimp is a delightful thing. Flying on the principles of Archimedes rather than Bernoulli, they are graceful creatures that never fail to draw the eye, delight the imagination, and stir the heart.

FRANK C. MAHNCKE  
Norfolk, Virginia

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George, James L. *The U.S. Navy in the 1990s: Alternatives for Action*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1992. 246pp. \$18.95

"You've got to air creative ideas, no matter how controversial. You've got to innovate. You've got to see old and new problems with a fresh view, and a steady eye on the process of learning the lessons of the past, be it recent or further back, for the fleet that will sail into the future." This provocative quote is from the address of the former Secretary of the Navy, J. Lawrence Garrett III, to the 1990 Sea Power Forum. James L. George does exactly what Garrett called for—he airs creative ideas, no matter how controversial.

James George is an internationally known analyst of naval affairs and arms control, a former member of both the legislative and executive branches of government in the field of national

security affairs, and a widely respected author. He has a *cachet* that many in the profession can never hope to obtain—respectability and a platform from which to espouse ideas that would be considered heretical from a lesser source.

George disparages the current and projected Navy building program as "less of the same," and he waves a red flag at the current Navy leadership. He refers to the current period as a new "interwar period," one which lacks the leadership that led in the past to Navy brilliance. Using the past as an analytical guide, the author demonstrates that although from many perspectives the three previous interwar periods (between World Wars I and II, World War II and the Korean War, and from the Vietnam War to the Reagan buildup) were perceived as disastrous for the Navy, they were actually times of progress and imagination in which the seeds of naval success in the next war were sown by imaginative mavericks who challenged traditional naval parochialism.

Acting precisely as did the mavericks he cites, George uses two central themes to illustrate the crossroads at which the Navy is poised. First, he discusses the lack of coherent and realistic mission analysis (a strategist's term known to military planners as force planning), which he insists is the basis for everything else. George shows that in the radically altered international environment in which the Navy must operate, the strategic patterns of the past simply do

## 146 Naval War College Review

not fit. Writing before publication of the new maritime concept “. . . From the Sea,” which focuses on littoral warfare, George suggests that no new ground has been broken with the proposals for restructuring the Navy. He postulates, with insightful analysis, an entire nuclear deterrent force at sea, the Navy as the primary U.S. force in Nato with SacLant emerging as the senior U.S. officer in the alliance, and the U.S. Navy as the primary force to deal with trouble in the Third World. It is clear that he views the Navy as the only logical force of choice in many situations.

The second alternative to the current and programmed naval force structure is lengthy and detailed, and it is the meat of the book. Much of his argument is controversial, but all of it is thoughtful, well reasoned, clear, and concise. The author discusses mission analysis as a crucial first step, but eventually the issue becomes the forces: type, quantity, and building plans—including research and development, new deployment concepts, the role of the reserves, and reconstitution should the interwar period end. In each area George offers alternatives to prevalent naval thought, some of which have already been adopted, some certainly under consideration, and others that are guaranteed to raise the hackles of some segment of the Navy.

Now that he has raised the communal blood pressure, George slices a vein of Navy blue with his rapid-fire conclusion that lists the perils of the “less of the same” course: decreasing

numbers, erosion of the industrial-reconstitution base, a focus on yesterday's mission requirements, a squeeze on future programs, the tendency to try to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear (attempting to push the wrong program for the wrong mission), increased deployment requirements, morale problems, Goldwater-Nichols, parochialism, shooting the messenger, congressional interference, arms control, and personnel problems.

*The U.S. Navy in the 1990s* is a *tour de force*, written by a man who has spent much of his life thinking about the Navy and its role in national security. No matter what one thinks of his proposals, James George cannot be ignored. This book will make waves. It should be required reading for everyone in Washington.

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Brown, David K. *Future British Surface Fleet: Options for Medium Sized Navies*. London: Conway Maritime Press and Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1991. 190pp. \$34.95

The title of this work is rather misleading, until the book is read. Thereafter, one would find it difficult to compose ten more suitable words as a precis of its contents. David Brown's slim book, which runs well under two hundred pages, satisfies not one but three schools of interest. Firstly, for those expecting grand strategy, the book both devotes a chapter to the