2005

Shaping American Military Capabilities Right after the Cold War

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol58/iss4/17
Moore looks on the bright side of JICPOA’s modest performance, but he finds only one outstanding success by its analysts during the war. Ironically, it was in support of an amphibious operation that never occurred, the planned invasion of Kyushu in the autumn of 1945. Because Japanese garrisons usually fought to the death and inflicted high casualties on attacking forces, the five hundred thousand defenders of Kyushu were capable of turning the opening phase of the attack on the home islands into a bloodbath. JICPOA’s accurate estimates of the steady buildup of Japanese forces on the island led military planners to support a less costly way to end the war in the Pacific—the use of the atomic bomb against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

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Richard Lacquement provides an important narrative history and critical analysis of the Defense Department’s official policy studies and reviews from the end of the Cold War through the early administration of George W. Bush. The book addresses several key themes, highlighting the scope and speed of military reform efforts and the failure, in the author’s view, of defense transformation. Each chapter provides a review, discussion, and critique of the official documents on American defense policy and strategic thinking in the post–Cold War decade. The book traces the major themes and issues in the official Defense Department policy reviews, including the 1990 Base Force, the 1993 Bottom-Up Review, the 1995 Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, and the 1997 and 2001 Quadrennial Defense Reviews.

Lacquement is an Army field artillery officer who has served on the faculties of the U.S. Military Academy and the Naval War College. Shaping American Military Capabilities after the Cold War, his first book, is based on his Princeton University doctoral dissertation. It is the product of serious academic research that is informed throughout by the sincere search of a soldier-statesman for better ideas in the development of the U.S. armed forces’ capabilities to serve the nation’s current and future security needs.

From Les Aspin, through William Perry and William Cohen, to Donald Rumsfeld, defense secretaries and their official policy documents have addressed the Defense Department’s and services’ efforts at transforming the post–Cold War military. Lacquement’s argument is that more change throughout the 1990s would have been better. He contrasts the influence of outsiders, mainly political defense reformers, to that of insiders, members of a mostly conservative military culture and status quo–oriented senior military leadership. Lacquement characterizes Bill Clinton’s defense secretary, Les Aspin, and Connecticut senator Joseph Lieberman as champions of innovation, while portraying the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairmen Generals Colin Powell and John Shalikashvili as resistant to revolutionary new thinking on defense issues.
In tracing the evolution of these official policy documents, Lacquement comes out on the side of the glass-half-empty view of the Defense Department’s attempts at reshaping post–Cold War military capabilities and service organizations and programs. He argues that major weapons programs and service budget shares overrode sound strategic thinking; that innovation champions were stymied by senior officers; and that incrementalism prevailed over transformation. Lacquement is clearly on the side of the proponents for more, better, and faster defense transformation.

Toward the end of his book, Lacquement also raises important questions regarding the nation-building capabilities of U.S. forces engaged in current complex counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. For instance, he calls for additional civil affairs and psychological operations forces. In recent military history, those nation-building debates have gone back to the arguments over the appropriate roles and missions of U.S. ground forces in the war in Vietnam (Lacquement cites Andrew Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* [Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998], for instance). Nevertheless, his arguments lend an element of currency to those engaged in Iraq and Afghanista policies regarding “postconflict” and stability operations. The final chapter, “Evaluation and Recommendations,” introduces possibilities for engaging in some out-of-the-box thinking on winning the next war by leveraging technology and the revolution in military affairs; supporting effective peace operations; and fighting the global war on terrorism while improving homeland defense. These are significant enough research topics for a second book.

What this work does not provide is an assessment of the innovations that were attempted and in some cases executed during the Clinton and early Bush eras. My hunch is there were innovations at many levels within the Defense Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the services, and the combatant commands that deserve additional attention and more research. For instance, how are we to explain the relative successes in the use of military capabilities to achieve political objectives in Balkans peacekeeping, as well as in the wars in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq? Would a more thoroughly transformed military have resulted in even fewer American and civilian casualties, and better coordinated NATO operations in Kosovo? More effective combined, joint, and special operations in Afghanistan; or a quicker completion of the conventional battles in Iraq?

Lacquement’s book, carefully read, provides critical insights into the assumptions and themes in the evolution of the key policy and strategy documents in the decade following the end of the Cold War. *Shaping American Military Capabilities after the Cold War* serves to inform and ground a study of the history of major Clinton-era defense policy reviews. Gauging the size, scope, and speed of change while retaining the readiness and military capabilities to defend against current and emerging threats, of course, represents an important research agenda. For all these reasons, *Shaping American Military Capabilities after the Cold War* is an important book for students of international security and American
defense policy, and especially readers interested in defense transformation.

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Throughout this excellent collection of essays on what might rightly be called the mystique of mutiny runs a significant thread—that from centuries of laws and regulations governing naval conduct and discipline there has emerged no precise or universally accepted definition of mutiny. Ambiguity has clouded every effort to create one. The only consistent element, despite the number of crewmen involved and the growth of simple disobedience into violence, is the necessary presence of usurpation and subversion of authority. This is evident in what thirteen writers contribute here, in an authoritative and attractive style and tone. The mutinies they have selected for study are of a character so dramatic that no matter how scholarly the approach and painstaking the research, each tale is likely to intrigue the reader. Certain selections may be familiar: the Russian battleship Potemkin, the mass uprising that shook the German High Seas Fleet in 1918, Invergordon, and the Port Chicago mutiny. The authors—Robert Zebroski, Michael Epkenhans of Germany’s Otto von Bismarck Foundation, Christopher M. Bell, and Regina T. Akers of the Naval Historical Center—tackle their subjects with fresh appraisal and zeal. The bloody Potemkin revolt led to the fall of the Romanovs. The mutinous German seamen sabotaged their government’s war effort. The Invergordon mutiny threw Great Britain off the gold standard. Thanks mostly to the NAACP’s brilliant young lawyer, Thurgood Marshall, the Port Chicago episode not only struck a blow at racial discrimination but highlighted the endless debate of what constitutes a mutiny. Also, it should not be forgotten that President Clinton’s pardon of Freddie Meeks in 1999 still leaves the names of forty-nine African-Americans on record as the only convicted mutineers in U.S. naval history.

The lesser known mutinies are dealt with by equally qualified experts with comparable skill and revelation. In 1910 the fury of Brazilian sailors against brutal employment of the lash reflected that country’s discontent. After winning minor reforms from the ruling class, the men of the dreadnoughts Minas Geraes and Sao Paulo continued to show the Brazilian flag above subequatorial waters, maintaining their country’s reputation as South America’s leading naval power. The mutiny in the Adriatic Sea aboard the Austro-Hungarian armored cruisers Sankt George and Kaiser Karl VI in February 1918 is said to have helped bring down the Hapsburg monarchy. Yet as the author of “The Cattaro Mutiny, 1918,” Paul G. Halpern of Florida State University, asserts, the revolt lasted only two days. Its causes were traceable to bad food, boredom, and plain war-weariness. Also mutinous, after four years of war with Germany, were French sailors when ordered into war against Russian Bolsheviks. While this event is the principal focus of the essay by French history professor Philippe Masson, notice...