

Naval War College Review

Volume 34
Number 1 *January-February*

Article 15

1981

Combat Fleets of the World 1980/1981

D.G Clark

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Clark, D.G (1981) "Combat Fleets of the World 1980/1981," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 34 : No. 1 , Article 15.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol34/iss1/15>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

compromise than does the United States. The author is also extremely critical of the nation's failure to pursue strategic defense systems while noting the significant efforts the U.S.S.R. has undertaken to protect its people and production base.

On general-purpose forces, "U.S. quality at this stage can no longer compensate completely for the lack of flexibility caused by quantitative inferiority...." United States' economy of force now necessitates a defensive strategy in Western Europe and limits the options of tactical airpower. The U.S. Navy, with its "sea control" mission, is confronted by a greatly expanded Soviet Navy, which needs only to exercise "sea denial" to succeed. In fact, Collins believes, the Navy is now at a crossroads. "America's Navy is marginally capable of carrying out its mission in support of national strategy.... Serious students of naval strategy sum up the situation with one succinct statement: the future U.S. Navy faces reduced options and reinforced risks." In contrasting mobility forces, Collins finds improved Soviet capabilities on one hand, with efficient U.S. airlift but deficient sealift capabilities on the other.

Collins then delves into alliance systems and regional balances noting that unity of command and strategic initiative favor the Warsaw Pact, as does the lack of substantive growth in NATO members' military capabilities. Analysis of the Far East indicates that neither power can reasonably expect to apply decisive influence. In the Middle East, the Soviets need only act as a "spoiler" to succeed in constraining U.S. options. The Rapid Deployment Force could successfully engage minor Third World opposition but is no match for possible Soviet power in that area.

Collins concludes with the observation that despite rampant numerical imbalances favoring the Soviets in most manpower/material

comparisons, "A mirror image between U.S. and Soviet Armed Services is neither necessary nor desirable." After advocating improvements in U.S. nuclear, chemical/biological, and conventional capabilities, Collins states that "The lack of U.S. flexibility is in large part a self-inflicted wound that results from decisions promulgated over the past two decades." In his estimation, no miraculous cures seem imminent. "More money to operate, maintain, and refurbish U.S. Armed Forces may be imperative at this point, but bolstering budgets will produce fewer defense benefits than desired unless U.S. leaders stand back, survey the strategic forest instead of the tactical trees, challenge assumptions, subordinate special interests, stress proven principles, and press for practical change."

Collins' work should be a mandatory addition to the libraries of individuals interested in military history and defense decisionmaking. Well-documented and thoroughly indexed, it is a comprehensive, up-to-date reference text that will unquestionably garner accolades for its author. Authoritative and detailed, yet readable, the book is uniquely valuable in setting the stage for the changes in military balance that will take place during the 1980s.

R.J. ZLATOPER
Commander, U.S. Navy

Couhat, Jean Labayle, ed. *Combat Fleets of the World 1980/1981*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1980. 794pp.

The third biennial English language edition of this French publication has now become available through the efforts of the U.S. Naval Institute and A.D. Baker III. It is again larger (by 142 pages) than the previous edition and contains more photographs and details than before. I found it more readable,

and better suited to reference because of changes in format and a more convenient positioning of photographs near the applicable text. Larger type setting off the ship class titles would make it still more readily useful as a reference.

In the introductory portion of *Combat Fleets* the editor states (in comparing the U.S. to the Soviet Navy) that "... a fleet that has a definite plan for its future and a firm grasp of its strategic and political responsibilities will sooner or later achieve ascendancy over one that does not." He goes on to mention "a lack of understanding of the uses of sea power" at the highest political levels but leaves the impression that the U.S. Navy does not comprehend its mission. No one who has read the works of contemporary U.S. Navy authors over the past 10 years could accept that viewpoint. The annual statements to the Congress and "CNO Report" state concisely the view of those in uniform regarding the identity of our mission and often list the wherewithal required to accomplish it.

M. Couhat criticizes the FFG-7 class for its capability. Yet, under the politics of the early seventies, that was the only design that could gain approval. He commends the Iranian DDG-993 design, but neglects to mention that it is based on the U.S. Navy's original plan for the *Spruance* class (20 DDGs and 40 DDs with a common hull design) which was reduced by Congress and the Administration to 33 DDs only. The time may come when this country must look for scapegoats to blame for its neglect of the military. That search should not start with those who have spent their careers working to maintain the all too few ships provided and pleading for more, because they had seen the enemy at first hand and knew his capability and potential.

