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In Harm's Way: American Seapower and the 21st Century

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Heffernan was dismissed “shortly” after becoming Director of Naval History largely because of the admiral’s discharge of an unnamed “civilian historian who was making little progress on a project for the Navy.” This appears to be a reference to Heffernan’s controversial decision in 1950 to terminate Robert G. Albion’s contract to write a history of naval administration in World War II. It is true that the admiral’s action won him few friends, especially in academic circles, but it did not result in his dismissal. In fact, Admiral Heffernan served as Director of Naval History from 1947 until 1956. Despite such problems, however, Pfitzer’s volume does deepen our understanding of a dominant figure in the intellectual history of the United States. This book will be read with interest and considerable profit by students of naval and maritime affairs.

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Ullman, Harlan K. *In Harm's Way: American Seapower and the 21st Century*. Silver Spring, Md.: Bartleby Press, 1991. 271pp. \$16.50

In 1982 the newly appointed Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral James Watkins, received a letter from the Vice Chief, Vice Admiral William Small, which stated that although the Navy was experiencing a gratifying expansion, the strategy underwriting

that growth was not sufficiently defined either for the public or for Congress. The implication was that if easily understandable strategic justification was not provided and made a top Navy priority, every gain would be at risk.

Harlan Ullman believes that Admiral Small’s statement has even more validity today than it did in the halcyon years of expanding budgets. In the post-Cold War era every strategic assumption that justified the modern, dominant U.S. Navy is under fire. The demise of the Soviet Union dominates congressional and public thinking, and unless both are provided with strong strategic arguments, the immediate future of the Navy looks bleak. *In Harm's Way* is a carefully crafted effort to provide those arguments, discussing the politics of justifying, building, and maintaining a navy.

The fundamental problem is clearly presented in the beginning of his treatise: the days of citing the Soviet capability as justification for ships, aircraft, and weapon systems are over. The key factors in the U.S. Navy’s future are economics and politics—not just threats. Ullman predicts that its future will probably be dominated by events over which it has no control and by people over whom it has relatively little influence. This may have far-reaching effects on what he calls the four “battle ensigns” that will shape the navy of the future: strategy, domestic environment, infrastructure, and operations.

The author has devoted a substantial portion of the text to the background of the U.S. Navy, and offers a detailed explanation of how and why our current navy was fashioned. Though this is a most interesting and useful analysis, one may not agree with Ullman's underlying belief that those responsible for today's navy were ignorant of the true threat: that whereas the Soviets fashioned their navy to meet the nuclear threat to their homeland from our submarines and aircraft carriers, the U.S. Navy presented its rapidly expanding surface and submarine fleet as meeting a threat to the sea lines of communication in the Atlantic—which bore little relation to Soviet strategic thinking. Despite this, Ullman's focus on the past and present is not an indictment, but rather an attempt to help one make an educated prediction of the Navy's future.

Ullman's analysis of the threats to U.S. security focuses not only on politico-military threats but on politico-economic and environmental threats as well, and dares to speculate about whether military action against Brazil might become necessary if that state does not take action to cease denuding the rain forest!

The strength of this text is that Ullman has written it for the layman. He has presented a simple premise and provided the necessary details for discussion. He does, however, possess a bias that some readers may find bothersome.

Ullman believes that the Soviet Union has not gone away. It maintains

a military capability second only to the United States. The reader should keep in mind that this book was published before the demise of the Soviet Union and before the Central Committee was removed from power. However, only the former Soviet Union has the capability to destroy the United States in fifteen minutes. (Now that it is fractured, what becomes of that capability?) Harlan Ullman maintains that despite the rhetoric of change, this fact must never be forgotten.

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Kaufmann, William W. and Steinbruner, John D. *Decisions for Defense: Prospects for a New Order*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1991. 78pp. (No price given)

The dramatic collapse of communism that ended the Cold War has led to calls for equally dramatic cuts in U.S. defense spending. The Bush administration responded in 1991 with proposals to cut outlays for defense by over \$50 billion, to \$253 billion (in 1992 dollars), and to reduce U.S. forces by about twenty-five percent over the 1991-1996 period. Critics in Congress and elsewhere do not believe that these cuts go far enough to reflect what has happened in the international environment, and domestic economic stringency. This study contributes to that debate and will help military professionals understand the critics of defense spending.