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# The Defense Reform Debate: Issues and Analysis

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the prospects for deterring the Soviets from launching a conventional attack in a future crisis."

Mearsheimer's principal conclusion in this chapter is that the Soviets enjoy a relatively large quantitative advantage in key categories of conventional arms and force comparisons; therefore, our conclusions about the prospects for defeat or victory are scenario-dependent. In part, the potential outcomes will be a function of warning, mobilization rates and readiness.

Mearsheimer is correct in suggesting that a battle in Central Europe that erupts from a Soviet "standing start attack" may have a different outcome than one which is initiated only after a Warsaw Pact mobilization. But the author's assumptions are open to question and leave room for debate—that a "limited victory" would hardly be "an attractive option" and that for a "war in Europe to become a realistic possibility, there would have to be a significant deterioration in East-West relations."

One could argue, for example, that if the Soviet Union is primarily interested in the political dissolution of Nato (rather than its military conquest) a limited military action might have a much greater political effect than a potentially lengthy campaign where the Soviets would almost certainly risk nuclear escalation and retaliation with US strategic systems. That risk would be much reduced in a lightning operation designed to present Nato with a political fait accompli. In addition,

for reasons of political timidity and tactical ineptness, there is some question about Nato's ability to respond rapidly to signals of Soviet mobilization. This at least suggests that strategic warning might not be as critical a factor in Nato's response, as Mearsheimer argues.

Finally, I am not persuaded that East-West relations would have to reach a dangerously strained level before a war in Europe becomes a "realistic possibility." I recall similar assurances just prior to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and Moscow's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. True, these attacks did not take place in Central Europe and therefore the Soviet calculations would be different. Nevertheless, they do suggest that Soviet conceptions of what is "realistic" may differ markedly from our own.

In sum, John Mearsheimer has produced a valuable work of solid scholarship and provocative analysis. His appreciation for the lessons of history provides an edifying perspective for those who insist on ignoring the past.

JED C. SNYDER  
Hudson Institute

Clark, Asa A. IV et al. eds. *The Defense Reform Debate: Issues and Analysis*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984. 370pp. \$30, paper \$12.95

The military reform movement is attempting a newly unprecedented effort to bring about changes in US military doctrine, strategy, weapons and organization. The movement

was sparked largely by five individuals: Colonel John Boyd, USAF, Retired, Steven Canby and Pierre Sprey (defense consultants), William S. Lind (president, Military Reform Institute), and Norman Polmar (naval analyst). They enjoy the support of the bipartisan Congressional Military Reform Caucus as well as of a number of officers, active and retired, primarily in the Army and Air Force.

The goals sought by the reformers include increases in the defense budget; higher spending on innovative, less sophisticated, less expensive weapons; reexamination of defense doctrine; smaller aircraft carriers in greater numbers; diesel submarines, hydrofoils, and surface effects ships; shifting land war doctrine from an emphasis on firepower-attrition to an emphasis on maneuver; changing military education and promotion to give officers a chance to think about warfare; greater stress on military history and theory in military schools; revitalizing our military journals; reducing the administrative load on officers in the field; shifting from a bureaucratic to a corporate organization model such as exists in the Marine Corps; improving military decision processes; and, by some, shifting from a continental to a maritime strategy in Europe.

The reformers' goals are more a grab bag than a formal agenda, and do not all carry the full support of all the activists. Indeed, most of the goals are unexceptionable. Few would argue on principle against an increased budget, greater effective-

ness, innovative weapons, improved educational programs, revitalized military journals, or reduced administrative burdens. But the specifics of several programs separate the flag-waving reformer from the traditionalist who may also seek many of the same goals. On this point the background of *The Defense Reform Debate* carries special significance.

For two decades the United States Military Academy has sponsored the West Point Senior Conference seeking to facilitate open exchanges on significant topics of the day. The theme of the 20th conference (1982) was "The Military Reform Debate: Directions for the Defense Establishment for the Remainder of the Century." The book evolved from the edited report of the conference. None of the 22 chapters identifies a specific Army issue, all are Defense oriented. Yet the contributors are dominated by West Pointers or members of the Reform Caucus. The Air Force views are represented formally only by a reprint of General David C. Jones' *New York Times* article on "What's Wrong With Our Defense Establishment." Though some contributors support current Navy positions, there is no naval spokesman; the only formal statement of modern maritime strategy is by Jeffrey Record, a prominent defense scholar who once was a legislative aide to Senator Sam Nunn, "Implications of a Global Strategy for U.S. Forces."

