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Organizing OPNAV (1970–2009)

Thomas Culora

BOOK REVIEWS

REARRANGING DECK CHAIRS: THE NEAR-NORMAL STATE FOR THE NAVY STAFF

Swartz, Peter M., with Michael C. Markowitz. *Organizing OPNAV (1970–2009).* Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, January 2010. 118pp. Available at www.dtic.mil.

For any institution adapting to change, the dreaded "*R*-word" (reorganization) has come to represent an often disruptive, albeit necessary, transition. But as the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) authors Peter Swartz and Michael Markowitz clearly highlight, reorganization has been the near-normal state for the Navy Staff (OPNAV) over the past several decades. Conducted under the sponsorship of the Naval History and Heritage Command, this CNA report effectively tracks the numerous changes in the organization of OPNAV in response to changes both in Chiefs of Naval Operations (CNOs) and in the strategic and budgetary environments since 1970.

As experienced CNA researchers, Swartz and Markowitz have applied their knowledge and experience in analysis, policy, and history to assemble a highly accurate and credible compendium of the mechanics of change in OPNAV over a forty-year span. Swartz has special insight here. As a former Navy captain, he served on the OPNAV staff during part of the period covered

by this report and is currently CNA's adviser to the Strategy and Policy Division (N51), giving him both an outsider's and insider's view of the process and personalities.

The study focuses on answering three principal questions: What have been the significant changes to the OPNAV staff, why were these changes made, and what observations and conclusions can be drawn from these changes? Swartz and Markowitz admit that the emphasis of the study was in the "data-gathering task" embodied in the first question. Also, some readers may find the "PowerPoint with heavy notation" format of the study off-putting. However, this format lends itself to understanding the complex structures, timelines, and machinations of the reorganization efforts of each successive CNO from the 1970s onward.

The taxonomy used by Swartz and Markowitz in presenting and categorizing the myriad changes in the OPNAV staff structure provides a highly understandable and ordered review of the complicated and sometimes confusing

organizational adaptations. Especially useful are the four "context" tables, one for each decade starting with the 1970s, that list by year who was presiding as CNO, along with the relevant Navy capstone documents, the Navy's "total [that is, financial] obligation authority," total number of ships in the fleet, new ships arriving in the fleet, active personnel, and new capabilities introduced. Juxtaposed against the numerous organizational charts in the report, these context tables help in understanding how each CNO has reorganized, not only responding to the variety of exogenous forces but also to implement his own vision for the future of the Navy. By recounting in detail the reorganization that the current CNO, Admiral Gary Roughead, has made to the staff, readers can see for themselves the most consequential changes enacted and, by extension, the most consequential issues facing the Navy today, in Roughead's view.

Swartz and Markowitz identify two major changes made by Admiral Roughead. First is the consolidation of the Intelligence (N2) and the Communications Networks (N6) directorates into a newly created Directorate for Information Dominance (N2/6), a move that underscores the critical importance of a holistic approach to communications and intelligence, including the emerging preeminence of cyber and electronic warfare. The future impact of this consolidation could be quite large, given the issues at stake.

Second, equally as revealing has been the morphing of the staff's internal think tank, "Deep Blue," into the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) cell to meet the challenges of the recent QDR, and finally into the Naval Warfare

Integration Group (00X), in late 2009. One function of 00X will be, acting as a "special assistants" group, to provide the CNO with direct assessments of Navy programs and systems. Plainly, this CNO sees a critical need to be armed with as much information and analysis as possible to address the tremendous budgetary pressures affecting the Navy, which pose a special challenge to the future health of the naval force, a challenge requiring particular attention and focus.

Where the study itself is admittedly thin is in its narratives—which might have been richer—of the colorful personalities, nuanced forces, and institutional rivalries that sculpted the shape of the OPNAV staff during a very dynamic period. Those wanting an Allisonian-like examination of the organizational, political, and personal dynamics shaping this change will have to wait for what Swartz and Markowitz recommend as next steps: an expansion of the study to personalities, relationships, and in-depth answers to the "why" question. Until then, scholars of U.S. Navy history and organizational studies can be content with this well researched, accurate, and informative report.

THOMAS CULORA, *Chairman, Warfare Analysis and Research Department*
Naval War College

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Students of American national security policy, particularly those without the benefit of firsthand policy-making