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Tactical Nuclear Weapons: European Perspectives

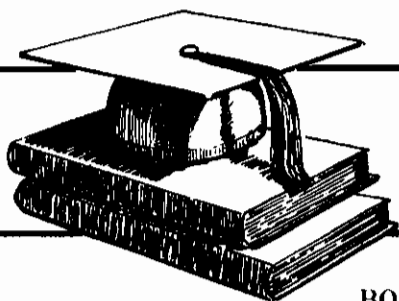
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BOOK REVIEWS

Barnaby, Frank, ed. *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: European Perspectives*. London: Taylor and Francis, 1978. 371pp.

Van Cleave, William R. and Cohen, S.T. *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: An Examination of the Issues*. London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1978. 119pp.

The employment of tactical nuclear weapons has been a stepchild in Western military studies since the beginning of the sixties. In U.S. doctrine, a shift away from theoretical consideration of tactical nuclear warfare coincided with the enunciation of the strategy of flexible response and the decision to install a new locking system on American weapons in Europe. From the NATO perspective, both decisions undercut the belief in automatic recourse to nuclear weapons in European conflict. The topic of tactical nuclear weapons was revived forcefully in 1977 by the debate over DOD proposals to modernize American stocks. Controversy centered on what was popularly called the neutron bomb. *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: European Perspectives* represents the effort of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute to deal with many of the issues raised by the debate, as well as to present concerns that are more European than American in nature.

The value of the SIPRI volume lies in three areas. First, the book provides coverage of diverging opinions on a range of issues associated with the use of tactical nuclear weapons. For

example, one author may argue convincingly that the firebreak between nuclear and conventional weapons is inviolate (which is the real heart of the debate) and that improvements in tactical nuclear weapons will make it more likely that the firebreak will be crossed. Another counters, equally logically, that it is possible to separate strictly strategic and tactical nuclear forces and to do so without diminishing the value of either. A similar balance of opinions is also achieved on the issue of efforts to control or limit tactical nuclear weapons in Europe; alternative proposals are included with discussion of what levels of tactical nuclear disarmament are feasible.

The second value of the SIPRI book is that it clearly spells out the ambivalent attitude towards tactical nuclear weapons held by the European community and the dichotomy between American and European views. Essentially, the European position is a contradiction between the desire to use tactical nuclear weapons to preserve the American commitment (for those who accept them as part and parcel of deterrence) and the overwhelmingly negative reaction to the prospect of actual use of the weapons in European territory. The dilemma of the European position and the inevitable difference between American and European perspectives are inescapable facts if NATO is to produce a coherent doctrine of tactical nuclear warfare. That doctrine cannot be exclusively American if it is to be accepted and credible.

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Finally, the results of the SIPRI conference (of which this book resulted) lay to rest some of the conventional wisdom concerning tactical nuclear weapons that perhaps has been less wise than conventional. For example, the first chapter, setting out the history of tactical nuclear weapons, closely questions the assumption that Western analysts have operated with a correct assessment of the Soviet tactical nuclear threat. Given the almost total absence of hard data, the author notes that "the judgements of Western authors most often seem to be derived from a group of extremely limited and cryptic Soviet statements, from which many analysts seem to be able to obtain far more meaning and clarity than the original statements contain." As a result of this marginal information, categorical statements concerning what the Soviets have in their tactical nuclear stockpiles, where these weapons are, and for what purpose they are assigned, are not valid. Nor is the existence or nonexistence of a Soviet doctrine for the use of tactical nuclear weapons proven. Any attempt to encourage the formulation of a NATO position on tactical nuclear warfare must recognize this gap. Creating a doctrine to counter an ambiguous threat is difficult at best; it is nearly impossible if the ambiguity is not recognized.

A second example of laying conventional wisdom to rest concerns the performance of enhanced radiation weapons (or whatever name is chosen)—that is the falseness of the assumption that they are almost identical to conventional weapons. The designation "mini-nukes" or "clean" weapons is misleading. Initial collateral damage from low yield or enhanced radiation may be considerably less than that from conventional weapons or from larger yield fission weapons. The "advantage" of such weapons is that they achieve a high kill by initial radiation rather than by blast. However, in order to achieve this result the weapons actually cover pro-

portionately wider areas with delayed radiation effects than do conventional nuclear weapons. "Mini-nukes" is therefore a misnomer whose use could lead to incorrect judgments in the policy planning process. The dispelling of such common myths is a significant contribution of the SIPRI book.