The chapter "Guiding the Reform Impulse" by Newt Gingrich and James W. Reed makes reference to "Marlborough's Continental Strat-

egy” versus “the elder Pitt’s blue water strategy.” Congressman Gingrich, a member of the Reform Caucus, and Major Reed of the US Army, find that the maritime strategy fails for these reasons: it would “abandon 500 million relatively free people, . . . would lead rapidly to Finlandization of those peoples on the periphery of the Soviet empire”; it would advertise the “weakened American resolve and recognize that we, in fact, are the eventual losers; . . . it fails to anticipate the likely Soviet response . . . and concede[s] the contest for dominance on land”; and “would deal a crushing blow to the morale and élan of the American people.” Obviously some of these conclusions are faulty; others are debatable.

Jeffrey Record’s paper takes the opposite view, supporting a maritime strategy in place of the continental. If our European allies will not contribute adequately to Nato defense, despite their undoubted capacity to do so, then the United States, which cannot do both, should focus primarily on other interests. He calls for gradual withdrawal of US ground troops from Germany, and major expansion of the Navy and Marine Corps to carry out a global strategy based primarily on sea-power. Record finds the required expansion of the Navy to 600-800 ships to be incompatible financially with the big-deck carriers and the \$1.5 billion missile-launching nuclear submarines. Instead he favors greater numbers of smaller carriers, diesel submarines for specialized roles, and

more amphibious support ships. He would also replace the Rapid Deployment force with a small, agile, tactically capable sea-based force.

Robert Komer, a former RAND scholar and a strong proponent of a central front strategy for Nato, discusses the flaws in a maritime strategy and finds the big ship navy of Secretary John Lehman now under contract “a recipe for strategic disaster.” Although criticizing both Record and Gingrich for failing to account for the collective contribution allies should make, he supports the Gingrich-Reed thesis and faults Record for failing to “bother” with the implications of “losing” Western Europe. The reviewer, like any other “unbiased and wholly objective reader,” comes to a more optimistic conclusion on the maritime strategy both on substance and on the evidence presented.

Steven Canby, a West Pointer and a colleader of the reform group, criticizes the naval force structure in the current Five Year Defense Plan. The Navy gets the lion’s share of the budget yet “nowhere is there an articulated strategy for naval operations; what is termed strategy is a mere collection of justifications for more ships.” Canby opposes the large carrier as “vulnerable to submarines and to massed raids by aircraft equipped with antiship missiles,” but overestimates the capability of Soviet naval squadrons, “. . . some out of reach of carrier aviation or sheltered by land-based air defense.” He tends to underestimate the superior geographic position of Nato and

the isolation of the Soviet Union from the sea, largely through Nato controlled land-based air, which puts the shoe at least partly on the other foot.

Other issues developed in *The Defense Reform Debate* cover doctrine, force structure, modernization and weapons acquisitions, and reorganization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. All are well written in concise, jargon-free prose. General Paul Gorman, Commander in Chief, US Southern Command, offers a particularly outstanding discussion, "Toward a Stronger Defense Establishment." His thoughts on the deep and divisive service differences—ideas, traditions, customs, prejudices and obstinacies—show an unusual understanding of cultural factors too often misidentified as interservice rivalry. Thanks to his deeper understanding, his is one of the very few, despite the wealth of talent among the contributors, to display a truly objective analysis of maritime views.

General Gorman's essay points up the fundamental contradiction in the entire book, the lack of balance in the contributions. Why are naval strategists and organization experts not included in discussions of the defense reform debate and other crucial issues of the day? Certainly some of the questionable statements about maritime war which mar a most useful and informative study would not have gone unchallenged.

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Friedman, Norman. *Carrier Air Power*.  
New York: The Rutledge Press,  
1982. 192pp. \$29.95

Friedman, Norman. *U.S. Aircraft Carriers: An Illustrated Design History*.  
Annapolis: Naval Institute Press,  
1983. 427pp. \$44.95

Hudson Institute naval analyst Norman Friedman has used his considerable skills of synthesis and overview to produce two indispensable volumes for naval officers and historians alike in understanding the material and doctrinal evolution of aircraft carriers. Indeed, every naval officer associated with carriers must read these works not simply for essential background to current carrier policies but for learning the reasons why viable or seemingly viable, actions were rejected—small carriers, certain conversion plans, internal sacrifices, and so on.

Both books are written for the active professional officer, since they presuppose a knowledge of Navy acronyms and abbreviations, some of which baffled a retired 30-year black-shoe who looked at the reviewer's copies. The historian, however, will welcome the concise treatment of many subjects, even though he must regret Friedman's failure to cite specific documents (he only gives the general "sources" of his evidence). Also, Friedman relies too much on inferences ("probably" and "it appears" are overused), though his obvious erudition and command of the material force the reader to trust him in general.