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The Economy of Death

C. O. Fiske
U.S. Navy

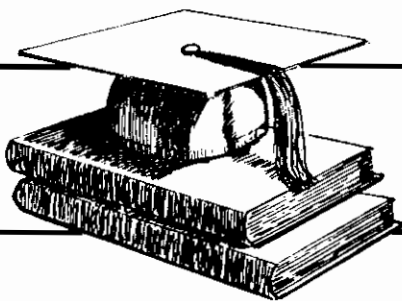
Richard J. Barnet

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PROFESSIONAL READING

American Security Council. National Strategy Committee. *The ABM and the Changed Strategic Military Balance: U.S.A. vs. U.S.S.R.* Washington: 1969. 60p.

In this brief study prepared at the request of the American Security Council in May 1969, 32 members of a special subcommittee attempt to address the changing strategic military balance between the United States and Soviet Russia. Their approach is centered around the current controversy over the need for an antiballistic missile (ABM) defense system. Of interest to naval officers will be the fact that the report includes the views of prominent military and naval officers whose names would tend to assure the reader of the objectivity of the report. In examining the need for an ABM defense, the subcommittee members discuss in concise terms the aspects of United States and Soviet strategic military balance, strategic defense, and the equally controversial issue of civil defense. For a report of its brief size, there are more facts, figures, and charts of diagrams than are to be found in the other two leading works on the ABM issue, *ABM; an Evaluation of the Decision to Deploy an Antiballistic Missile System* (New York: New American Library, 1969) and *Anti-Ballistic Missile: Yes or No?* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968). For a full comprehension of the ABM contro-

versy, the reader should consult all three works. However, the item under review presents as complete an overview as can be found at this writing. The reviewer researched the complete spectra of ABM literature for a thesis topic and has found no other work (including the extensive Congressional reports) as comprehensive and lucid as *The ABM and the Changed Strategic Military Balance: U.S.A. vs. U.S.S.R.* This booklet builds a strong case for an ABM defense. *ABM; an Evaluation of the Decision to Deploy an Antiballistic Missile System* opposes the ABM. The other work of the trilogy, *Anti-Ballistic Missile: Yes or No?* provides the balance between the two extremes.

C.O. FISKE
Captain, U.S. Navy

Barnet, Richard J. *The Economy of Death*. New York: Atheneum, 1969. 201p.

As an authority on national security and arms control matters and as a founder of the Institute for Political Studies (in Washington), Mr. Barnet challenges the validity of the rationale used by the Department of Defense to support and continue the military-industrial complex—hence the title *The Economy of Death*. The author contends that for more than a quarter of a century, American citizens have permitted their Government to foster an

ever-growing defense industry based on the overkill theory, i.e., the best defense lies in more and more nuclear weapons and a proliferation of complex, expensive weapons systems. There is much in the book which would cause the military reader to see a direct challenge to principles and ideas which are traditional or current in military strategic thinking and defense planning. Certainly this publication will do little to close the alleged gap between the military and the so-called "alienated society." The author is guilty also of building a case against post-World War II defense policy and programs, using only the views of the better known critics augmented by some unfortunate utterances of the members of the "Establishment" from which the uninformed reader could well derive an out-of-context impression.

Despite these criticisms, Barnet's book must be viewed as a primer for use in understanding the current public hostility toward things military and, in particular, the military-industrial complex. There is enough of the essence of the views of the leading critics in this book, in condensed form, to provide the major elements of the case against the military, defense spending, and the M-I complex. The introduction and those portions of chapter II which address the uninformed military, militarized civilians, the national interest, and the politics of defense are well worth reading. Because of the brevity of the book and the inclusion of an unusually high number of "facts and figures," it seems certain that this work may well become the "red handbook" of the critics of the Defense Establishment. One can expect to hear more of the philosophy of "the economy of death." For the military reader this book should serve two purposes: (1) it should prepare him for the

nature of the arguments he can expect to face from critics of the military and their association with defense industries as these relationships affect the national budget and foreign policy, and (2) it should point to the areas of further military effort or individual effort if one expects to be able to cope with or counter the criticism. Barnet has done his homework well and knitted his arguments into a tidy hundle. Unlike many critics, however, the author *does* offer some constructive counter-proposals to current defense programs and planning for national security. Few of the proposals are of the "motherhood" variety, and Barnet is to be commended for setting forth some clear options for hard choice by our society.

In summary, Barnet opens his book with the question "How much defense spending is enough?" The next 200 pages attempt to answer that question.

C.O. FISKE
Captain, U.S. Navy

Fisher, Roger. *International Conflict for Beginners*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969, 231p.

Mr. Fisher set out to write a book which would set forward a simpler method of thinking about international affairs not only for the "beginner" addressed by his title, but also for the professional diplomat. He has succeeded. However, one problem always associated with formulation of simpler ways of considering complex problems is the need to avoid complexity in presentation of the new method. Simple schemes demand simplicity of expression, while publishers apparently demand some minimum physical weight for all books, regardless of their philosophical substance. Mr. Fisher's book bears the unmistakable scars of conflict