The ship and crew I command just had such an opportunity. The timely arrival aboard of *Combat Fleets* just

prior to my ship's deploying for TEAMWORK 80 and BALTOPS provided a chance to put the volume to good use on the bridge and in CIC. Our operations with ships of nearly all the NATO navies made the unclassified data available in *Combat Fleets* extremely valuable to all watchstanders who had to be alert for rapid identification of contacts. Only the perpetual North Sea fog limited its use as this ship operated as an "Orange" unit far outnumbered by "Blue." The text came in handy for allocating tasks to our Orange allies ranging from the 30-year old German *Zerstorer 5* (an ex-*Fletcher*) and the new Dutch *Kortenaer* with her rapidly responding gas turbines. The book also helped the lookouts pick out the curious *Krivak* who was taking notes on the operations of the *Nimitz* task group and several assorted Warsaw Pact combatants who followed us through the Baltic.

Combat Fleets now needs to address two items before the next edition is published. First, it requires some detailed research to correct and update portions of the data provided. At least in the U.S. Navy portion, with which I am most familiar, there are some obvious errors, some typographical but many of substance. Admittedly, this is a difficult task in light of the level of detail provided and changing plans for combat suites. However, it must be done if the text is to retain credibility.

Second, *Combat Fleets'* publishers and editors should now decide whether it is to continue expansion until it approaches in size its major competitor or whether the next edition should confine itself to remaining smaller yet thorough, and thus appeal to a slightly different market. There would seem to be no need for a second *Janes'*, even at a slightly lower price. There may be more of a place for a more concise and hence readily useful reference text.

Whichever path *Combat Fleets* may choose, it should remain a fine

102 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

publication that will find a home aboard ship and in the libraries of Navy buffs worldwide. This short review cannot do justice to the enormous amount of accurate data contained in this large and well-presented reference work.

D.G. CLARK
Commander, U.S. Navy

Deeb, Marius. *The Lebanese Civil War*. New York: Praeger, 1980. 159pp.

Gordon, David C. *Lebanon: The Fragmented Nation*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1980. 297pp.

When confronting problems as intransigent and complex as the obscene destruction of Lebanon by parties, groups and individuals of every conceivable political stripe, one tends to be overwhelmed by the very inadequacy of our explanations for such carnage. Anyone familiar with the literature knows that only very few authorities have been able to capture adequately and objectively the web of circumstances that led to the war or the political machinations that have kept the Lebanese death dance in progress during 1975 and 1976 (and still keep it alive, albeit at an abated level). Indeed, it is rather an awesome task just to stay abreast of the shifting loyalties, alignments and relationships of the parties involved. Even those books that succeed in presenting a snapshot-in-time turn out to be keenly perishable, even in comparison to the corpus of literature on the modern Middle East which is not itself noted for durability.

Thus, approaching the two books under review, one is tempted on the one hand to expect too much, to demand success where others have failed, and on the other hand, to expect very little. Neither fulfills the grander expectation, but both manage to transcend the lesser. For very different reasons, these two books reward the reader, and while

neither one is indispensable, they offer insights and information not readily available in English.

Lebanon is a little book—the adjective is not demeaning—in the sense that this former American University of Beirut history professor has provided a workmanlike overview of modern Lebanon (1946-1976) that he then colors quite effectively through the judicious use of his own observations and the reproduction of entries from his personal journal interspersed throughout the book. While reading *Lebanon*, one is at first struck by its being rather pedestrian and lacking in insight, but after a time it becomes clear that Gordon's book should be judged as a personal document—almost a memoir—for what the author does best is to share the perceptions, fears and hopes of a non-Arab (with nearly a half century's experience in the Eastern Mediterranean) living in Lebanon during calamitous times. While it is of some value to read Gordon's look at the Lebanese polity, it is far more interesting to savor the vignettes and anecdotes that succeed in teaching us something about Arabs, Lebanon, the Beirut academic scene and the author. To illustrate:

Once I was interviewed by a local Arab magazine about my life in [a quarter of Beirut]. The few guarded remarks I made concerning my preference for life here, rather than in America, came out: "Professor Gordon hates America and thinks Beirut is a paradise." I objected to such a revision of what I had actually said. The interviewer's answer was: "We Arabs like to put things strongly."

[Notes from Gordon's journal, 1975, during the first stages of the civil war.] May 2: "A Bullet Dodger's Guide to Beirut" is available advising on what to say depending at whose barricade one is stopped.