The major challenge to the SIPRI book is likely to be a philosophical one in that the volume begins with the statement that tactical nuclear weapons should be eliminated. Such an opening could well put off the reader who recognizes the futility of bemoaning a technological development: the weapons exist, it remains to decide how to incorporate them or limit their use. Beyond this philosophical stumbling bloc, the reader should find considerable value in the detailed and readable history of tactical nuclear weapons provided by the book, and in its concluding presentation of opposing solutions.

Tactical Nuclear Weapons: an Examination of the Issues ranges less widely over the issues than does the SIPRI book. In fact, this book may be mistitled in that it is not truly an examination of the issues, but a presentation of one side of the case. The central theme is that the United States lacks a doctrine for the use of tactical nuclear weapons and needs to develop one. Much of the authors' argument is drawn from precisely the assumptions that are challenged by the SIPRI collection: the existence of a Soviet intention to use tactical nuclear weapons in Europe (based on Soviet citations that are apparently so limited that the authors are frequently forced to reuse them) and the relative "cleanness" of discriminate enhanced radiation weapons. The authors note that there are differences of opinion concerning these "facts" but are still willing to use them as the basis for later arguments. In this sense, the Van Cleave and Cohen book would serve better as a chapter in a larger collection than as a separate

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work. Structurally, the volume could fit as a chapter if the repetitions that characterizes each section were eliminated. Finally, in terms of content, there is a gap between the problem posed and the solutions offered. The authors focus on the lack of theory, but the concluding section on alternatives merely restates the need for a doctrine and shifts to consideration of some very specific non-doctrinal proposals, such as dispersal of forces and the introduction of VSTOL. These solutions do not parallel the theoretical questions presented throughout the book.

Neither the Van Cleave and Cohen book nor the SIPRI collection should be regarded as a final answer to where tactical nuclear weapons do or do not fit in modern arsenals. The merit of both is that they may stimulate other studies on the issues raised.

RENITA FRY

Baugh, Daniel A., ed. *Naval Administration 1715-1750*. London: Navy Records Society, vol. 120, 1977. 523pp.

Collinge, J.M., compiler. *Navy Board Officials 1660-1832 (Office Holders in Modern Britain, vol. 7)*. London: University of London, Institute of Historical Research, 1978. 152pp.

These two volumes are essential reference works for the student of English naval administration in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Professor Baugh's work is a selection of 437 documents that illustrate the most challenging administrative problems that faced the Royal Navy in a 37-year period of peace and war. The documents are carefully selected to stand by themselves as illustrations of a specific period and at the same time to complement works already in print. Most notably, this collection documents Professor Baugh's own well-known study of British Naval Administration in

the Age of Walpole (Princeton, 1965). There is much to be said for using the two volumes together. They are basically organized around the same categories, and the introductions to the different sections in the collection of documents provide some modification to his earlier judgments. In an additional short selection of material about Naval Stores and Timber, Baugh makes some important comments that modify or clarify several points in R.G. Albion's pioneer study, *Forests and Sea Power* (Harvard, 1926). Although there are a large number of documents on the subject of colonial naval stores, the documents printed here illustrate several points that have been previously overlooked. In particular, they complement the useful book by J.J. Malone, *Pine Trees and Politics: The Naval Stores and Forest Policy in Colonial New England 1691-1775* (University of Washington, 1964). Baugh's collection of documents makes a major contribution to our understanding of naval history and carries on the series of Navy Board papers that the Navy Records Society has published: *The Sergison Papers* for the period 1692-1702 and *Queen Anne's Navy* for the period 1702-14. Taking the three volumes together, one may see the manner in which the wartime procedures of 1692-1713 were consolidated and institutionalized by the middle of the 18th century.

Michael Collinge's work carries on the lists of Modern British Office Holders begun by J.C. Sainty. In 1975, Sainty published *Admiralty Officials 1660-1870*, a list of officials who served in the immediate office of the Lord High Admiral or Commissioners of the Admiralty. The men in that office were at the top of the navy's bureaucracy and were concerned with appointments, promotions, assignments and fleet operations under the direction of the cabinet. Collinge's work, like Baugh's, focuses on the administrative side that was dominated by the Navy Board, an